



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs

MEDIA ALERT

Issued: 12 October 2009

Chair: Mr Mark Dreyfus QC, MP

Reforming our Referendum Processes

The House Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee will hold a roundtable discussion on reforming our referendum processes with a number of key organisations and academics in Sydney on Wednesday 14 October. Participants include the Australian Electoral Commission, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, AusPoll, the Foundation for Young Australians, as well as Gilbert & Tobin Centre Professor George Williams.

Representing a range of interested parties, the participants will discuss the current referendum processes as outlined in the Referendum Machinery Provisions legislation, and consider options for improving how the government can engage and inform people about proposed changes to our constitution.

The Chair of the House of Representatives Committee Mark Dreyfus QC said "There has not been a successful referendum in Australia since 1977 and there has been no referendum since the unsuccessful campaign for a republic in 1999. It is important to review our current processes to determine if they adequately address the needs of Australians in the 21st century."

The current legislation sets out the processes for preparing the arguments for and against the proposed changes and limits government spending in relation to this. The purpose of the inquiry is to determine whether this legislation is sufficient in addressing voter requirements in the lead up to a referendum. As such, the inquiry will consider whether there are other ways to provide the public with the same or greater levels of explanatory information.

Mr Dreyfus said "This roundtable represents an important component of the inquiry and will enable the Committee to consider ways to improve the referendum processes".

The roundtable will be divided into two sessions. The first session will focus on the machinery of referendums legislation, and will include a legal, historical and comparative analysis of the current framework. Discussion during the second session will concern effective communication and community engagement methods in the context of referendums. Please contact the Secretariat for a full list of participants.

Details of the roundtable:

Date: Wednesday 14 October 2009

Time: Session One: 09:15 am – 12:00 pm; Session Two: 12:45 pm – 5:00pm

Location: Rooms 814/815, Parliament of New South Wales, Macquarie Street, Sydney

Webcast: (Audio only) Live on <http://webcast.aph.gov.au/livebroadcasting/>

Members of the public are welcome to attend this roundtable.

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.