

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### **Background**

1.1 This inquiry into an Australian republic was undertaken as the result of a decision by the Senate. The vote in the Senate to refer the matters set out in the terms of reference occurred on 26 June 2003, and was uncontested.

### **Conduct of the inquiry**

1.2 The Legal and Constitutional References Committee advertised the inquiry in *The Australian* newspaper on 17 December 2003, 28 January 2004, 11 February 2004 and 25 February 2004. In December 2003 the Committee released a discussion paper to facilitate discussion and to focus debate. The Committee wrote to around 80 organisations and individuals, and submissions were invited by 31 March 2004. Details of the inquiry, and associated documents were placed on the Committee's website.

1.3 The Committee received over 700 submissions from various individuals and organisations and these are listed at Appendix 1.

1.4 Public hearings were held in Parramatta, Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide, Hobart, Brisbane and Canberra. A list of witnesses who appeared at the hearings is at Appendix 2 and copies of the Hansard transcript are available through the Internet at <http://aph.gov.au/hansard>.

### **Scope of the report**

1.5 Chapter 2 provides a background to the inquiry, discussing the history of recent moves towards a republic, and also arguments put to the Committee regarding the desirability or otherwise of Australia becoming a republic.

1.6 Reflecting the terms of reference for the inquiry, the remainder of the report is largely divided into two parts. Chapters 3 and 4 address term of reference (a), regarding the most appropriate process for moving towards an Australian republic. Chapter 3 covers themes raised in submissions and evidence, including the importance of engagement with the process by Australians, and the need for an extensive education program. Chapter 4 looks at the different components that may comprise a future process, including plebiscites, conventions, parliamentary committees and a referendum.

1.7 Chapters 5, 6 and 7 address term of reference (b), regarding alternative models for an Australian republic. Chapter 5 addresses the possible functions and powers of a republican head of state and related issues such as the title of the head of state. Chapter 6 discusses possible methods for selection and removal of the head of state.

Chapter 7 examines some of the key features of various alternative models for an Australian republic.

1.8 Chapter 8 gives the Committee's conclusions.

### **Acknowledgement**

1.9 The Committee thanks those organisations and individuals who made submissions and gave evidence at public hearings. The Committee also thanks Scott Bennett from the Parliamentary Library for his assistance in the preparation of the Committee's discussion paper.

### **Note on references**

1.10 References in this report are to individual submissions as received by the Committee, not to a bound volume. References to the Committee Hansard are to the proof Hansard: page numbers may vary between the proof and the official Hansard transcript.