



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs

**MEDIA ALERT**

Issued: 4 November 2009

Chair: Mr Mark Dreyfus QC, MP

### Steering pub conversation towards the constitution

The current provisions for communicating proposed changes to the constitution is expensive, inefficient, outdated and ignores informal community networks such as bars, pubs, sporting environments and clubs, according to *Rethink Australia*. The Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee will hear *Rethink Australia's* views on the current method for communicating information on matters of constitutional change at a public hearing this Thursday in Melbourne. The Committee will also hear from a number of witnesses, including constitutional law experts, a communications strategist and Family Voice Australia.

The Chair of the House of Representatives Committee Mark Dreyfus QC said "it is important to acknowledge the current processes for communicating referendum material to the public were designed in 1912. There have been significant changes in both communication technologies and the needs of voters during the previous 100 years. We need to address these changes to ensure that information campaigns are effective for all Australians".

In determining the most effective way to communicate information concerning the proposed change to voters, the Committee will hear from Ms Jennifer Williams, who will provide evidence on visual communications design from the University of Technology, Sydney. Ms Williams will discuss the importance of presenting visually aesthetic material to the public to make sure the material is more engaging to the reader.

The Committee Chair added "The Yes/No case in 1999 was widely criticised for not being user-friendly in its design and layout. We need to learn from these mistakes and consider not only the content of material to be provided to voters but ensuring this material looks engaging."

A copy of the public hearing program is available on the Committee's website: [www.aph.gov.au/laca/](http://www.aph.gov.au/laca/).

#### Details of the public hearing:

*Date:* Thursday 5 November 2009

*Time:* 9.00am – 3.00 pm

*Location:* Malcolm Moore Room, Ground Floor, Australian Institute of Management, Management House, 181 Fitzroy Street, St. Kilda, Melbourne

**Members of the public are welcome to attend this public hearing.**

#### 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/](http://www.aph.gov.au/laca/) or contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 2358.