

Commonwealth Day 2009

Message from the Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon. Kevin Rudd

Commonwealth Day is an opportunity to celebrate the unique association of Commonwealth members. It is a partnership of countries who share a common interest in improving the livelihoods of their peoples through a commitment to the fundamental Commonwealth principles of democracy, good governance, the rule of law and the protection of human rights. This year marks the 60th anniversary of the London Declaration, when the Commonwealth's colonial legacy was transformed into a partnership based on equality, choice and consensus.

The Commonwealth Day theme for 2009, 'thecommonwealth@60 – serving a new generation', highlights the importance of youth in addressing the shared challenges facing Commonwealth members. The Commonwealth's commitment to youth is clearly exhibited by the work of the Commonwealth Youth Programme, which is dedicated to empowering young people. Through our engagement with the Commonwealth and the broader international community, Australia will continue to work actively to ensure young people have the opportunity to become active citizens who understand their rights and responsibilities.

Australia continues to provide opportunities to young people. The Youth Ambassadors for Development program has enabled more than 2,500 young Australians to share their skills and knowledge in developing countries and make a difference in some of the world's poorest nations. Furthermore, the Australian Government provides up to 1,000 Australian Development Scholarships each year to contribute to the long development needs of Australia's partner countries.

As we look to the next 60 years of the Commonwealth, I am confident that we can make a significant contribution towards empowering young people throughout the Commonwealth and continue to address the shared challenges of our era, and those of the next.