

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT for 2010**

**Presented to the Annual General Meeting 16 February 2011**

It gives me pleasure to report on behalf of the Council for 2010.

The Council considers there was steady progress throughout the year in pursuing our principal objectives and in providing an active and relevant programme.

We were delighted that RCS Director, Dr Danny Sriskandarajah, was able to join us for a brief meeting when on a brief private visit from London in March. He reminded us that the principal objective of the RCS world-wide is to be “an important and dynamic civil society organisation” working in support of the modern Commonwealth.

Here at the local level in Canberra we seek to achieve this through regular and appropriate activities in education, in advocacy and in extending the principle of Commonwealth friendship. In terms of our regular activities the past year has been active and full of interesting and worthwhile events emphasising an on going “Commonwealth Conversation” commenced in 2009. Country briefings by High Commissions continued (Singapore and India); a successful Schools Public Speaking Competition; regular readings at the Commonwealth book club: participation in the Round Table Centenary Seminar and the ANU Africa Day Seminar. On the social side four seasonal lunches, the annual Commonwealth Dinner in Commonwealth week, and the Queens Birthday dinner jointly hosted by the RCS and the Australia-Britain Society. The theme for the year was *Science, Technology and Society: Strengthening the Modern Commonwealth* was pursued at the Commonwealth Day Celebration, the Commonwealth Dinner and through press articles. We are grateful to Dr Denis Blight AO FRS, CEO of the Crawford Foundation (and RCS member), for his participation and advice on the subject.

An important principal is that we work under the umbrella of *Friends of the Commonwealth in Canberra*, to build up a coalition of interests and talent, working relationships, vibrant partnerships that might be influential in furthering the work of the Commonwealth of Nations in pursuing peace and security, democracy and good governance and economic and social progress throughout the world.

In this connection we are again grateful for the collaboration of the Commonwealth Day Celebration Committee (CDCC) and its Chairman and RCS member, Mr. Tony Eggleton AO CVO. This multi-faith,

multicultural event on Commonwealth Day (the second Monday in March), celebrating the vibrant diversity of the modern Commonwealth, will remain an important and highly anticipated event on our annual calendar. We are also glad of the cooperation and support of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture (ACC&C) and its Director The Rev Professor James Haire AM and the financial support of the ACT Government through its multicultural programme.

The Commonwealth Round Table in Australia (CRTA), convened by Professor Anthony Low AO (an RCS member), has continued to provide a forum for contemporary international issues of importance to the Commonwealth. This year the CRTA has overseen two major submissions: to the House of Reps Committee on Africa; and the submission to the EPG through Mr Justice Michael Kirby.

During the year Commonwealth friends became increasingly involved in numerous briefings as CHOGM in Perth approaches regarding arrangements for civil society groups, including with senior Australian officers, with senior representatives of the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Foundation and the Commonwealth Business Council.

Finally, I would like to thank RCS members and Council for their support in 2010.

As a CHOGM year, 2011 promises to be full of interest with Australia becoming the focal point of international attention with the visit of over 50 leaders and HM The Queen as head of the Commonwealth. I trust the Society can look forward to all its supporters in making it a promising year for the RCS.

***Hugh Craft***

President

12 February 2011