

SOCIAL WORK HELPS SHAPE COMMONWEALTH PRIORITIES AT HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING IN SAMOA 21 – 26 OCTOBER 2024

Social work has been visible and influential during the first phase of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Samoa 21 – 24 October 2024. Six representatives from the region have made significant contributions with sustained impacts over coming months.



Video of Malakai promoting the Commonwealth Charter for Young Carers

Malakai Waqa Kaitani spoke powerfully about the Commonwealth [Charter for Young Carers](#) and the development of social work in the South Pacific in a Spotlight session in the Youth Forum. He referred to his own experience caring for family members, which was echoed by many others in the hall. The Charter was developed through consultation with young carers across the Commonwealth and has now been recognised in many Commonwealth communiqués and forums. Working with the [Young Carers Alliance](#), [Ortsé Williams](#) and others, COSW will promote wider recognition of the Charter and young carers.



Malakai Waqa Kaitani, Nathan Chong-Nee, Yvonne Crichton-Hill, Jioji Ravulo

'Indigenous values and knowledge - often integrated into social work practices - can build healthier and fairer communities' was the key message of a COSW led session in the People's Forum. Malakai, Nathan and Yvonne, supported by Jioji (left) focused on Pacific perspectives and case studies, stimulating a lively debate that highlighted the value of indigenous approaches. COSW, with regional and international partners, plans to sustain the focus on developing social work across the South Pacific.



Helen Jones, Debbie Chantal Gray, Justice Vui Clarence Nelson, Yvonne Crichton-Hill, Layne Robinson

Professor Yvonne Crichton-Hill presented at the CHOGM side-event on *One Resilient Common Future: Accelerating implementation of the 2022 Kigali Declaration on Child Care and Protection Reform*, alongside UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy, Justice Vui Clarence Nelson (Supreme Court of Samoa), Debbie Chantal Gray (UNICEF) and other distinguished speakers (see left). She highlighted the key role of social workers in care and protection of

children and the importance of respecting indigenous solutions to family and community problems: *"We must give strong voice to the Kigali Declaration and the care and protection of children"*.

The [briefing paper](#) shared in the event, was co-written by Chair of the Commonwealth Children Interest Group (ComCIG) and COSW Board Member David N Jones. ComCIG and the Commonwealth Secretariat will publish the full report later in 2024. Support from Heads of Government in the communiqué ensures that the wellbeing and safety of children will be a major focus over the coming two years, for the Commonwealth and COSW.

"The practical experience of and evidence from social workers is crucial to future world peace and social development", said Sylvia Daisy Romanus, President of COSW. "Our impact at CHOGM is testimony to the value of social work to the world community as it struggles to achieve the SDGs. Social workers are deeply indebted to our effective and impressive team in Samoa and the organisations which supported them" Sylvia concluded.

ENDS**NOTE TO EDITORS**

The COSW team at CHOGM in Samoa included:

- **Associate Professor Yvonne Crichton-Hill** (Head of Delegation), University of Canterbury, Christchurch, Aotearoa New Zealand
- **Malakai Waqa**, Interim President of the Association of Fiji Social Workers, University of the South Pacific
- **Nathan Chong-Nee**, Chief Executive, Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW)
- **Naomi Spencer** (COSW Board Member, Australia)
- **Andrzej Frank** (young carer advocate, UK)
- **Professor Jioji Ravulo** (South Pacific policy analyst, Fiji/Australia)

Support by **David N Jones** (COSW Main Representative to the Commonwealth) liaising from the UK.

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](#).

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, economic issues and the global situation.

Resilient future [briefing paper](#) available at <https://cosw.info/cosw-news/>.

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

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

Independent Forum of Commonwealth Organisations [submission](#) to CHOGM 2024.

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