



ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY
VICTORIA BRANCH



Commonwealth News

We will take a leading role in achieving a fairer world for Commonwealth citizens by connecting, convening and equipping people to advance the values of the Commonwealth.



Welcome to the November 2021 edition of RCS Victoria Branch Commonwealth News.

Victorian restrictions have eased, it's time for us all to get out and about and celebrate what's left of our centenary year.

Our timeline of the 100 years of RCS Victoria continues with the 2010-19 featured in this issue.

Worldwide: Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

Victoria: Her Excellency The Honourable Linda Dessau AC Governor of Victoria

November 2021

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We want to improve the lives and prospects of all Commonwealth citizens

A history in common, a future in progress

The Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS) is a network of individuals and organisations committed to improving the lives and prospects of Commonwealth citizens across the world. Through youth empowerment, education and high-level advocacy, the Society champions the importance of literacy, equality and inclusion, the environment and connected communities across the Commonwealth's 54 member nations. The

Society's unique position within the Commonwealth family allows it to play a pivotal role in convening and connecting the Commonwealth's political and diplomatic representatives, as well as industry, civil society, academic and business leaders, on a wide range of issues. Founded in 1868, the RCS is non-partisan, independent of governments and relies on public generosity to achieve its mission.

Presidents Report

Dear Fellows and Members,

Since the government announced the ending of lockdown and we have been experiencing greater freedoms I would like to issue a caution.

I have spoken with 2 doctors in recent days and their agreed opinion was that the next month could still provide some problems with covid 19, especially with patients that are immune compromised, so i ask all our friends to still be careful.

having said that, I advise that our November luncheon is all go, and we will finally get to celebrate our centenary with our gala black-tie dinner on 9th December.

please keep the date free we are expecting a big rollup, we are inviting commonwealth consuls, and some other dignities and representatives from other Australian branches. we intend to display some of our memorabilia from the last 100 years on the night and maybe a couple of surprises.

please be aware that all staff at gables on finch are vaccinated and all guests will need to provide their vaccinated status as we are a fully vacationed location.

The Queens Essay Competition has been judged with winners announced last month.

The Senior winner is 16-year-old Kayla Bosire from Nairobi, Kenya, whose entry 'A Letter from the New World' imagined a world 30 years after the end of the pandemic.

The Junior winner is Ethan Mufuma (13) from Mukono, Uganda, whose entry was entitled 'Okware, Our Pandemic Epic'. Ethan, who began writing when aged 10 through his school's writing Club, says he now writes mostly poetry.

The Senior runner-up, 15-year-old Aditi Nair, a student at the Sanskriti School, New Delhi, India, whose entry was entitled 'Prithvi Mata' (Mother Earth).

The Junior runner-up, Raisa Gulati (14), from Amritsar, India, wrote 'An Autobiography of Corona'.

The Award Ceremony has been held at Buckingham Palace in recent years. The prizes include a week of educational and cultural events in London. The winning essays can be read on the RCS website:

www.thercs.org

Lloyd Byrne

President

RCS Victoria

ANNOUNCEMENTS

2021 EVENTS CALENDAR

NOVEMBER LUNCHEON -A festive event

DATE: 11th November 2021

WHERE: Gables on Finch

'The Gables' 15 Finch St Malvern East

TIME: 12pm for 12:30 start

COST: \$50/\$60

RSVP: Friday 5th November 2021 - please email Simon on

admin@rcsvic.org

Covid Vaccinated members & guests only

DECEMBER CHRISTMAS-GALA DINNER

WHERE: Gables on Finch

'The Gables' 15 Finch St Malvern East

DATE: 9th December 2021

TIME: 6:30pm

DRESS: Black Tie

COST: \$80/\$90

RSVP: Friday 3rd December 2021

Covid Vaccinated members & guests only

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

DATE: To be confirmed November 2021

LOCATION: To be confirmed



Webinar: We are the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Date: 16th December 2021 6am – 9am AEDST

This 45 minute presentation will introduce you to the fascinating work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC)

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/we-are-the-commonwealth-war-graves-commission-tickets-184861013267?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch>

Women's Group Message

November Luncheon

It was with regret that we had to cancel the August Luncheon due to the COVID-19 restrictions and lockdown. However, November luncheon on 11th November, Armistice Day is definitely going ahead. As you will read elsewhere in this newsletter there are certain protocols that must be followed in line with Government directives and to keep us all safe; i.e., the staff of The Gables on Finch, us, the members and our guests. You are earnestly urged to observe these protocols.

The luncheon will be a festive occasion marking the nearing of the end of yet another year full of uncertainties. The Society will be coming to the end of its 100th anniversary year, a cause for celebration as is the transition from the racing season to the end of year festive season. We will not have a guest speaker as we are sure you would love to talk to one another catching up on several months' news. The Women's Group Committee plan to have a cake, other treats and a small raffle, also beautiful poppies for sale – confirmation of these details will be in the next newsletter.

Dress code: The occasion calls for something frivolous drawn from any period over the last 100 years.

Women's Group News

The Women's Group Committee members look forward to welcoming you all back to the RCS on 11th November. We trust you are all surviving this prolonged lockdown. If you need any assistance, or just somebody to talk to, you know you can contact me any time by phone or email. (Contact details below)

It is hoped some of you watched the webinars about the Queen's historic houses and paintings. The third webinar in the series, "The Royal Art Collection" is on 28th Sept. – refer to announcements for details.

Over the past couple of weeks, I have received invitations from the Commonwealth Secretariat via the Commonwealth Foundation to join two webinars focusing on issues of concern to the Commonwealth as featured in its Plan of Action.

1. "Climate justice for Small Island States". Many of these States make up over half the membership of the Commonwealth so deserve support as they grapple with rising sea levels and other devastating effects of climate change. Advocacy is required now in preparation for the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow due November but postponed.

2. "#JointheChorus campaign to end domestic and sexual violence and launch Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 Implementation Toolkit" was held as a side event in the margins of the 79th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. The Commonwealth Secretariat, in partnership with other entities developed strategies for the Toolkit which was produced by the Secretariat and the NO MORE Foundation. This was a very well-run webinar focusing on action so far taken and to be taken in ending violence against women and girls, a refreshing perspective. Rt. Hon Patricia Scotland, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth delivered the opening and closing speeches.

Elisabeth Newman AM

Women's Group Convenor

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Royal Commonwealth Society Victoria Branch Historical Highlights – 2010's

New Leadership

As we entered our 10th decade, the Victorian Branch began working hard to create a new direction to ensure we were sustainable and viable.

Lloyd Byrne was elected President of the Branch and Elisabeth Newman was our Women's Group Convenor. In 2013 HM Queen Elizabeth II celebrated her Diamond Jubilee. Our Branch celebrated with the re-issue of the 55 page journal from 1953.



Accountable Future

As Australia undertook several Royal Commissions, the RCS Victoria Branch moved to become more accountable. A major step for our Branch was gaining charitable status through the ACNC. This would enable us to continue our great work supporting the community. Our Branch launched its first scholarship and partnership with RMIT along with a plan to deliver support to the areas of priority for the RCS Victoria Branch.



2010-3

2014-6

2017-8

2019-0

Connecting Locally

As part of the Branch's strategic plans, better connections were established with various organisations and groups. Our support of local charities grew. The relationship with RSL Branches continued with several guest speakers. The Hon. Ted Baillieu visited a number of times to speak of the ANZAC Centenary celebrations and how we were all connected to the ANZAC story. The Magna Carter celebrated 800 years.



A New Era and a New Century

As we approached the end of our first centenary, our Branch had become recognised as a global contributor to the RCS international movement. We had been selected to host the 2021 International Meeting. Sadly the world was hit by a global pandemic, changing many plans. Our Branch stayed connected and committed. The RCS Victoria Branch will continue to lead the way in conversations regarding climate change, education and gender equality.

News from around The Commonwealth



Commonwealth Youth gearing up to lead COP26 discussions

As the countdown to COP26 continues, young environmental activists and innovators, academics, experts and government officials from across the Commonwealth, joined a series of regional dialogues to help set the youth agenda at the conference.

Organised by the Commonwealth Youth Programme and the Commonwealth Youth Climate Change Network (CYCN) and supported by the Commonwealth Blue Charter, the Climate and Sustainability Summit gave young people a space to share their views on sustainable and localised climate change solutions, and climate impacts on health, gender equality and economies.

Head of Social Policy Development at the Commonwealth Secretariat, Layne Robinson, described the dialogue as crucial to helping the Commonwealth meet its commitment to youth participation and empowerment: "Our young people are the ones who will be forced to live with the chilling projections and predictions that are captured in recent climate change reports. Therefore, it is critical that they are at the forefront of this conversation about the survival of our planet. "That is why we are standing strong with our growing youth networks and helping them to ensure that the youth perspective is not just represented, but actually makes a difference to the outcome of this COP."

Ambition vs opportunity

Speaking on the first day of the Summit, which was focused on climate change adaptation projects in the Commonwealth, building resilience across small island development states (SIDS), and youth involvement in climate policy and research, innovator Ibnur Rashad declared: "People always say the sky is the limit, I disagree with that, I say your imagination is the limit." Rashad, who runs the Ground-up Innovation Labs for Development, which is designed to bridge the gaps between nature, technology, and communities, added: "I am hopeful that the solution to the world's climate change is still hidden within the imagination of our young generations, so I think that the real solution is yet to emerge. Keep experimenting!"

At the same time, executive director of WEYE Clean Energy Co. Ltd and 2020 Commonwealth Young Person of the Year, Kakembo Galabuzi Brian, stressed the importance of funding and training. He said: "The biggest challenge is that many of the youth can't access the finance or training to actually get their ideas further."

Regional perspectives

Regional dialogues in Asia, Europe, Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific on the second day of the Summit, allowed panellists to elaborate on specific climate crisis issues in their regions. In the Pacific, the focus was on support for extremely vulnerable communities including SIDS - which represents 32 of the Commonwealth's 54 countries. Pointing to the frightening increase in cyclones in the region, Sagufta Janif, founder of The Fusion Hub and Bula-lance and 2020 Commonwealth Youth Awardee for the Pacific, said: "The most vulnerable communities are often neglected when it comes to capacity building opportunities or when it comes to involving them in important discussions and conversations that happen around climate change." While in the Caribbean, Adrian Watson, the Jamaican CEO of social enterprise start-up Honai Beez which uses beekeeping to combat climate change, highlighted environmental impacts on communities. Watson, whose own local community is affected by pollution from nearby dumps, said: "When you are talking about youth on the front line, for me that is a very literal thing and so you have to think about young people who are living in these degraded communities...." In the Asia dialogue, the call was to share ideas and resources between countries. Commonwealth National Climate Finance Adviser for Seychelles, Kai Kim, spoke about good practices in the region which can be replicated. "Nepal was one of the first countries to do national climate budget tagging, and Indonesia as well, so you will find that Asia was the region that led on this initiative, and this is now being adopted by more countries in the Indian, African and Pacific regions."

Youth voice

More accountability amongst developed countries who are emitting the most pollution was top of the agenda for participants in the African dialogue. Dr Mithika Mwenda, executive director for Pan African Climate Justice Alliance, said: "Africa should be the embodiment of climate justice because we are the continent that is the most vulnerable, most impacted, yet the least responsible for climate change. He added: "We have no capacity, we have other competing priorities, we are the largest population living below poverty levels.... We need those who have caused the problem to address it." Key regional figures such as Dr Filimon Manoni, Deputy Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum, were involved in the dialogues. Dr Manoni stressed: "It is your future that policymakers and decision-makers are striving to make the decisions about today. Your views are important." The conversation continues next week when the Commonwealth Youth Programme will host four youth-focused events at the [COP26 conference in Glasgow](https://thecommonwealth.org/media/news/commonwealth-youth-gearing-lead-cop26-discussions).

<https://thecommonwealth.org/media/news/commonwealth-youth-gearing-lead-cop26-discussions>

Contact Details



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General Banking

Commonwealth Bank
BSB: 063-301
A/C: 10483586

Donations & charitable giving

Commonwealth Bank
BSB: 063-301
A/C: 10486533

EFTPOS/Credit Cards is available
at all functions.