



## UNIFORM LAWS – DESIRABLE AND ACHIEVABLE?

Federal Parliament's Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee wants to hear whether the differences in state and federal laws are affecting trade and commerce.

The Chairman of the Committee, Peter Slipper MP, today announced an inquiry into harmonisation of legal systems. "The Committee wants to see if costs can be reduced and duplication avoided" Mr Slipper said.

"We have been asked to look at not only differences in the legal systems of the states and the Commonwealth, but also to see if there are similar issues affecting businesses operating in both Australia and New Zealand".

"We will not be making judgements on the relative merits of the different systems, and what should be the standard", Mr Slipper added. "That will be a decision for the governments of those jurisdictions. What we aim to do is to identify what areas of legal difference are having the greatest impact and see where harmonisation might be possible".

In referring this matter, the Attorney General has asked the Committee to examine a number of areas including legal procedures, partnership law, evidence law and standards of products. Other issues may arise in the course of the inquiry.

"The Committee will also be looking at the different ways harmonisation might be achieved, looking beyond what has occurred in the past, to see if new models might be developed" Mr Slipper added. "A number of High Court decisions have affected cooperative schemes developed by the state and federal governments. Is amending the Constitution the only way to guarantee such schemes or are there other options?"

Members of the public will be able to make submissions in writing to the Committee until 8 April and attend public hearings which will be held from late-April.

### **For interview:**

Please contact the Committee Chairman, Peter Slipper MP on (02) 6277 4975 (Canberra) or in his electorate on (07) 5443 3555.

Or Mr Slipper's media adviser, Amalia Matheson on 0417 486673.

**For background information**, including the full terms of reference and copies of submissions when they become available, please contact the committee secretariat on (02) 6277 2358 or visit the inquiry website at [www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/laca/index.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/laca/index.htm)