



PRESS RELEASE

30 June 2021

The Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work (COSW) has adopted a statement on '*Human Rights for all Peoples in the Commonwealth*' which restates the values and principles of the Organisation and reaffirms COSW support for the *Commonwealth Charter*.

Launching the statement, COSW Chair Sylvia Daisy Romanus said: 'The COSW statement on human rights for all makes clear that, as a Commonwealth Organisation, 'we cannot ignore the legacy of colonialism, racism and other discriminations which have left an indelible legacy within the Commonwealth . Therefore, in response to the worldwide #BlackLivesMatter protests and the indisputable evidence of structural racism and of persistent discrimination faced by Indigenous Peoples and other minorities around the Commonwealth, we reaffirm our commitment to the values expressed in the words of the Commonwealth Charter and recognise our responsibility to uphold those principles in the practice of social work and the education of social workers and to take action to challenge and correct past abuses.'

Dr Sylvia continued 'this statement notes that, despite the good intentions and fine commitments of the Commonwealth Charter, health inequalities, poverty and other forms of discrimination continue within and between Commonwealth countries. The disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on black and minority ethnic communities in the Commonwealth, including lack of access to vaccines, gives renewed urgency to the need to challenge structural racism in social work education and practice and to create a society of fairness.'

The statement includes several COSW commitments including: working 'to enhance equal opportunities for peoples of all races, ethnicities and backgrounds'; raising 'awareness of the consequences of racism and discrimination throughout the Commonwealth'; supporting 'the inclusion of decolonisation perspectives at all levels of social work education'; and taking 'steps to ensure that our organisation reflects the diversity of the Commonwealth'.

'These principles and commitments are not new in social work', said Dr Sylvia, but at this crucial and troubling time in the world, we need to restate them and be ready to stand by them'.

NOTE TO EDITORS

The statement can be found on the COSW website www.cosw.info/news

COSW is an organisation for citizens of the Commonwealth who are interested in supporting social work and social development. It is supported by a number of social work associations in the Commonwealth. It aims to promote and support communication and collaboration between social workers and social work associations of Commonwealth countries, and to uphold and promote the code of ethics of the International Federation of Social Workers.

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