

REPORT ON 71st COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

United Kingdom

13th - 17th March 2023



Lisa Munday MLA

Member for Dawesville

History

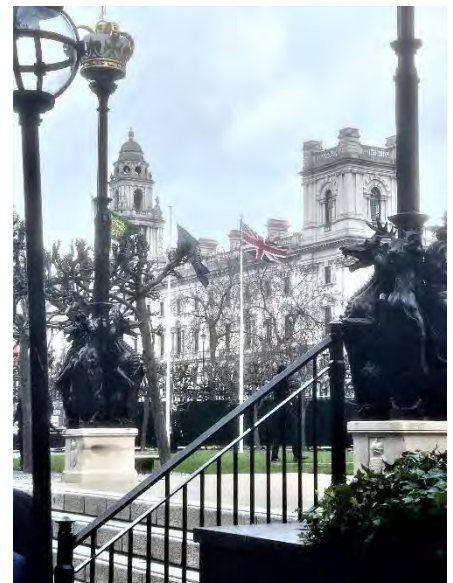
- ❖ The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) is a voluntary association of Commonwealth Parliaments and Legislatures that aims to promote democracy, good governance, and cooperation among its member countries.
- ❖ The CPA's main objectives are to promote parliamentary democracy, strengthen democratic institutions and processes, and support the development of parliamentary democracy. The organization works to enhance the knowledge and skills of parliamentarians, and to encourage them to share their experiences and best practices.
- ❖ The CPA organises conferences, seminars, and training programs for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff, and supports the development of parliamentary libraries and research services. It also provides technical assistance and advice on parliamentary procedures and practices, as well as on legislative drafting and scrutiny.
- ❖ On 13th March 2023, Commonwealth Parliamentarians gathered in London, to attend the 71st Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference and associated meetings. The seminar was a discussion and sharing information titled "**Westminster Seminar – On Effective Parliaments**" which was a week of contribution from selected members of parliament sharing their experiences of what their life as a representative of their parliament – both in government and opposition looked like, with discussion and comment from the room during and after the sessions. The week also included subject matter experts on varied topics relating to the Westminster system and included discussions from seasoned UK Parliamentarian's on their experiences and journey through political life.
- ❖ The Conference explored a wide range of workshop topics discussing subjects of power and privilege, ethics; working in the ever evolving digital work space; parliamentary systems across the commonwealth; how to ensure diversity in parliaments. It included a practical simulation of a committee hearing – watching (or participating) in role play – with a Senior Researcher from the UK Parliament explaining the working model of what a committee does and is responsible for, using a freeze frame focus where the exercise was paused for discussion and comment.
- ❖ The Conference was held over 5 days, hosted by the CPA United Kingdom, and was attended by 68 Parliamentarians and Parliamentary Clerks representing their Parliaments and Legislatures from across the Commonwealth.

- ❖ This Conference brought together Speakers, Members of Parliament and Parliamentary staff representing the nine regions of the CPA – Africa; Asia; Australia; British Islands and Mediterranean; Canada; Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic; India; Pacific; and South East Asia.

March 13th – Monday

- ❖ **Commonwealth Day Flag Raising Ceremony in the UK**

We attend a flag raising ceremony on the parliamentary estate. It was led by the Rt Hon. Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP, Speaker of the House of Commons in the UK Parliament. This happened very quickly, and I actually expected to see more pomp and ceremony. Mr Speaker (centre picture) walked out to the New Palace Yard with a small entourage, walked over to the UK flag, which he raised himself in silence and then they formed a line and the entourage retreated back into the Palace of Westminster – the whole event took less than 5 minutes.



❖ Commonwealth Day Flag Raising Ceremony



We were all invited to attend a reception with light refreshments at the invitation of the Rt Hon. Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP, Speaker of the House of Commons in the UK Parliament. Also in attendance was Hon Stephen Smith, Australia's High Commissioner to the UK and it was lovely for myself and Member for Albany - Rebecca Stephens to catch up with him and chat about his work and how busy he has been settling in. (Collage picture with Right Hon. Sir Lindsay Hoyle – top right, High Commissioner Hon. Stephen Smith – bottom left).

❖ In Conversation with Rt Hon. David Lammy MP



Rt Hon David Lammy MP Labour Member of Parliament (MP) for Tottenham. He has been an MP since 2000 and has held various roles in government and opposition, including Minister of State for Higher Education and Skills, and Shadow Secretary of State for Justice. It was such a pleasure to hear him speak about the opportunities and challenges of life as a parliamentarian. My takeaway from his time with us – "Being outspoken is the point!!" You need to speak up for your community.

Topics that he covered was the impact of the Grenfell Tower Fire - [Corporate manslaughter: what is it and could it bring justice for Grenfell Tower victims? \(theconversation.com\)](#). The Windrush Scandal - [David Lammy's speech on the Windrush scandal shook the walls of Westminster | British GQ | British GQ \(gq-magazine.co.uk\)](#)

One of the highlights of David Lammy's career is his advocacy for social justice, particularly in relation to racial inequality. He has been a vocal critic of systemic racism in various areas, including the criminal justice system, education, and housing. He has also been a strong supporter. of human rights and has worked to promote greater understanding and cooperation between different communities.

Another notable achievement of David Lammy is his work on higher education. As Minister of State for Higher Education and Skills, he played a key role in implementing reforms to the student finance system, making it more accessible to students from disadvantaged backgrounds. I did however have the opportunity to ask Minister Lammy, if his seat wasn't a safe one – would he do exactly the same as he done again? He acknowledged that having a safe seat gave him the extra safety net to step up and out of line sometimes during his career but did say be true to your values.

❖ **Visit to Westminster Abbey.**



Myself, and the Member for Albany – Rebecca Stephens were lucky enough to be selected to sit (at the Deanery Pew) inside Westminster Abbey for The Commonwealth Day celebrations for 2023, along with our Clerk Sam Hastings. The theme this year is 'Forging a Sustainable and Peaceful Common Future', highlighting the active commitment of the family of nations to support the promotion of peace, prosperity and sustainability, especially through climate action, to secure a better future for young people and improve the lives of all Commonwealth citizens.

We were seated alongside *The Choir of Westminster Abbey*, which was magnificently conducted by Andrew Nethsingh. The King delivered his Commonwealth Day message from the Great Pulpit, saying in part –

..." whether on climate change and biodiversity loss, youth opportunity and education, global health, or economic co-operation, the Commonwealth can play an indispensable role in the most pressing issues of our time. Ours is an association not just of shared values, but of common purpose and joint action.

In this we are blessed with the ingenuity and imagination of a third of the world's population, including one and a half billion people under the age of thirty. Our shared humanity contains an immensely precious diversity of thought, culture, tradition and experience. By listening to each other, we will find so many of the solutions that we seek.

This extraordinary potential, which we hold in common, is more than equal to the challenges we face. It offers us unparalleled strength not merely to face the future, but to build it. Here, the Commonwealth has an incredible opportunity, and responsibility, to create a genuinely durable future – one that offers the kind of prosperity that is in harmony with Nature and that will also secure our unique and only planet for generations to come... Let ours be a Commonwealth that not only stands together, but strives together, in restless and practical pursuit of the global common good..."

It was a once in a lifetime experience to be able to make eye contact with King Charles III and get a smile and a nod of the head was a breath holding, surreal experience that many, many people would never get. It is not lost on me how lucky I am and how grateful I am to the CPA for the opportunities afforded to me and my other commonwealth parliamentary colleagues this week.



March 14th - Tuesday

❖ **Session 1: The Role and Powers of the Speaker**

This session explored the differences and similarities in the role and responsibilities of the Speakers and Presiding Officers in different legislatures across the Commonwealth.

The Speaker of the Westminster parliamentary system. They are responsible for maintaining order during parliamentary debates and ensuring that all members of parliament have an opportunity to speak. The Speaker protects the rights and privileges of the MP's and are responsible for ensuring that MPs are able to speak freely and without fear of retribution, and for protecting the rights and privileges of the House of Commons as a whole. Rt Hon Hoyle spoke about his personal tips of holding order, using a mixture of humour and instruction to keep the chamber flowing, while maintaining control.

The Hon. Samuelu Penitalia Teo's appointment as Speaker was seen as a significant moment in Tuvaluan politics, as he is the first person from the island of Nanumanga to hold the position. It was also seen as a reflection of his long and distinguished career in public service and his commitment to serving the people of Tuvalu, he was elected to the position by his fellow MP's in 2019. Mr Speaker of Tuvalu said they don't have a Parliamentary building to go to, they rent a space in the capital city – Funafuti to do their work. One of his biggest concerns is that the island of Tuvalu is sinking due to the rising of the seas and how they as a government are going to manage that over the next decade.

(Chair: Jon Davies, Chief Executive, CPA UK. Speakers: Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP, Speaker of the House of Commons, UK Parliament Hon. Samuelu Penitalia Teo, Speaker of Parliament, Parliament of Tuvalu)

Session 2: Parliamentary Systems Across the Commonwealth

We were split into groups with members and parliamentary officials to exchange, compare and contrast the procedures and features of our respective legislatures, including differences in unicameral and bicameral systems, the powers of each chamber and the different customs and traditions adopted within each model.

Our group was made of members and officials from Nova Scotia, Western Australia, Australian Capital Territory (ACT), Tasmania and Queensland. Nova Scotia, and Queensland's Legislative council was abolished in 1928 and 1922 respectively and now work as a Unicameral system. The ACT only ever had a Legislative Assembly and that first sat as a state parliament in 1989, prior to that they were

administered by the commonwealth government. The other Parliaments -Tasmania and WA both have bicameral systems.

Compared to a lot of other Commonwealth governments in the room, we were quite similar in our conversations, our party selections and numbers ranged from 25 seats in the Assembly in ACT and Tasmania, Nova Scotia has 55 seats, WA has 59 seats, and with the greatest number in the Queensland Legislative Assembly of 93 seats.

❖ Lunch with Mr Speaker at Palace of Westminster

We joined the Rt Hon. Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP for lunch at Speaker's House. One of the most interesting stories Mr Speaker shared with us is that it is common practice for the Speaker of the House to invite the royal who is about to have his or her coronation, in this case King Charles III to sleep over at the Palace of Westminster. He showed us the bedroom and explained it hadn't been slept in since George IV in 1821 as he was a self-confessed traditionalist.

There was a bit of mystery with regards to the bed for the Royals, it disappeared in 1940's and no one seemed to notice (or maybe care) until 1979 when an interiors expert at the Victoria and Albert Museum put a call out to the media to see if it could be located. As it turns out it was unwittingly sold at an auction, and it had made its way to Wales where the Martin family cherished it for many years before it was returned to its rightful resting place.



❖ **Session 3: Ensuring Representation and Diversity in Parliaments**

A panel of speakers focused on the meaning of diversity in parliament, and the work being done to address discrimination and ensure parliaments are reflective of the societies they serve.

Minister Gamage (Sri Lanka) discussed the need for more women in politics in Sri Lanka her roles include being Chairperson and Founder of the United Women's Front Organization, a Colombo-based Welfare organization that works with women and Children around Sri Lanka, to improve living standards, educational development of children. Sri Lanka ranks at 179 out of 189 countries for the percentage of women in national parliaments. While women represent over 52% of the Sri Lankan population, men continue to be more prevalent in the national legislature. Inadequate female representation is a prominent weakness in Sri Lanka's government and something Minister Gamage highlighted in her address to us.

Senator Lemaletian (Kenya) talked about diversity and change and how as a young person there is still a lot to be done in Kenya. Kenya is a country where the government has gender quotas, more women are turning to politics, especially the youth of the country. Her drive to do more was the reason she said she turned to politics to help counteract the violation of human rights of women and was determined to work within the government to abolish Female Genital Mutilation in Kenya. However, when the topic of gay marriage and relationships was discussed in this session, Senator Lemaletian refused to comment or be drawn into the conversation. ** In May 2019, the high court in Kenya upheld laws criminalising homosexual acts. In February of 2023 this year Kenya's highest court ruled that it was wrong for authorities to ban the gay community from registering a rights organisation. but confirmed that gay sex remains illegal.

(Chair: Rebecca Stephens MLA, Acting Speaker, Parliament of Western Australia

Speakers: Baroness Jenkin of Kennington, Member of House of Lords, UK Parliament Hon. Minister Diana Gamage, State Minister of Tourism, Parliament of Sri Lanka Sen. Hezema Lemaletian, Parliament of Kenya.)

❖ **Session 4: Privilege & Conduct: Standards, Behaviour & Etiquette**

How does parliament ensure that there is a balance between the respect of privilege and maintaining required standards of behaviour? Opening the conversation on privilege and behaviour in parliament, when working both physically and virtually, this session will explore the role of *Parliamentary Privilege* in ensuring a safeguard for parliamentarians to be able to perform their duties without inappropriate interference from outside the House.

We were given the absolute pleasure to listen to Mr Greenberg's address on the standards system, the right, the wrong and the food for thought. (I have attached it here)

"Welcome to a tale of two systems. It is the best of systems; and it is the worst of systems. Although really, the story of the role of standards in the Westminster Parliament is not so much a tale of two systems, as two completely different and conflicting stories, one of which is cried from the rooftops, and the other of which is rarely told. The one that is rarely told, is infinitely more important than the one that is cried from the rooftops, and so it is with that story that I will begin. So here is the positive side of the standards system. The House of Commons has passed for itself for many years now, a Code of Conduct for Members that articulates and codifies the very best of standards of public life, to which the vast majority of MPs commit unwaveringly and sincerely.

That Code is predicated upon seven principles, which are as recent in their articulation, as they are timeless in their origins and authority. These are the seven Principles of Public Life, first articulated in their present form by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, chaired by Lord Nolan, in its first Report published in 1995. Those seven principles are: openness and honesty; accountability and integrity; selflessness and objectivity; and leadership in demonstrating them all. The most important feature of these principles is that they carry equal weight and authority amongst every section of the enormously diverse population that makes up the United Kingdom today. For some people, honesty is a religious obligation. For others, it is a construct of the demands of humanity on itself. For many of us, it is a principle whose origins we may not claim to know, but whose demands we feel with clarity and certainty. The House of Commons has constructed a Code of Conduct for Members built upon the sure foundation of these timeless principles.

The Code expresses its purposes as including the aims:

- to build a common understanding of what behaviour and attitudes the House wishes to promote or considers unacceptable*
- to ensure the openness and accountability essential to the proper functioning of a representative democracy*
- to protect and enhance the reputation of the House of Commons, in order that the public can have justifiable confidence in it*
- to ensure that all Members can and do speak and act without fear or favour*
- to give clarity for Members and the public about the rules of conduct which underpin these standards, which are expected of all Members in undertaking their duties.*

For the purpose of achieving these objectives the Code imposes the following obligations on Members that —

- *Members must treat their staff and all those visiting or working for or with Parliament with dignity, courtesy and respect.*
- *Members must base their conduct on a consideration of the public interest, avoid conflict between personal interest and the public interest and resolve any conflict between the two, at once, and in favour of the public interest the acceptance by a Member of a bribe to influence his or her conduct as a Member, including any fee, compensation or reward in connection with the promotion of, or opposition to, any Bill, Motion, or other matter submitted, or intended to be submitted to the House, or to any Committee of the House, is contrary to the law of Parliament;*
- *Members must rigorously follow the rules on lobbying set out in the Guide to the Rules;*
- *Members must fulfil conscientiously the requirements of the House in respect of the registration of interests in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.*
- *Members must always be open and frank in declaring any relevant interest in any proceeding of the House or its Committees, and in any communications with Ministers, Members, public officials or public office holders.*
- *Members must only use information which they have received in confidence in the course of their parliamentary activities in connection with those activities, and never for other purposes.*
- *excepting modest and reasonable personal use, Members must ensure that the use of facilities and services provided to them by Parliament, including an office, is in support of their parliamentary activities, and is in accordance with all relevant rules.*
- *Members must not provide, or agree to provide, paid parliamentary advice, including undertaking, or agreeing to undertake services as a Parliamentary strategist, adviser or consultant; and*
- *Members shall never undertake any action which would cause significant damage to the reputation and integrity of the House of Commons as a whole, or of its Members generally.*

Against the background of these inspiring and enduring objectives, I now come to the negative side of the Standards story, the investigation of breaches of the Code and the imposition and enforcement of sanctions. And I make no apologies for leaving this negative aspect of standards until after consideration of the positive, because the former gets all the oxygen it needs from the concentrated attentions of the press, the wider media, and of course, social media.

And I do not complain of that. It is only natural that people should be outraged by betrayal of trust on the part of politicians, as it is only right that media of all kinds should prevent breaches of trust from being hidden from scrutiny. It is not the fault of the media if a small number of Members of Parliament insist on tarnishing the reputations of the whole by indulging in paid lobbying or other forms of bribery. Nor is it the fault of the media if the result of this and other forms of misconduct has been to reduce the public reputation

of politicians as a class to a level that is dangerously low for the safe and secure operation of the rule of law, in a Parliamentary democracy which depends on government by consent. Nor, of course, is this the fault of the majority of Members who go about their public lives strongly committed to maintenance of high standards. Except perhaps in one small respect: perhaps the majority of politicians have been slightly at fault in being too shy of proclaiming and demonstrating the preponderance of good behaviour to bad. Perhaps this is not surprising, as they may rightly feel that the reputation of the political class as a whole has sunk to such a low level in the United Kingdom that an attempt to justify their own behaviour would fall on deaf ears and indeed rebound against them in cynicism. As a result, therefore, when I took up my role as Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards at the beginning of this year, one of my resolves was to try to create a safe space, in which Members from all sides of the political spectrum could demonstrate their commitment to high standards in public office, articulate and refine best practice, and indeed share their experience and inspire each other.

To this end, for example, I am commencing a series of seminars in which Members' staff, and then Members, can discuss how the Nolan principles are encoded into the practical realities of day-to-day life in their offices.

We will be preparing case studies of best practice which can then be shared with other members and ultimately with the public. I certainly do not overestimate the potential impact of this and other similar mechanisms for redressing the balance in relation to the reputation of politicians. But I am encouraged by what I have seen so far to believe that it may be able to do some good. Now the practicalities of the negative side of the system. Standing Order No. 150 of the House of Commons requires me to investigate allegations of breach of the Code. I can investigate allegations of breaches based on complaints received from anyone, including any member of the public – and I receive a considerable number of such complaints – or I can investigate on my own initiative arising out of matters that come to my attention from the media or elsewhere. There are significant limitations on my investigatory powers. The Code recognises that Members are entitled to privacy in relation to their private affairs, and it specifically prohibits me from investigating anything in relation to what Members do in their purely private and personal lives.

I am also obviously prohibited from investigating anything that is said or done in the course of Parliamentary proceedings (except for a limited role in relation to the declaration of interests) or in the course of the exercise of Members' functions in relation to their constituents (except in the context of conduct that would cause significant damage to the House). So, for example, I am not permitted to intervene in correspondence between Members and their constituents, even to the extent of exhorting members who are dilatory in replying to constituents to engage with them more effectively. Sometimes I wish that I could do that: but I recognise the importance and justice of the Code in keeping me well away from interference in how Members

choose to perform – or even to neglect – their functions. The Code of Conduct adumbrates four sets of practical obligations which are then embroidered in the Guide relating to the Conduct of Members:

- *registration of interests.*
- *declaration of interests.*
- *a prohibition of paid lobbying; and*
- *a new prohibition this year of undertaking work as a paid Parliamentary consultant.*

These are in addition to the more open obligations at the beginning of the Code, most notably the requirement already mentioned to avoid conduct that would cause significant damage to the reputation and integrity of the House. In relation to some of the more specific kinds of breach I have a range of options where I investigate and find that a breach has occurred. In particular, under the Standing Order I have a number of rectification options that are open for me to exercise myself without recourse to anyone else. Most of these are carried out publicly, and the result, whether it be a remedial registration or an apology will be made public. And I do have some powers to enter into private discussions with members in relation to certain kinds of breach and to resolve them in private, for example by giving words of advice, if that seems to me to be the most reasonable and proportionate outcome in all the circumstances. In relation to other breaches, however, I do not have the power to impose any kind of sanction myself, or, indeed, as of the beginning of this year, formally to make a decision that a breach has occurred. In these cases, I must report the matter to the Committee on Standards, a Select Committee of the House of Commons comprising MPs with the addition of a number of lay members. This Committee must take my report, decide whether it confirms my opinion and, where relevant, set a sanction.

The most important sanction available to the Committee that is not available to me is the sanction of suspension from the House. This is always a significant sanction; but since the passage of the Recall of MPs Act 2015 it has the ability effectively to signal the end of a Member's career. Where a Member is suspended for at least 10 days their constituents can, by a petition signed by at least 10% of the constituents, recall them, which in effect means having them dismissed from the House. So far, three petitions have been triggered under the Act, and two were successful. There is now an Independent Expert Panel, composed of judges and others with legal experience, which hears appeals by MPs against findings of breaches of the code of conduct by the Standards Committee. I should also mention that in relation to allegations of bullying, harassment and sexual or other interpersonal misconduct, there is now an Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme, which is open to all Members of either House, staff of Members of either House, and staff of either House, to complain about Members or any of those other classes. That Scheme employs



independent investigators, and in relation to complaints made against MPs investigations are carried out under my oversight and my decision in relation to them is made without reference to the Committee on Standards. I will end my remarks by bringing us back to the best of times, and saying that I very much look forward during my five years in office to working with parliamentarians around the world in reaffirming the commitment of the majority to the highest of standards in public life, and hopefully, to achieving some degree of success in helping members of public to have a better opinion of the way in which we all strive to serve them."

Daniel Greenberg CB

Our very own Rebecca Stephens (Member for Albany) followed up on this to give her perspective as a regional Member of Parliament (Legislative Assembly) I have added Rebecca's speech for review...

How far does parliamentary privilege (for Members) extend in your Parliament?

"The law of parliamentary privilege in Western Australia is contained in our Parliamentary Privileges Act. That Act sets out some express powers and privileges and also incorporates the privileges of the House of Commons as of 1 January 1989 – usefully chosen to coincide with the 21st edition of Erskin May.

In effect, this means that there is centuries of powers and privileges and precedent that are influential in the day to day running of our parliament. This session is based on member conduct and as far as privilege goes the most useful stick that can be used is a finding of contempt against a Member. However, a finding of contempt against a member is only usually available where a Members' conduct substantially interferes with the work of the House.

This requirement for a substantial interference is easier to establish where a Members' conduct relates directly to what is happening in the chamber or committees – for example, deliberately misleading the House, wilfully disrupting proceedings or disclosing confidential material.

Of course, parliamentary privilege is not just about punishing people, it also provides vital protections for our Members to be able to fully undertake their role in the House without fear of adverse consequences. Article 9 of the Bill of Rights applies in Western Australia and has in only recent times performed its role in protecting Members in their work.

These protections also extend to those who participate in parliamentary proceedings such as witnesses in committee proceedings and those that produce materials that are directly related to proceedings in parliament.

One challenge that Members and parliaments can face is the term "privilege" itself. Members of parliament in Australia are not the most popular people and it can be hard sell to suggest that parliamentarians have these "privileges" that others do not.

However, there is a reason that these fundamental laws have sustained for so long. I think this point is an important one to remember as like anything, having significant powers means that they should be exercised cautiously and not recklessly. In this regard, tapping into the expertise of our clerks is vital.

In our parliament we see it as our responsibility to educate young people on the role and function of parliament so that future generations have a better grasp of the importance of parliament's work. We hope that this investment will help strengthen the role of parliament into the future.

Are there mechanisms in place, to ensure that Members adhere to the Standards, Behaviour & Etiquette that is required of those in public office?

One challenge that many Australian parliaments are facing is how to make Members accountable for their conduct, particularly that conduct that does not consist of a traditional contempt. Like many Westminster Parliaments in recent years, Australian parliaments have been places where unacceptable conduct has occurred.

Members of Parliament are in a strange position in Western Australia. They are neither employees or statutory officers. They are not the direct employees of those who work for them – electorate office staff are employed by the Presiding Officer.

Ministerial office staff are employed by the public service. Despite this, Members of Parliament are for all intents and purposes their managers and only source of day to day authority on their duties. This can be a challenge for some new Members who may enter the parliament having never managed staff before.

Some of these issues have recently been explored in reviews of parliamentary workplaces conducted in a number of jurisdictions – most notably the Jenkins Review in the Commonwealth Parliament and the Broderick Review into the Parliament of New South Wales.

These inquiries into bullying and harassment examined the different cohorts in parliament – Members, their staff and the parliamentary service. The findings may not be a surprise to you, they generally found:

- *The power imbalance and limited rights of employment can result in staff being unwilling to historically raise concerns.*
- *Young people and people of diverse sexuality were found to more likely be subject to bullying harassment.*
- *Both women and men reported serious cases of bullying, harassment and sexual harassment.*
- *There was a low level of trust in reporting mechanisms.*

Many Australian parliaments are now contending with this question of how standards can be enforced, particularly against MPs. Traditionally the only mechanism available was discreet inquiries by parliamentary officials and at most, private admonishment from the presiding officer.

The political parties themselves may have played a role under their own procedures where they were aware of poor conduct. In my House, we have a Code of Conduct that forms part of our Standing Orders that provides a guide to Members on how to conduct themselves.

What role does the Speaker play in promoting a respectful working culture in Parliament?

In my role as Acting Speaker, I preside over the Assembly for around 5 hours per week. I'm very conscious that what happens on the floor of the House is only a fraction of the work that goes on in a parliament but it an important part and a very public part. The public expect Members of parliament to hold themselves to high standards. I see it as my role to uphold these standards in the debates that I preside over.

This means that I apply the Standing Orders in a way that promotes respect. This however can be a challenge, particularly when society's expectations as to what is acceptable behaviour can often be ahead of the way that our parliament works.

For example, one hundred years ago, the first Australian woman, Edith Cowan, elected to a parliament was elected to my chamber. There was outrage in some quarters and reportedly she was frequently spoken over, interrupted and at times treated very disrespectfully on the floor of the chamber.

Despite us having the same type of prohibitions in our standing orders as back then – for example to not be "unparliamentary" or to not use "offensive words" Edith Cowan would hopefully be treated very differently today as what is considered unparliamentary and offensive has changed over time. –

Rebecca Stephens MLA

(Chair: Darren Jones MP, Chair of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee, House of Commons, UK Parliament

*Speakers: Daniel Greenberg CB, Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, UK House of Commons
Rebecca Stephens MLA, Acting Speaker, Parliament of Western Australia.)*



March 15th - Wednesday

❖ **Session 5: Separation of Powers – Parliament and the Executive**

In this session David Melding explored the nature of the relationships between Parliament, the Judiciary, and the Executive. He underlined the importance of autonomy for each one of these three branches and how this translates in practice, and in this session clarified the role of Parliament in holding the Executive to account.

(Chair: Axell Kaubo, Programme Manager and Security Thematic Lead, CPA UK)

Speakers: David Melding CBE, Former Member of the Welsh Parliament (Senedd) Baroness D'Souza, Member, House of Lords, UK Parliament)

❖ **Session 6: Holding the Government or Prime Minister to Account**

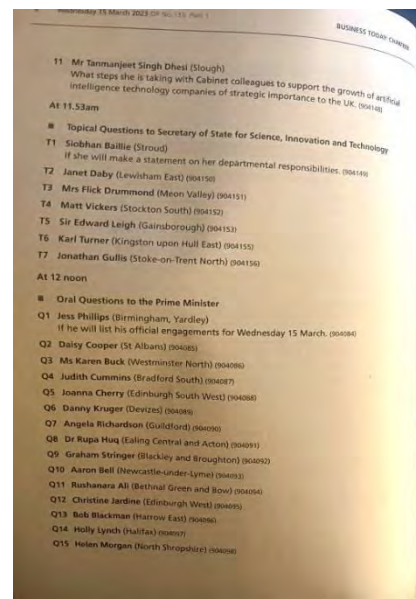
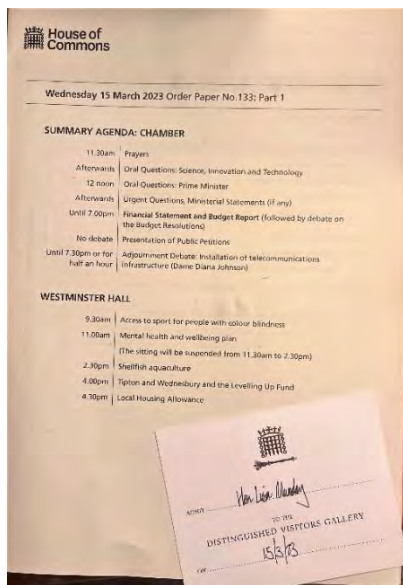
Focusing on accountability, this session explored the role of the Head of Government in different legislatures across the Commonwealth, what is good practice in holding them to account and the effectiveness of existing parliamentary mechanisms to do so across the Commonwealth.

(Chair: Chris Elmore MP, Opposition Whip, House of Commons, UK Parliament)

Speakers: The Rt Hon. Ian Blackford MP, Former Leader of the SNP, House of Commons, UK Parliament Lloyd Owen, Clerk of the Liaison Committee, UK House of Commons)

❖ Prime Minister's Questions Live

Approximately half the room of MP's were taken across to watch Prime Minister Question Time from the Commons Gallery. Unfortunately, we were not able to take photos as the scene was one of organised chaos with the Speaker managing with cajoling and scolding the MP's with veiled threats of having them removed from the chamber. Members were sitting on long benches and stood up and sat down many times during QT looking to be noticed by Mr Speaker. There were also members standing around in groups, near the Speakers chair, along the walls – very loud and what seemed unstructured in comparison to how our Question Time works in the West Australian chamber of the legislative assembly.



❖ Session 7: Training - Leadership and Communication Skills for Parliamentarians



This session was led by a communication expert, tailored for us parliamentarians to work on leadership and communication skills to achieve impact as public figures. We completed simple listening and repeating exercises centred around the importance of allowing someone to be heard and to understand the best way to respond.

Storytelling. Ginny explained that research by Stanford University revealed that stories can be 22 times more memorable than facts. We split up into groups and worked through how to create impactful stories.

Facilitator: Ginny Radmall, Director, The Ivy Way (for parliamentarians)

❖ Session 8: Parliament and the Digital Space

What can parliaments do to ensure effective scrutiny of online bullying and harassment legislation?

In an era where social media is increasingly present within the political and public spheres, what responsibility do members have to promote freedom of speech online whilst still protecting the fundamentals of democracy? This session uses examples of how parliamentarians and committees best use social media to increase their presence, manage misinformation and encourage greater public engagement. It also explores how committee clerks ensure safeguarding when addressing sensitive communication from the public. Delegates will have the opportunity to share their own experiences of social media use, its challenges, including the spread of fake news and what innovative ways are being used to capture the public's concerns.

We discussed what parliaments can do to ensure effective scrutiny of bullying and harassment legislation online. We are in an era where social media is increasingly present within the political and public spheres, and discussion centred around our responsibility as members to promote freedom of speech online whilst still protecting the fundamentals of democracy.

This session used examples of how MPs and committees best utilise social media to increase their presence, manage misinformation and encourage greater public engagement. It also explored how committee clerks ensured and safeguarded information when addressing sensitive communication from the public.

We heard from members and clerks who expressed their own experiences of social media use, its challenges, including the spread of fake news and what innovative ways it is being used to capture our local communities.

(Chair: Rt Hon. Dame Maria Miller DBE MP, Member, UK House of Commons

Speakers: Damian Collins MP, Member, UK House of Commons Florence Eshalomi MP, Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Cabinet Office of Government, UK House of Commons)

March 16th - Thursday

❖ Briefing and Practical Exercise for Committee Exercise

This session was a practical exercise where a handful of delegates were selected to form a committee, and they questioned pretend witnesses on a specific topic.

This allowed us to put into practice the knowledge, skills and questioning techniques developed during this session. During the session, we 'freeze-framed' and worked as a group to question the Committee on their style of questioning – gave tips and ideas on what other angles you take the questioning. We talked about the potential motivations of each committee member and questioned things like declaring conflicts of interest – when, how and why it is time. This session also allowed participants to pause and think about how certain aspects could have been done differently or how things usually would be conducted during a committee hearing in their legislatures. It was a great session with everyone involved in acting out the practical session doing exceptionally well.

March 17th – Friday

Constituency Visit (Members)

In small groups, we parliamentarians visited one of the following constituencies and met with the MP from that electorate.

Member of Parliament:

Streatham Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP

Vauxhall Florence Eshalomi MP

Westminster Nickie Aiken MP

East Ham Rt Hon. Sir Stephen Timms MP

My group returned to Parliament House to meet with Nickie Aiken, MP for Westminster (central London area). We met Nickie for about 5 minutes before she was called away to go into the chamber to speak on a Bill.



We spent the time with her advisors discussing the similarities and differences between electoral office staff vs parliamentary staff. Comparatively speaking, Nickie's team worked very similarly to our electoral offices with allocated duties such as continual campaigning, organising events and social media.

None of us in the group were Ministers, so they had no team at parliament that worked for them. Some MPs from smaller countries discussed their difficulties as some have no staff and must do everything themselves, including emails, diaries, events, social media, speeches for parliament, etc. Nickie's team offered different ideas and solutions for topics raised by us that we were dealing with in our electorates.

We returned to the conference room for lunch and then wound up from there, saying our goodbyes.