



RENEWING THE COMMONWEALTH –
SPECIAL ARTICLE ON THE COOLUM CHOGM

2001–02

'The core values of the Commonwealth, which are a commitment to democratic practice, the rule of law and more open societies ... have been very much reaffirmed at this meeting.'

Prime Minister John Howard, Coolum, 5 March 2002



The Prime Minister as Chairman of the Coolum CHOGM greets the Outgoing Chairman of CHOGM, President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), a two-yearly gathering of heads of government from all Commonwealth member nations, is a major international event. For Australia as host country, the sixteenth modern CHOGM, held at Coolum from 2–5 March 2002, was the largest and most prestigious meeting of international leaders ever held in the country.

Despite extraordinary circumstances, uncertainty and some adversity – for the organisers and the participants – the Coolum CHOGM will be remembered as a great success. It confirmed that the Commonwealth remains both relevant to international relations and flexible enough to rise to any occasion. The general flavour of the meeting and the High Level Review Group recommendations it endorsed (recommendations that Australia had strongly promoted) underscored the Commonwealth's commitment to its core values and renewed and strengthened bonds between member nations.

This article discusses the challenges the Government and this department faced in hosting the meeting; summarises the policy process in the lead-up to CHOGM, and the major policy outcomes; and describes both the event and the management and security arrangements that made it possible.

Preparing for a modern CHOGM

Bigger than ever

Australia hosted the first Asia Pacific Commonwealth Heads of Government Regional Meeting ever held, in Sydney in 1978, and hosted a meeting of the modern CHOGM in Melbourne in 1981. The Melbourne CHOGM was the subject of a special article in the department's 1981–82 Annual Report.

Since 1981, CHOGM has grown to become a large and complex international summit, potentially involving the leaders of 54 member countries (there were only 42 Commonwealth members in 1981). Initial planning for the Queensland CHOGM foreshadowed arrangements for 54 leaders, 1,500 delegates and 1,500 media representatives.

In the event, the Coolum CHOGM was attended by Her Majesty The Queen, representatives of 52 countries (35 of them heads of government), 1,200 delegates and 1,000 media representatives. Pakistan and Fiji had been suspended from the councils of the Commonwealth at the time planning commenced. The suspension of Fiji was lifted on 20 December 2001, and Fiji's Prime Minister attended the meeting. Pakistan was not represented at Coolum, still being suspended, nor was Grenada.

Strategic direction

Strategic direction for CHOGM preparations was provided by the CHOGM Executive Steering Group, chaired by the Secretary of the department. Membership included Secretaries, chief executives and senior officers of 15 participating government departments and, from July 2001, the Queensland Department of the Premier and Cabinet and the Queensland Police Service.

The mandate of the CHOGM Executive Steering Group was:

- to keep the Prime Minister fully informed
- to provide high-level direction and guidance to the task force on event management and security issues
- to oversee and endorse policy preparations
- to determine and integrate individual agency responsibilities
- to provide guidance on media liaison and public affairs issues.

CHOGM Task Force and International Division

For 15 months, a CHOGM Task Force consisting of three people set about strategic planning for the event, the immediate priorities being to develop basic arrangements for venues and infrastructure, accommodation, preparation of a budget and development of a security framework. Consultative arrangements were developed with principal stakeholders, including the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Commonwealth security agencies – namely, the Attorney-General's Department, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, the Protective Security Coordination Centre, the Australian Federal Police and the Department of Defence – as well as with the Commonwealth Secretariat, located in London.

The CHOGM Task Force was initially situated within the International Division, meaning that organisational plans and initiatives were developed in tandem with key policy directions and objectives. International Division (working closely with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, AusAID, the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts and the Commonwealth Secretariat) continued to coordinate whole-of-government policy preparations after the CHOGM Task Force had been expanded and separated from the division. Close liaison between the two groups was maintained throughout the preparations, and was crucial to the successful management of CHOGM.

Also important to the preparations for an efficient and effective CHOGM were innovations for managing and streamlining the CHOGM agenda, in line with the High Level Review Group's reform proposals. Agreed to by member governments and the Commonwealth Secretariat at the meeting of Senior Officials in Apia, Samoa, in October 2000, these recommendations proved valuable in reconfiguring agenda arrangements after the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks.

Other contributors

The Queensland Government made a major contribution to the staging and security of CHOGM. The Queensland Government established a CHOGM Coordination Group consisting of all relevant agencies concerned with the delivery of support services, including operational security (delivered through the Queensland Police Service); health; transport; public relations and communications; trade; and tourism promotion. Similarly, close liaison arrangements were established with the Victorian Government specifically in relation to the Commonwealth Business

Forum and security provision issues involving the Victoria Police.

As host country, Australia had to work closely with the Commonwealth Secretariat and all Commonwealth member governments in developing the policy agenda for the meeting. International Division coordinated a whole-of-government policy approach involving a wide range of Australian government departments. It also assisted the Prime Minister, in his role as CHOGM chairman, to work with other leaders to achieve successful outcomes on contentious issues (including events in Zimbabwe, the engagement of developing nations with the World Trade Organisation, and global action against terrorism).

The road to Coolum

At the conclusion of the Edinburgh CHOGM in 1997, the Prime Minister extended an invitation to Commonwealth leaders to meet in Australia as part of our Centenary of Federation celebrations in 2001. Canberra was chosen as the venue. However, following a reassessment of the logistical requirements, it was announced on 31 December 1999 that Brisbane had replaced Canberra as the preferred location. The meeting was scheduled for 6–9 October 2001, with the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre as the principal venue.

During 2001, as the work of the CHOGM Task Force intensified, it expanded to 87 members. A Brisbane office was established in February 2001. Planning advanced to the extent that the Prime Minister was able to inspect facilities in the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre on the morning of 28 September 2001.

Later that day, however, the Prime Minister announced that, as a consequence of the terrorist attacks which had occurred in the United States on 11 September 2001, and following the Commonwealth Secretary-General's consultation with member governments, the Brisbane meeting had been postponed – making it the first CHOGM meeting ever postponed.

On 30 November 2001, the Secretary-General and the Prime Minister announced the meeting would instead be held from 2–5 March 2002 in Coolum, on Queensland's Sunshine Coast, previously planned to be the retreat venue. The 2002 CHOGM thus became the first to be held outside a major city.

The decision to move CHOGM to Coolum was based on the dual considerations of enhancing security and ensuring convenience for leaders. The Hyatt Regency Coolum resort would provide the centrepiece for the summit, housing the leaders and all the resources needed for their formal and informal sessions. The nearby Novotel Twin Waters resort would be the focal point for ministers' and officials' accommodation and meetings.

The events of 11 September 2001 generated important policy agenda issues, as well as organisational challenges, for the CHOGM organisers and participants. Terrorism was made a key agenda issue for the meeting, and an ad hoc Ministerial Committee on Terrorism (chaired by the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs) was established by the Commonwealth to coordinate a collective response to international terrorism and to report to leaders at Coolum.

Organising such a major event in a resort venue posed major logistical challenges for the task force, because facilities that would have been at hand in a large city were unavailable. Over 100 temporary structures – ranging from the very large Media Centre and opening ceremony venues to small security observation posts – had to be constructed, with all their accompanying infrastructure. Additionally, given that the majority of officials and ministers were located not in the Hyatt Regency Coolum resort but at the nearby Novotel Twin Waters resort, while other delegates and media representatives were accommodated in venues along the length of the Sunshine Coast, a major transport challenge had to be met.

The relocation of the meeting from Brisbane to Coolum did not allow for three CHOGM related events – the Commonwealth Peoples’ Centre/Festival, Commonwealth Business Forum and Commonwealth Youth Forum – to proceed at the same time as CHOGM. The festival and youth forum took place in Brisbane as scheduled, and the business forum was cancelled. A Commonwealth Small States Summit, originally proposed to take place in July 2002 as a Queen’s Jubilee gathering, was replaced by a major focus on small states issues in discussions during the Executive Sessions of CHOGM.



The Prime Minister chairing a general session of CHOGM. To his right: Mr Don McKinnon, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth.

The Coolum model

The ‘Coolum model’ proposed delivery of a streamlined, compact summit incorporating an enhanced security environment, limited movement demands on leaders, and reduced numbers of officials and media. A key component in this was the separate convening of the principal officials’ preparatory meeting of the Committee of the Whole, which was set down to meet in London several weeks before CHOGM, on 15 February 2002. This approach was first proposed by the High Level Review Group. The Coolum imperatives allowed it to be trialled, and demonstrated its advantages.

The Coolum CHOGM would effectively achieve the objectives of being a compact and secure event. The resort environment and the single location for leaders' activities would enhance formal and informal contacts, in an efficient and structured manner. It would draw much positive comment from leaders and delegations, demonstrating the effectiveness and suitability of a streamlined CHOGM.



CHOGM in session

The event

Goals

Australia took full advantage of its position as host in order to shape the CHOGM agenda, and ensure the meeting would produce substantive and forward-looking outcomes, working through preparatory meetings of Commonwealth leaders, ministers, senior officials and the administrative centre of the Commonwealth, the Commonwealth Secretariat. As part of the two-year High Level Review Group preparatory process, in September 2000 the Prime Minister attended a leaders' meeting in New York, coinciding with the United Nations Millennium summit.

The CHOGM theme – 'The Commonwealth in the Twenty-first Century: continuity and renewal' – underlined member nations' determination that the first CHOGM of the new century should demonstrate the Commonwealth's continuing role as a modern, progressive and relevant multilateral organisation.

Central to meeting this challenge was the work of the High Level Review Group, which had been established at the last CHOGM of the twentieth century in Durban, in 1999. Prior to the Coolum CHOGM, Australia – represented by the Prime Minister, supported by the Secretary and International Division of the department – played a key role in shaping the group's reform recommendations, with their adoption by CHOGM being a key objective for Australia.

Preliminary meetings

At the Coolum and Twin Waters venues in the days immediately before CHOGM:

- the eight-member Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (including Australia), chaired by Foreign Minister Merafhe of Botswana, met to make recommendations for action on political issues on its agenda, including the situations in Zimbabwe, Pakistan, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Sierra Leone
- the Ministerial Group on Small States, chaired by Foreign Minister Downer of Australia, met to recommend a range of measures on issues affecting small states, including assistance on trade issues, financial services, attracting private investment and assistance with capacity building
- the High Level Review Group, chaired by President Mbeki of South Africa, met at the leaders' and senior officials' level (involving the Prime Minister and the Secretary of the department) to finalise its substantial package of recommendations for the reform and renewal of the Commonwealth.

Related events

The oversight and coordination of the three CHOGM related events occupied a significant amount of the time and energy of the task force and International Division. The task force was represented in the steering committee of each event and contributed to the steering committees' work programmes. In the event, owing to the extraordinary circumstances surrounding the Coolum CHOGM, the related events were handled differently.

Commonwealth Peoples' Festival

The Commonwealth Peoples' Centre/Festival, organised by the Commonwealth Foundation, located in London, had been introduced experimentally at the Edinburgh (1997) and Durban (1999) CHOGMs, with some success. It involved activities focused on the non-governmental, civil society dimensions of the Commonwealth at work.

The non-governmental resources of the modern Commonwealth are very significant. Ninety formal associations work through professionals' and community networks – such as networks of dentists, architects, lawyers, environmentalists or local governments – across most Commonwealth countries. Their work is reinforced by the Commonwealth's civil society agenda, incorporating the wider NGO community, spearheaded by the Commonwealth Foundation.

A steering committee, chaired by the Rt Hon. Ian Sinclair AC and comprising prominent Australian NGO leaders, was established to oversee the CHOGM related events. It adopted the theme 'Connecting Communities', seeking to stress in practical ways the need for, and existence of, coherence and mutual support between civil society and the government organs of the Commonwealth.

In the event, despite the Brisbane CHOGM's being postponed, a Brisbane Commonwealth Peoples' Festival went ahead. Over 500 cultural performances took place in the peoples' centre and

on the streets of Brisbane, around 80 meetings of Commonwealth organisations were held, and 120 NGOs contributed to an exhibition held at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Commonwealth Business Forum

The Victorian government had successfully bid to host the Commonwealth Business Forum, against competition from Brisbane and Sydney. The business forum had operated previously – under the aegis of the Commonwealth Business Council – at the CHOGMs in 1997 and 1999, with meetings held in London and Johannesburg respectively.

The Australian forum aimed to bring together 600 delegates, along with up to 20 heads of government and senior ministers, in Melbourne immediately prior to the Brisbane CHOGM. The forum's stated aim was to strengthen economic engagement between Commonwealth countries, including on matters of governance and macroeconomic management; working to the theme 'The Twenty-first Century: new economy, new challenges, new opportunities'. A steering committee was established, with Mr Hugh Morgan AC as chair, and brought together senior representatives of business and the three levels of government to oversee forum preparations. Regrettably, the forum was eventually cancelled as a consequence of the postponement of the Brisbane CHOGM.

Commonwealth Youth Forum

The Commonwealth Youth Forum had also been held at the Edinburgh and Durban CHOGMs. On this occasion – with the assistance of Australian resources and funding, delivered through the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs – the youth forum took place on Queensland's Gold Coast, immediately prior to the dates scheduled for the Brisbane CHOGM. Attendees included young people from over 60 other Commonwealth countries and dependencies, as well as 30 young Australians. Considering the role of young people in the Commonwealth, the forum focused on how to promote young people's engagement in supporting Commonwealth democracy objectives, youth entrepreneurship, and social development.

Opening ceremony

The Government took the opportunity presented by the CHOGM opening ceremony to promote both the Commonwealth and its programmes, and Australian contemporary culture and society – showcasing Australia as a modern, innovative, technologically advanced state making a constructive contribution to international and regional affairs. The ceremony's programme of songs, dances and images reflected the story of Australia's national spirit, the story of CHOGM and the character of Australia in the twenty-first century. It was an occasion to display the diversity and innovative characteristics of both Australia and the Commonwealth, as well as to celebrate the cultural life of the modern Commonwealth.

The opening ceremony took place in a specially constructed marquee in the grounds of the Hyatt Regency Cooloom. The seating capacity was approximately 900. This may be contrasted with the opening ceremony planned for Brisbane, which would have accommodated 3,000 guests in the Great Hall of the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre.



The Queen (second left) and the Prime Minister (left) at the Opening Ceremony at Coolum

Royal Visit

Her Majesty The Queen attended CHOGM, was present and spoke at the opening ceremony, gave audiences to a number of leaders and, with The Duke of Edinburgh, attended a Royal Jubilee banquet hosted by heads of government in honour of her golden anniversary as Head of the Commonwealth.

The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh also undertook meet-the-people visits to South Australia and Queensland before and during CHOGM.

Leaders' meetings

Leaders met in three formal Executive Sessions on 2, 3 and 5 March 2002. A separate room with a more informal seating arrangement was provided for the extended Retreat Sessions held on 3 and 4 March. Leaders also met informally in the context of the Commonwealth Sports Luncheon on 4 March. The informal sessions were crucial in achieving consensus outcomes on contentious issues – particularly, events in Zimbabwe.

At their meetings, leaders agreed to two important initiatives. The first was a clear statement on Zimbabwe authorising firm action by a Commonwealth leaders' committee comprising the leaders of South Africa, Australia and Nigeria, should a Commonwealth Observer Group report to be submitted on the Zimbabwean presidential elections of 9–10 March require this. The ensuing report provided the basis for the Prime Minister to convene the committee in London on 19 March, and for the resulting suspension of Zimbabwe from the councils of the Commonwealth.

The leaders also endorsed the Coolum Declaration, which reaffirmed Commonwealth fundamental political values and took a firm stand on key issues, such as terrorism, HIV/AIDS, economic development and the concerns of small states. Australian initiatives on HIV/AIDS, development assistance, and support for developing states' engagement in international trade were warmly welcomed. See figure 8 for details of some Australian announcements in these areas.

Figure 8 Australian aid contributions to assist Commonwealth projects, as announced at CHOGM

Australia will contribute \$6 million, over three years, to a key CHOGM initiative, 'Youth for the Future'.

Australia will provide trade related development assistance of over \$90 million to support the efforts of Commonwealth developing nations to increase their engagement with the Commonwealth and access to the benefits of trade. This includes:

- \$500,000 to support small states' representation at the World Trade Organisation in Geneva
- \$500,000 annual contribution to the Commonwealth's Trade Investment Access Facility
- training for trade negotiators from 20 African countries.

Australia will also support a package of assistance to combat HIV/AIDS in Africa and the Asia Pacific region.

- African member nations of the Commonwealth will receive \$11.5 million over four years. The funds will go to community based projects identified by Australian NGOs and to scholarships to assist African health workers to develop strategies for combating HIV/AIDS.
- In recognition of the Commonwealth's global commitment to beating HIV/AIDS, Australia will commit \$100 million over the next five years to directly assist Asia Pacific members of the Commonwealth in that endeavour. Support will be provided for a range of prevention and care strategies, community care and clinical services.

The Coolum Declaration also adopted the report of the High Level Review Group, agreeing to:

- stronger Commonwealth support for democratic values and the rule of law
- new opportunities for members in trade, investment and private sector development
- a pan-Commonwealth youth initiative
- a rationalised and streamlined modern governance structure for the Commonwealth organisation
- closer links and better consultation and collaboration with Commonwealth NGOs and civil society.

CHOGM also enabled the Prime Minister to pursue Australian interests in a range of key bilateral meetings and a breakfast meeting with Pacific Islands Forum leaders.

The resources

Budget

The budget for staging the CHOGM was allocated under three main heads:

- task force logistics and operations
- supplementation for Commonwealth security agencies (specifically, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, the Australian Federal Police and the Protective Security Coordination Centre – other agencies, including the Department of Defence, absorbed their CHOGM costs)
- assistance to the Queensland Government.

The division of expenditure between these three items is set out in table 9 below.

Table 9 Breakdown of CHOGM expenditure

<i>Expense item</i>	<i>Amount spent (\$ million)</i>
CHOGM Task Force	34.5
National security agencies	14.5
Queensland Government	17.4
TOTAL	66.4

Many of the contractors engaged by the task force to work on projects for the Brisbane CHOGM had completed much of their work by 28 September 2001, when the postponement of the Brisbane meeting was announced. Several major Brisbane hotels experienced bulk cancellations of room bookings.

The task force sought and adhered to legal advice provided by the Australian Government Solicitor's Office and the Attorney-General's Department in dealing with contractors' claims for payment and/or compensation. The approach adopted was in accordance with the Attorney-General's *Legal Services Directions on Handling Monetary Claims*. The Government resolved claims on the basis of paying reasonable expenses incurred by the contractors, with individual settlements taking into account steps that the contractors took or could reasonably have taken to mitigate their expenses; and the Government agreed to forfeit the deposits already paid to hotels, in line with normal commercial practices.

Staffing

When the CHOGM Task Force was convened on 1 July 1999, it consisted of three members and worked within the International Division of the department. As planning for the Brisbane CHOGM progressed, the task force and its responsibilities increased and it grew to 87 members by 28 September 2001.

When the postponement of the Brisbane meeting was announced, the task force was pared back to 38 staff, who commenced planning for the Coolum CHOGM. As the event approached, the task force appointed temporary staff to deal with the peak workload, reaching 117 members at its busiest period.

Policy preparations drew heavily on staff resources of the department's International Division and other agencies as the meeting approached. Details are contained in tables 10 and 11.

Table 10 Breakdown of CHOGM Task Force staffing (1 October 2001 to 8 March 2002)

<i>PM&C Ongoing Employees</i>	<i>Secondees Ongoing Employees (PM&C payroll)</i>	<i>PM&C Non Ongoing Employees</i>	<i>Secondees (other agencies' payrolls)</i>	<i>Contracted Staff</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
11	10	71	18	7	117

Table 11 CHOGM Staff allocation, by function

<i>Executive</i>	<i>Logistics</i>	<i>Delegate Relations</i>	<i>Airports</i>	<i>External Communications</i>	<i>Security</i>	<i>Planning and Resources</i>
4	50	10	9	27	9	8

The rules governing modern public sector employment (under the *Public Service Act 1999*) provided the task force with great flexibility in employment arrangements. As a result the staff included a mix of government and private sector, ongoing, non-ongoing, seconded and contracted staff. Their mix of skills and breadth of experience proved a considerable asset in undertaking the wide variety of tasks required by such a complex operation.

Volunteers

The CHOGM team included a contingent of 372 volunteers engaged to undertake about 18 categories of work. They were employed as drivers or information technology specialists, for example, or assisted in providing airport operations, broadcasting, media liaison or welcome-desk services. The task force worked with Volunteering Queensland to recruit, and to develop arrangements for, the volunteers. The average age of the volunteers was 42 – their ages ranged from 18 to 76, with 65 per cent being over 50 years old. The work of volunteers contributed significantly to the success of CHOGM. The decision to engage a large team of volunteers took account of the contribution volunteers made to the success of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, and the fact that 2001 was the International Year of Volunteering.

Contractors

The task force let approximately 60 contracts, all in accordance with the Government's competitive tendering and contracting guidelines. Contractors provided services in many areas, including: accommodation, construction, fit-out, supplies, transport (land and air), information technology and communications, hospitality, gifts, broadcasting, opening ceremony design, security (specifically in relation to accreditation passes, private security guards and the supply and operation of magnetometers and x-ray machines), and the employment of volunteers.

The extensive use of contractors enabled the task force to draw on private sector expertise and experience not generally available in the public sector and not required on an ongoing basis.

Security

Security has become an integral and costly factor in the logistics of major international events, particularly those involving heads of state and government. In recent years, there has been growth in both the incidence and violence of protest activities at international summits – an example close to home was the anti-globalisation protest held at the Melbourne World Economic Forum in 1999. The terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001 heightened security concerns, reinforcing the CHOGM Task Force's need to ensure comprehensive protective measures were put in place.

From the outset the task force was responsible for the overall planning, coordination and assessment of security for CHOGM. This model was unlike that used during the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, where primary responsibility rested with state authorities. Security planning was carried out in the broader context of Australia's federal law enforcement system, under which the Queensland Police Service has the primary responsibility for operational policing and law enforcement in Queensland.

The security coordination effort focused on identifying the levels of security needed to deliver a safe and secure CHOGM while giving visiting delegations confidence in Australia's security provisions. Key consultative mechanisms were established: high-level advice on strategy and planning for CHOGM security was obtained through a Senior Security Liaison Group, and a Security Working Group undertook detailed operational planning. Both groups were made up of representatives of national and state security agencies.

Two key documents were developed: a security framework, identifying the roles and responsibilities of all national and state agencies; and a security plan that contained details of policy direction, coordination methods and all CHOGM security arrangements. Key elements of security planning included venue security; access control and accreditation; and aircraft, vehicle and mail security.

Robust and comprehensive security arrangements were provided during CHOGM. They included prevention, response and recovery actions for possible terrorist attacks, protest activities or maverick acts by attention seekers. The security arrangements for Coolum presented a significantly higher capability than originally planned for Brisbane, and included restricted airspace and active air defence measures, as a direct consequence of the terrorist attacks on the United States. Such measures had never previously been applied in Australia during peacetime, and were separately approved by the National Security Committee of Cabinet. Airservices Australia provided continuous air traffic control services, including temporary radar facilities at Sunshine Coast Airport, to manage airspace restrictions for commercial and general aviation aircraft in the area. Australian Defence Force fighter aircraft operated combat air patrols over Coolum during 10 designated time periods in the course of CHOGM, with a delegated authority to destroy any hostile aircraft entering the restricted airspace. Detailed command and control procedures were provided to meet reporting and decision making requirements.

While the security arrangements undertaken at Coolum were complex and, indeed, unprecedented in Australia, they were implemented smoothly and with minimal disruption or inconvenience, to either delegates or the public. They were also highly effective, since the outcome was an incident-free CHOGM.

Information technology and communications

Information technology and other electronic resources have become a crucial part of mounting major events. Facilities required by CHOGM included access to database systems, electronic mail, telephones, radios, mobile phones and office machines.

The Coolum site presented special problems for computing and communications applications. The relatively limited infrastructure meant that many facilities had to be specially commissioned and designed for the Coolum sites. Specific arrangements needed to be made to provide for radio communications base stations; extend the capacity of mobile telephone services; connect the two main sites to the national telephone infrastructure; and add computer and communications cabling to the temporary structures within each site. In addition there was a requirement for the installation of secure systems to meet national security requirements. In effect, the two resorts had to be transformed in order to provide full-scale electronic services to an international conference of such size and complexity.

Media Centre

The Coolum CHOGM Media Centre was a purpose-built structure consisting of a series of marquees covering almost 4,500 square metres, erected on the golf driving range at the Hyatt Regency Coolum. Consistent with arrangements made at previous CHOGMs, the centre was self-contained and catered for all media types under the one roof.

As well as working areas, the Media Centre had conference and interviewing or briefing rooms; a large computer based work area for both electronic and print media; a wall of plasma screens; a bank of televisions tuned to all local free-to-air and cable news services; communications and reproduction facilities; and technical facilities for guest broadcasters. The Australian Broadcasting Corporation was appointed as host broadcaster. Through pooling arrangements, the task force ensured that all key CHOGM events could be covered by local and visiting media representatives.

The outcome

The Coolum CHOGM was a major success for Australia.

The Coolum model provided a template which demonstrated the viability of a more compact leaders' summit, which should enable smaller, less developed states to contemplate hosting future CHOGMs. The single-location approach, which brought leaders' formal executive sessions and informal retreat sessions together in one location, delivered economies of scale, benefits of security and convenience, and a level of intimacy which leaders found attractive.

It produced substantial policy outcomes and a re-energised Commonwealth, and fostered a strong engagement by leaders. CHOGM gave added impetus to the Commonwealth's important international role and its pursuit of the core objectives – of building democratic structures and societies – which it shares with Australian foreign policy interests and objectives. As an event, the Coolum CHOGM was applauded for the excellence of the arrangements put in place, demonstrating Australia's well recognised ability to organise major events to the highest international standards.



A group of Heads of Government and Representatives with the Prime Minister, Mr Howard (fourth left), and the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Mr McKinnon (far left)

Figure 9 CHOGM 2002 organisational arrangements

