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# THE FUTURE OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNANCE

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Australia will face new challenges as it prepares for the future, and a new way of governing is needed to meet these challenges and help to shape the nation. The Government is enhancing cooperation and effectiveness across all levels of government, and is committed to increasing the transparency and accountability of government.

An example of the Government's new approach is the Community Cabinet process. This process has given a greater number of Australians an opportunity to meet Cabinet ministers and engage with them about important issues.

Another example is the 2020 Summit itself – a collaborative and dynamic process that brought together many people and generated many creative ideas.

The Summit's Governance Stream considered the breadth of issues relating to the future of Australia's governance. The development of a modern federation was a key theme, focusing on collaboration across all levels of government and with the community and private sectors. The Governance Stream considered that a modern Australia would include a reformed Australian Constitution that incorporates the rights and responsibilities of the Australian people.

An open, transparent and accountable government with integrity was also seen as a priority for the Governance Stream and many of the ideas were directed at achieving that objective.

The Governance Stream developed a broad range of ambitions, themes and ideas that have influenced and guided the Government's policy in this area, including:

- **COAG Reform Council** – The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) is undertaking a wide range of major reforms to strengthen effective collaboration between the Commonwealth, state and territory governments. COAG has agreed to an expanded role for the independent COAG Reform Council, which will monitor the aggregate pace of activity in progressing COAG's agreed reform agenda.
- **Australian Council of Local Governments** – The first meeting of the Australian Council of Local Governments (ACLG) was held on 18 November 2008, enhancing collaboration with local government. The Government is also committed to a full and frank dialogue through the ACLG on a process for moving towards the Constitutional recognition of Local Government.
- **Human Rights protection** – In December 2008, the Government announced a national consultation with the Australian people on how to best protect human rights. The consultation will be led by a committee, which is due to report by 31 July 2009.
- **Freedom of Information Reform** – The Government is undertaking broad reforms of the freedom of information system and is consulting with the public on its exposure draft legislation to improve and streamline the system.
- **Community engagement and e-governance** – The Government is acting to increase the community's ability to interact with the parliament and the policy development processes of government, and to make information about policy issues available online.

The following tables provide the Government's response to the ideas raised by the Governance Stream at the 2020 Summit.

## Key ideas being taken forward by the Government

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<b>Community Cabinet</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen the capacity for non-government organisations to participate – for example, through a Community Cabinet.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree. Community Cabinet meetings are now held throughout Australia. They are part of the Prime Minister’s commitment to ensure close consultation with the Australian people on the things that concern them, whether they are national or local matters. The 2020 Summit itself was also a successful example of non-government participation in the policy process.</p>
<b>Community Engagement</b>  Also raised by: Communities Economy Rural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An online portal, free and searchable government information, and a space for citizens to participate and share their views – ourgov.au</li> <li>Establish a diverse set of community engagement mechanisms and multiple forms of participation to ensure public involvement, exploit opportunities from new technology.</li> <li>National platforms for various citizen groups, creation of a national online service for young people or a national platform for community radios.</li> <li>Establish a Commission for Participatory Democracy.</li> <li>Suggestion box on government department websites for community feedback (on governance) – all communications must be answered.</li> <li>AuSpan network – an Australian C-Span.</li> <li>A public digital channel with access to policy debate.</li> <li>An online channel for access to government information, including spending information and outcomes and providing for online parliament.</li> <li>A public affairs digital network by 2020, with a high proportion of international work (65 per cent), book launches, interviews, and other public affairs broadcasts.</li> <li>Empower citizens and communities to participate in decision-making processes-provide a context for and facilitate place-based community planning.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government agrees with the idea of enhancing community engagement. The Government’s approach is to trial different and innovative mechanisms and draw on specific suggestions across several streams in that context.</p> <p>For example the Government is committed to developing practical initiatives in e-governance that increase communities’ ability to interact with the Parliament and the policy development processes of government. The Government is committed to making extensive information about policy issues available on-line to the community. The Government will develop better ways to increase interactive consultative processes using new technologies to communicate and hear from people. Some aspects of this work will be guided by the statutory Information Commissioner position, which the Government will be establishing as part of its Open Government reform agenda. As a first step, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has sought expert advice on the enhancement of information and access to Commonwealth information and policy and a whole-of-government approach to the development of an e-governance strategy.</p>

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<p>Continued ...</p> <p><b>Community Engagement</b></p> <p>Also raised by: Communities Economy Rural</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish an Office of Social Innovation and a Charter of Community Engagement. The Office would have equal government, corporate and non-profit funding, and its first task would be to develop a Charter of Community Engagement to outline how the government goes about engaging with the community in the process of developing and delivering public policy. This would include an agreement to take a national approach to community facilitation.</li> <li>• Introduce a Prime Minister's Grand Challenge Prize for solving big national challenges of a global nature-for example, climate change.</li> <li>• Strengthening the public policy debate.</li> <li>• Establishing a 'bottom-up' approach instead of a 'top-down' one, fostering an environment for experiments that are monitored, measured and shared with the public through the internet.</li> <li>• Communities having a say in what happens.</li> <li>• The Council of Australian Governments (key decision maker): building genuine public involvement into it.</li> <li>• Facilitation of local 2020 summits to empower communities and to inform the development of regional prospectuses to guide future development and support bids for funding.</li> <li>• Implementation of a citizens' cabinet from the United Kingdom, currently being trialled in Queensland.</li> <li>• New mechanisms for facilitating greater involvement of non-government organisations, as well as the arts and volunteer sectors, in the development of policies for remote, rural and regional Australia – particularly new climate change policies.</li> <li>• Policy making at the local and regional level.</li> <li>• Define social citizenship and promote it – active, responsible social citizens, including organisations, not just individuals.</li> <li>• Establish a Charter of Community Engagement (similar to a Charter of Human Rights).</li> </ul>	<p>The Government is also considering holding a set of forums that will bring together experts, business and community representatives and others with a strong interest in a number of topics to promote a collaborative approach to challenging issues and better inform government decision making.</p>

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<p>Continued ...</p> <p><b>Community Engagement</b></p> <p>Also raised by: Communities Economy Rural</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve deliberative democracy and equip citizens to participate in an engaged, modern democracy. This could be done by using online participation, citizens' juries, citizens' parliaments, citizens' assemblies, participatory budgets, sampling citizens randomly about different issues, informing citizens about the legislative process, participatory budgeting, 21st century and electronic town meetings.</li> <li>• Establish a permanent 2020 summit to increase committee function and increase discussion of day to day issues.</li> <li>• Develop deliberative and new forms of democracy on tough issues through citizen assembly, participatory budget, on-line capability, develop a citizen- or community-focused public service.</li> <li>• Better information delivery and hubs of civic participation, presence of government in the community-rovng parliamentary sittings.</li> <li>• Deliberative inclusive processes that feed directly into government decision-making processes.</li> <li>• Engage the Australian community in the development of an ambitious long-term national strategic plan that delivers results.</li> <li>• Identify issues of national significance and a means to respond to them.</li> <li>• Empower citizens and communities to participate in decision-making processes – provide a context for and facilitate place based community planning.</li> </ul>	

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<p><b>Removing Discrimination</b></p> <p>Also raised by: Economy Security</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unleashing Australian talent by removing direct and indirect discrimination, which means improving structural support, strengthening laws and creating public accountabilities beyond gender – that is, age, race and disability.</li> <li>• Review domestic legislation for human rights impacts and compliance.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in-principle. On 10 December 2008, the Commonwealth Attorney-General announced a national consultation process on human rights and responsibilities in Australia. The consultation will be conducted in the first half of 2009 by a committee comprised of Father Frank Brennan SJ AO (Chair), Ms Tammy Williams, Ms Mary Kostakidis and Mr Mick Palmer AO APM.</p> <p>The Government has recently taken some key steps to addressing issues of discrimination. For example, in July 2008, the Government ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and in December 2008, tabled a National Interest Analysis proposing that Australia accede to the Optional Protocol to the Convention. The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties reported its views on 12 March 2009 and recommended that Australia accede to the Optional Protocol.</p> <p>In December 2008, the Government tabled draft Disability Standards to improve access to premises for persons with disabilities, and introduced legislation to implement recommendations of the Productivity Commission from 2004 to improve the operation of the Disability Discrimination Act.</p> <p>The states and territories also have existing programs to address issues of discrimination.</p> <p>Also in December 2008, the Government acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.</p>

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<p><b>Human Rights Reform Package</b></p> <p>Also raised by: Communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Australia should be a country where the respect and protection of the human rights of all people are maintained and strengthened.</li> <li>• There should be a national process to consult with all Australians as to how to best protect human rights.</li> <li>• A federal statutory bill or charter of rights (or alternatively, a parliamentary charter of rights) should be created in consultation with the Australian community.</li> <li>• The Charter should protect and promote all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and provide meaningful remedies where rights are violated. It should address the rights and responsibilities of all Australians, including Indigenous Australians.</li> <li>• The Charter should make human rights an integral part of law-making and policy-setting processes.</li> <li>• The Charter should require parliament to consider whether laws comply with human rights.</li> <li>• The Charter should enable courts to interpret laws consistently with human rights where possible and to identify laws that do not comply with human rights.</li> <li>• The Charter should provide accessible and appropriate remedies for human rights breaches.</li> <li>• There should be intensive, inclusive consultation with the community on rights and responsibilities—moving around local communities—framed in non-legal jargon and not pre-determined by the Attorney-General.</li> <li>• Introduction of a non-statutory Charter of Comprehensive Rights and Responsibilities.</li> <li>• The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission should have explicit extensive power over all human rights.</li> <li>• Embed a non-discriminatory clause in the Constitution (not the preamble).</li> </ul>	<p>On 10 December 2008, the Commonwealth Attorney-General announced a national consultation process on human rights and responsibilities in Australia. The consultation will be conducted in the first half of 2009 by a committee comprised of Father Frank Brennan SJ AO (Chair), Ms Tammy Williams, Ms Mary Kostakidis and Mr Mick Palmer AO APM. The consultation delivers a key election commitment made by the Government and provides an opportunity for all Australians to share their views on how human rights and responsibilities can be better recognised and protected.</p> <p>The consultation will encourage broad community debate on a range of human rights issues, not only on whether a Charter or Bill of Rights is necessary. The consultation does not presuppose any outcome, although the Government has made it clear that any proposals must preserve the sovereignty of Parliament.</p>

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<b>Freedom of Information Reform</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completely reforming freedom of information laws.</li> <li>• Appoint a Commissioner for Freedom of Information and conduct a full merits review.</li> <li>• Create an exemption test based on matters of essential public interest (e.g. national security).</li> <li>• Ensure that if public service documents are released in the public interest, they are free and accessible.</li> <li>• Release government and public service documents after 15 years instead of 30 years.</li> <li>• Reform the current freedom of information system by abolishing conclusive certificates.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree. The Government is moving ahead with broad reforms to the Freedom of Information (FOI) system and has released exposure draft legislation for public consultation. These reforms include the establishment of an Information Commissioner, a Freedom of Information Commissioner and other measures to improve and streamline the <i>Freedom of Information Act</i>, and measures to reduce the open access period under the Archives Act for all documents from 30 down to 20 years and for Cabinet notebooks from 50 down to 30 years. Legislation to remove conclusive certificates has been introduced.</p>
<b>Electoral Reform – Advertising</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ban on government partisan advertising prior to the elections with the agreement of the Opposition, except for cases of emergency situations (a bird flu epidemic, for example).</li> </ul>	<p>Agree. The Government has implemented guidelines to govern Commonwealth Government campaign advertising to ensure that campaigns, at any time in the electoral cycle, are legitimately authorised, properly targeted and non-political. Any advertising proposed for the caretaker period prior to elections will only be undertaken following consultation with the Opposition.</p>
<b>Parliamentary Reform – General</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministerial advisers should have to appear before parliamentary committees when they are taking executive decisions.</li> </ul>	<p>In June 2008, the Government introduced a Code of Conduct for Ministerial Staff that makes it clear that Staff are not to make executive decisions.</p>
<b>Parliamentary Reform – Review of the <i>Legislative Instruments Act</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen Parliamentary review of delegated legislation.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree. A review of the Legislative Instruments Act 2003 has been completed and the Attorney-General will table the report later in 2009.</p>

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<p><b>Regulation – COAG Business Regulation and Competition Working Group</b></p> <p>Also raised by: Rural Economy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uniform regulation, licensing, standards and enforcement for transport (both road and rail) and agriculture.</li> <li>• Harmonisation of state and territory regulations, including the removal of impediments associated with access to drought assistance.</li> <li>• Cutting red tape in general and setting minimum red tape targets when introducing new polices for dealing with climate change.</li> <li>• Harmonisation of federal and state regulations to reduce duplication and the costs of doing business.</li> <li>• The speed of regulatory reform should be increased, including creation of seamless national markets in key areas.</li> <li>• Review regulatory regimes to encourage private investment.</li> <li>• Regulation to be seen in the context of allowing market solutions wherever possible to deal with social problems and externalities.</li> <li>• Establish uniform national laws for industry, trade, finance and property.</li> <li>• Uniform laws for human rights, resources and infrastructure, and workplace safety.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in-principle. The 2020 Summit recognised the importance of regulatory reform and harmonisation of state and territory laws.</p> <p>Many of the ideas discussed at the Summit reflect the work program of the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) Business Regulation and Competition Working Group (BRCWG).</p> <p>In December 2007, COAG established the BRCWG to deliver more consistent regulation across jurisdictions, reduce restrictions on competition in priority areas of the economy, and improve processes for regulation making and review. The work program includes reducing inconsistent and unnecessary regulation in 27 separate areas and delivering competition reform in eight agreed priority areas.</p> <p>In November 2008, COAG agreed to the new National Partnership Agreement to Deliver a Seamless National Economy, under which the Commonwealth committed to provide funding to the states and territories of \$550 million over five years. The payments are in two components; \$100 million to facilitate the implementation of reforms, and \$450 million in reward payments. The reforms, include nationally uniform OH&amp;S laws, a national system for registering business names, and a national electronic conveyancing system.</p>

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<p><b>Values and Civic Education</b></p> <p>Also raised by: Communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modify curricula from kindergarten to postgraduate education to include civic and moral education and engagement, social values and social inclusion in the education system which will ensure children are exposed to diverse value systems, other cultures and levels of disadvantage, with a specific focus on Indigenous issues.</li> <li>• Develop greater inclusion strategies at school to reduce exclusion and racism.</li> <li>• Provide active citizenship training as a universal component of primary and secondary school curricula and available to the broader community.</li> <li>• Incorporate active citizenship education as part of the school curriculum.</li> <li>• Develop and implement a national civics curriculum.</li> <li>• Establish a forum or audit to identify good practices and programs on values in Australia and internationally, using these to develop national programs.</li> <li>• Hold a national ethics and values convention every ten years or so to converse about our national key values.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government agrees with the importance of informed community discussion and education regarding Australian values.</p> <p>Through the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (released on 5 December 2008), the Government – along with state and territory governments – has agreed to work in collaboration with all school sectors to support all young Australians to become active and informed citizens.</p> <p>The development of a national history curriculum will also provide significant opportunities for Australian students to access civics and citizenship education. The national history curriculum is being progressed by the Interim National Curriculum Board. Once operational, the national history curriculum will be developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority. The annual National Values Education Forum allows governments and the education community to engage in discussion about and develop best practices for values education.</p> <p>The Australian Human Rights Commission plays an important role in educating and raising awareness about racism, racial vilification and harassment. The Commission delivers a range of educational programs that are specifically developed for young people.</p> <p>The Government indicated in its November 2008 response to an independent review of the Australian Citizenship Test that work is underway on a whole-of-government approach to the promotion of civics and citizenship in the general community.</p>

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<b>Formal Role for Local Government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopt a formal role for the most local level of government in adapting national policies.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in-part. The Government has established the Australian Council of Local Government to give local government a direct voice into Commonwealth policy making, and help accelerate the implementation of program innovation, performance improvements and accountability in service delivery. The inaugural meeting of the Australian Council of Local Government (ACLG), held on 18 November at Parliament House Canberra, highlighted the Australian Government's agenda for forging a new and stronger partnership with local government.</p>
<b>Vision for Australia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an agreed vision for the future of Australia.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in-principle. The Australia 2020 Summit provided the Government with insight and guidance in developing a vision for the future. The Government will continue to consult with the nation in developing and adapting our vision for Australia.</p>
<b>Australia in a Global Context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Address Australia's sustainable growth and change in a global context.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in-principle. The Government recognises the future challenges that the nation will face and is targeting policies at ensuring sustainable growth for the nation in the context of global challenges.</p>

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<b>Modern Federation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinvigorate the Federation to enhance Australian democracy and make it work for all Australians by reviewing the roles, responsibilities, functions, structures and financial arrangements of governments.</li> <li>• An expert commission to propose a new mix of responsibilities.</li> <li>• Implementation by intergovernmental cooperation or referendum.</li> <li>• Hold a convention of the people, informed by the commission and by a process of deliberative democracy to get community input.</li> <li>• An integrated planning process across the Commonwealth and states levels: a new compact between the three levels of government based around redefining roles and responsibilities.</li> <li>• National planning framework concept: by 2020 design and implement a cooperative national/intergovernmental planning framework.</li> <li>• Establish an agreed policy position, including principles, to facilitate outcome-based decision making.</li> <li>• Reconcile conflicting state priorities in the national interest and align state, regional and local planning activities.</li> <li>• Achieve greater coordination and alignment between the governments (federal, state and local) of Australia.</li> <li>• Achieve greater coordination and alignment between the governments (federal, state and local) of Australia.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in-part. There were many ideas from the 2020 Summit directed towards improving the way the Australian federation works. The Government agrees that improvements can be made, although it will not adopt all of the ideas from the Summit in the short term.</p> <p>The Government's approach is to work collaboratively with the states and territories through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). In November 2008, COAG committed to an historic new Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) on Federal Financial Relations which provides an overarching framework for the Commonwealth's financial relations with the states and territories.</p> <p>The new federal financial framework began on 1 January 2009 and provides a solid foundation for COAG to pursue economic and social reforms to underpin growth, prosperity and social cohesion into the future. The IGA is supported by six new National Agreements in the areas of health, education, vocational education and training, disability services, housing, and Indigenous reform, and a range of National Partnership payments to fund specific projects and to facilitate and/or reward States that deliver on nationally significant reforms.</p> <p>The new framework provides a clearer specification of roles and responsibilities of each level of government and an improved accountability for the delivery of outcomes.</p> <p>COAG has also agreed to an expanded role for the COAG Reform Council (CRC). To enhance accountability, the CRC will report to the Prime Minister (as Chair of COAG) on the performance of all jurisdictions in relation to each National Agreement, and independently assess whether performance benchmarks have been achieved before an incentive payment to reward nationally significant reforms under a National Partnership is made. The CRC will also produce an analytical view of performance information for each Specific Purpose Payment.</p> <p>The CRC also has a role in monitoring the aggregate pace of activity in progressing COAG's agreed reform agenda.</p> <p>The Government will consider further options for modernising the federation once the outcomes of the current reforms have been assessed.</p>

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<b>Open and Accountable Government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whistleblower protection is respected and strengthened.</li> </ul>	<p>The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs tabled its report entitled 'Whistleblower protection: a comprehensive scheme for the Commonwealth public sector' on 25 February 2009. The Government is now considering the report's recommendations and is committed to developing legislation to protect public interest disclosures within the public sector.</p>
<b>Media – Strengthen Free Press Protections</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government should be open and accountable and protections of free press should be strengthened.</li> </ul> <p>A Charter of Free Speech should be established to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No journalist will face criminal proceedings for publishing information they receive from their sources in the official conduct of their duties</li> <li>Effective shield laws are established for journalists, without the threat that they must reveal their sources</li> <li>The journalists' 'code of ethics' is strengthened</li> <li>There is a national commitment to protecting journalists or media producers</li> </ul>	<p>The Attorney-General has introduced into Parliament amendments to the journalist shield provisions of the Commonwealth Evidence Act 1995. The Government has also raised the need for journalist shield laws in the States and Territories through the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General.</p>

## Ideas the Government will consider further

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<b>Constitutional Reform – General</b>	<p><b>Republic</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An Australian Republic (Stage One: That a plebiscite be held on the principle that Australia becomes a republic and severs ties with the Crown. Stage Two: This is to be followed by a referendum on the model of a republic after broad and extensive consultation.)</li> <li>Be celebrating the fifth anniversary of the republic by 2020.</li> </ul> <p><b>General</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A new Constitution-retaining good bits of the existing Constitution, embodying a republic model, protecting rights, and permitting extensive community consultation.</li> <li>A national competition to draft a new preamble to the Constitution.</li> <li>Establish a constitutional commission or convention.</li> <li>If the Constitution and Senate powers remain the same, there should be a requirement that if the Senate blocks supply it should face the people.</li> <li>Statehood for the Northern Territory.</li> <li>Introduction of four-year fixed terms for the federal government to allow for a greater focus on longer term matters and removal of overlap between different tiers of government.</li> <li>Improve process to make law making more efficient and effective by creating fixed parliamentary terms.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government recognises the priority placed on constitutional reform by the community. The Government is committed to ongoing reform of our Constitution where appropriate and will draw on the input of the Summit in thinking about future possible proposals for constitutional change.</p>

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<b>Constitutional Reform – Indigenous Recognition</b>  Also raised by: Indigenous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians and reconciliation compact.</li> <li>• Constitutional recognition, Treaty or Settlement – commence a dialogue leading to Constitutional recognition, Treaty or Settlement – through which the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is defined.</li> <li>• That the Constitution be amended to remove any language that is racially discriminatory.</li> <li>• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people being recognised as First Nations people.</li> <li>• Formal legal recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Including a national education program to support the dialogue and co-commitment to the agreement from the states and territories.</li> </ul>	<p>Indigenous recognition is a key issue for consideration and the Government is committed to consulting the community on a range of proposed constitutional reforms. The Government is considering a timetable for this consultation.</p>
<b>Constitutional Reform – Local Government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognition of local government in the Constitution.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government is committed to taking steps towards the recognition of local government in the Commonwealth Constitution and has committed to a full and frank dialogue on this issue. The Government intends to progress this in partnership with the Australian Local Government Association and through the Australian Council of Local Government.</p>
<b>Electoral Reform – General</b>	<p>The Governance stream raised a range of electoral reform proposals including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universal automatic enrolment to vote, voting for all Australians over the age of 18 years and automatic re-enrolment of eligible voters</li> <li>• Optional enrolment to vote and voting for Australians aged between 16 and 18 years</li> <li>• Using electronic means to make it easier for people to enrol to vote</li> <li>• Supporting a strong electoral education program</li> <li>• Following an election, if a Member of Parliament's party is not elected, the Member of Parliament should still be compelled to see out the term and not retire.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government will consult Australians on a wide range of options for electoral reform through a second Green Paper on electoral reform, which will be released for public comment in 2009.</p>

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<b>Electoral Reform – Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Abolish private campaign finances, including third party donations, with an exemption for small individual donors, to increase trust in political parties and help create the level playing field for elections.</li> </ul>	<p>On 17 December 2008, the Cabinet Secretary and Special Minister of State, Senator the Hon John Faulkner, released a first Green Paper on electoral reform for public comment. The Green Paper covers issues related to the possible reform of electoral funding, including political donations and campaign expenditure and was developed in consultation with the states and territories. The Government is considering the submissions made in response to the Green Paper.</p>
<b>Open and Accountable Government</b>	<p><b>Political Culture</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reform of political culture in Australia – participants argued that political culture in Australia needs reform in a number of areas. For example, a deviation from the party or government line is viewed very negatively, whereas in other democracies disagreement is permissible. It was also noted that the media needs to play a role in the reform of a political culture towards greater openness.</li> <li>Encourage greater use of ‘conscience votes’ by Members.</li> <li>Strengthen government accountability by establishing a Parliamentary Code of Ethics and an Ethics Commissioner.</li> <li>Promote a more open and publicly accountable government including through parliamentary processes.</li> <li>Establish a House of Representatives Estimates Committee.</li> <li>Strengthen question time: ‘Dorothy Dixers’ to be controlled. It is a limitation that the ‘other side’s’ question time is the only bit of Parliament that gets media coverage. The Senate also to have the capacity for supplementary questions with one minute answers from Ministers.</li> </ul> <p><b>Independence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a charter for Parliamentary reform to restore the independence and effectiveness of Parliament.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government recognises and supports the need for openness and accountability in government and in parliamentary processes. The Government has undertaken a number of reforms to improve transparency and accountability which reflect the Government’s commitment in this area, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reforms to freedom of information legislation</li> <li>New rules for government advertising</li> <li>Merit selection processes for senior public service appointments</li> <li>The introduction of a Lobbying Code of Conduct and Register of Lobbyists</li> <li>A Code of Conduct for Ministerial Staff and new Standards of Ministerial Ethics.</li> </ul> <p>Further reforms on open and accountable government will add to these measures.</p> <p>The Government notes that some aspects of the reform of political culture are principally a matter for political parties.</p> <p>The Government will consider undertaking further work in this area if the current reforms do not deliver the required changes.</p>

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<b>Budget and Services Accountability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish accountability of the Executive, with specification of how public money should be spent and reframe appropriation Bills to specify individual projects and programs.</li> <li>• Ensure more efficient and effective government service delivery.</li> <li>• Facilitate allocation of funding based on service responsibilities.</li> <li>• Establish relevant benchmarks and indicators to monitor performance.</li> <li>• Determine appropriate community service standards linked to community needs.</li> </ul>	<p>Through Operation Sunlight, the Government is delivering a range of reforms that will improve the openness and transparency of budget papers and financial management. In addition, there are a wide range of accountability measures which are regularly reviewed.</p>
<b>Public Sector Reform</b>  <b>Also raised by: Economy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attracting and retaining quality staff.</li> <li>• Develop a core of strong policy professionals with ease of movement between academia and the public service.</li> <li>• Commission an Inquiry on flexibility, remuneration and incentives within the APS to facilitate transition of top Australians between public and private sectors.</li> <li>• Innovative and open policy.</li> <li>• Develop a citizen or community focused public service and system.</li> <li>• Eliminate jargon in governance and bureaucracy.</li> <li>• Strengthen institutions that develop the policy core (including the Australia New Zealand School of Government) and allow a greater flow from our neighbours in the region.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government recognises that new approaches to workforce planning are fundamental to ensuring that the Australian Public Service (APS) is responsive, agile and well positioned to support government in the 21st century. With this in mind, the APS is taking steps to identify current and future capability requirements and implement strategies to make sure that they are met.</p> <p>A number of reforms aimed at improving the professionalism of the APS are already in place, including, for example, the introduction of merit based selection for government appointments to APS agencies and the commencement in May 2009 of the Ethics Advisory Service in the Australian Public Service Commission.</p> <p>Strategies are also being explored to build a professional and better skilled public service, attract and retain employees with specialist skills through cadetships and work experience programs for tertiary students, enhance strategic policy capability and encourage more evidence based policy making and increase mobility between the APS, universities and the private and not for profit sectors. These reforms will help ensure that the APS has the capability to meet the challenges of the future.</p> <p>In developing and implementing these reforms, the Government will draw on the input of the 2020 Summit.</p> <p>The Cabinet Implementation Unit in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet promotes effective policy and program implementation and builds skills and capacity across the APS in this area. <i>The full list of related ideas can be found in the Economy Stream.</i></p>

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<b>Abolish Crown Copyright</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crown copyright should be abolished.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government is considering options to reform Crown copyright and other recommendations for greater open access to Government information.</p>
<b>National Compact / Third Sector Reform</b>  <b>Also raised by: Communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a regulatory framework for the non-profit sector.</li> <li>• Recognise the importance of the non-government, or third, sector in public policy development and governance and protecting and promote policy advocacy – for example, removal of taxation roadblocks and reform of charity law.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government is considering reforms to the way it funds and regulates the not-for-profit sector (or the third sector), with a view to shaping a national compact between the Government and the sector.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the compact would take the form of an agreement between the Australian Government and the not-for-profit sector that outlines how the two will work together to improve and strengthen their relationship.</p> <p>The Government will work closely with the community sector to progress the development of a National Compact in 2009. It is expected that key governance and structural issues will be addressed in that Compact.</p> <p>The Government will also consider broader reform in light of the findings of ongoing reviews. For example, the Minister for Finance and Deregulation is examining ways of reducing red tape across Commonwealth grants, which would assist the not-for-profit sector. Philanthropic tax incentives fall within the broad scope of the current review of the Australian taxation system, Australia's Future Tax System, which will report to the Government by the end of 2009.</p> <p>There are many other existing initiatives in this area being addressed by states and territories or philanthropic organisations.</p> <p><i>The full list of related ideas can be found in the Communities Stream.</i></p>

## Ideas others may progress

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<b>Bill of Rights at State Level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A bill of rights at state level to strengthen the accountability of the states.</li> </ul>	This is a matter for the states.
<b>Media – Reform of the Press Council</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve accountability of the media (Press Council). The media should be accountable to the public, including radio, television and media on the internet.</li> <li>• Improve media diversity and accountability.</li> <li>• Expand the role of the Press Council to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Strengthen and reinvigorate the professionalism of journalists</li> <li>– Improved accountability</li> <li>– Review roles of Press Council in light of new media.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	The Press Council is independent of government and reform should be driven by the industry.

## Ideas with no further action at this time

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<b>Constitutional Reform</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Westminster form of government discourages openness. We should head towards the American ‘presidential’ form of government, where there are checks and balances between the legislature and government.</li> </ul>	Not supported at this time.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All agree that the Governor-General has the power in the Constitution – without reference to the Queen.</li> </ul>	Noted. Issues relating to the powers granted by the Constitution will be addressed in future discussions relating to Australia becoming a republic.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Constitution should recognise that under Australia’s system of government, all government power and authority is derived from the Australian people.</li> </ul>	Australia’s system of responsible and representative government already implicitly recognises the derivation of power and authority from the Australian people.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The principles of public service in our society should be incorporated in the Constitution so that public servants know their roles and responsibilities.</li> </ul>	Not supported at this time. There are existing mechanisms to ensure that public servants know their roles and responsibilities, including through the <i>Public Service Act</i> and the activities of the Australian Public Service Commission.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Constitution should set out the relationship between the political and administrative arm of government, the relationship between Ministers and public servants, and the role of the public servant.</li> </ul>	Not supported at this time. Read together, the Constitution and relevant Commonwealth legislation provide an appropriate framework for the regulation of these relationships.

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<b>Modern Federation</b>  <b>Also raised by: Rural</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formally enforce cooperative federalism at all levels.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government supports cooperative federalism, but does not consider that cooperation is best achieved through compulsion.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Abolish local government and have only two levels of government. There would then be a need to create more states (as many as 40) to take over the role of current local government.</li> </ul>	<p>Not supported at this time. Australia's local governments play a key role in the governance of Australia. The Commonwealth, through the Australian Council of Local Government, is seeking better engagement with local government as part of progressing new cooperative federalism. It is also noted that local governments are a function of the states and are not within the ambit of Commonwealth action without reference to the states.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drive effective intergovernmental collaboration by establishing a national cooperation commission to register, monitor and resolve disputes concerning intergovernmental agreements.</li> </ul>	<p>Not supported at this time. A commission with powers of compulsion would alter the balance of powers and could undermine co-operative federalism. The COAG Reform Council and the system of ministerial councils and secretariat support provided by departments deliver many of the outcomes that could be achieved through a commission.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Abolition of the states and territories and their replacement with amalgamated regional councils, which could potentially be modelled off the 1920 Australian Labor Party regional provinces map.</li> <li>Structure government by regions, biophysical or other.</li> </ul>	<p>Not supported at this time. State governments play a central role in policy development and service delivery to citizens. Abolition of Australia's state governments has very limited popular support.</p>
<b>Federation Council</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a Federation Council with a degree of independence, to facilitate Commonwealth-State relations.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government does not consider this to be necessary given the expanded role of the COAG Reform Council.</p>
<b>Northern Territory Emergency Response</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Northern Territory Intervention should happen everywhere, not just in the Northern Territory.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government is pursuing reform of service delivery in remote areas, including through COAG, as a critical contribution to closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) Review Board was established to conduct an independent and transparent review of the NTER. The Review Board provided its report, including key recommendations for moving forward, to the Australian Government on 13 October 2008.</p> <p>The findings of the Review, along with wider lessons learned during NTER implementation, will help to inform future policies and programs in the Northern Territory and elsewhere in Australia.</p>

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<b>Electoral Reform</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Representatives elected to represent groups rather than electorates.</li> </ul>	<p>Not supported at this time. The Government considers the current representative system remains appropriate.</p>
<b>Electoral Reform – Engaging Youth</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An alternative to the idea of changing the voting age to 16 is to have a youth parliament.</li> </ul>	<p>While noting that there are alternative mechanisms that enable young Australians to have a voice, this issue will be addressed in the second green paper on electoral reform.</p> <p>On 2 October 2008 the Government launched the new Australian Youth Forum. This aims to engage young people and the youth sector in public discussion and facilitate their input into policy and decision making on issues that affect their lives.</p>
<b>Budget Research Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need for a well-resourced and financed parliamentary budget office and research office.</li> </ul>	<p>The case for change is not clear at this time. Extensive expertise exists in the Parliamentary Library to advise on budget-related matters.</p>
<b>Government Reform – Open and Accountable Government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve accountability by keeping track of ministerial council discussions as well as delegated legislation and grant allocations.</li> </ul>	<p>The case for change is not clear at this time. Delegated legislation is recorded on a Federal Register of Legislative Instruments. Ministerial Council meetings are minuted. Grants are recorded on AusTender and reported to Parliament three times a year in accordance with Senate standing orders. Government departments and agencies also report grants in their Annual Reports.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve community and stakeholder engagement in scrutiny of Bills and policy development.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government is committed to ongoing improvement to community engagement at all levels of policy development and will choose the most appropriate form of engagement for each policy development process.</p> <p>The Government has no current plans for systemic reform. Rather, the Government will continue to make use of well-established mechanisms such as Green Papers, exposure draft legislation, parliamentary committees and ensuring that bills are publicly available.</p>

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<b>Government Reform – Open and Accountable Government – Public Immunity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Independent arbitration of Ministerial claims of public interest immunity and reversing the onus for public immunity tests for Ministers.</li> <li>Strong political leadership on open government.</li> <li>Ministerial advisers should be compellable witnesses in Parliament – but only when making executive decisions in the official conduct of their duty.</li> </ul>	<p>Public interest immunity claims are appropriately dealt with by each Chamber of Parliament. The Government does not support independent arbitration of public interest immunity claims (save where that is already part of normal legal process).</p> <p>The Code of Conduct for ministerial staff makes it clear that members of staff are not permitted to make executive decisions.</p>
<b>Government Reform – Open and Accountable Government – Information Disputes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish an independent process to resolve disputes about disclosure of information, along with an independent arbitrator.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government is undertaking reforms of the freedom of information system to improve accountability, including the establishment of an Information Commissioner and an FOI Commissioner.</p>
<b>Government Reform – Trade Practices Act</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creation of a <i>Trade Practices Act</i> section 52 ‘misleading or deceptive conduct’ offence for politicians.</li> </ul>	<p>Not supported. Politicians are accountable to the public at elections every three years.</p>
<b>Government Reform – Minister for Democracy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a Minister for Democracy.</li> </ul>	<p>Not supported at this time. The Government believes that the current ministerial arrangements are appropriate. The Cabinet Secretary is the responsible Minister for many related matters.</p>

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<b>Parliamentary Reform</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embark on electoral and constitutional reform to renew and reshape the role and composition of the Senate as a house of review and to make the Australian Parliament more representative.</li> </ul>	Not supported at this time.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Entrench the operations of the upper houses. The idea is that governments never control upper houses: their role is reserved as a house of review.</li> </ul>	The composition of upper houses in Australia (where they exist) is a matter for the electorate and the Government has no current plans for broader reform.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enable members and the public to ask questions in question time; a four-minute time limit in question time.</li> </ul>	The function of Question Time is for elected members, representing the public, to ask questions. Members of the public can ask Ministers questions in correspondence, at Community Cabinets and, indirectly, through their local members and senators.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish minimum time and process standards for the passage of legislation, including Committee scrutiny (for example, 30 days), unless otherwise negotiated.</li> </ul>	The Government does not support time periods for legislative processes, as this reduces the capacity to prioritise and respond to specific needs. The period for consideration of bills should be dependent upon the context, complexity and potential impacts of the relevant legislation.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Commonwealth Government to make an undertaking to allow a vote in both houses of Parliament before (except in cases of emergency) committing Australia to war or to a war-like situation.</li> </ul>	Not supported at this time. The Government does not intend to alter the existing arrangements whereby the power to deploy Australian Defence Force personnel overseas rests with the executive arm of government.

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<b>Public Sector Reform</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Committee structure to be broadened to include subject matter experts from outside parliament. Lower the level of public servants that are brought before committees.</li> </ul>	<p>Committees have the power to engage consultants and to require attendance of any person if necessary. However, the practice is that senior public servants attend to ensure the quality of the evidence and effectiveness of the process.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Government to instruct the Australian Public Service that it has a duty to cooperate with Parliament.</li> </ul>	<p>The <i>Public Service Act</i>, the Australian Public Service Code of Conduct and the Australian Public Service Values set out a framework that makes it clear that the Australian Public Service has a duty to cooperate with Parliament.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflect a better relationship with the Australian Government through changes in the machinery of government.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government considers that the existing machinery of government arrangements are appropriate.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A new public contract outlining what a model public servant should be.</li> </ul>	<p>The existing <i>Public Service Act</i> and Australian Public Service Code of Conduct and Australian Public Service Values already establish the code of conduct for Australian public servants.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A national civil service, where working for Australia could be a profession of first choice.</li> <li>Introduce a public service exchange program between federal public service, state and territory public service and the private sector.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government does not support a national civil service. However, it is committed to making the Australian Public Service a career of choice and aims to encourage exchanges between the Australian Public Service and universities, state and territory public service agencies and the private and not for profit sectors.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a uniform national ethical framework and code of conduct for public servants across the three levels of government.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government does not support this approach. The code of conduct for other jurisdictions is a matter for their relevant authorities.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A commission of inquiry to look at the state of the public service, the structure and likely requirements.</li> </ul>	<p>A separate commission of inquiry is not supported at this time.</p>
<b>Freedom of Information Reform – General</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reform of the current freedom of information system to be achieved by legislating through the <i>Electoral Act</i>.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government does not consider that the <i>Electoral Act</i> is the appropriate vehicle for reform of the freedom of information system. The Government is currently undertaking reform of the freedom of information system through other means.</p>
<b>Freedom of Information Reform – Archiving</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase open access to Government. The Government should apply new technologies to its records and make them searchable. There should also be a reduced period before Government documents can be accessed.</li> </ul>	<p>Wider aspects of freedom of information reform are proposed by the Government's current review and reform package. Archiving aspects are already supported through the National Archives and the Australian Government Information Management Office within the Department of Finance. Open access periods for documents under the Archives Act will be reduced from 30 years to 20 years.</p>

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<b>Media – Supporting Independent Media and Journalism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen accountability through a national investigative journalism fund. This could be co-funded by industry and government and would be a way to keep healthy high quality journalism alive in Australia.</li> <li>More informed and empowered citizenry predicated on more accountable media.</li> <li>Improved media diversity and accountability, a trust established for community media and national broadcasters to secure their long term funding. a removal of restrictions on multi-channelling and other economic restrictions.</li> <li>Secure independent public broadcaster.</li> </ul>	The Government indirectly funds investigative journalism through its funding of the national broadcasters, the ABC and SBS, both of which have independent boards.
<b>Change Defamation Laws</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defamation laws should be reformed ‘to shift the burden of proof’. A public figure alleging defamation would bear the burden of proving falsity.</li> </ul>	Not supported at this time. Defamation is primarily governed by State and Territory laws. Substantial reform to streamline and harmonise defamation laws has been implemented in recent times.
<b>National Days</b>	National days of recognition for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Constitution Day</li> <li>Democracy Day</li> <li>Deliberation Day.</li> </ul>	The Government will continue to monitor the need for additional days of recognition. At this time, it is not apparent that these particular days have significant public support.
<b>National Narrative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Prime Minister or Parliament to write a national narrative about governance and Australia’s connection into that narrative as a community.</li> </ul>	The Government will continue to develop and communicate its vision of the key challenges facing Australia and to further develop community engagement strategies.
<b>Guaranteed Indigenous Representation</b>  <b>Also raised by: Indigenous</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Entrenched and guaranteed Indigenous representation in federal parliament.</li> <li>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander seats in Parliament as in New Zealand or greater support to stand as candidates.</li> </ul>	Not supported at this time.