



E-NEWS FROM THE COMMONWEALTH

E-Newsletter April 2022

Branch Patron: H.E. General the Hon. David Hurley AC DSC (Retd) Governor-General of Australia



JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS ON TRACK FOR JUNE CLIMAX

Australia, like many other countries throughout the Commonwealth, is preparing for a climax of events to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee around the 70th anniversary of her Coronation on 7 June 1952 and her Official Birthday on 13 June.

In Canberra, the RCS ACT Branch will combine with the Australia-Britain Society to host a formal dinner on Thursday 16 June at which the British High Commissioner H.E. Vicki Treadell will be Guest Speaker and Guest of Honour. (*See Notice p.4*)

Celebrations in Canberra, however, began in March, with a morning garden reception at Government House on Commonwealth Day. This was hosted by RCS Patron, the Governor-



H.E. the Governor-General and Mrs Hurley with RCS Vice-President Mr Kantilal Jinna and Mrs Jyoti Jinna, at the Commonwealth Dinner in March.

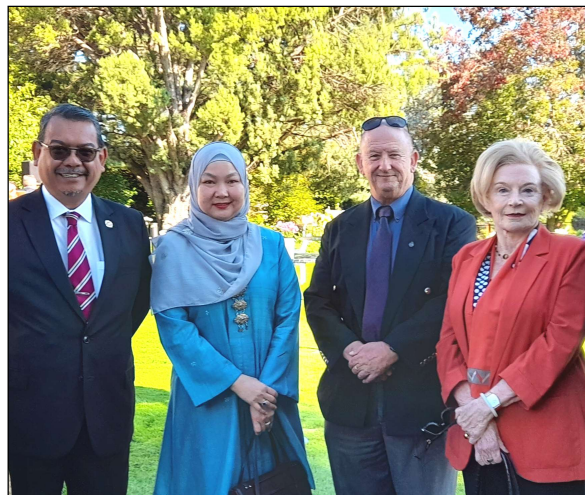
General, H.E. General the Hon. David Hurley and H.E. Mrs Linda Hurley and attended by RCS Councillors, Commonwealth High Commissioners, representatives of the Australiana Fund, and a group from *BackTrack*, a mentoring program based in Armidale NSW for youth from rural and remote areas of which the Governor-General and Mrs Hurley are patrons. The reception was followed a few days later by the RCS Commonwealth Dinner at which the Governor-General was Guest Speaker.

The highlight of the morning reception at Government House was the launch of a concept plan for a Queen Elizabeth II Garden as a permanent tribute and celebration, where selected flora of each Australian State and Territory will be planted in distinct garden 'rooms'. Nearby will be two garden metal sculptures of a kangaroo and an emu described as 'Coming together, Moving Forward, Standing Tall' made by *BackTrack*, and unveiled at the reception by the Governor-General, who described them as 'a symbol of our nation', adding that he would be calling them Roo and Moo (*right*).

The Federal Government has urged individuals and groups everywhere to organise community events to mark the Jubilee. The first official tribute, in February, was the launch of a



'Planting Trees for the Queen's Jubilee' program across the nation. A number of official events are planned for Canberra between 2 and 5 June, including lighting the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Beacon and the renaming of Aspen Island on Lake Burley Griffin as Queen Elizabeth II Island. Specially-minted gold and silver limited edition commemorative coins have been issued by some State Mints, as well as the Australian Mint, while Australia Post has issued commemorative stamps featuring portraits of the Queen. For more information on Australian Government-sponsored celebrations visit www.platinumjubilee.gov.au



The Malaysian High Commissioner H.E. Dato Roslan Abdul Rahman (above left) with Mrs Radiatun Malkan, Dr Martin Hess and Mrs Audrey Wilson at the Government House reception. Pictured left are Mrs Ann Sutton, RCS Victoria President, Mr Lloyd Byrne, and Mrs Audrey Wilson at the Commonwealth Dinner later in the week. Other dinner guests (below) were Mr Mark Mowday (left), Mr Max Mowday and Mrs Angela Mowday with Mr Kevin Squair.



SEMINAR ON THE FUTURE OF THE COMMONWEALTH

This topic will be addressed at a seminar being organised by the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in London on 17 May between 6.00 and 7.30 pm. The speakers are the Vice-Chancellor of the University of London, Professor Wendy Thomson, and Lord Desai, a member of the House of Lords and Emeritus Professor of Economics at the LSE.

They will canvass such issues as the Future of the Commonwealth as an idea and organisation for effective collaboration in today's troubled world and whether it should still be headed by a British monarch or should have a revolving headship. In conversation with Professor Thomson, Lord Desai will reflect on the relevance of the Commonwealth in an age of single-issue identity politics and how it can continue to evolve.

Although the seminar will be live-streamed, it will be in the early hours of the morning in Canberra. Requests have been made to produce a podcast of proceedings for later access. To find out if this has been possible, email the SAS Events Office at sas.events@sas.ac.uk nearer the date of the event.

TWO NEW CHALLENGERS FOR COMMONWEALTH'S TOP JOB

Jamaica's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Senator Karmina Johnson Smith, and the former Governor-General of Tuvalu, Sir Iakoba Italeli, have emerged as the latest contenders for the position of Commonwealth Secretary-General to challenge the present incumbent, Baroness Patricia Scotland, following the sudden withdrawal by Kenya's Dr Monica Juma in February.

Senator Johnson Smith's candidacy was announced in London on 21 April, prompting a response from Baroness Scotland on Antigua and Barbuda's national TV and radio station restating her position as 'very determined to continue to serve our Commonwealth'.

She added that she would be 'incredibly pleased if Senator Johnson Smith thought again', adding that she felt that 'this was not the appropriate time to challenge a fellow Commonwealth-Caribbean for this post ...'

Split

The move by Senator Johnson Smith to stand against Dominican-born Baroness Scotland as Commonwealth Secretary-General is reported to have split the Caribbean nations, which, until now, were united in their support for the latter's wish to serve a second four-year term.

Sir Iakoba announced his challenge on 27 April, expressing the hope that the region will get behind his bid to become Commonwealth Secretary-General because 'it's time for a Pacific Islander to guide the organisation'. A long-serving government official, he was Tuvalu's Attorney-General from 2002 to 2006 before his appointment as Governor-General in 2010, serving until 2019.

The choice of a new Commonwealth Secretary-General for a four-year term is made by Heads of Commonwealth Governments at a regular meeting. Baroness Scotland was appointed to succeed Kamallesh Sharma at the Malta CHOGM in 2017. Despite two postponements of CHOGM because of COVID-19, Scotland could still have been appointed for another four years like her predecessors. She failed in her bid, however, and was instead extended twice, for one year. When Heads meet in Kigali, Rwanda, in the week beginning 20 June, they will have to decide whether to extend her appointment for another two years thus making a second four-year term 'official' or choose a new Secretary-General from other candidates.

Although born in Dominica, Baroness Scotland was educated in Britain and had a career at the Bar, becoming a QC before serving as Attorney-General in the Labour Government of Gordon Brown in 2007. Her tenure as Secretary-General has been marked by criticism and controversy, not least by Britain, Australia and New Zealand who suspended their financial support as a result of a dispute with the Secretariat. This was later restored pending the Rwandan meeting.

Among charges against her—which she has defended—are allegations of impropriety in the awarding of a contract to a company owned by a personal friend.



Senator Karmina Johnson Smith

TALK ON WRITER PATRICK WHITE

Members and Friends of the RCS in Canberra gathered in April at the Kingston home of Dr John Sutton and RCS Councilor, Mrs Ann Sutton, for morning tea and to hear a talk on Australian writer Patrick White. The speaker, Emeritus Professor Satendra Nandan, an authority on Patrick White, chose for the theme for his talk *A Personal Journey into Patrick White's Country of the Soul*. Patrick White was the author of 12 novels, 5 short story collections and 8 plays. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1973.



Dr John Sutton (left) and Mrs Ann Sutton (right) with Professor Nandan and Mrs Sue Gage.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Queen's Birthday Dinner in celebration of Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee

Thursday 16 June

7 for 7.30

The Commonwealth Club

Guest Speaker: The British High Commissioner H.E Vicki Treadell

Please see separate file attached to this email for details and acceptance form.

NEW RCS ACT BRANCH MEMBERS

The Branch extends a warm welcome to new members Dr Malcolm Beazley, Mr Dean Gough, Mr Robert James, Professor David Plummer, Mr William and Mrs Kathleen Reid, Mr Ethan Rozanic, and Dr Susan Sutherland.

VALE GWYNETH GEORGE

The RCS ACT Branch is saddened by the death of long-term member, Gwyneth George, who died in Tasmania in December 2021. She was 96. Gwyneth and her husband, Tony George, a long-standing member of Council who made a big contribution to the Branch, especially in reviving the annual Commonwealth Cricket Match. After Tony's death, Gwyneth was a member of RCS Council as well as continuing her work with Spiral, which she founded in the 1970s, a community-based club where older Canberrans could meet for fellowship, interesting talks and afternoon tea. Gwyneth moved to Tasmania four years ago to be near her son, Peter, and his family, to whom we extend our sincere condolences.

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Membership inquiries are welcome.