



Australian High Commission  
Trinidad and Tobago

# AussieNews

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# Presentation of Credentials

Since our first edition introducing our new Australian High Commissioner, Sonya Koppe has visited several countries in the region to present her letters of credence and introduction.

In March, Ms Koppe presented credentials to the former President of Trinidad and Tobago, HE Paula-Mae Weekes ORTT, followed by visits in May to present credentials to the President of Suriname, HE Chandrikapersad Santokhi, and the President of Guyana, HE Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali.

In September, High Commissioner Koppe presented her letters of introduction to Jamaican Prime Minister, the Most Hon Andrew Holness, ON, PC, MP before travelling to Belize to participate in

Diplomatic Week, where Ms Koppe presented to Belizean Foreign Minister, the Hon Eamon Courtenay.

Also in September, she presented letters of introduction to Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, the Hon Gaston Browne, and in early October Ms Koppe presented credentials to President of Barbados, HE Dame Sandra Mason, FB, GCMG, DA, SC, LLD.

The Australian High Commission in Port of Spain is accredited to 14 countries in the region and Ms Koppe is keenly looking forward to visiting and presenting credentials in the countries she has not yet been to.



High Commissioner presents her Letters of Credence to T&T's former President, HE Paula-Mae Weekes ORTT.



High Commissioner presents her Letters of Introduction to the Foreign Minister of Belize, the Hon Eamon Courtenay.



High Commissioner presents her Letters of Introduction to the Jamaican Prime Minister, the Most Hon Andrew Holness.



High Commissioner presents a copy of her Letters of Introduction to the Jamaican Foreign Minister, Sen the Hon Kamina Johnson Smith.



High Commissioner presents her Letters of Credence to the President of Barbados, HE Dame Sandra Mason, FB, GCMG, DA, SC, LLD. Also present was Australian Honorary Consul to Barbados, Mr James Gardiner.



High Commissioner presents her Letters of Credence to the President of Guyana, HE Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Hon Hugh Todd present.



High Commissioner presents her Letters of Credence to the President of Suriname, HE Chandrikapersad Santokhi with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, HE Ambassador Albert Ramdin present.



High Commissioner presents her Letters of Introduction to the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, the Hon Gaston Browne.



# Hello everyone,

It's been an action-packed few months for me since arriving in Port of Spain in March to take up my posting.

I've met with a wide range of politicians, government officials, business people and fellow diplomats and have got to see beautiful Trinidad and Tobago. Highlights were going to Matura as the guest of the Minister of Planning and Development,

Pennelope Beckles, to mark Earth Day in April, and seeing the majestic leatherback turtles laying their eggs.

I travelled to Tobago in August – on the Australian-built ferries – to cheer on our fabulous young Australian athletes in the Commonwealth Youth Games. And I've been on official visits to present my credentials in six of our countries of non-resident accreditation – Suriname, Guyana, Jamaica, Belize, Antigua and Barbuda, and Barbados.

I've been struck by the rich culture, physical beauty and diversity of Caribbean countries, as well as the friendliness of the people everywhere I've been. I'm even starting to attune my ears to the different accents I'm hearing in my travels!

I was particularly pleased to visit aid projects funded by the Australian Government under our Direct Aid Program in Guyana, Jamaica and Belize. It was a fabulous opportunity to see Australian aid at work and the difference our small grants are making to local communities. These visits also enabled me to travel into the countryside – into the interior of Guyana and Jamaica and down to southern Belize.

I'm looking forward to visiting our other countries of accreditation in the near future. Meanwhile, I hope you enjoy reading about other activities the Australian High Commission has been involved in over the last few months.

**Sonya**

## FIFA WOMEN'S WORLD CUP TROPHY TOUR

### JAMAICA

In the lead up to the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup, the competition's prestigious trophy made its journey to each of the 32 qualified countries, including Jamaica and Haiti. The 2023 tournament was the first to be co-hosted – between Australia and New Zealand – the first to be held in the southern hemisphere, and the first with 32 teams.



At the invitation of the Jamaica Football Federation (JFF), Acting High Commissioner Ms Melissa Mitchell spoke at the trophy tour launch event in Kingston, highlighting Australia's commitment to harnessing the power of sport to promote gender equality, as well as the strength of sporting ties between the Caribbean and Australia.



L-R: Minister of State in the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport, Hon Alando Terrelonge; Australia's Acting High Commissioner to Jamaica, Melissa Mitchell; Hon Olivia Grange MP, Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport; and representatives of the Jamaica Football Federation and FIFA.

# GENDER EQUALITY SYMPOSIUM

In the sidelines of the FIFA Women's World Cup, Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator the Hon Penny Wong, hosted a Gender Equality Symposium, bringing together women leaders, human rights advocates, athletes and academics, including Jamaica's Foreign Minister, Senator the Hon Kamina Johnson Smith.

The Symposium reflected the Australian Government's commitment to inspire action and connection on gender equality and the human rights of women and girls through the power of sport and featured addresses by former international footballers Khalida Popal (former Afghan Women's captain), Sarah Walsh and former Australian national team players as well as FIFA Chief Women's Football Officer, Sarai Bareman.

Speaking to attendees, Minister Wong reflected on the benefit to communities when women and girls are supported to engage and our responsibility to champion that inclusion: *"this FIFA Women's World Cup reminds us how we come together as an international community and as a human community. Sport – especially the global game of football, played by millions, watched by millions – brings us together in all our beautiful diversity. A kaleidoscope of humanity."*



Australian Foreign Minister, Penny Wong and Jamaican Foreign Minister Kamina Johnson Smith pose for a selfie at the FIFA's Women's World Cup, Australia vs Nigeria pre-game match.



Australian Foreign Minister, Senator Penny Wong with specially invited guests at the FIFA's Women's World Cup Gender Symposium in Brisbane.

# NAIDOC Week

Marked in the first week of July each year, NAIDOC Week is a celebration of the history, culture and achievements of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. This year's theme recognised the important and prominent role Elders have played, and continue to play, in First Nations communities and families. First Nations communities draw strength from their knowledge and experience, in everything from land management and cultural knowledge to justice and human rights. Elders influence multiple sectors like health, education, the arts, politics and everything in between.

For NAIDOC Week 2023, High Commissioner Sonya Koppe hosted an event to celebrate and

share Australian Indigenous art and cuisine, with the diplomatic corps, members of the public and private sectors, academia and, international agencies. We were honoured to have Chief Ricardo Bharath Hernandez and Ms Superville of the Santa Rosa First Peoples Community of Trinidad and Tobago in attendance. Ms Koppe presented a mini-exhibition of vibrant Indigenous artwork on loan to the High Commission through Australia's ArtBank, encompassing five pieces by Julie Dowling, an Indigenous artist from Perth. Her work explores issues of race and Aboriginal identity in contemporary Australia and specifically considers the continuing impacts of the Stolen Generations. Guests were also treated to a taste of Australia's native ingredients, sourced through Warndu, an Australian Aboriginal-owned business that employs Aboriginal people.



High Commissioner Sonya Koppe stands alongside specially invited guests, Chief Ricardo Bharath Hernandez and Ms Superville of the Santa Rosa First Peoples Community of Trinidad and Tobago, and 'The Apology' to Australia's Indigenous Peoples.



Indigenous menu for the night's event consisted of quandong and blue cheese. Indigenous food product inputs and recipes were sourced from Warndu, an Aboriginal-owned business.

# GIRLS PLAY AUSTRALIA

In celebration of the FIFA Women's World Cup, co-hosted by Australia and New Zealand in July and August 2023, the Australian High Commission and the Trinidad and Tobago Football Association (TTFA) teamed up for the Girls Play Australia football camp on 3 August 2023. Held at the Woodbrook Youth Facility, girls between ages six and twelve, alongside the TTFA under-17 women's football team, had the opportunity to showcase their talent and learn new skills, while engaging with young female athletes from Australia's Commonwealth Youth Games (CYG) team. Seventeen-time paralympic champion, Australian CYG Team General Manager and FIFA Ambassador Ellie Cole gave a keynote address and filmed a message of support from participants for Australia's Matildas football team.

Between 2022-2032, Australia will host several major sporting events in the lead up to the Brisbane Summer Olympics and Paralympic Games 2032. Dubbed the Green and Gold decade, it commenced in 2022 with the FIBA's Women's Basketball World Cup and Men's T20 Cricket World Cup and will include the Netball World Cup, the BMX World Championships, the ICC Men's T20 World Cup and the Men and Women's Rugby World Cup.



Australian Deputy High Commissioner, Ms Melissa Mitchell sharing her knowledge of Australia with the young footballers.



Seventeen-time paralympic champion and FIFA Ambassador Ellie Cole, High Commissioner Sonya Koppe, along with Commonwealth Youth Games elite athletes and members of the Trinidad and Tobago Football Association, show their support for participants of the Girls Play Australia football camp at the Woodbrook Youth Facility on 3 August 2023.



Showing some skills at the Girls Play Australia football camp.



Australian Commonwealth youth athlete joins in the fun with camp participants.



# 50 Years

OF AUSTRALIA-CARIBBEAN RELATIONS

In 2024, the High Commission will celebrate the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Australia and five of our countries of accreditation, The Bahamas, Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, as well as the opening of the first resident mission in the region, originally located in Kingston, Jamaica. We look forward to highlighting the anniversary across the region.

## commonwealth youth games

TRINBAGO 2023

The Trinbago Commonwealth Youth Games, held between 4-11 August 2023, saw over 1000 athletes and para-athletes between ages 14-18 participate in seven sports.

Australia was represented by 51 female and 24 male athletes, including five First Nations Australians, from all of our states and territories. Together they topped the medal tally, winning 26 gold, 17 silver and 21 bronze.

Team General Manager, Ellie Cole OAM extended sincere gratitude on behalf of her team for the warm welcome and generous support shown to the Australian team at the Games in Trinidad and Tobago.

Congratulations to all medallists and to all the athletes, who gave their best to represent their nations and territories – 71 in total!



Australian cyclists crossing the finishing line at the Commonwealth Youth Games 2023



Victory for Australian swimmers at the Commonwealth Youth Games 2023



Members of the Rugby 7s team following a stellar performance at the Trinbago 2023 Commonwealth Youth Games which culminated in the team securing the gold medal.



High Commissioner Sonya Koppe with Wade Carruthers, Regional Consular Officer, and Robin O'Neil, General Manager of Commonwealth Games Australia in Tobago for Commonwealth Youth Games 2023.

