

CSA 26th Annual General Meeting and Social

Saturday 18th November 2023

at the Pennant Hills Community Centre

Ramsay Road, Pennant Hills NSW

ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT PAULINE GUNewardENE



Well, here we are again, with another year having disappeared into the past at lightning speed!

A very good evening to you guests and members of the Ceylon Society of Australia. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the Annual General Meeting and Social in the 27th year of our existence!

Before I go on with this Report to the membership, it is my sad duty to remember the passing away on the 11th of September of our former President Harry de Sayrah, as well as a former Committee member of long standing, Srikantha Nadarajah on the 19th of August. The current November journal carries Appreciations for them both by good friends Doug Jones and Rex Olegasegarem respectively, so I will not go into details here. Harry was President from 2011 to 2013 and on the Committee as Public Relations Officer from 2005 to 2010 and again from 2014 until he passed away. Nada, as he was known to all, was Treasurer from 2005 to 2009 and a Committee Member from 2011 to 2019. Their service to CSA has been invaluable with their totally committed dedication to our Society. So we need to honour their long contribution to where the CSA is at today, and I would ask you please to stand while we observe a minute's silence in their memory.

SILENCE OF ONE MINUTE

To recap the activities of the Sydney parent body over the past year, we held the scheduled three General Meetings in Sydney in February, May and August.

February 2023

The first talk for the year was by Adjunct Professor Maithri Panagoda, lawyer, poet and humanist, in the 'Stories of Success' series which I am hoping to do. Maithri is an outstanding lawyer and has risen to the heights in his profession, achieving high recognition in this his adopted country not only for his legal work, but also for his ground breaking work for the First People of Australia. It was an illuminating talk on what exactly "success" means in all its varied aspects.

May 2023

Dr. Raja Bandaranayake was the speaker on the most interesting topic of "Charles Dickens on Ceylon" – did he or did he not visit the country and have personal

knowledge to do his writing? The answer from his research would seem that Dickens did not visit after all! It was a 'detective in action' by Dr Bandaranayake and the Q&A session was lively.

August 2023

This was the highlight of the year with the speaker being the new High Commissioner for Sri Lanka to Australia, Her Excellency Chitrangane Wagiswara, a career diplomat, speaking on "Sri Lanka: Road to Recovery – Challenges and Opportunities". We were very privileged to be able to get the HC making a special visit to Sydney to present for us on this topic of keen interest to all Sri Lankans after the economic crisis of 2022. We had a record attendance of over 100 and the feedback was that her presentation was interesting and thought provoking, with a grounded attitude focusing on facts and the realities. The talk was followed by a High Tea where attendees had the opportunity to interact with the High Commissioner.

I am very glad to report that the Melbourne and Colombo Chapters have been very active. Both Chapters have been holding regular meetings, increasing the profile and awareness of the CSA. The Colombo Chapter has been particularly revitalised with the appointment of their new young Secretary, Avishka Senewiratne, who has been organising meetings and recruiting many new members to almost double their membership base – congratulations to Avishka!

Here in Sydney, our parent body General Meetings take place on the last Sunday evenings of February, May and August, with the AGM and Social on the one before last Saturday in November. It is just three meetings for the year, and I urge members to make every effort to attend. Your ongoing interest and enthusiasm is what gives us Committee Members the stimulus and encouragement to give of our services to keep running the Society.

Membership

Our overall membership now stands at 315, including 16 Complimentaries sent to institutions. We have 251 in Australia – up from 248 – and Sri Lanka has done really well to go up to 40 from 28, with 24 in other overseas countries. The 16 Complimentaries of our highly regarded journal are being sent out for the libraries of various prestigious institutions such as the Royal Asiatic Society UK, Royal Asiatic Society Ceylon, the National Library of Australia, the State Libraries of NSW, Victoria and Queensland, to name but a few. You will agree, I am sure, that we are certainly punching above our weight!

Which takes me to my usual plug for CSA to increase membership, particularly with the recruitment of younger age group members if we are to keep the continuity going of this valuable association. Realistically and hopefully, this would be members from the 60s age group at least, and it would be great if you could all invite a friend as a guest to one of our meetings to incentivise joining. Sri Lanka has a 2,500 year

old history and culture that evokes much interest in the world and we could play our part in our stated mission of "studying, fostering and promoting interest" with our membership drive.

Accounts

The Accounts for the year ended 30 June 2023 have been audited by Rienzie Fonseka. Our thanks to Rienzie for helping us with this over the last eight years.

Copies of the audited Accounts have been emailed by the Secretary to Members for information, and a few explanations would be appropriate, while noting that we use the Australian taxation year of 1 July-30 June although subscriptions are based on a calendar year.

1. The receipts show a balance of \$1,000 approx over 2022 partly due to this Social providing the much needed boost to our finances as always, and also due to the sale to members this year of the books from the CSA Library, which the Committee decided we should give up since it was not being made use of by the membership. The books not sold were donated to Victor Melder in Melbourne for his community library.
2. We had a small profit of \$400 from the August Meeting featuring the High Commissioner.
3. The cost of postage for Australia and Overseas has gone up and keeps rising. Printpost being used for Australian journals has gone up by approx 10% from \$800 to \$900, and International postage has also gone up by approx 10% from \$220 to \$240.
4. Printing costs have been reduced by moving the printing to KwikKopy Five Dock at a very competitive quote of approx \$900 per run, saving us \$200. The Colombo Chapter journals are being printed by MD Gunasena over the past year at a very competitive cost of around Rs.10,000 per run at half the cost of other printers there. I am glad to have been able to negotiate these prices as we do need to keep our outgoings down.

In the current climate of escalating costs, maintaining subscriptions at the level we are doing now is a very difficult balancing act, although we are striving to do so by identifying savings wherever possible. We do hope members will understand the need to increase subscriptions if we are forced to do so to enable us to avoid running at a loss.

New Initiative

I would like to give the membership advance information that the Committee has approved the proposal by Editor Adam to set up a CSA website to take us forward into the future of technology. Adam will be registering a domain site and doing the setting up required, including the purchase of Licence and Software. He will be responsible for the website operation and maintenance. It will be a platform for growth and further development, and we will send members more detailed information later. We envisage keeping the

hard copy of the journal in production for sending out to members, with the website carrying copies but restricted to paid subscription members who wish to use it.

Committee Members Contributions

I would like to acknowledge here for you the contributions of the various Committee members, who give of their services voluntarily with the commitment to do the best possible for the CSAs overall functioning. I know you will agree that Editor Adam is doing an excellent job of maintaining the iconic status of the journal and getting it out in time to deadline despite the pressures of his paid editing job. Presenji has taken over successfully from Sunimal to keep the secretarial function going, Deepak is maintaining the requirements of the Treasurer role, and Amal makes sure the journals get sent out when ready with the printer. Earlson and Kumar have been very helpful in the arrangements for meetings. Hugh and Thiru are great mainstays of regular well researched interesting contributions to the journal, and Srilal helps to keep the Melbourne Chapter going.

At this stage I should mention that Hemal Gurusinghe, the Melbourne Chapter Convenor for many years, has decided to step down. He has the CSA's grateful thanks for all his efforts, with his wife Ratna helping, to run the activities in Melbourne. There will be a presentation in Melbourne in December, organised by Srilal, to show our appreciation. A small group will be set up to take over the functions of the Melbourne Convenor.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you most sincerely for your presence here tonight, for making the effort to attend the AGM and giving us the pleasure of your company at the Social to make the Committee's organising efforts worthwhile. We hope you will enjoy the evening of socialising and have a happy time. Please participate with gusto in the Singalong of old favourites and carols, and hype up into dancing the night away when we move into that stage.

Catering this year again is by the well known Flavour of Ceylon, and I would like to thank Aquinas for his helping us with this function despite his many commitments at this time of year. Enjoy the menu!

Let's have fun together in a pre-Christmas celebration! Let's live in the moment and make it joyous – tomorrow is another day!

Thank you.

Pauline Gunewardene
President, Ceylon Society of Australia

Saturday, 18 November 2023

Some photos of the evening.
Thanks to Mahal Selvadurai



*Mahal Selvadurai and
June Aranwella*



Avinder Paul



*Devika de Fonseka and
Pauline Gunewardene*



*Deanna Saathananthan and
Srikanthi Wijetunga*



Tale of Two Presidents! Pauline (current) and Thiru (immediate past) announcing winner of the Trivia contest



Amal and Rosani Wahab



Kanthi Perera and Chandra Senaratne



Aubrey Joachim, Hyacinth Jones and Adam Raffel



Nelleke and Kumar Rasiah



Thiru and Malini Arumugam with Dr Krishna Sellathurai



Nargis and Presenji Jayawickrama



Kantha Abeysinghe and Hyacinth Jones



Lucien and Srikanthi Wijetunga



CSA Choir in full voice!



*Ably accompanied by Roger Menezes (left) and Shiranthi Rodrigo (on the piano)
Priyanga and Devika de Fonseka leading the Baila! (below)*



Upali and June Aranwella



Rex Olegasegarem and Earl Forbes



Gunasmin and Esme Lye



Indrakumar and Roshani Jayewardene



Earlson Forbes with June and Upali Aranwella



Chandra Senaratne, Shiranthi Rodrigo and Pauline Gunewardene