



New inquiry on the Rules for Referendums

The House Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee is to review the effectiveness of legislation administering the conduct of referendums. The *Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984* (Cth) sets out the processes for preparing the Yes and No cases for referendum questions and restricts government spending in relation to referendum questions.

In announcing the inquiry today, the Chair of the Committee, Mark Dreyfus QC MP, said ‘The Yes and No Cases for referendum questions were first introduced in 1912. At that time, the pamphlets were innovative and necessary to inform the electorate about the proposal submitted to referendum. In 2009, it is appropriate to ask whether there is a more effective way to engage and inform people about the Constitution and proposed constitutional change.’

“Submissions to the inquiry will inform the Committee in its assessment of the effectiveness of the Act. I encourage interested organisations and members of the public to consider how the *Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984* (Cth) could be changed to better provide for constitutional engagement and make a submission to our inquiry”, Mr Dreyfus said.

The Committee has been asked to inquire and report on the following terms of reference:

1. The effectiveness of the *Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984* in providing an appropriate framework for the conduct of referendums, with specific reference to:
 - a. Processes for preparing the Yes and No cases for referendum questions;
 - b. Provisions providing for the public dissemination of the Yes and No cases; and
 - c. Limitations on the purposes for which money can be spent in relation to referendum questions.
2. Any amendments to the *Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984* the Committee believes are required to provide an appropriate framework for the conduct of referendums;
3. Any other federal provisions relevant to terms 1 and 2 above, as the Committee considers appropriate.

Submissions addressing the terms of reference should be emailed or posted to the Committee by Friday 9 October 2009.

For interview:

Contact the Committee Chair, Mr Mark Dreyfus QC, MP on (02) 6277 4305 (Canberra) or in his electorate on (03) 9769 1955. Or Mr Dreyfus' media adviser, Tim Lisle-Williams on 0431 178 280.

For background information please visit the inquiry website at www.aph.gov.au/laca or contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 2358.