



## E-NEWS FROM THE COMMONWEALTH

E-Newsletter No.2 June 2021

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



*Ms Julie Bishop*

### **ANU CHANCELLOR SAYS INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS CAN HELP SOLVE SOME PROBLEMS OF MODERN SLAVERY**

ANU Chancellor and former Australian Foreign Minister, the Hon. Julie Bishop, has called on individuals to help solve some of the problems of modern slavery by boycotting cheap goods from sweat-shop factories in developing countries.

Ms Bishop was delivering the annual Commonwealth Lecture on 27 May, named for the distinguished Commonwealth Historian, the late Professor Anthony Low, Vice-Chancellor of the ANU 1975-1982, in the auditorium of the Australian Centre on China and the World at ANU.

Some examples of 'modern' slavery given by Ms Bishop were forced labour, forced marriage, organ trading, debt bondage, people trafficking, sex slaves, child beggars, 'sham' orphanages and garment industry workers. Noting that human trafficking is still not an offence in some regions, she said that one in four trafficked people are children, sent to middle and higher income countries for sexual exploitation, adding :

'The clandestine nature of modern slavery means that there is little reliable data. Globally, the situation remains dire.'

There is a process of dehumanisation, she said, especially regarding those who are illiterate or outside a person's culture.

She saw an opportunity for consumers in developing countries where there is wealth disparity to 'demand higher standards to see a real change, flowing down to the people affected, so that they live without coercive power over them'.

Ms Bishop suggested that people in developed countries could use market-based mechanisms to help undermine practices that exploit the poor and vulnerable.



*RCS ACT Branch Treasurer, Sunita Dhindsa (centre) with Youth Coordinator Bradley Innes (left) and Holly Halford-Smith, at the Commonwealth Lecture in May.*

She expressed pride in having seen the passage of the *Modern Slavery Act 2018\** passed by the Australian Parliament during her term as Australia's Foreign Minister. The purpose of the Act was to achieve successful prosecutions in legal systems around the world. Britain is the only other country to have enacted similar legislation.

In summing up, Ms Bishop suggested—as individual consumers—we could all make a difference to effect change by taking care in what we buy.

'The only way is to reduce the value of the products in the market place,' she said. 'Our choice will then have greater impact than any government legislation.'

'We have choices every day on what we buy. Individual actions lead to a collective outcome.'

The Commonwealth Lecture is organised each year by the Commonwealth Round Table in Australia, founded by Professor Low, and sponsored by the ANU College of Asia and the Pacific. The current Round Table convenor is Dr Hugh Craft, a former Australian diplomat and Vice-President of the Royal Commonwealth Society ACT Branch.

Members of Professor Low's family who attended were his daughter Penny Low and her son Anthony, and Ms Georgina Neuhaus, his grand-daughter, who gave the vote of thanks. Professor Low's daughter, Angela, is currently on a posting to the Netherlands with her husband, Matthew Neuhaus, who is Australia's ambassador at The Hague. Professor Low's wife, Belle, to whom warm tributes were paid, died in November 2020.

*\*The Modern Slavery Act 2021, which became operative on 1 January 2019, can require businesses—either based or operating in Australia—with a revenue of over \$100 million, to report annually on the risks of modern slavery in their operations and supply chains and what they are doing to address those risks.*

## **ANU WORKSHOP ON MODERN SLAVERY**

The subject of modern slavery and possible solutions was addressed again the following day when the ANU College of Law, in partnership with the Walk Free Foundation and the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, held a Workshop, moderated by Professor Jo



Ford, on the role of multilateralism and global institutions .

Speakers at the Workshop included former Senator Lisa Singh from the Walk Free Foundation (*left*), the Chief Executive of the Australian Human Rights Commission, Padma Raman, the Director of the Human Rights Initiative, Professor Justine Nolan of UNSW, Ms Sally Irwin from the Freedom Hub, and HE the Hon. Vicki Treadell, British High Commissioner to Australia.

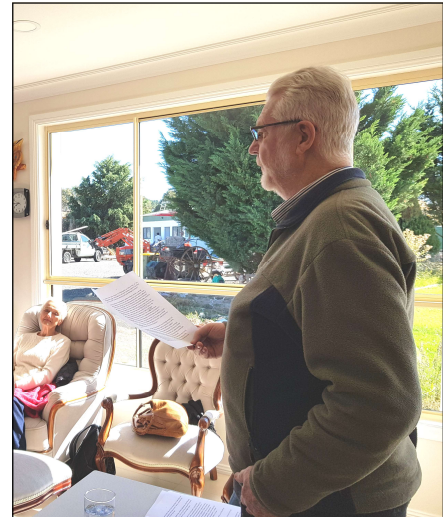
The United Nations and the Walk Free Foundation estimate that there are more than 40.3 million victims of modern slavery in the world, 40 per cent of whom are in Commonwealth countries, and many of them female, including victims of forced marriage. By 2050, half of the world's child brides will be found in Africa if nothing is done to slow the rate of child marriage, according to the Walk Free Foundation. Only South Africa, Ghana and Rwanda have fully criminalised the practice, while Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria and Rwanda have raised the legal age of marriage to 18.

The Australian Government estimates that there were 1567 known modern slavery victims in Australia between 2015 and 2017.

## **RCS ACT CELEBRATES SHAKESPEARE'S BIRTHDAY**

Members and friends of the RCS ACT Branch celebrated Shakespeare's 405th birthday on Friday 23 April—also the anniversary of his death 53 years later—with a talk by Canberra poet and Shakespeare scholar, Mark O'Connor.

The event was hosted by the RCS Hon. Treasurer, Sunijta Dhindsa and her husband, Harjinder, at their farm in Sutton.



*Dr Mark O'Connor (above) and some of the members and friends (left) of the RCS ACT Branch who attended the celebration of Shakespeare's birthday on 23 April.*

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## **RWANDA CHOGM DEFERRED AGAIN**

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) due to take place in Kigali, Rwanda, this month—June 2021—has been deferred again due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic.

The postponement was announced jointly by the Rwandan President, Paul Kagame, and the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Patricia Scotland, on 7 May. President Kagame said that the decision to postpone CHOGM for a second time had not been taken lightly. 'The health and welfare of all Commonwealth citizens at this critical time must take precedence,' he said. 'We look forward to welcoming the Commonwealth family to Kigali for CHOGM at the appropriate time.'

No new date has been proposed.

The Commonwealth Leaders' summit normally takes place every two years. The last CHOGM was held in London in 2018. Britain remains chair-in-office until the next meeting.



## PRESENTATION OF CRICKET TROPHY TO COMMONWEALTH TEAM



The formal presentation of the trophy to the Commonwealth cricket team for its victory over the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Commonwealth Week was made by Department Secretary, Frances Adamson, (*left*) seen holding the trophy with Mr Tony Muttukumar, whose father, Major-General Anton Muttukumar, donated the trophy for the annual match while serving as the High Commissioner for Ceylon in the 1960s. To the right of Ms Adamson is RCS ACT Branch President, Kanti Jinna.

## NOTICE OF FUTURE EVENTS

### THE QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY DINNER Thursday 17 June 2021

**The Commonwealth Club  
Forster Crescent, Yarralumla**

**Guest Speaker: Mr Nick Crouch, British Deputy High Commissioner**

Notice of this event was emailed to RCS Members in May. **RSVP is Friday 11 June.** If you did not receive a notice and would like to attend, please contact the organiser, Mrs Ann Sutton at [a.jsutton@netspeed.com.au](mailto:a.jsutton@netspeed.com.au)

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### RCS WINTER LUNCH

**Sunday 8 August 2023**

The RCS Branch will hold a Winter Lunch for Members and Friends at **Rama's Fiji-Indian Restaurant** in Pearce on **Sunday 8 August**. This is always a popular event and a wonderful opportunity for families and friends to share delicious food and enjoy good company, so keep the date free.

*Further details will be available closer to the event.*

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Contact: Maureen Hickman, Editor, at [rcsact@bigpond.com](mailto:rcsact@bigpond.com)

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