



Australian High Commission
Trinidad and Tobago

Aussi@News

AusNews Issue 1, 2023



Inside

Messages from
current and former
High Commissioners

Australia Day!





Hello everyone.

I'M **SONYA KOPPE**, Australia's new High Commissioner in the Caribbean. Welcome to the Australian High Commission's newsletter, which we hope will inform you about Australia's activities in the Caribbean, and about interesting developments in Australia itself. I arrived in Port of Spain to take up my posting on 8 March and I'm absolutely delighted to be representing Australia in such a beautiful and diverse part of the world. I'm especially honoured to be



Australia's first female High Commissioner in the Caribbean. Having presented my credentials to the outgoing President of Trinidad and Tobago on 16 March, I'm looking forward to travelling to the 13 other Caribbean countries for

which I'm responsible - meeting people, learning all about this fascinating region and sampling local cuisine. My first Trini snacks of doubles and pholourie were delicious!

Looking ahead to the next few months, one of the highlights will be the Commonwealth Youth Games in Trinidad and Tobago in August, for which we are expecting a sizable contingent of young Australian sportspeople. With the Games' events being held on both islands, I'm also looking forward to taking a trip on one of the Australian-built passenger ferries!

As I settle into my new role, I hope to visit all your countries soon and learn more about them. I know I'm going to really enjoy my time here in the vibrant Caribbean.

Australian High Commission celebrates

Australia Day

Earlier this year, we celebrated Australia Day at a reception with colleagues and friends of the Australian High Commission in Port of Spain, to recognise and celebrate Australia's strong friendship with Trinidad and Tobago and the countries of the Caribbean.

In his remarks at the event, Australia's outgoing High Commissioner, HE Mr Bruce Lendon, explained the theme of 'Tropical Australia' had been chosen to highlight the similar ecologies, opportunities and challenges shared by Australia and the Caribbean. Mr Lendon highlighted Australia's commitment to working with the Caribbean region on global issues such as climate change and sustainable biodiversity.



He also highlighted the close people-to-people and sporting linkages between Australia and the Caribbean. Australia was delighted to have hosted the West Indies Cricket Team in November and December 2022, and Australian netball coaches,

Sue Hawkins and Rob Wright, worked with netball teams from Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica respectively in the lead up to Birmingham Commonwealth Games.

The Australian High Commission was delighted to host an in-person function again in Trinidad and Tobago and we are looking forward to many more face-to-face interactions across the region in the year to come.



HE Lendon and Senator the Hon Paula Gopee-Scoon, Minister of Trade and Industry and Acting Minister for Foreign and CARICOM Affairs raise a toast in honour of Australia Day.



L-R: Minister in the Ministry of Legal Affairs, Senator the Hon Renuka Sagrainsingh-Sooklal; Minister of Planning and Development, the Hon Penelope Beckles-Robinson; Australian High Commissioner, HE Bruce Lendon; Minister of Social Development and Family Services, Senator the Hon Donna Cox; and Minister of Trade and Industry and Acting Minister for Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, Senator the Hon Paula Gopee-Scoon



A Farewell Message



I have been Australia's High Commissioner in the Caribbean since 2019.

From Port of Spain, where the High Commission is based, we represent Australia in 14 very diverse and individual CARICOM countries. I'm pleased to say that my job has been made a lot easier by the common love of sport that Australia shares with the region, as well as a relaxed and 'no fuss' attitude to life.

Like the rest of the world, the Caribbean has faced a tough time over the past few years and, sadly, many people are still to fully recover from the economic shocks associated with the covid pandemic. I've been impressed, though, by the resilience I see in the region, and by the widespread determination to get back to business. Living in Trinidad, I have to pay special tribute to the energy and enthusiasm of Trinidadians as they prepare for the first Carnival since 2020. It promises to be an amazing few days.

Sadly, after almost three and a half years in the region, I'm coming to the end of my posting in Port of Spain and will shortly return to Australia. Aside from being awed by the Carnival preparations in Trinidad, it's been a time of reflection for me. Because of covid, we haven't been able to do everything we'd hoped when we first arrived in Port of Spain, but we have nevertheless been able to travel widely in the region (as the photos show!). Some of the highlights of my time naturally have been related to the work the High Commission does. These have included our consular response to the covid crisis in the first half of 2020, when we helped many Australians travelling in Caribbean countries find their way home; the delivery of two passenger ferries and two coast guard patrol boats to Trinidad and Tobago in 2021, demonstrating the world class engineering and shipbuilding skills of Australian industry; and the way in which our Direct Aid Program has supported small, grassroots projects in nine of our 14 countries.

What I'll probably best remember long after I leave Port of Spain, though, are the amazing people I've met. There is no doubt that the Caribbean is an area of great natural beauty, but its true strengths are its creative, adaptable and enterprising citizens. Some of the challenges the region faces are global – climate change and adaptation is one on which we must all work together – but I'm confident that most of the solutions to its challenges will come from the people who live here, and best understand its needs. Even though I'll soon be on the other side of the word, I'll continue to cheer on their efforts and successes from afar.

Mr Bruce Lendon concluded his term as High Commissioner in February 2023.



Antigua – with members of Integrated Health Outreach Inc Bee Project



The Bahamas – HE Lendon presents credentials to PM Hubert Minnis



Guyana – HE Lendon attends a wreath laying ceremony after Presentation of Credentials



Dominica – Presentation of Credentials



Guyana – Presentation of Credentials to Secretary General of CARICOM Amb Irwin LaRocque



Jamaica – Netball Jamaica Centre Pass Sponsorship Ceremony



Jamaica – FM Johnson Smith and Australian HE Lendon – Farewell call Jan 2023



Trinidad and Tobago – With members of the Austral team in Trinidad



St Kitts & Nevis – HE Lendon receives gift, Presentation of Credentials



Trinidad and Tobago – Receiving a farewell gift from FM Sen the Hon Dr Amery Browne