



Western Australian Branch



Report of Conference Proceedings

PARLIAMENTS, PEOPLE AND PANDEMICS

The Parliament of Western Australia is honoured to host the 39th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Australia and Pacific Regional Conference.

The hybrid conference was attended in person by 14 delegates and 5 observers while 27 delegates attended virtually, along with 5 observers.

The theme Parliaments, people and pandemics was topical and broad and allowed participants an opportunity to explore and reflect on various subthemes.

This Report of Conference Proceedings provides a summary of the key themes of each of the sessions of the Conference.

Conference papers and presentation slides are available at:

<https://cpaaus.org/>

Documents are not loaded yet but will be loaded week beginning 8 November 2021.

Thank you for your attendance and we hope that you enjoyed your time with us.

Hon Alanna Clohesy, MLC
President

Hon Michelle Roberts, MLA
Speaker

Tuesday, 2 November 2021	
9.00am	<p>Welcome to Country Ceremony Conducted by Dr Richard Walley.</p>
9.15am	<p>Official Opening Professor Colleen Hayward provided an opening address.</p>
10.15am	<p>Election of Chair and Deputy Chair for Conference</p> <p>Hon Ngaree Ah Kit, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Northern Territory, nominated Hon Alanna Clohesy, President of the Legislative Council of Western Australia, as Chair of the Conference. Hon Jackie Jarvis, Member of the Legislative Council of Western Australia, seconded the nomination. There being no further nominations Hon Alanna Clohesy appointed as Chair of the Conference.</p> <p>Hon Jackie Jarvis nominated Hon Ngaree Ah Kit as Deputy Chair of the Conference. Hon Rosemary Armitage, Member of the House of Assembly of Tasmania, seconded the nomination. There being no further nominations Hon Ngaree Ah Kit appointed as Deputy Chair of the Conference.</p> <p>The Conference Chair welcomed all attendees, in person and online, and acknowledged the Deputy Chair.</p> <p>The Deputy Chair accepted and welcomed all attendees.</p>
11.00am	<p>Session One: Performance of Parliaments Chaired by President Clohesy</p> <p>Hon Joy Burch, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, ACT Law in the time of Corona: Optimising parliamentary functions during long-term crises</p> <p>This presentation explored methods for optimising the parliamentary functions without jeopardising the executive’s capacity to respond effectively during long term crises. This was illustrated through the experiences of the ACT Legislative Assembly in managing the imbalance of power during the ongoing novel coronavirus pandemic.</p> <p>Hon Adam Searle, Member of the Legislative Council, NSW The accountability of government during the COVID-19 pandemic</p> <p>This presentation discussed how the NSW Parliament dealt with the challenges of ensuring the effectiveness of Parliamentary scrutiny of government activities during the COVID crises. It also looked at the experience in other jurisdictions, both inside and outside Australia, to see what further opportunities exist for more successful innovations to enable better accountability outcomes during a period of crisis and whether any of the measures used should be retained post-pandemic.</p> <p>Questions were asked and answered after both sessions from live and virtual attendees.</p>
1.30pm	<p>Session Two A: CPA HQ Operations Chaired by Speaker Ah Kit</p> <p>Mr Stephen Twigg, Secretary General, CPA HQ Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger, A/Chairperson, CPA HQ Mr Jeffrey Hyland, Communications Manager, CPA HQ Ms Lydia Buchanan, Deputy Head of Programmes – Bilateral Engagement, CPA HQ</p>

A summary of CPA operations during COVID-19
New CPA website and Parliamentary Academy

Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger gave a recorded presentation thanking everyone for attending, and noting that next year will be the first in-person CPA conference for three years, to be held in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

Mr Ian Twigg gave a summary of CPA operations during Covid-19, including the CPA's provision of practicable support for members and parliamentarians and staff; championing the independence of parliaments and the role they play in public life; learnings of the past 18 months; how to use technology and innovation to maintain and strengthen the relevancy of parliaments – and reflect the communities. Climate change and sustainability are expected to be important areas for CPA work over the next four years.

Mr Jeffrey Hyland spoke about CPA communications work and how CPA members can connect. The CPA has launched a new website containing accessible features with information about all branches, forthcoming events and extensive CPA information. Mr Hyland also spoke about *The Parliamentarian*, the CPA's flagship journal, published both in hard copy and digitally, and a number of new innovations, the CPA Podcast and CPA blog. The CPA also engages in a range of social media. Members were encouraged to contribute to and use all of the resources provided.

Ms Lydia Buchanan spoke about the CPA Parliamentary Academy which was launched in May 2021 providing various types of online learning and nine online courses so far. Over 50 experts provide learning for parliamentarians, Clerks, Committee Chairs, Public Accounts Committees and others. The courses should be accredited toward the end of this year and allow users to learn in their own time and at their own speed. A number of residency courses will be offered as an extension of the online courses. A video demonstrating how to use the Academy portal was shown.

Questions were taken from the floor and virtually, and answered by the panel.

2.45pm

**Session Two B: Government responses to the Pandemic
Chaired by President Clohesy**

Hon Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, Speaker, Fiji

How the Fijian Parliament has responded to the pandemic

Mr Nailatikau shared the Fijian Parliament's experience and response to the effects of the pandemic, in particular efforts to ensure that parliamentary business and Parliament's core constitutional functions were not hindered by the multiple fallouts from this global public health crisis. The border closures, lockdowns, inter-island travel ban, curfews, social distancing, and other restrictive public health measures brought about by the pandemic doubled the burden on many parliaments. Parliament had to comply with the COVID-19 protocols and emergency public health regulations. It also had to take legislative action and facilitate the response to the pandemic. Parliament continued its business in plenary and committees by working virtually.

Questions were taken from the floor and answered by the Speaker.

Wednesday, 3 November 2021

**8.30am Session Three: People and Parliaments
 Chaired by President Clohesy**

Hon Sandra Carr, Member of the Legislative Council, WA

The empty fruit bowl: The external and internalised obstacles for women in politics

Ms Carr discusses the political landscape leading up to Julia Gillard becoming Australia's first female Prime Minister, her time as Prime Minister, and the shifting sands beneath the feet of women in politics since that time. In so doing Ms Carr identifies some of the more obvious external obstacles to women's success in the political arena, the obstacles that lurk more insidiously, and the mechanisms that work to reinforce them.

Hon Sue Lines, Deputy President of the Senate

The time is now: Making our Parliaments a safe workplace

Senator Lines discussed the public impacts on women when COVID-19 struck. Women were at the front line of fighting the virus in care work and hospitals and were also hit disproportionately by job loss. Women lack equal representation in Parliaments throughout the Commonwealth, and methods used by various Parliament to address this was discussed. Comparison of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the CPA's work to address gender inequality in Parliaments was made. Senator Lines explored how we now have that opportunity to change our parliament to make it a safe workplace and a place where women are respected but will we and are we bold enough?

Senator Lines made the following key statements:

- The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association will introduce and publish on their website a monthly ranking of women in national parliaments, using data published by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and work towards collecting and publishing data on women in Commonwealth sub-national parliaments.
- The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association will conduct and publish on their website a survey into sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians and staff in Commonwealth parliaments.

Questions were asked and answered after both sessions from live and virtual attendees.

**9.45am Session Four: People and Parliaments
 Chaired by Speaker Ah Kit**

Hon Ayor Makur Chuot, Member of the Legislative Council, WA

Pandemic responses and CALD peoples in WA

Ms Makur Chuot explored COVID-19 pandemic responses by the McGowan Government since June 2021 with emphasis on compliance with public control measures and public health messaging, and other factors affecting Western Australia's CALD community. In COVID-19 ravaged America and Britain, culturally and linguistically diverse peoples have been disproportionately impacted by the disease. Recent findings from the Delta outbreak in eastern Australia show similar outcomes. Of particular concern to Western Australia is the impact Delta may have upon its most vulnerable communities like the CALD population should the disease infiltrate its tight border.

Hon Jackie Jarvis, Member of the Legislative Council, WA

Education, Events and Engagement. How the Parliament of Western Australia connects to community

Ms Jarvis discussed the recent significant shift in the way Parliaments have sought to connect and engage with a broader audience than the traditional cornerstone of community engagement activities like school visits and access to education resources. The creation of different touch points to deliver

an expanded range of activities, both within and outside of Parliament House can build awareness of the role and function of the 3 levels of government that operate in Australia.

11.00am **Session Five: People and Parliaments**
Chaired by President Clohesy

Hon Colin de Grussa, Member of the Legislative Council, WA
COVID and the regions

Mr de Grussa summarised the impacts of COVID-19 in Western Australia, noting the success of the hard border closure in keeping relative freedoms for West Australians, whilst noting how difficult it has been for separated families. The success of the economy, driven by mining and agriculture unhindered by internal shutdowns was explored. When borders do open, the lack of ICU capacity in regions, the logistics of transporting patients to Perth for ICU treatment and the capacity of Perth hospitals all remain a concern, despite the government's work to increase health personnel. Mr de Grussa also discussed Western Australia's lower vaccination rates, possibly due to complacency and difficulty getting to regional areas. This has led to WA implementing the most significant mandatory vaccination program in Australia.

Hon Pierre Yang, Member of the Legislative Council, WA
Diversity in the Parliament in the last two decades

Mr Yang gave the conference a social and historical perspective of the diversity of Members in the Western Australian Parliament. He outlined a number of diversity firsts for Western Australia and the Commonwealth. It is more beneficial for the community when the Members reflect the diversity of the community and therefore can influence the decision making process. The Australian Labor Party has very successfully used quotas to increase gender equality. Mr Yang suggested parties work to increase the diversity of their candidates by reaching out to communities and encouraging participation.

Questions were asked and answered after both sessions from live and virtual attendees.

Thursday, 4 November 2021

**8.30am Session Six: People and Parliaments
Chaired by President Clohesy**

Hon Jonathan O’Dea, Speaker of the NSW Legislative Assembly

Mr Ralph Ashton, Founder Next 25

Ms Margaret Fitzherbert, CEO McKinnon Institute for Political Leadership

Addressing behaviour and culture – how has your parliament addressed standards of behaviour and/or culture?

Hon Jonathan O’Dea noted that the paths into politics are varied. There is no specific training required to become a parliamentarian. As Speaker, it was clear to me that if we were serious about rebuilding trust in the institution, we must first invest in the skills, wellbeing, development and performance of the very people at the centre of the institution – our members. As a result, in 2020 the NSW Parliament launched an Australian-first Professional Development Program for its members. The program included three key pillars and has resulted in many MPs engaging in the training provided.

Mr Ralph Ashton spoke about Next 25, a non-partisan institution, which supports parliamentarians to reconnect to their values, strengthen their capability to respond the challenges of the 21st century and increase public trust. The course is offered to MPs across Australia and can be participated over 2 days with follow-up workshops and ongoing coaching.

Ms Margaret Fitzherbert CEO of McKinnon Institute for Political Leadership spoke about the programs offered by the institute, the calibre of experts and the quality of the training.

Hon Jonathon O’Dea finished the session by summarising the successful participation results and providing a summary of the next steps envisaged for the program.

Questions were asked and answered after both sessions from live and virtual attendees.

**9.45am Session Seven: People and Parliaments, Government responses to the Pandemic
Chaired by President Clohesy**

Hon Lorna Harper, Member of the Legislative Council, WA

Gender and Representation of Women in WA Parliament

Ms Harper discussed how gender and representation has changed throughout Parliaments over the past 100 years, noting not enough change has occurred. Over the past 100 years in Western Australia, 114 women have been elected. In the first 50 years only 4 women were elected. In the first 70 years 23 women were elected. It took 80 years to have 50 women elected. Ms Harper summarised the work of a number of prominent women members who fought for woman’s rights for the community.

Representation of women in the WA parliament has only changed significantly in the last 20 years. Ms Harper explored how this has impacted on representation of ‘women’s rights/issues’ and what else Parliaments need to do to have true representation of women in all areas where decisions are made.

Mr Simon Millman, Member of the Legislative Assembly, WA

Government responses to the Pandemic

Mr Millman discussed the different approaches taken by Governments in tackling COVID-19. The response in Australia, particularly Western Australia has been unique. Several factors have contributed to the successes and failures in responding to the outbreak. These include:

- Western Australia being relatively isolated from the rest of the world
- Consistent health and scientific-led decision making
- Determined strategy to keep COVID-19 out of Western Australia, protecting the community and the economy as a result.

- Creating time for the vaccine to be developed and rolled out

Other issues covered included:

- Pandemic responses and First Nations Peoples
- Western Australia's response
- National Cabinet
- Public health messaging and vaccine hesitancy
- Approaches to returning Australians and resumption of international travel.

11.00am **Session Eight: Government responses to the Pandemic**
Chaired by Speaker Ah Kit

Hon Ngaree Ah Kit, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, NT
Ms Dvinia D'Anna, Member of the Legislative Assembly, WA
Hon Kyam Maher, Member of the Legislative Council, SA
Ms Sheena Watt, Member of the Legislative Council, VIC
Hon Rosetta (Rosie) Sahanna, Member of the Legislative Council, WA

Hon Kyam Maher, Member of the Legislative Council, SA was unable to participate in the panel due to technical difficulties.

The panel explored the following questions:

1. How could Aboriginal politicians be better supported?
2. How did you decide to run for Parliament? Did someone tap you on the shoulder and ask you to run?
3. Since being elected I assume you have all faced challenges as loud and proud Aboriginal women to deliver in your role as an elected member. Can you share the challenges you have faced and describe what sort of steps you have taken to represent your electorate?
4. Paraphrasing Professor Haywood who opened the conference, for Aboriginal politicians, do we consider ourselves to be Aboriginals who are politicians, or politicians who are Aboriginal? Are we politicians first, or Aboriginal people first?

Senator Sue Lines provided the following question virtually:

5. What are the things that non-Aboriginal people can do to support First Nations politicians and do political parties also need to change?

1.00pm **Session Nine: Government responses to the Pandemic**
Chaired by President Clohesy

Ms Christine Tonkin, Member of the Legislative Assembly
Public procurement legislation and achieving policy objectives in the pandemic

Ms Christine Tonkin discussed, there are three genres of public procurement legislative framework evident internationally including the rules-based approach typified by the UNICTRAL Model Procurement Law, the principles-based approach typified by the Western Australia Procurement Act (2020) and the results-based approach typified by the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Procurement Act (2015) as amended in 2020. These different approaches to public procurement legislation are considered with a focus on the implications of each for achieving policy objectives including under the emergent circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.30pm

Administrative Matters
Chaired by President Clohesy

The 2022 Regional Conference will be held in Vanuatu.

Adoption of Conference Report:

Hon Jacki Jarvis moved that the Conference Report be adopted.

Hon Sandra Carr seconded the motion.

The report was adopted.

The Chair thanked all participants and those who helped deliver the conference.