

ENSURING SOCIAL WORK EXPERIENCE IS RECOGNISED AT THE COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING IN OCTOBER 2024

Social work is planning to make an impact on the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) being held in Samoa in October 2024.



The Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work (COSW) is working with regional partners to showcase indigenous perspectives from across the South Pacific in support of the CHOGM theme "One Resilient Common Future: Transforming our Common Wealth". COSW is also working with other civil society groups to raise Commonwealth-wide social policy issues.

COSW will be represented at CHOGM by social workers from the region, as at previous CHOGMs. COSW is working with the **Association of Fiji Social Workers** (AFISW), the **Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers** (ANZASW), the **Tangata Whenua Social Workers Association** (TWSWA) (Aotearoa New Zealand) and the **University of the South Pacific**.

The head of delegation is **Dr Yvonne Crichton-Hill** (Associate Professor, Social Work Programme, Faculty of Health, **Te Whare Wānanga O Waitaha - University Of Canterbury**, Aotearoa New Zealand). Yvonne is of Samoan heritage and uses qualitative, intersectional indigenous methods to study social work in order to develop and inform Pacific knowledge, research and practice, with a particular interest in Pacific wellbeing, climate change, and social work education.

Others involved include **Malakai Waqa** (Interim President, AFISW), **Sharyn Roberts** (President, ANZASW), **Miriama Scott** (TWSWA), **Nathan Chong-Nee** (Chief Executive, ANZASW) and COSW Board member **Naomi Spencer** (Australia).

"CHOGM 2024 offers an opportunity for social workers to highlight our knowledge and experience of key issues for national governments and the Commonwealth", said COSW President Sylvia Daisy Romanus. *"As active members of the Commonwealth community, working with our regional and Commonwealth partners, we will make sure that social work is visible and recognised by Heads of Government from the 56 member states of the Commonwealth"*, Sylvia concluded.

"CHOGM enables AFISW, ANZASW, TWSWA and our partners to advance strategic priorities for social work and climate action in the Pacific", the COSW delegation announced. *"We will highlight local indigenous social work knowledge and responses and advocate for sustainable practices and policies that address the unique environmental and social challenges faced by Pacific communities"*, said Yvonne Crichton-Hill (COSW), Sharyn Roberts (ANZASW), Miriama Scott (TWSWA), Naomi Spencer (COSW) and Malakai Waqa (AFISW).

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COSW is calling on Heads of Government to endorse the **Commonwealth Charter for Young Carers**, which has already been recognised as good practice by Health and Youth Ministers and is referenced in official CHOGM briefing papers.

COSW has contributed to the submission by the Independent Forum of Commonwealth Organisations (IFCO) on the contribution of **civil society in the Commonwealth**. An associated proposal for a People's Forum roundtable event recognises that civil society space is decreasing in many countries, limiting the right to speak up about human rights abuses and defend minorities. It calls on governments to protect civil society space.

COSW is contributing to a CHOGM side event on activation of the **Kigali Declaration on Child Care and Protection Reform**.

COSW is supporting a proposal for a People's Forum workshop on **health and social service workforce** challenges around the Commonwealth.

COSW is also supporting the submission by the Commonwealth Health Professions and Partners Alliance (CHPA) drawing on the outcomes of the CHPA **health and wellbeing** policy forum in March 2024.

"The CHOGM 2024 agenda has much of relevance to social workers", said David N Jones. "COSW will be there to ensure that our experience is shared and the key role of social workers responding to so many of today's global challenges is recognised", he concluded.

NOTE FOR EDITORS: COSW is an organisation for citizens of the Commonwealth who are interested in supporting social work and social development. It is supported by social work associations in the Commonwealth. It aims to promote and support communication and collaboration between social workers and social work associations of Commonwealth countries, and to uphold and promote the code of ethics of the International Federation of Social Workers. This statement can be found on the COSW website <https://cosw.info/cosw-news>.

Commonwealth Heads of Government meet in a summit every two years alongside civil society representatives. As an Accredited Commonwealth Organisation, COSW can make submissions to CHOGM and send representatives to meetings, including observing the meeting of Foreign Ministers, attending the opening ceremony and reception and participating in the People's, Women's and Youth Forums. In the context of the [UN Sustainable Development Goals \(2015-2030\)](#), CHOGM reviews social policy, security and economic issues and the global situation.

CHOGM 2024 website <https://samoachogm2024.ws/>

Commonwealth Charter for Young Carers <https://cosw.info/young-cares/>

Independent Forum of Commonwealth Organisations submission to CHOGM 2022
https://www.ifco.online/_files/ugd/e2b645_f4db2f735daf43d1b22287b2c0295ea8.pdf

Contact

David N Jones +44-1604-414345

ComSocWk@aol.com

Twitter [@CwthSocWk](#)

COSW Main Representative to the Commonwealth institutions