

QUEENSLAND BRANCH



40th CPA Australia and Pacific Regional Conference



PARLIAMENT HOUSE – BRISBANE - QUEENSLAND 1 - 3 NOVEMBER 2023

REPORT OF CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

DAY ONE – Wednesday 1 November 2023

9.30am	Welcome to Country Mr Christopher Tosh Dawson, an emerging elder representing the Turrbal people, offered a welcome to country.
9.40am	Election of Chair and Deputy Chair for the Conference Mr Auuapaau Muliploa Aloitafua Mulipola, Deputy Speaker, Legislative Assembly of Samoa, nominated Hon Curtis Pitt MP, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland, as Chair of the Conference. Mr Michael Pettersson MP, ACT Legislative Assembly, seconded the nomination. There being no further nominations Hon Curtis Pitt MP was appointed as Chair of the Conference. Mr Tatai Tura, Speaker, Parliament of the Cook Islands nominated Mr Auuapaau Muliploa Aloitafua Mulipola, Deputy Speaker, Legislative Assembly of Samoa as Deputy Chair of the Conference. Mr Jon Krause MP, Legislative Assembly of Queensland, seconded the nomination. There being no further nominations Mr Auuapaau Muliploa Aloitafua Mulipola was appointed as Deputy Chair of the Conference.
9.50am	Official opening Hon Curtis Pitt MP, Conference Chair and Host Branch Chair, provided an opening address.
10.00am	Tour of Parliament House Tours of Parliament House were conducted by the Parliamentary Education Team, Queensland Parliament.
11.15am	Guest speaker: Ms Talei Elu, 2023 Queensland Young Australian of the Year Speaking to the conference theme of ‘Representation for the Future: Young people and parliaments’, Ms Elu spoke of the importance to her of her community, Seisia (a Torres Strait Island, with a young population). Her community has a history of policies and laws being imposed upon them by leaders, agendas, and governments from far away. This has led them to a dynamic, layered and complex eco system of social, economic, health, technological and environmental issues. Ms Elu reminded us to not lose sight of the different forms of infrastructure needed to properly engage with people from all age groups, backgrounds and social circumstances. For example, physical infrastructure places limits on what can be done, for example regular service outages including internet, and limited bandwidth to download and upload documents has limited engagement. Likewise, social infrastructure such as language barriers and levels of literary will entirely affect the levels of engagement and participation people will have, including the ability to even enrol to vote, let alone view or make a submission to a committee, or email an MP. Service outages are expected to continue with severe weather implications of climate change, and the distance associated with getting repairs.

	<p>Ms Elu spoke of her work for the AEC aiming to increase voter enrolment in her community, and the significant impact for local people who have begun to manage the voting process. The community partnership program is to extend; and next year it will include a youth parliament to develop an understanding of the formal parliamentary processes for young people. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations are younger than the whole Australian population so the program is focussed accordingly, aiming to provide an ongoing dialogue with their elected representatives. The program will also focus on putting ideas into action. Ms Elu remarked that <i>“Real learning takes place when youth are given the opportunity to lead”</i>.</p> <p>Discussion following Ms Elu’s speech covered topics including the National Indigenous Youth Parliament, the impact of education, and implications of the recent ‘Voice’ referendum in Australia for engagement of young Indigenous people in parliamentary political processes.</p> <p>1.30pm CPA HQ update</p> <p>Mr Stephen Twigg, Secretary-General of the CPA, provided an update on current issues for the CPA including the legal standing of the CPA and possible implications for where CPA locates its headquarters; a report from the 66th CPC held in Ghana in October 2023; progress of work towards assessing Commonwealth parliaments against the CPA’s benchmarks. Mr Twigg also invited feedback from CPA members as to CPA communication and ideas about how to better engage young people with parliaments.</p> <p>2.00pm Engagement Practices</p> <p><i>Taking youth engagement seriously</i> Ms Naomi Simmonds, Senior Engagement Advisor, Parliament of Victoria.</p> <p>The presentation discussed the broad range of methods used by the Victorian Parliament to engage with young people, including online forums, podcasts, making videos, Linked In and other social media platforms.</p> <p>Many young people are active citizens, committed to civic engagement and social justice issues but they face barriers to participation in political processes and institutions.</p> <p>What matters most to young people and what’s in it for them when it comes to engagement with parliament? The importance of ensuring a mutual benefit was highlighted (for example, skill-building, professional references, payment).</p> <p>All issues are young people’s issues: consulting young people, investing in their capacity to engage and providing them with a platform to communicate messages about parliament can have a positive impact for all involved.</p> <p><i>Committees in Queensland: experiences of engaging with young people</i> Ms Joan Pease MP, Member for Lytton, Legislative Assembly of Queensland</p> <p>Engaging young people with parliamentary committees is a critical aspect of a vibrant and inclusive democratic process. Ensuring that the voices of the younger generation are heard in the policymaking and legislative processes is not only a matter of fairness but also essential for addressing their unique concerns and needs. Speaking from her experience serving on parliamentary committees, Ms Pease MP highlighted key factors influencing</p>
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young people's capacity for engagement include topic relevance, time available (ie short committee inquiry timeframes), committees' use of existing networks, and whether engagement in inquiries is promoted on appropriate platforms.

There can be ethical considerations for committees in engaging with young people, such as privacy, confidentiality and consent, mandatory reporting and information sharing.

Several case studies illustrated practices used by committees in Queensland. Ms Pease suggested parliaments develop social media platform policies, and collect demographic data from from submitters to parliamentary committees to support evaluation of the effectiveness of engagement with young people.

Kiribati Parliament youth engagement

Mr George McKenzie, Parliamentary Counsel, Parliament of the Republic of Kiribati

This presentation demonstrated the approach of leveraging a focus on youth engagement with other activities, such as Commonwealth Day celebrations in Kiribati. A Youth Parliament was a central part of the program, amongst considerable cultural celebrations. It has become a key part of the school calendar now, on the main island. The logistical challenges of doing this in a country made up of many islands over a large geographical area, were highlighted.

Mr McKenzie noted the relevance of a community's understanding of the place of young people, upon the extent and effectiveness of young people's engagement. For example in Kiribati and other places, leadership positions reflect age and younger people are not considered to be leaders.

A public outreach program has been developed to reach more people. There is no television in Kiribati, so radio is the key media. Public Outreach officer visits those communities with videos, and powerpoint presentations. They are not at the stage of using social media. They target village meeting houses, and primary schools. The perception of the Parliament, has been a place where people argue. The program is being used to help address that perception. It is early days, but the program is a beginning towards engaging youth in Kiribati.

Discussion included how to continue engagement that may have started in youth parliaments, beyond the programs.

3.45pm

Parliamentary Education – Youth Parliaments

Youth Engagement and Youth Parliaments

Hon Curtis Pitt MP, Speaker, Legislative Assembly of Queensland

There are many paths into parliament, and perceptions of parliament play a role. We need to demystify politics and parliaments, and show their relevance to the lives of all citizens. Some techniques in Queensland are regional parliaments, where the entire parliament is relocated to a regional location for an entire sitting week, allowing for a huge range of public engagement activities (especially with children and young people).

Queensland's extensive range of youth parliament programs provide a hands-on understanding of parliamentary processes. Key topics young people have brought forward as part of their youth parliament experience have included youth crime, housing

	and homelessness, protecting the natural environment, health (including mental health and vaping) and the perennial 'hot topic' of banning homework.
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DAY TWO - Thursday 2 November 2023	
9.00am	<p>Q&A Panel Hon Meaghan Scanlon MP, Minister for Housing and Member for Gaven Mr Sam O'Connor MP, Member for Bonney Moderator: Mr Neil Laurie, Clerk of the Parliament (Qld)</p> <p>Two of the youngest members of the Queensland Parliament spoke from their experience, and told of the obligation they feel to put forward a point of view on behalf of young people in policy discussions with colleagues, that political parties need to make themselves feel accessible to young people and that old ways of doing party business is not engaging for today's youth just as communicating with them through 'traditional' media of television and newspapers is not going to work.</p>
10.00am	<p>Guest speaker Professor Vicky Browning, Program Director, Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Pathways to Politics Program for Women</p> <p>Professor Browning presented on the Pathways to Politics Program for women, operating in Australian jurisdictions and funded through a philanthropic trust. The presentation highlighted some of the barriers faced by young women engaging in political processes, particularly as members and potential members of parliament. Entry to the program is open to women who are engaged in politics, either in their communities or in a political setting, committed to seeking elected office, and have leadership experience. The formal program includes workshops on building a political career, building skills to be a strong candidate, and then on election, how to be the best leader they can be. Coaching is also a key part of the program. Some of the topics covered in these workshops were outlined.</p> <p>Some enablers identified by program participants include sowing the seeds in schools, mentorship programs, active preselection by political parties (who need to reach into community-based organisations to find future leaders).</p>
11.00am	<p>Direct representation and participation</p> <p><i>Voting for 16 and 17 year olds</i> Mr Johnathan Davis MLA, Member for Brindabella, ACT Legislative Assembly</p> <p>Mr Davis MLA presented on the campaign to extend voting rights to 16- and 17-year-olds, some of the questions and arguments surrounding this issue, and provide a brief on efforts to do just this in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT).</p> <p>Though 18 years was previously an appropriate voting age, as the roles, responsibilities and expectations of today's young Australians have evolved, so too should the legislation.</p>

Young people aged 16-17 actively contribute to Australia's economic, social and cultural environment.

Young people aged 16-17 are active and contributing members of Australian society, who hold considerable decision-making powers regarding their own lives and who are required to meet a number of legal requirements. They should therefore be afforded the opportunity to vote on matters that affect them. Arguments around neurodevelopment and whether or not if the franchise were extended to this group, voting should be compulsory, were explored.

Whether or not candidacy for election as well as voting rights should be extended to 16 and 17 year olds, was identified as a matter for further consideration.

Challenges to addressing disenfranchisement among young people

Mr Rory Amon MP, Member for Pittwater, NSW Legislative Assembly

Mr Amon discussed changing demographics in Australia since the 1940s and the proportion of the electorate now who are young people. As young people are engaging less in the political process, this has the impact of a de facto disenfranchisement. Generations Y and Z – people born since 1981 - now make up 43% of the population.

Major parties have historical foundations that are not as directly relevant to the electorate today: for example the distinction between labour and capital and the principles associated with those. There have been significant social and economic changes since those parties' foundations. Young people today have not lived through the environments prior to, or through, those social and economic reforms, so do not understand the 'before' situation.

The disconnect between social media spend on campaigns and the proportion of the population for whom social media is the primary source of news, is a factor in disengagement.

Major parties are not providing policies that are perceived by young people as addressing the issues of concern to them, including housing, and competing agendas in that space. Increasingly young people will be looking to parties who reflect their values. Public funding to the major parties is questionable if a large portion of the electorate is not voting for them.

11.45am

Benefits of, and barriers to, participation by young people

The benefits of youth participation and representation in parliaments

Hon Tutai Tura (Speaker, Cook Islands)

Hon Tura related a story about a teacher and a young boy. The teacher would conduct oral spelling tests each morning. The teacher asked a boy ('Tom') to spell the word 'Crocodile'. Tom considers this and says, Sir: Crocodile: C-O-C-O-N-U-T'. Everyone was pleased and the test continued. Later, the teacher realised this was not the correct spelling. Now, we have to consider who was right. The boy or the teacher? Tom is now 76. Last week he said that the teacher had thought he was stupid: but he was not. He became one of the most high-ranking public officials in the Cook Islands.

Young people are the voices of tomorrow and we need to listen, provide opportunities for engagement in parliament. Decisions made today must consider the long-term implications for the future.

This is a key means to ensure a more inclusive, diverse and dynamic democratic framework. They offer fresh perspectives: with a natural inclination to think 'outside the box' and challenge conventional approaches, new ideas are brought to the table.

It is our collective responsibility to give opportunities to engage politically, via inclusive platforms for participation and implementation of policies that engage them. This is how we ensure our future is in safe hands.

Representation and Participation

Hon Mulipola Aloitafua Auuapaau, Deputy Speaker, Legislative Assembly of Samoa.

Young people participate in multiple ways, but representation in formal political processes is limited. Given the proportion of the population they represent, it is important that they are represented. The Samoa National Youth Council is a focal office for youth activities in Samoa. More than 130 young people on the Council. Quarterly forums to build capacity.

The Youth Council recently participated in the 10th Commonwealth Youth Minister's Meeting in London: a gathering of leaders from 50 member nations focussed on critical issues affecting young people within the Commonwealth.

A political system is not representative if all parts of society are not represented. Inclusive participation is not only a fundamental right: it is crucial for a stable and peaceful society.

Barriers to inclusion include cultural norms (and the need for parental support), economic and physical circumstances, lack of relevant skills and training, and time and money. These must be addressed for the future to be handed to individuals who are prepared to uphold democratic principles of good governance.

Suggested mechanisms to reduce the barriers are to make parliament more accessible by inviting young people to observe the operations of Parliament and its committees; introducing a Members Interface program to encourage oral and written submissions; and youth parliaments as a means of advocacy.

12.15pm

Report: Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) meeting

Hon Kate Doust MLC, Legislative Council, Western Australia and Australia Region CWP Representative.

Hon Doust provided a report on the recent CWP meeting held in Ghana. Some areas to be focussed on are barriers to women's participation in formal political process, identifying the programs currently in place, and the challenge of deciding on the best vehicles to enable greater participation by women. CWP also wants to look at the role of the CPA in this space.

Consideration is also being given to the Small Parliaments model, which runs a series of events alongside the CPC meeting.

Hon Doust advised that CWP Australia Region will meet on 1 December as to its position regarding content of a CWP forum at the CPC in NSW in 2024.

1.30pm

Influences on young people's participation

The impact of peers/family/community on young people's democratic participation
Hon Te-hani Brown, Parliament of the Cook Islands

Hon Brown noted the strong influence of peers on young people's involvement in democratic processes. They play a key role in developing political consciousness, through discussion, challenging each other's viewpoints; and socialization: acting as a central hub for participation, eg youth organisations, protest rallies. Through sharing experiences, peers empower one another, inspiring each other to participate. Support is crucial.

Family plays an instrumental role. Growing up in politically engaged families is a key influence; family values such as justice and tolerance provide a foundation for political participation. Hon Brown's family has a long history of political engagement and direct representation in parliaments. Discussion and debate at home about local, national and international issues are a safe space for young people to develop their interests and acumen. Knowledge sharing between generations can teach and inspire.

The broader community offers access to resources: communities that prioritise education, easy access to information, create an enabling environment for young people to participate. Community efforts to engage with young people. Role models, community leaders who support democratic principles, can inspire and influence. Youth focused initiatives such as workshops, events which promote democratic values and participation, create opportunities for participation. They create a sense of belonging and valuing.

Experiences as a young Member of Parliament
Hon Laura Henderson MLC, Legislative Council, South Australia.

As a large proportion of the voting population, young people have significant influence. Need to be able to make committee submissions, sign and start petitions. But civics education is critical as a foundation to enable this engagement. It makes the difference between apathy and engagement. Low voter turnouts at the 2019 Federal election in Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide – the youngest electorates in those states – had the lowest turnouts.

We cannot just rely on social media to engage. Young people need a seat at the table. They need to see themselves reflected in their parliamentarians. So, electing more young people to parliament is key. Parliamentarians should be elected on merit, because their community thinks they are the best person for the job. Hon Henderson noted she was preselected, then elected as a young woman, with no longstanding ties to either South Australia or the Liberal Party. Hon Henderson had been preselected in two 'unwinnable' seats before this and learned a lot, at the age of around 21. This gave her great insights into challenges of young person entering politics. But for the most part the community was excited and supportive.

Barriers Hon Henderson observed include the cost of elections: cost of materials, but also time off work at a stage of life when young people are less established financially. Priorities may be different at that stage of life too: establishing a family, travelling, studying. Young women in particular also note that politics may not be a supportive environment for beginning a family, and further, that this may impact forming a relationship in the first place. Unwanted advances, and inappropriate posts on social

media, as well as questions about whether she intends to have children, have been very difficult to deal with, as well.

The SA Parliament has worked towards cultural changes. For example fewer late sitting nights, a Code of Conduct for members, changes to Standing Orders to allow for maternity leave, and breastfeeding in the Chamber by Members. The more diverse parliament is, the more representative of our community it will be.

Discussion included the value or otherwise of quotas.

2.30pm

Equipping young people to be the next generation of leaders

Empowering girls through sport

Ms Lynda Voltz MP (NSW)

Equal opportunity starts from a young age and building leadership confidence for young women and girls requires both role models and opportunity. Young girls and women cannot be what they cannot see.

Sport plays an important role in leadership. In a survey of 821 high-level executives, 90% of women in those positions played sport, and this rose to 96% for executive level positions within a company. Girls and women who play sport have more self-confidence, are better educated and are more likely to work in non-traditional jobs.

Women parliamentarians across the region are uniquely placed to work together to use sport as a vehicle to provide better opportunities for young girls and women and to build professional networks together. Recent programs run by women parliamentarians both in the NSW Parliament and the NZ Parliament have proved very successful in this respect.

A greater focus on what women parliamentarians can deliver in a collegiate approach, using both our leadership knowledge and our capacity to organise together to spearhead grassroots education with sport, will reveal an untapped regional resource. This will not only assist in empowering young girls and women to become our future leaders but also to help support those women fighting for greater women's representation across the Pacific.

The influences of civic education on youth political participation

Hon Fonotue Pierre Lauofo (Samoa)

Civics education promotes democracy, protects rights, counters misinformation, fosters active citizenship, strengthens social cohesion and prepares future leaders. Thus, it prepares individuals to participate in the civic and political life of their communities, countries, and the world at large. Youth political participation enables representation, strengthens democracy, promotes inclusivity and equity, and provides new policy ideas. It develops leadership and prevents apathy, encouraging a commitment to the welfare of the community.

The Office of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly in Samoa operates a Youth Parliamentary Programme. The youth programme is conducted once a year ever since this division was established in 2013. This programme creates a path for the youth to participate and have the opportunity to be present in a parliament sitting. The following are other activities conducted through this programme:

- Presentations on the role of each division in OCLA
- Presentations on the functions of Parliament
- Presentations on the mandated legislation of Parliament and OCLA
- Mock Parliament on controversial topics such as Same Sex Marriage, Women in Parliament etc.

Additional measures Samoa could implement include youth engagement programs including in schools or community centres; civics education in the school curriculum; youth friendly policies – taking into account the unique needs and aspirations of young people (including them in the policy development process); utilising digital platforms; celebrating world parliament day (30 June). International best practices include a youth quota (Kenya, Uganda) and Youth Parliament (eg New Zealand and UK models).

3.45pm

Concerns of young people

Resilient measures against sea level rise

Hon Samuelu Penitala Teo, Speaker, Parliament of Tuvalu

Hon Teo read a statement about sea level rise, a pressing issue affecting many small island states, including Tuvalu. The consequences are dire: coastal erosion, salt water intrusion, and the potential displacement of communities. The people of Tuvalu have taken significant steps to adapt and mitigate sea level rise. Sustainable practices and policies – investing in renewable energy sources such as solar power to reduce contributions to greenhouse gas emission; adopting innovative engineering such as sea walls; educating the population about climate change and its impacts, and the steps they can take to adapt. This empowers citizens to be part of the solution. But, the battle cannot be won by Tuvalu alone: more proactive international cooperation, action and support (financial, technical, policy and practical) is essential.

The resilience of the Tuvalu people is an inspiring example of resilience and adaptation; and leading responses to climate change.

Hon Teo then provided a visual presentation to demonstrate the impacts of climate change in Tuvalu.

He explained that ‘raising’ the level of Tuvalu will offer perhaps another 50 years. The only way so far identified to keep Tuvalu above water. It is very expensive project; and there are two sides of the island to be considered.

Many pledges are made: big countries who pollute the world, do not live up to their pledges. It just gives those countries more time to burn more fuel.

Inter-generational debt

Hon David Davis MLC (Victoria)

The purpose of this presentation is to spark a discussion about the attitude of young people to government debt.

ANU’s 2016 Australian Electoral Study suggests that 51.7% of people aged over 50 responded that government debt was extremely important when they were deciding to vote. For people aged 30 to 50 the figure was 31.1%. But for people aged less than 30, government debt was extremely important to the vote of just 20.1%.

	<p>The nation's net debt has tripled over the last decade (COVID played a part here). Borrowings by states funded significant infrastructure projects, some wasteful.</p> <p>Transparent reporting of financial data needs to be tailored in ways that young people can engage with. Much of the focus of engagement we've discussed over the past two days, is about hearing what young people consider important, rather than engaging on issues that they rightly should be concerned about. The 2023 Inter-Generational Report points out our aging population which creates significant budget pressure. Government spending will also increase, as a result. But few younger Victorians read or understood the Report.</p> <p>Young people are concerned about the significant issues such as climate change, yet future financial pressures will impact government's ability to respond. Making the issue more visible is a key to engaging young people. It is critical to highlight the impact of high tax and high debt policies on issues of concern to younger people, like the affordability and accessibility of housing and governments' ability to combat climate change.</p>
<p>4.45pm</p>	<p>Hon Ben Franklin MLC, President, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and President, Legislative Council of New South Wales</p> <p><i>Looking ahead to the 67th CPA Conference in Sydney, 2024.</i></p> <p>Hon Franklin spoke to the role of the CPA in bringing together members from around the world, and the importance of strong relationships between Commonwealth jurisdictions. He noted that decisions made by the members of parliaments extend internationally, as illustrated by the presentation from Tuvalu. To that end, the 2024 CPC to be hosted by New South Wales will continue to promote the development of those relationships and friendships as enablers of collective action on global issues.</p> <p>Hon Franklin considered the 66th conference in Ghana, provided a strong reminder as to our commitment to democracy. Speech of Vice-Patron CPA, Ghana President reminded us of the Commonwealth's shared 'commitment to open and tolerant societies, equality for all, and respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms.'</p> <p>With one in three of the world's young people living in Commonwealth countries we all have a responsibility to ensure our parliaments are representative of their interests. The 2024 CPC conference will put those interests at the front and centre.</p>
<p>5.00pm</p>	<p>Conference formal close Hon Curtis Pitt MP, Conference Chair</p> <p>The Conference Chair provided a brief overview of the conference content, including the key messages which emerged from the conference. He thanked all delegates for their participation in the conference, and declared the conference closed.</p>