



Report of the Senedd's participation in the
COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION
67th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference
3-8 November 2024
Sydney, New South Wales



Photo: Llywydd, Elin Jones MS and CPA Senedd Chair, Rhun ap Iorwerth MS with
The Hon Greg Piper MP, Speaker of the NSW Legislative Assembly.

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Background, Summary and Highlights.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) is the annual meeting of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). It is one of the largest Commonwealth meetings, bringing together over 500 Parliamentarians representing over 180 parliamentary Branches, from across the Association's nine Regions.

The 67th CPC took place between 3-8 November 2024 in Sydney, New South Wales (Australia). The Conference theme was "**Engage, Empower, Sustain: Charting the Course for Resilient Democracy**".

The Conference in Sydney coincided with the bicentenary of New South Wales Parliament.

The CPA Wales (Senedd) Branch, as part of its fee structure, was invited to send one delegate with the option of being represented by additional conference "Observer" participants.

On this occasion the Llywydd, Elin Jones MS (Branch President) and Chair, Rhun ap Iorwerth MS represented the Branch at this special Conference. This was the first time that Rhun ap Iorwerth MS had attended a CPC since being elected as Branch Chair in 2016. This was also the first known occasion for a Senedd Llywydd to attend a CPC; with this conference coinciding with the 25th anniversary of the Senedd.

The Senedd delegation participated fully in the CPC, proactively seeking opportunities to make leading contributions to the conference proceedings as well as to take advantage of the occasion and location in order to undertake a series of bilateral meetings as well as to engage with the local Welsh community.

Some noteworthy highlights and key takeaways from the Conference:

Opening Ceremony.

The Official Opening Ceremony was quite an event.

Taking place in the impressive Darling Harbour Theatre the programme included:

- A welcome to Country by Matthew Doyle, a well-respected First Nations Artist and Cultural Advisor.

Addresses were given by:

- Her Excellency the Hon Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of NSW;
- The Hon. Ben Franklin MLC, President of the Legislative Council of NSW;
- The Hon Greg Piper MP, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of NSW

- Mr Stephen Twigg, Secretary General of the CPA;
- The Hon. Chris Minns MP, Premier of NSW

Performances were delivered by:

- The Sydney Conservatorium of Music;
- Bangarra Dance Theatre
- The Sydney Children's Choir
- James Johnston, NSW native Country Music star.

Key Decisions taken at the CPC:

CPA Status

This longstanding issue was finally resolved and Conference Delegates welcomed the work undertaken to enable the CPA to create a **new non-charitable organisation and the passage of the CPA Status Bill in the UK Parliament to legislate to recognise the CPA as akin to an international, interparliamentary organisation.**

Election of new CPA Chair and Vice-Chair.

During the 2024 CPA General Assembly, CPA Members elected [Hon. Dr Christopher Kalila, MP \(Zambia\) as the new Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee for a new three-year term](#)

During the meeting of the new CPA Executive Committee, **Hon. Carmel Sepuloni, MP**, Member of the Parliament of New Zealand and Regional Representative for the CPA Pacific Region was elected to the position of Vice-Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee.

2025 – 68th CPC

It was confirmed that the [68th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference \(CPC\)](#) will be hosted by the CPA Barbados Branch in October 2025.

As part of the wider CPC, the [8th Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians \(CWP\) Conference](#) took place. The theme of the CWP Conference was '**Engaging, Promoting and Retaining Women in Power**'. As well as participating in the overall CWP Conference, the Llywydd gave a keynote address at the Workshop on ["How to Keep Women in Politics"](#).



The Llywydd's Speech can be read in **Annex B**

[2024 CPA General Assembly Topical Debate.](#)

As part of this year's General Assembly, Senedd delegate Rhun ap Iorwerth MS was selected as a keynote speaker in the Topical Debate on "*The Role of Parliament in Strengthening Democratic Resilience in an Age of Fake News and Synthetic Media*". The Speech is included in **Annex A**

Conference Workshops.

The Senedd delegation attended numerous Conference workshops, including on "*The Use of Artificial Intelligence in Parliamentary Processes and Practices - Opportunities and Challenges*", and "*Parliamentary Frameworks for Meaningfully Engaging with Indigenous Peoples*"

Of particular interest was the workshop on "***How can Legislatures Best Support and Promote LGBT+ Participation?***" where the Branch Chair was able to highlight the positive work (in which [Adam Price MS](#) was playing a leading role) being undertaken within our BIM Region to establish the first LGBTQ+ Regional Network within the CPA.

BIM Regional Meeting.

A gathering of BIMR Delegates in attendance at the CPC provided the opportunity to hear governance and other updates by our Regional Representatives on the CPA's International Executive Committee.

Senedd Chair, Rhun ap Iorwerth MS addressed the gathering to discuss progress with the LGBT+ work (noted above) as well as to discuss the 54th BIM Regional Conference, which the Senedd looked forward to hosting in June 2025.

Official Dinner at Sydney Town Hall

The 67th CPC closed with an Official Dinner within the spectacular setting of [Sydney Town Hall](#).

Special guest at the Conference Official Dinner was The [Prime Minister of Australia, Hon. Anthony Albanese, MP](#). Mr Albanese's Keynote speech can be read [here](#)

Video Highlights



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Bilateral Meetings

i) Speaker Greg Piper of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly.



It was an honour to have had the opportunity to visit the New South Wales Parliament and to meet with Greg Piper, Speaker of the NSW Legislative Assembly.

The visit included a formal meeting with Mr Speaker as well as a tour of the Parliament, including the Chamber, which Speaker Piper noted was referred to as "*the Bear Pit*" due to the often adversarial nature of the debates.

Discussions included:

- the significance of the 200th anniversary of the NSW parliament – the first and oldest parliament in Australia.
- The potential for closer links and collaboration between the Senedd and the NSW Parliament, through the CPA, but also bilaterally.
- the Senedd's ceremonial mace which was gifted by the parliament of New South Wales on the occasion of the official opening of the Senedd building in 2006.
- Cultural influence and links between Wales and NSW and Welsh influences in Australia. Discussed in particular was the popularity of "[Eisteddfods](#)" in Australia.



Photo. The Senedd delegation was honoured to see the "Ddraig Goch" (Welsh flag) flying outside the NSW Parliament during their visit.

ii) Deputy Speaker Regan Allen and delegation of the Western Cape Provincial Parliament (South Africa).

It was once again good to meet with representatives from the Western Cape Provincial Parliament. [Deputy Speaker Reagen Allen](#) passed on the best wishes from [Speaker Daylin Mitchell](#) who had unfortunately had to withdraw from attending the CPC.



Photo: The Senedd and WCPP delegations in the Sydney Convention Centre.

Discussions included:

- An update on the WCPP's plans to establish a Youth Parliament, following the sessions provided by the Senedd Commission on the [Welsh Youth Parliament](#) model. The Llywydd noted her pride in the WYP and encouraged the WCPP to pursue this. The WCPP thanked the Senedd and WYP Manager, Delyth Lewis, for her work and commitment to support to the Western Cape Provincial Parliament with this important project.
- Hybrid working, with the WCPP interested to learn more of how the Senedd operated and of the remote voting app which it had developed during the pandemic and continued to use.
- Constitutional developments within Wales and of the planned increase in numbers of Members for the 2026 Senedd Elections. This was of particular interest to the WCPP which, it was acknowledged, was underrepresented as a legislature. The Senedd agreed to share the "[A Parliament that Works for Wales](#)" Report, led by Professor Laura McAllister as well as details of the reform legislation with the WCPP.

iii) Speaker Natalie Roy and the National Assembly for Quebec

An informal meeting was held with Speaker Natalie Roy and her delegation from the National Assembly for Quebec.

Discussions included:

- feedback on the CWP Workshop in which the Llywydd and Speaker Roy had taken part in.
- The visit by Speaker Roy and her delegation to the Senedd in June 2024
- CPA Conferences which both Quebec and Wales would be hosting in 2025 for the Canada and BIM Regions, respectively.
- The Conference of Women Speakers which the National Assembly for Quebec would be hosting in May 2025, to which the Llywydd was invited to attend.



Photo: The Llywydd sharing the stage with Speaker Natalie Roy of the National Assembly for Quebec.

iv) New Zealand Parliament

A breakfast meeting was arranged, within the margins of the conference, between the Senedd and New Zealand Parliament delegation.

Discussions included:

- current development at the New Zealand Parliaments as well as an overview of the constitutional changes happening at the Senedd.
- A discussion on how our Parliaments work bilingually as well as the role of the Welsh and Māori languages within our respective societies.
- The New Zealand Parliament's recent experience in hosting the [Commonwealth Youth Parliament](#) (CYP) where the Senedd was represented by former Welsh Youth Parliament Member Tegan Skyrme, whose report can be read [here](#). The Senedd noted that we had expressed a provisional interest in hosting a future CYP conference and the NZ Parliament kindly offered to pass on its learnings.
- New Zealand's hosting of the ANZACATT conference in Wellington in January 2025 at which the Senedd would be represented by a senior clerk.



Photo: The Senedd and New Zealand Parliament delegation (Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Hon. Willie Jackson, Dana Kirkpatrick, Dr. Lawrence Xu-Nan and Dr. David Wilson, Clerk of the NZ House of Representatives.

Invitations to attend the Senedd hosted BIMR Conference.

The Senedd will, in June 2025, host the 54th Conference of the British Islands and Mediterranean Region. The Llywydd and Branch Chair issued invitations to each of the above delegations with whom they met to send a delegate to attend the conference, as our international guests.

Engagement with the British Consulate General, Sydney

The Senedd delegation was pleased of the opportunity to meet with the British Consulate General in Sydney, Loise Cantillon, and her team for a Briefing Session as well as an official reception, kindly facilitated for delegations from the BIM Region.

The Briefing session, which included participation via video-link with colleagues from the British High Commission in Canberra, included insights on a number of topics of interest, including on:

- The current political landscape in Australia
- Australia's demography and the importance of its 60,000 Aboriginal people' - the world's oldest civilisation which made up 3% of Australia's population.
- The sensitivity and sometimes divisive nature of the [2023 "Voice" referendum](#) where Australia voted overwhelmingly to reject a proposal to amend the constitution to recognise the First Nations people and create a forum for them to advise the Government.
- The importance of UK-Australia Trade and Tourism.
- "Climate Wars" and the challenging narrative around climate discussions in Australia which was currently the 3rd largest exporter of fossil fuel, whilst it aspired to host the COP31 summit, in partnership with the Pacific Island Nations.
- Compulsory Voting in Australia (established in 1924), and the infamous "democracy sausages".
- Cost of living challenges in Sydney – the second most expensive city in the world.



Photo: BIMR Delegates at the British Consulate, Sydney.

Engagement with the Sydney Welsh Society

The Senedd delegation was pleased of the opportunity to engage with Members of the [Sydney Welsh Society](#).

An informal event, kindly hosted by the Griffiths family in the Mosman area of Sydney, brought together over 30 members of the society - some of whom who had travelled many hours to Sydney. The Llywydd and Rhun ap Iorwerth MS addressed the gathering and spent time meeting the Members (some of whom were old friends and familiar faces) learning of their lives in New South Wales as well as their Welsh ancestry.



Photos: With Members of the Sydney Welsh Society.



Photo: Rhun ap Iorwerth MS representing the Senedd at the CPC General Assembly.

Conference Concluding Statement

The **Conference Concluding Statement** for the **67th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC)** is available [here](#)

This concluding statement contains:

- the main outcomes of the conference,
- a summary of the workshop discussions, and
- the recommendations that were either endorsed or noted by the Members in attendance.

For access to further news and resources from the 67th CPC – please visit the CPC website hub [here](#)

Images from the events of the 67th are also available at the CPA's Flickr page [here](#)

Acknowledgments

The CPA Senedd Branch would like to put on record its sincere gratitude to:

Speaker Gregg Piper MP and The New South Wales Parliament
The British Consulate, Sydney
The Griffiths (Welsh) Family in Sydney
The Sydney Welsh Society
Helen Haywood and the BIMR Secretariat
The CPA HQ Secretariat

Annex A

Keynote Speech by Rhun ap Iorwerth MS to the General Assembly Topical Debate on:

Votes vs Likes: The Role of Parliament in Strengthening Democratic Resilience in an Age of Fake News and Synthetic Media.

Thanks for the opportunity to contribute to this debate, that cuts to the heart of one of THE big issues in global politics today, that of trust in the political system. All of us here as Parliamentarians have decided to put our trust in the democratic system. We ask people to believe in us, or our parties, or our policies - or a combination of all of these – and ask them to place THEIR trust in us through the ballot box.

But we're dealing right now with factors that are undermining the very foundations on which that relationship between politician and voter is based. In some ways there's nothing new in that. There are plenty of examples throughout history of people in politics being rather 'economical with the truth'. And yes that's always driven a level of distrust in politicians. "Are they really telling it to us straight there. Are they just talking themselves up or their opponents down?!" But the 21st century iteration of this has taken the threat of democracy being undermined to a new level.

Firstly it's the pace through which fake news can be spread that has changed dramatically through the advent and proliferation of social media platforms. A TikTok or Instagram reel, a Twitter post can be around the world in minutes, being thrust into a person's timeline by aggressive algorithms. There's no choosing which newspaper to buy nowadays! You read what THEY want, when they want you to. But then take it to another level again: with fake news driven by deepfakes and synthetic media, shared on those social media platforms in your hand or in your pocket all the time, we are dealing with the ability of bad actors to genuinely misrepresent. Synthesising audio. Or video. Making something happen that didn't happen. Things being said that were never said. And very convincingly. Now, I look at this from a number of angles. Firstly, I'm an ordinary citizen, like the rest of you. I believe in democracy, and I want to have a functioning democratic system.

Secondly I'm a politician myself. I want politics to be honest.

But thirdly, although I've found myself in elected politics for the past decade-and-a-bit, for two decades before that I was a journalist and broadcaster with the BBC, and I

still very much consider my profession to be journalism. And as a journalist, the pursuit and promotion of truth is deeply important to me. But truth itself is now under siege.

So what do we do? We're still in the early years of these new AI technologies. We've been discussing at this conference how to make the most of the opportunities presented to us by AI, but also how to face the challenges. And democracy has to adapt.

Yes, those behind the new digital tools and social media platforms themselves have to take action, but we as parliamentarians must a) work with them and b) find ways to regulate against deepfakes and synthetic media. They serve no positive purpose, and they undermine democracy.

And we need to educate. As a journalist, sources are important. We used to encourage young people to multiple-source information, for school research for example. Don't just do a Wikipedia search. Seek out alternative sources for information presented to you. Well, that's still very relevant of course, but the need to promote vigilance in how to receive information becomes vastly more complex when that information reaches the citizen in a passive way – casual untruths portrayed as fact on social media platforms... hear them often enough or perhaps just the once if done in an effective way, and perceptions can be distorted. In democratic terms a political position can be turned upside down, an elected representative or a candidate's character or beliefs misrepresented. So effective citizenship education is VITAL so people are ALWAYS on the lookout for attempts to con them and mislead them.

Something else I'll refer to - just in case this spurs some questions or debate here today. We can, after all, control what comes out of our own mouths or what's printed or published in our names. In the Welsh parliament we're looking at how we could potentially make it illegal to lie in politics – to make it illegal for those in elected office or candidates to KNOWINGLY mislead people. This is being done very much as a response to the global phenomenon of declining trust in politics, and the real danger of where that could lead us.

Finally, and I'll end on this point – be it through that kind of legislative approach, or through regulation, or education - all of us as individuals have a role to play in seeking to promote political honesty and integrity, and in so doing help promote the kind of resilience that feels genuinely threatened in our parliamentary systems. But it's only together, collectively, that we can REALLY hope to address this threat, and that's why it's so important that we as a CPA take this matter so seriously, and why I'm so glad this is our topical debate today.

Annex B

Keynote Speech by the Llywydd, Elin Jones MS to the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Conference Workshop on:

The Retention of Women in Parliaments: How to Keep Women in Politics?

This is a fascinating topic. It's one that's crossed my mind, increasingly so, over the past few years but not until preparing for this session in this conference have I focussed my thoughts on what it means to us women parliamentarians – those of us here today and those of us to come tomorrow.

Let me start by telling you a little bit about gender representation in my Parliament. The first thing to know is that the Welsh Parliament, the Senedd, is new – celebrating 25 years this year since our creation. We are a new Parliament in an old country. Here, in Sydney, we are in New South Wales. I'm from Old Wales, but due to history and a lot of politics, the Parliament of Old Wales is 175 years younger than the Parliament of New South Wales, which has just celebrated its bi-centenary. Our first election was in 1999. I was elected in that election and I am serving my sixth term now. Two out of the three main parties used affirmative action to select women candidates in that election. That resulted in 40% of the members elected being female. In 2003 we elected a gender equal Parliament in Wales – 50-50 – the first such Parliament in the world. For one year in 2006, there were more women in the Welsh Parliament than men. Today we have 43% women in our Parliament, a Woman First Minister and Cabinet of majority women.

That 1999 election was transformational – in almost a hundred years of female representation from Wales at Westminster during the 20th century, only 7 women MPs had been elected. Overnight, on the eve of the new millennium, the face, the shape and the colour of Welsh politics changed – it became more diverse, more informed and more representative. And far more interesting. Looking back now at 25 years of near equal representation in our Parliament – how do I perceive the challenges?

Of course, it is still more difficult to persuade women candidates to stand than men and it is still more challenging for young mothers to juggle parenthood with parliaments than young fathers. Society's expectations still demand everything of the woman and expect and accept far less of the man. That has been very slow to change.

But what has changed radically over the last 25 years is information technology – and it offers both threat and hope to women parliamentarians.

Its threat is much talked about – social media has been weaponised by some to attack women politicians, disproportionately to men. Social media can be a demeaning, abusive and threatening space. It makes us frightened to appear in public and we question why do we want to put ourselves and our families through this. It needs to be tackled by regulation of social media companies and by the criminal justice system, and it is in some cases. One man from my constituency served a jail sentence this year for his malicious communication and threat to me. But technology also offers hope - hope that women can better balance their multi-family-responsibilities with their working, parliamentary life. As a Parliament in Wales, we now work in a permanent hybrid setting. That means that for all our Committees, and all our full Parliament sittings, then members, including Ministers, can participate and vote remotely.

It means that I could make a speech tonight live into our Parliament from Sydney – although the time difference would mean I'd need to be awake at 4am! But more importantly it means that anyone who has a caring responsibility, a small child or an elderly mother, can participate from a home setting if they need to. There are women members of our Parliament now who use this facility to enable them to stay in their constituency to care for their elderly relatives in their illness. I've done so recently in helping to look after my Dad as he recovered from a stroke. And the flexibility to be able to balance caring responsibilities with parliamentary work has been a significant, influencing factor in my recent personal decision to stand again for election in 2026. Hybrid Parliament working has made it possible for me to stand again.

Linked to this is the daily use I now make of Zoom and Teams to meet with constituents and to cut down on the large amount of time I used to spend driving in my large rural constituency. My office is now my phone, and that offers real flexibility for balancing multi responsibilities with work. It also sometimes means I'm answering Direct Messages from constituents about problems with hospital waiting lists or cancelled trains at 11 o'clock at night – but that's my choice! So information technology can help to retain women in politics, even though it has its downsides.

What else can help? Well it's obvious – Women. Women can help each other and persuade each other to carry on. We now have a Women's Caucus in our Parliament – women of all parties coming together to discuss and analyse and find solutions to common challenges.

Women need to support each other across political boundaries – men have always done so in Parliamentary bars and clubs, we need to do so too.

And to discuss the topics that have long remained silent – especially recently on women’s health. And how women’s menstrual and menopausal health can affect ability to work and how to overcome this. Too many women have given up successful careers in all sectors due to menopausal symptoms.

I’ve just passed my menopausal age, but I remember the complete terror of brain freeze overcoming me, mid-sentence in a live television interview. At the time I didn’t even know that brain fog was a symptom of menopause and I spent months thinking I would need to give up my work due to my irregular brain function. I now know why my brain was freezing at the most inconvenient of moments. Public discussion of the menopause is very recent in the UK - and the power of that knowledge along with the support of other women, and medication for some, is necessary to help so many women parliamentarians to carry on our work in our midlives.

We have to remember that the reality of women in parliaments is still a relatively new phenomenon. For men, their lives have been in synch with parliamentary life for years, centuries. For them too, some of this is changing. But for women we need to develop our own Parliamentary rhythm. We must not be short-term, here today and gone tomorrow. For some, yes, they will lose election or choose to leave, but we must have longevity and experience too. The old heads cannot just be male heads.

In 25 years of our Welsh Parliament, only 4 of the original members continue to serve – 3 women and 1 man. Let me tell you the story of one of those women, Jane Hutt. She has been a Minister in Government for every one of those 25 years. She is 75 years old and is currently Minister for Social Justice and Leader of the House. In 25 years she has not slowed in her parliamentary and government work and has won her very marginal seat on 6 consecutive occasions. As a politician, she brings people across the political divide together. She’s a creator and a survivor. And a wise, old head. Every Parliament needs a Jane Hutt, a lot of Jane Hutt.

As women, let us support each other across all Commonwealth Parliaments, all Parliaments, to create new norms. To work in different ways. To make Parliaments work for us, so that we can work for Parliaments.