



Photos of Commonwealth Country Flags in Samoa, delegates at the People's Forum and networking reception, and RCS members at the Marine Discovery Centre



**THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY**  
South Australia Branch

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# November 2024 – January 2025 Newsletter



RCS members and friends touring SAHMRI

**PATRON**

**World wide Patron**            **His Majesty King Charles III**  
**World wide Vice Patron**    **Her Majesty The Queen**  
**South Australian Patron: the Governor of South Australia**  
**Her Excellency, the Honourable Frances Adamson AC**

**DIARY DATES**

**Annual Christmas Party:**            **Thursday December 5th, 6.00pm –8.00pm**  
**Public Schools’ Club, East Terrace ,**  
**Adelaide**  
**Rediscovering Adelaide**            **Tuesday 26 November 11.00am**  
**Botanic Gardens to view Chihuly Glass**  
**Sculptures.**

For further details regarding the above functions please contact  
 Libby 0412 820 121 or Julie 0407203035

**2025 SUBSCRIPTIONS due on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025**

**Couple**                    **\$75**  
**Single**                    **\$50**

**Please pay the Treasurer as soon as possible**

**Subscription form with bank details is inserted in this newsletter**

**BSB**                    **105-148**  
**account**              **554020140**

**Your annual subscription entitles you to**

- **the quarterly newsletter**
- **the opportunity to vote at the AGM**
- **the opportunity to be a Council member and make a difference to the Society**
- **attend special events which have limited numbers**
- **attend special functions at a reduced rate**
- **Receive a name badge**

**MEMBERS OF THE COMMONWEALTH**

**The following Countries are members of the Commonwealth in order of seniority of membership**

United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Ghana, Malaysia, Nigeria, Cyprus, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago, Uganda, Kenya, Malawi, Malta, Zambia, Singapore, Guyana, Botswana, Lesotho, Barbados, Nauru, Mauritius, Swaziland, Tonga, Samoa, Fiji Islands, Bangladesh, The Bahamas, Grenada, Papua New Guinea, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Dominica, St Lucia, Kiribati, St Vincent & The Grenadines, Vanuatu, Belize, Antigua & Barbuda, St Christopher & Nevis, Brunei Darussalam, Namibia, Cameroon, Mozambique, Rwanda, Maldives, The Gambia, Toga and Gabon

These diverse nations representing one quarter of the world’s population over every continent, include Republics, National Monarchies and a number of Nations that recognise King Charles III as their own Head of State

**Objects of the Royal Commonwealth Society**

The objects of the society are to promote the increase and diffusion of knowledge respecting the people and Countries of the Commonwealth, to maintain the best traditions of the Commonwealth and to foster unity of thought and action to matters of common interest

**Branch Council Members 2024**

President:	Libby Ellis OAM	0412 820 121
Vice President	Judy Clarke	0419 500 218
Treasurer:	Julie Gameau OAM	0407 203 035
Secretary:	Julie Gameau	0407 203 035
Councillors:	Chris Ashton	0419 804 725
	Patsy Beckett	0407 249 850
	William Comley	0478 287 287
	Christine Cundell	0403 796 087
	John Shepherd AM	0467 621 030
	Brenda Wallis	0481 481 116

Please contact the above members for any information regarding the activities and news of the Royal Commonwealth Society (South Australian Branch)

## THE COMMONWEALTH

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 56 independent and equal sovereign states encompassing many ethnicities and faiths. Each is committed to upholding shared values and principles to promote and protect Democracy, Human Rights, the Rule of Law and Equality for all citizens in accordance with the Commonwealth Charter.

The modern Commonwealth spans the six regions of Africa, the Americas, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe and the Pacific. Thirty-one members are small states, many of which are island nations. The total population is assessed at 2.5 billion people, approximately one third of the world, of which 1.5 billion are under 30 years of age.

The relevance and strength of the modern Commonwealth lies in its network of diaspora, cultural and sporting links, the widespread use of a common language and a strong shared legal heritage. These values, characteristics, and interests have engendered a common interest and trust between the peoples and communities of this unique and widely diverse association of independent countries.

Outside of the core of inter-governmental agencies, the Commonwealth benefits from a number of civil society and professional bodies that represent the evolution of the modern Commonwealth and the many links between peoples, communities and interests upon which it is built. The Royal Commonwealth Society is a leading body within this group of independent organisations.

**The website for the Royal Commonwealth Society in London has changed. [www.royalcwsociety.org](http://www.royalcwsociety.org)**

**Find more information about The Royal Commonwealth Society and the Commonwealth.**

[www.royalcwsociety.org](http://www.royalcwsociety.org)  
[www.thecommonwealth.org](http://www.thecommonwealth.org)

Check out the South Australian website  
[www.thercssa.com.au](http://www.thercssa.com.au)



**Libby Ellis, President of the  
Royal Commonwealth Society  
South Australia**

**invites members of the RCS and friends  
to the**

**ANNUAL CHRISTMAS RECEPTION**

**THURSDAY 5<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2024**

**6.00pm-8.00pm**

**Finger food catered**

**Refreshments available at the bar at your own cost.**

**RCS Financial Members  
guests**

**no cost  
\$10**

**Please bring a parcel of non-perishable foods or Christmas gifts for  
the charity basket**

**RSVP by November 29<sup>th</sup> for catering purposes**

**[juliegameau@gmail.com](mailto:juliegameau@gmail.com)**

**BSB 105-148  
account 554020140**

**Further inquiries please phone the President, Libby Ellis  
0412 820 121 or Julie Gameau 0407 203 035**

President's report

**CHOGM, SAMOA, OCTOBER 2024**

After years of planning and delays, finally the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) has been and gone. Our Executive attended the People's Forum, (at our own cost), and a fabulous experience it was. But our inexperience meant we made a couple of rookie mistakes. The most obvious was that, by being accredited to the People's Forum meant we could have attended other events, but we had arranged to leave straight after our meeting. Won't do that again! One mistake we did not make, was to host a networking event in a local restaurant. Twenty-five people from across the Commonwealth attended, many of whom we knew from previous meetings, but some new contacts with whom we are hoping to collaborate in the future. Included amongst this was Justin Koonin (Adjunct Associate Professor at the Kirby Institute, University of New South Wales), and Stephanie Harvey (CEO, Community First Development & Board member, Australian Regional and Remote Community Services (ARRCS)). The next CHOGM is scheduled for Antigua/Barbuda in 2026, and I hope more people will be able to join us. Stay tuned for more feedback from our visit to Samoa and possibilities for future events.

**RCS LONDON**

Among our guests at this networking event were Elizabeth 'Libby' Van Der Valk and William 'Billy' Bolton, COO and Public Affairs and Programme Officer, RCS London respectively. Libby reiterated that although she had announced that London was hosting an International Meeting in 2025, on her return from Singapore her Board had cancelled the event.

After the Adelaide group had left Samoa, we received an invitation to attend the launch of the new RCS environment initiative. The Commonwealth Clean Oceans Plastics Campaign, was launched in Samoa, by Dr Linda Yueh CBE, Executive Chair of the Royal Commonwealth Society.

**COMMONWEALTH QUARTER, WOOLWICH**

Another group at our networking event was a film crew from Woolwich headed up by Peter Mann. It was wonderful to catch up with Peter and several others from RCS Hong Kong. The Commonwealth Quarter, which David and I visited earlier this year has now been officially opened by HM King Charles III and the then Secretary General Patricia Scotland, Baroness Scotland. I was interviewed by the film crew and they are planning for the documentary about the Commonwealth to be shown on the BBC at some time in the future. Again, we are planning some collaborative events.

**The Council of the  
Royal Commonwealth Society  
South Australia  
wishes  
all members and friends  
a Merry Christmas  
and a safe and happy New Year.  
Council members look forward in  
seeing you at the Christmas Party on  
Thursday 5th December 2024**

**The Ode**

We of the Royal Commonwealth Society shall continue to foster goodwill and affection between peoples of the Commonwealth, so that all may live together in peace, sympathy and understanding

**Remember come to the Christmas Party on  
Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2024 at Public Schools  
Club, East Terrace, Adelaide 6.00pm to 8.00pm  
RSVP by 29<sup>th</sup> November**



Photos in this newsletter taken by Julie Gameau, David Ellis Libby Ellis Julia Archer

**REDISCOVERING ADELAIDE**

**MARINE DISCOVERY CENTRE HENLEY BEACH**

**South Australia's iconic coastal and marine environments.**

The Marine Discovery Centre aims to provide inspirational discovery learning experiences whilst empowering students to actively protect South Australia's coastal and marine environments.

The centre is the only coastal and marine educational facility for school students and the broader community in South Australia.

The Marine Discovery Centre features interactive learning stations covering topics such as sustainable fishing, applying sustainable practices at home, Aboriginal culture and the importance of preserving our unique marine environments.

The aquariums feature local marine wildlife species and provide engaging beach-side marine trails to complement the Centre's indoor educational facilities

For further information check out the website  
[www.marinediscoverycentre.com.au](http://www.marinediscoverycentre.com.au)

**REDISCOVERING ADELAIDE**

**VISIT TO THE MARINE DISCOVERY CENTRE AT HENLEY BEACH**

On Monday 16 September Carmen Bishop, the Director of the Marine Discovery Centre welcomed us all.

The museum provides inspirational learning and experiences for students of all ages and their accompanying adults.

How to play a didgeridoo, finding shell and starfish in a sandpit and then looking them up on a fact sheet and indigenous artifacts from South Australia were some of the activities.

The museum is very small and crowded and needs to transfer to larger premises which will benefit both staff and visitors, the artifacts and the activities provided by the museum and staff.

A late lunch followed at Stella's

A very good day

Harry Clarke

**President's report continued**

**MEETING WITH OUR PATRON**

Given our change of name and the implied change of our relationship with RCS London, I requested a meeting with HE the Governor. We were joined by her Chief of Staff, Hugh Borrowman and discussed which projects could involve the broader Commonwealth and which we should just continue as purely South Australian. We are privileged to have a Patron who is so experienced and interested in Commonwealth affairs.

**REDISCOVERING ADELAIDE**

Our visits to Adelaide icons continue to be an excellent way of our members getting together to celebrate Adelaide's wonderfully diverse history. In October we visited the South Australian Medical Research Institute (SAMRI) a mind-blowing organisation doing world beating research. In September we visited the Marine Discovery Centre, and everyone was so impressed, we have decided to support this wonderful initiative to assist them work towards a purpose-built facility rather than the wonderful but cramped quarters that currently house them. Stay tuned.

**RCS VICTORIA**

We have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with our sister association in Melbourne. We are planning to work together to strengthen the Royal Commonwealth Society in Australia with joint events and projects. The first of these events is them hosting a performance of Co-Opera's "Tosca" on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> November. This production is part of our ongoing sponsorship of the Adelaide Hills Chamber Players/Co-Opera, and several of us from Adelaide will be in Melbourne travelling with the company. We are planning several more collaborations with Melbourne.

**EISTEDDFOD NAMING HONOURS**

Because of our commitment to sponsor the Young Opera Singers, this category will be now called the RCS SA Youth Opera Prize.



Libby Ellis OAM,  
President

## REDISCOVERING ADELAIDE



On Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> October RCS members and friends took a very informative guided tour of the *South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute* on North Terrace. The Institute, next to the Royal Adelaide Hospital and affectionately known as the Cheesegrater because of its building's appearance, is a renowned centre of

medical research. Its main areas of research are:

**Precision Cancer Medicine.** The aim is to deliver more effective treatments for blood cancers such as leukaemia and myeloma, and solid cancers like gastrointestinal and prostate cancers.

**Lifelong Health.** To reduce the toll of illnesses like heart disease, diabetes, gut-related disease, mental conditions, stroke and dementia.

**Women and Children.** To improve the health and wellbeing of women and families. The research focuses on preventing premature births, boosting health care for premature babies, analysing allergies, treatments for childhood disability and boosting quality of life for families at risk of poor health.

**Aboriginal Health Equity.** Understanding, monitoring and reducing health inequality among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

SAHMRI is South Australia's flagship not-for-profit health and medical research institute. They host over 700 researchers and their outstanding work is dependent on external funding. Their website [sahmri.org.au](http://sahmri.org.au) gives details on how we can contribute to their continuing success.

Gary Archer



## Commonwealth Clean Oceans Plastics Campaign continued

Officially launching the RCS Commonwealth Clean Oceans Plastics Campaign, Dr Linda Yueh CBE, Executive Chair of the Royal Commonwealth Society, said:

“According to the United Nations (UN), ‘plastic is the most harmful type of ocean pollution,’ and the Commonwealth is disproportionately affected because nearly half of its members are Small Island Developing States (25 out of 56 countries). That is why this RCS Commonwealth Clean Oceans Plastics Campaign is so important and why, together, we take action to prevent plastic waste from entering our waterways and help achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14, ‘Life below Water. We are delighted to be working with local partners across the Commonwealth, notably including the Commonwealth Games Federation, to achieve this ambitious aim together.”

In partnership with the Commonwealth Games Federation, the campaign will also feature a sustainability relay, uniting athletes, youth, conservation groups, and local communities for country-specific weeks of action.

Dr Chris Jenkins, President of the Commonwealth Games Federation, said:

“A love of sport is just one thing we all share; the planet is another. We are thrilled to be partnering with the Royal Commonwealth Society and look forward to working closely with our Commonwealth Athletes and Games Associations on an innovative new relay to champion sustainability and climate action through sport as part of the countdown to the 2026 Commonwealth Games.”

### Rediscovering Adelaide Tuesday 26th November

Meander under the majestic trees and through the lush landscapes of the Adelaide Botanic Gardens and view the wonderful colourful sculptures of American glass artist Dale Chihuly.

As the light changes throughout the day and seasons, experience these vibrant, large-scale sculptures in the beautiful botanical destination.

Meet at the back gate at 11.00am

The tour can be followed with a light lunch in the Botanic Gardens

RSVP to the [juliegameau@gmail.com](mailto:juliegameau@gmail.com)

## The Royal Commonwealth Society launches the Commonwealth Clean Oceans Plastics Campaign in Samoa during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting

On Saturday 26 October, the Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS), in partnership with the Commonwealth Games Federation, launched the RCS Commonwealth Clean Oceans Plastics Campaign in Samoa during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM).

This campaign is a new pan-Commonwealth environmental initiative by the Royal Commonwealth Society. The aim is to prevent one million pieces of plastic from entering Commonwealth waterways. Through local action and education, this youth-led campaign will encourage everyone to reduce their plastic waste, highlight alternatives, and seek to permanently change the way we utilise our collective waterways across the Commonwealth.

The RCS is honoured that the Patron, His Majesty The King, highlighted this ambitious pan-Commonwealth campaign at CHOGM, highlighting his long-standing commitment to the environment.

The launch of the campaign took place at the Ulalei Vaiala, Taula Stadium in Apia, and, was attended by the Commonwealth political and diplomatic community, including UK Foreign Secretary The Rt Hon David Lammy MP, the Executive Chair of the Royal Commonwealth Society Dr Linda Yueh CBE, the President of the Commonwealth Games Federation Dr Chris Jenkins OBE, Commonwealth athletes from Samoa, local volunteers from the Samoa Recycling and Waste Management Association, and Commonwealth young leaders (including members of the Commonwealth Youth Taskforce, the newly elected Commonwealth Youth Council, the RCS's Associate Fellow Network and the RCS Commonwealth Youth Gender and Equality Network (CYGEN)).

Speakers included The Rt Hon David Lammy MP, UK Foreign Secretary; Dr Linda Yueh CBE, Executive Chair of the Royal Commonwealth Society; Dr Chris Jenkins OBE, President of the Commonwealth Games Federation; and Marina Keil, President of the Samoa Recycling and Waste Management Association.

## SAHMRI

Royal Commonwealth Society members were treated to a tour of the amazing SAHMRI building. So imposing on the outside and equally so in the interior. The foyer was inviting with the café and interesting large bank of lifts.

We were taken into the Auditorium to begin the tour and saw the clear views through the windows and the engineering magic of “flower” columns. Six of these instead of 36 pedestal columns to hold the weight of the building. Great in concept and view.

We learned of the types of research that SAHMRI does and its position as a centre of excellence. The effectiveness of the design of the building in controlling the temperatures and effects on the atmosphere was given. Our guides then took us to the lifts up to the heights and the commanding views. Coming down the circular staircase was another splendid option.

All the floors have designed colour for easy identification and we then visited the teal floor. Here we walked through the work areas and around a glass panelled research lab. Reading the labels showed areas devoted to Leukaemia and other cancers and many more. The fact that glass window panes shift easily to convert space into more research hubs as needed showed how effective is the design. The quietness of the area was amazing. In fact the building houses over 700 research scientists and 150 support staff.

Our two guides, Rebecca and Alexis then took us to some comfy seats and told us more about the wide area of research covered and some of its recent major successes. Their enthusiasm and commitment was obvious and much appreciated. It was super to find that the guide and one of our Council members had both taken part in the volunteer clinical trials run by AHMRI.

This was a most enjoyable tour of a major SA icon which as a bonus, is set in a precinct that shows landscaping at its best.

Babara Mayfield

## STOP PRESS

**At the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Apia, Samoa, leaders announced the selection of the Honourable Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, currently Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, Ghana, as the incoming Secretary-General of the Commonwealth.**



## THE PEOPLE'S FORUM

The People's Forum, a central part of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) for decades, provides a unique opportunity for Commonwealth citizens to engage directly with each other; to celebrate shared values and diverse cultures; to interact with leaders, and to participate in shaping both policy and practice.

The People's Forum 2024 opened with a ceremony themed around the concept of Fa'asamoa (the 'Samoan Way'). Her Excellency Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa, Prime Minister of Samoa welcome the delegates.

In the first session titled *The Challenges ahead: Climate Justice, Health Justice, and Freedom of Expression* delegates were challenged to think critically about how change happens, and how obstructions can be overcome. This participatory discussion set the scene for a deeper exploration of climate justice, health justice and freedom of expression taking place throughout the People's Forum.

The next session focussed on trailblazing grassroots initiatives that are leading the way to greater climate and health justice. At this session Queenslander Stephanie Harvey spoke the health of our country was intertwined with our mental and physical health. There is a loss of culture in the Sea Country and the Land Country but we are Guardians of Humanity.

Stephanie, a Bidjara woman is one of Australia's leading third-sector executives with a career that spans government, community and the not-for-profit sectors across priority areas in Australia and internationally including gender equity and women's safety, people trafficking and other transnational crimes and the right to self-determination for First Peoples. Stephanie is the CEO of Community First Development, a First Nations' led development and research organisation that is committed to the 'by community, for community' approach.



In the session *No time to Waste: Financing for Climate Change Justice and Resilience* delegates were told that financing climate change was a necessity.

Dr Christopher Bartlett, a graduate of James Cook University, has been a senior adviser on climate issues in Vanuatu and the Pacific for more than 20 years. Dr Bartlett said we are wasting time. We need to put climate together with everything: Climate and Health, Climate and Economy and Climate and Agriculture, Time is wasting.



## People's Forum Continued

The session *Putting People First: Health Justice for those Most in Need*, speakers informed the delegates that achieving health justice for the most vulnerable is a moral imperative and a truly global challenge. Justine Koonin, the moderator, for the session said that 60% of people in the Commonwealth do not have appropriate health care, mostly in the rural areas. The aim should be that everyone should have equitable access and opportunity to achieve good health.



*The People Speak: Freedom on Expression in our Commonwealth* was a dynamic session with journalists from around the world on the panel

It was stated that over a third of Commonwealth nations experienced sharp declines in media freedom in the last 12 years. There has been a rise in censorship and legal attacks on free expression and this has threatened transparency, accountability and the ability of Commonwealth citizens to participate in their governance.

The Hon Michael Kirby AC CMG participated in the session titled *Our Commonwealth, Our future*.

The panellists explored how the Commonwealth could strengthen democracy, foster economic development and advocate for its most vulnerable states. Michael Kirby said that the Commonwealth must be a valued based organisation or it is nothing. He said that it is important to read and understand the Commonwealth Charter.



Other sessions included *Disabled people in the Commonwealth*, equitable access to affordable medicines of assured quality, indigenous social work responses to health and equity in the Pacific Region, Dementia in the Commonwealth, *Trade Unions and a Resilient, Rights and Justice based Commonwealth*, *Civil Society and the Intergovernmental Commonwealth*

Delegates from around the Commonwealth also attended the Youth Forum, The Women's Forum and the Business Forum prior to the commencement of CHOGM.

Matthew Neuhaus said.

Overall though it is increasingly clear that the future of the Commonwealth will be what we see happening in Samoa – an organisation where the smaller countries will provide the leadership and civil society voices have space to be heard. And don't think they are not being listened to – the Australian and NZ Governments had silent participants in all three forums. The new UK Minister for Africa and the Commonwealth, Wayne Collins, quietly attended the final session of the Peoples Forum and stressed that civil society was the key ingredient for the future.

Matthew Neuhaus is the Hon Professor, ANU College of Law, President of the Australian Royal Commonwealth Society and a member of the Round Table's international advisory board.