

# Constitutional

# Conversation



## GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER?

*A new book provides food for thought about our Federation and Constitution*

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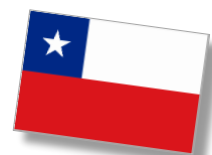
**A referendum on a republic can be risky**

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# Barbados plans to leave its colonial past behind

Plans by the government of Barbados to make the island nation a republic by 2021 were outlined by Governor-General Dame Sandra Mason when delivering [her speech at the State Opening of Parliament](#).

In her speech written by the government, Dame Sandra quoted Errol Barrow, the first prime minister of Barbados after it gained independence from Britain in 1966.

Dame Sandra said Barrow had “cautioned against loitering on colonial premises”.

“That warning is as relevant today as it was in 1966,” she said.

“Having attained independence over half a century ago, our country can be in no doubt about its capacity for self-governance.



Dame Sandra Mason ... statement of confidence

“The time has come to fully leave our colonial past behind.

“Barbadians want a Barbadian Head of State.

“This is the ultimate statement of confidence in who we are and

what we are capable of achieving.

“Hence, Barbados will take the next logical step toward full sovereignty and become a republic by the time we celebrate our 55th anniversary of independence,” she said.



## KEY FACTS

- Capital — Bridgetown
- Population — 300,000
- Area — 430 sq km
- Independence from UK — 30 November 1966
- A parliamentary democracy under a constitutional monarchy
- Head of State — Queen Elizabeth II represented by the Governor-General of Barbados
- Member of the Commonwealth of Nations
- Bi-cameral [Parliament of Barbados](#) (pictured above) with five-year terms.
- House of Assembly (lower house) — 30 elected members in single-seat constituencies
- Senate (upper house) — 21 members appointed by the Prime Minister (12), the Governor-General (7), and Leader of the Opposition (2)



- Prime Minister Mia Mottley (pictured) led the Barbados Labour Party to office and became the nation’s eighth and first female leader in May 2018
- The [Constitution of Barbados](#) was adopted at independence in November 1966
- The Constitution may be amended by an Act of Parliament passed by both houses
- Proposed amendments to “entrenched clauses” in the Constitution — those relating to citizenship, rights and freedoms, the Governor-General, elections, composition of parliament — require the support of two-thirds of both houses of parliament

## Barbados shows republics and the Commonwealth do mix

The small Caribbean island nation of Barbados has proved yet again that becoming a republic will not conflict with membership of the Commonwealth of Nations and respect for Queen Elizabeth II.

In September the Barbados government announced plans for the nation to become a republic by the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in November 2021 of the former colony’s independence from Great Britain.

If the plan succeeds, Barbados will join 31 other republics in the 54-member Commonwealth of Nations headed by Her Majesty. (Pictured on a visit to Barbados)

The planned move by Barbados proves yet again that there is no conflict between a nation being a republic and its membership of the Commonwealth.

The former British colony has a Westminster-style parliamentary system and its government has rightly declared that one of their own should be their head of state, not the British monarch.

I believe most Australians would have the same attitude — an Australian should be our head of state, preferably chosen through a direct election.

The words of the Prime Minister, Mia Mottley, sum it up: “This is the ultimate statement of



confidence in who we are and what we are capable of achieving.”

The words in response from Buckingham Palace — that it’s a matter for the people of Barbados to decide — show the Royal Family is relaxed about Commonwealth nations becoming republics.

They know that it’s not a sign of disrespect to Her Majesty or her family. The question of Australia becoming a republic has never been about the Royal Family. It is about what Australians want and how they see their future in the world.



DAVID MUIR AM  
Chair  
The Real Republic Australia



# Section 44 — a double standard?

Problems caused by a key provision of our Constitution may have waned, but DAVID MUIR suggests it still raises significant questions.

The drafters of our Australian Constitution were anxious to avoid foreigners infiltrating our Federal Parliament.

There was even a fear at the time that our “defence secrets could be sold” by such infiltrators.

Section 44 of the Australian Constitution was drafted to address this fear.

Under Section 44 dual citizens are not allowed to stand for parliament.

This was meant as a basic safeguard to the integrity of our parliament and our national sovereignty.

There are five subsections within Section 44 that were designed to cover a range of circumstances in which a person should not sit in our Federal Parliament.

In recent years we saw several MPs fall foul of Section 44.

They lost their seats and were forced to try to win them back at by-elections.

These MPs were caught by the provisions in Section 44 that

include the prohibition on holding an allegiance to a “foreign power”.

Yet how incongruous is it that we allow our Head of State to not only reside in another country, but have citizenship of another nation?

It gets worse, because our Head of State also acts as Head of State of a number of other nations as well.

It matters not that at the time of drafting Australia’s Constitution we were all citizens of the British Empire.

Those days are now long gone.

How can our nation continue to allow such a conflicted Head of State represent our country in its affairs when we are so careful to avoid this with our parliamentary representatives?

Where is our national integrity and sovereignty in such a system?



## 44. Disqualification

Any person who:

1. is under any acknowledgment of allegiance, obedience, or adherence to a foreign power, or is a subject or a citizen or entitled to the rights or privileges of a subject or a citizen of a foreign power; or
2. is attainted of treason, or has been convicted and is under sentence, or subject to be sentenced, for any offence punishable under the law of the Commonwealth or of a State by imprisonment for one year or longer; or
3. is an undischarged bankrupt or insolvent; or
4. holds any office of profit under the Crown, or any pension payable during the pleasure of the Crown out of any of the revenues of the Commonwealth; or
5. has any direct or indirect pecuniary interest in any agreement with the Public Service of the Commonwealth otherwise than as a member and in common with the other members of an incorporated company consisting of more than twenty-five persons;

shall be incapable of being chosen or of sitting as a senator or a member of the House of Representatives.

But subsection (iv) does not apply to the office of any of the Queen’s Ministers of State for the Commonwealth, or of any of the Queen’s Ministers for a State, or to the receipt of pay, half pay, or a pension, by any person as an officer or member of the Queen’s navy or army, or to the receipt of pay as an officer or member of the naval or military forces of the Commonwealth by any person whose services are not wholly employed by the Commonwealth.

Section 44 and just some of the MPs who fell foul of it

## Pandemic-linked Constitutional challenges fail in the High Court

The High Court of Australia has rejected two challenges to actions taken by governments in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Both actions claimed decisions by state governments had eroded freedoms supposedly guaranteed in the Australian Constitution.

Businessman and political activist Clive Palmer mounted a challenge to border closures imposed by the government of Western Australia under its [Emergency Management Act](#).

Lawyers for Mr Palmer argued that the closures breached

[Section 92](#) of the Constitution which guarantees movement between states.

The WA Government said the border closures were justified as a reasonable and necessary action to stop the spread of the virus in WA.

Chief Justice Susan Kiefel said the court had [found](#) the WA laws “comply with the constitutional limitation of Section 92 in both its limbs”.

She said the use of parts of the [Emergency Management Act](#) to create border closure directions “does not raise a constitutional question”.



The High Court [also rejected](#) a bid by Melbourne hotelier Julian Gerner who had sought to challenge Victorian Government pandemic restrictions by arguing that the Constitution contained an implied freedom of movement for any reason.

Mr Gerner’s counsel Bret Walker argued that the High Court should find an implied freedom of movement in the same way the court had in a 1992 decision found an implied freedom of political communication.

He said that the Australian nation was a “community of people” and required not just political communication but also “physical transport” of its people.

The Victorian Government noted that the Constitution contained powers for quarantine, defence and aliens – all of which allowed for limitations on freedom of movement.

# TABLE TALK RECALLS THE LESSONS OF FEDERATION

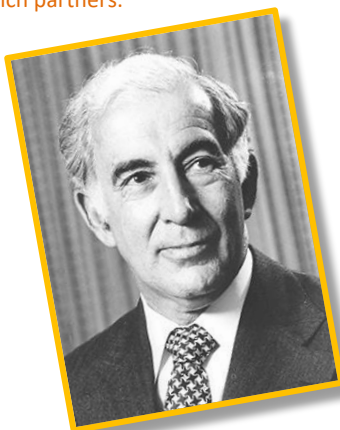
The book *Dinner with the Founding Fathers* by living legend [Everald Compton](#) is three books in one bringing to life the compelling stories of our “founding fathers” in delivering the miracle of federation of our great nation and the negotiation and drafting of its foundation document, the Australian Constitution.

This book could well be a catalyst for a national conversation about our federated system of government and the need to modernise our Constitution.

Storytelling is the art of informing and passing on history that is most engaging.

Compton does this by imagining a fictional dinner at the Melbourne Club with 10 of those involved in federation a decade after the event where they reflect on what they did and how well they did it.

The next book within the book is a fictional lunch at the Australian Club in Sydney 90 years later reflecting on the Whitlam dismissal in 1975. Sir Zelman Cowen is substituted for Sir John Kerr. Malcolm Fraser and Gough Whitlam are the other lunch partners.



Sir Zelman Cowen

Compton draws on his relationship with Cowen and acquaintanceship with Whitlam and Fraser to provide the direct speech in the conversation over lunch.

The final book is an epilogue on the major players.

The Melbourne Club dinner reveals some gems about the way our nation came together as one.

The dinner is hosted by the nation’s first Prime Minister Edmund Barton (nicknamed Toss Pot Toby).



Clockwise from top left: George Reid, Sir Samuel Griffith, Edmund Barton, Alfred Deakin

From the book we learn of the tension and rivalry among the colonies as well as between Britain and the colonies. We read that Britain regarded the colonies more as British counties very much within their dominion. Queen Victoria and Westminster did not want to let go of control.

The Australian Constitution was drafted in this context.

Britain wanted to control judicial and legislative decisions made in the former colonies.

It is why the final court of Appeal was the Privy Council.

It is why the Queen wanted power of veto over laws of any federal parliament.

The other context was that the colonies were reluctant to hand over too much power to the federation. The smaller ones feared potential domination by the larger colonies.

These are the themes that contributed to the way in which the Constitution was drafted.

It meant that the colonies kept powers over health, education and transport to themselves.

It meant that the Senate was designed to re-address the imbalance in power giving



each colony the same representation no matter what size.

So our Constitution reflects the politics of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with little amendment since that time to reflect the modern world.

Most people will be aware that Queensland Chief Justice and former premier Sir Samuel Griffith together with Edmund Barton from New South Wales and Charles Kingston from South Australia spent a weekend in March 1893 on board the Queensland Government yacht *Lucinda* on the Hawkesbury River drafting the Constitution.

Many may not know that Andrew Clark



The Queensland Government’s *Lucinda*

from Tasmania had made the first draft of the document following visits to Britain, Canada and America drawing on aspects of their political systems. Clark does not get the recognition he should for his contribution.

In the first 10 years of federation there was much competition between free traders and protectionists revealing that trade issues between the states also played a role in the colonies coming together.



# The foundations of federation can help build a republic



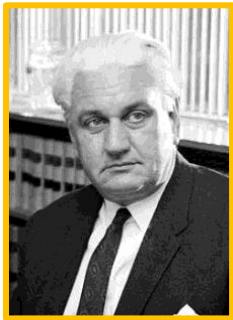
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The abolition of customs duties between colonies was one of the outcomes of federation.

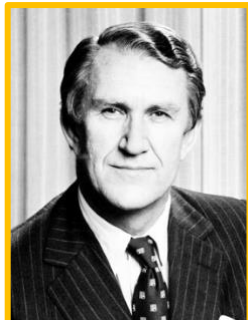
This issue played out particularly at places like Corowa on the Murray River. Then there was competition between labour and capital.

It was through this prism of competition that political parties were developed.

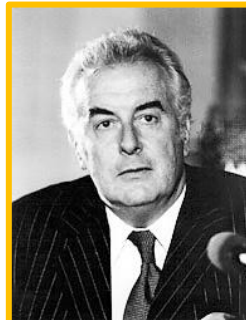
Political parties changed the way in which the Senate worked. Senators were meant to be guarding states' rights. Instead they became beholden to political parties.



Sir John Kerr



Malcolm Fraser



Gough Whitlam

The constitutional nexus between the two houses of parliament has led to the situation where Tasmania now has 12 Senators with only five lower house representatives in the Federal Parliament.

Compton reveals in his book that Alfred Deakin and Bolton Bird were frustrated about their unfinished business in the drafting of the preamble for the Constitution. They wanted a declaration of Australian values.

Women and indigenous people were not recognised in the Constitution. This was a time of the white Australia policy. Women did not have the vote nor could they stand for parliament. It was not until 1967 that indigenous recognition was achieved by constitutional amendment through referendum.

Another aspect of control by Britain was revealed in the Australian Club lunch in discussion about the reserve powers of the Governor-General. Westminster wanted the Queen's representatives to be able to dismiss a government.

The luncheon attendees agreed that the Senate ought not have the power to block

supply to a government that had the confidence of the lower house, being the catalyst for the Whitlam dismissal.

Tellingly all at the luncheon acknowledge that mistakes were made by each of the three key figures in the dismissal in 1975.

The fictitious dinner and lunch discussions reveal that much is needed to bring our Constitution into the modern age together with securing our national identity and independence.

We owe much to the "founding fathers" for their courage, commitment and foresight.

It is now up to a new generation to take the next necessary steps to forge our national identity and cement our values in our Constitution.

In the context of the nineteenth century it would have been difficult to forge a republic without significant conflict. Much compromise was required to merely federate.

Now an Australian republic can be built on the foundations made by the founding fathers in an environment where conflict is no longer required.

There is also now no need to compromise on what is the best model for a republic either.

DAVID MUIR AM

## DINNER WITH THE FOUNDING FATHERS

By Everal Compton AM

Published by Austin Macauley Publishers

To purchase, visit [the book's website](#).

## John Fahey in the republican vanguard

Former NSW premier John Fahey who died in September has been remembered as one of the first conservative politicians to embrace the republican cause after then prime minister Paul Keating put the idea on the national agenda in 1993.

Mr Fahey, who served as a Liberal Party premier from 1992 to 1995 also served in the Federal Parliament from 1996 to 2001 as Minister for Finance in the first two governments of John Howard.

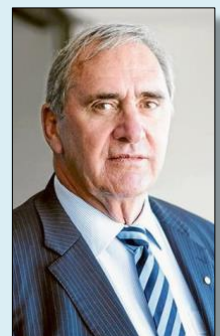
In February 1993, prior to that year's federal election Mr Keating announced plans to establish what became the Republic Advisory Committee consisting of eminent Australians who outlined a proposal to move the nation to a republic.

Shortly after Mr Fahey as NSW premier said it was "inevitable" that Australia would become a republic.

He proposed a national constitutional convention to decide the issues needing to make it happen.

Mr Fahey recognised that his view on a republic was not shared by all on the conservative side of politics.

But he [advocated](#) a wide and considered public debate to ensure Australians were fully informed before making their decision.



John Fahey

Mr Fahey favoured a "minimalist model" for a republic – having a head of state chosen by a two-thirds majority of Federal Parliament.

He [believed](#) this would be a "safer" option than having a directly elected head of state.

"The question that's being put allows for something like in excess of 200 [MPs] – representatives of all the people of Australia – to actually have a say in selecting, and the proposal for our head of state ensures that when we become a republic, we will get an eminent Australian, not a politician, as our head of state," he said.

# Recent referendums show model is key

**News that Barbados plans to legislate to turn the island nation into a republic caused a British academic to canvass the chequered history of republic referendums.**

In an article [published by The Conversation](#), Professor Matt Qvortrup said since Mexico voted to scrap its monarchy in 1863 there had been [33 similar referendums around the world](#) to abolish or restore monarchies.

[Professor Qvortrup](#) is Professor of Applied Political Science and International Relations at Coventry University in the UK.

He described some referendums as “dubious, if not outright absurd”. For example, a 1955 vote staged by the Diem regime on whether Vietnam would be a monarchy or a republic saw more votes cast than eligible voters.

South Africa voted in 1960 to

sever ties with the British monarchy, although in the apartheid era only whites could participate. There were also successful plebiscites in to cut ties with the monarchy in Ghana in 1960 and in Rwanda in 1961.

In 1965 Gambia gained its independence from Britain and voters decided to retain a constitutional monarchy, but five years later a referendum made the nation a republic.

Referendums in Europe saw mixed results. In 1944 Iceland voted to become a republic followed by Italy in 1946. In 1950 Belgians voted in favour of the return of King Leopold III from Switzerland where he had been in exile under the orders of Nazi Germany since World War II.

In 1974 69% of Greeks voted against the return of King Constantine, which Professor



Qvortrup attributes to unease about the former monarch’s role in the preceding decade of military rule rather than any sense of constitutional change.

Professor Qvortrup said voters had “not rushed to reinstate monarchies when given the chance”.

In Brazil such a proposal was rejected in 1993. Three years later Albania did the same.

He cites as a curious example the tiny nation of the Maldives where voters backed the abolition of the monarchy in 1952, then voted to re-establish it the following year, and then finally to become a republic in 1968.

Professor Qvortrup noted that three of the more recent referendums – Australia in 1999, the South Pacific island nation of Tuvalu in 2008, and St Vincent and the Grenadines in 2009 – all voted to retain the Queen as head of state.

He said “an element of conservatism” had played a role in the rejection of a republic. But he pointed to the model being offered to voters as a more significant explanation.

“While opinion polls predicted a majority would have been in favour of establishing a republic, in the end most voters were against the alternative on the ballot, an indirectly elected head of state,” he said.

“At a time when politicians were in low regard, substituting a soft-spoken septuagenarian for a retired career politician was not a prospect that thrilled the hearts of voters.”

Professor Qvortrup concludes that if a nation didn’t need a referendum but could simply legislate to become a republic – as is the case with Barbados – they should just do it.

## Labor MP cautions on tactics

**Federal Labor Party frontbencher Tanya Plibersek says any campaign for an Australian republic that denigrates the Queen is doomed to fail.**

[Speaking](#) at the launch of a book about “the Palace Letters” Ms Plibersek said lingering anger over the 1975 dismissal of the Whitlam Government should not be the motivation behind a drive for a republic.

“We can’t let the dismissal and its resentments shape our case for a truly independent nation,” Ms Plibersek said. “I understand the temptation here – but we should resist it.

“Our republican story should project confidence – not bitterness. It should be forward looking – not tangled up in old battles. Our republic should be born in hope and optimism.”

Ms Plibersek said any campaign for a republic that sought to “trash” the Queen was destined to fail.



“Even republicans respect the Queen – and will never accept her as a villain,” she said.

“In the end, we need to make the case for an Australian republic, not the case against the British monarch.”

Ms Plibersek also said a move to a republic should also involve recognition of indigenous Australians.

Our republican story should offer a path to healing our oldest national wound.

“The fight for an Australian republic cannot be separated from the fight for Voice, Treaty and Truth Telling.

“As republicans, we should celebrate the best of us as a country.

“Mature, proud, egalitarian, multicultural.

“We should recognise the beauty and fragility of our land – and we should accept our responsibility to conserve it for future generations,” she said.

## OUR VIEW

The statements by Tanya Plibersek reflect the views of the Real Republic Australia.

We have always maintained that the debate on whether Australia becomes a republic should never be based on attacks on the Queen or any member of the Royal Family.

Ample evidence exists to show that the Royal Family



itself acknowledges that the decision is one for us to make and they will accept it. They know the questions needing to be resolved do not centre on them, but go to the heart of what Australians want and how Australians see their future.

The so-called “Palace Letters” have rightly excited historians and sparked debate among political observers and some may well see lessons in them.

But the real republic debate is a positive one about our nation’s future.



## Our newsletter

*Constitutional Conversation* is published quarterly by the Real Republic Australia.

It aims to foster public debate about potential changes to the Australian Constitution including a republic with a head of state elected directly by the people of Australia.

The Real Republic Australia was founded by Brisbane's longest-serving Lord Mayor, the late Clem Jones (1918-2007) and other delegates to the 1998 Constitutional Convention in Canberra who advocated for the direct-election republic model.

In line with his wishes, the Real Republic continues to campaign for a republic based on the direct-election model with support provided by the Clem Jones Group.

The Real Republic supports a range of changes to the Constitution that will improve the workings of government:



Clem Jones

- A directly elected head of state.
- A head of state with oversight of anti-corruption measures.
- Constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians.
- Constitutional recognition of local government.
- Fixed and synchronised four-year terms for both Houses of Parliament.
- Addressing the nexus dictating the relative sizes of both Houses of Parliament.
- Reducing the number of Senators.
- Applying the casual vacancy system of the Senate to the House of Representatives.
- Making the process for calling a referendum fairer.

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# Such a strange idea!

A radical twist on the “*bunyip aristocracy*” proposed by William Wentworth in the 1850s was put forward by a South Australian state MP in the 1990s.

The late **Bob Such** (pictured) served for almost 25 years as a Liberal Party and later an independent MP in the South Australian Parliament until his death from a brain tumour in 2014.

In the early 1990s he twice floated the idea of creating an Australian monarchy.

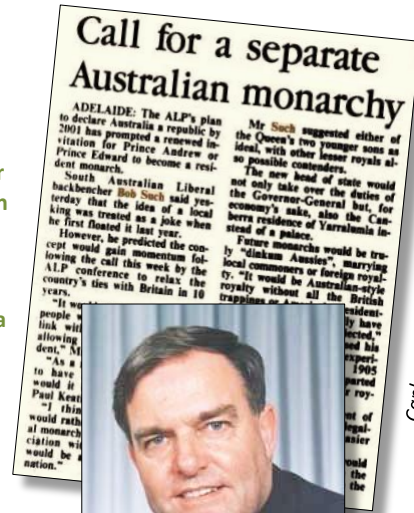
In 1991 the Labor Party announced its intention to turn Australia into a republic by 2001.

Mr Such responded by saying it would be easier – both legally and constitutionally – to establish a local constitutional monarchy.

Mr Such suggested that either of Queen Elizabeth II's younger sons, Prince Andrew or Prince Edward, would be suitable as a monarch resident in Australia.

“Changing to a republic would not only involve changes to the federal Constitution but also the states,” he said.

“It would be Australian-style monarchy without all the British trappings or America's presidential system where you



Canberra Times 28 June 1991

really have to be a millionaire to get elected.

“It would serve the interests of people who want to keep the link with British royalty while allowing Australia to be independent.”

Mr Such said to minimise costs the monarch would not only take over the duties of the Governor-General but also set up residence at Government House at Yarralumla in Canberra rather than establish a new palace.

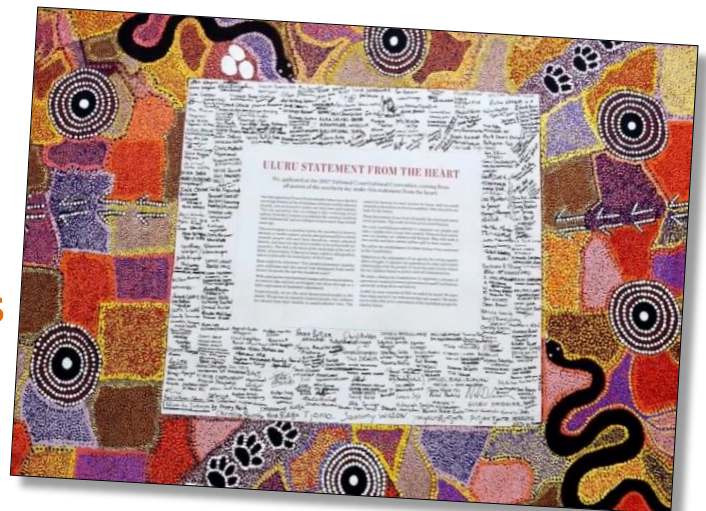
## Statement from the Heart now available in 60 languages

The [Uluru Statement from the Heart](#) is now available to read in 60 languages courtesy of a collaboration between the UNSW Indigenous Law Centre and SBS Radio.

Megan Davis, UNSW Professor of Law and Balnaves Chair of Constitutional Law, said English was not the first language for many Australians.

“These translations offer a powerful way for the whole Australian community to engage, read and understand what First Nations delegates called for in 2017 at Uluru,” Professor Davis said.

“The relationship between Indigenous Australia and multicultural Australia is an important one and we hope this work is received as a demonstration of how important we view this relationship.



The statement and the three reform proposals – a voice to parliament, a treaty, and truth telling – provide a roadmap for constitutional recognition of indigenous Australians.

They arose from the Uluru National Constitutional Convention in May 2017 where the statement (pictured) was signed and adopted by 250 First Nations delegates.

The statement has been translated into 60 languages which are [available online](#) at SBS Radio's website.

# Chileans vote for a clean sheet

Voters in Chile have given overwhelming support to a referendum asking them if they want to totally rewrite their nation's constitution.

In a result that underlined voters' desire to control the process of drafting a new constitution, voters also opted for directly electing delegates who will undertake the task.

The October referendum was [reported](#) to have asked voters two questions:

- Do you want a new constitution?
- What kind of body should write the new Constitution?

The referendum saw slightly more than 7.5 million people vote, representing a 50% turnout of almost 15 million eligible voters.

Political observers said the turnout was higher than usual for Chile where voting is not compulsory and participation levels are traditionally low.

Slightly more than 78% of those who did vote – or almost 6 million voters – approved the first question while almost 22% rejected the proposal.

On the second question, conditional on the first question being approved, provided two options for voters.

The first option was for the new constitution to be written by a constitutional convention with elected representatives. It received almost 79% voter approval.

The second option for a joint constitutional convention – a mix of elected representatives and some sitting MPs – received only 21% support.

The referendum had been planned for April this year but had to be postponed to October



## Gender sets the agenda

It is expected that Chile's new constitution will be written by an assembly of 155 citizens to be elected in April next year and given nine months to complete their work.

Half of those to be elected will be women – believed to be the first time in the world a constitution will be written by a group selected on gender parity.

The move to give gender balance to the process started when equal rights activists and feminists began a social media campaign with [the social media hashtag #neveragainwithoutwomen](#).

because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was held in response to widespread civil unrest which saw Chileans take to the streets to protest inequalities.

The BBC [reported](#) that Chile's current constitution, written in 1980 by dictator Augusto Pinochet who ruled the nation from 1973 to 1990, was blamed for entrenching disadvantage by specifying private sector control of major services such as health, education, housing, and pensions.

The 1980 constitution had also restricted political representation which was also seen as perpetuating social and economic disparities.

Chile's right-wing President Sebastian Piñera who agreed in November 2019 to hold the referendum, acknowledged that the current constitution was "divisive".

He urged Chileans to "work together so that the new constitution is the great framework of unity, stability and the future".

Elections for members of the constitutional convention will be held in April 2021. It will have nine months to draft a new constitution which is expected to be ratified by a national plebiscite in 2022.

## FURTHER READING

[Links to items of interest](#)

### Portuguese president raises concerns

The President of Portugal [has raised](#) the need to amend the nation's constitution to cope with future pandemics.

Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa said the current constitutional and legal system was not designed to cope with pandemic situations.

He canvassed legal doubts about restrictions imposed by the Portuguese government such as restrictions on the movement of people between municipalities.

### Low turnout for Algerian vote on new constitution

Less than one-quarter of voters in the north-west African country of Algeria voted in [a referendum](#) aimed at revamping its constitution and implement reforms to address widespread civil discontent.

Proposals included limiting Algerian MPs and the nation's president to two terms, limiting state-of-emergency decrees to 30 days, creating an anti-corruption body, and making it easier to create political parties.

Although the new constitution was [reported](#) to have been approved by 66.8% of those who voted, the low turnout means only 15% of the nation's voters backed the changes, leaving open the possibility of legal challenges.

### Taiwan pollster suggests changing terminology

A Taiwanese public opinion pollster says the country's constitution should drop references to itself as the "Republic of China" because of confusion with the People's Republic of China.

Ying-lung You of the Taiwanese Public Opinion Foundation said [his suggestion](#) reflected the shrinking number of residents who believed that the term "Republic of China" also included mainland China, and a growing number [identified in past polling](#) who described themselves as Taiwanese not Chinese.

## Chile at a glance.....

Chile is a republic with an elected executive president as head of state and head of government.

It has a bicameral legislature – the National Congress – with a lower house Chamber of Deputies with 155 members and an upper house Senate with 43 seats.

Population: 18.2 million