

# About THE PEOPLE'S CONSTITUTION

## THE PATH TO EMPOWERMENT OF AUSTRALIANS IN A 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY DEMOCRACY

### The People's Constitution by ACFP Founder Bronwyn Kelly

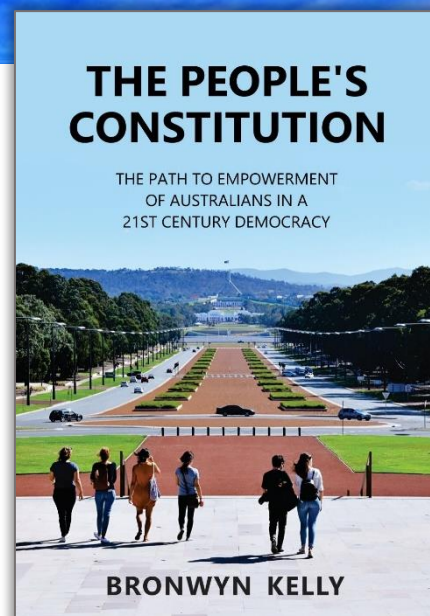
#### A short summary

This book offers the people of Australia a comprehensive proposal for a new type of constitution for their Commonwealth, a constitution in which they will have a role beyond mere voting and by which they can be empowered for the first time to take a rightful place in their own governance. It is designed to give them a practical means of forming a new, more productive and transparent partnership with those they elect and thereby to re-create their political systems and the nation itself as a fully open, participatory democracy.

In this new democratic arrangement, Australians can exercise a rightful share of power principally to express their sovereign will as a nation. The current Australian Constitution makes no place for the expression of this will. In the people's constitution, however, the people of Australia are offered a practical, well organised means to express their sovereign will in a coherent way and to offer that as new terms of trust to those they elect to positions of power.

*The People's Constitution* is set at a turning point in the history of democracy and in our understanding of how state sovereignty may be ethically arranged and made stable. It canvasses the history of Australia's capacity for effective governance since the current Constitution was first adopted in 1901 and examines the usefulness of the arrangement of power made possible under it, not just in relation to today's political challenges but also in relation to the capacity of these arrangements to help Australians meet the challenges of the future. Some of these challenges – including climate change and war – are potentially existential in their dimensions. Acknowledging the precariousness of our future, this book asserts that the type of democratic sovereign state made possible by Australia's current Constitution offers Australians insufficient capacity to safely navigate their future. It suggests that the capacity of their democracy can be sufficiently strengthened if a place is made in the Constitution for the people to state their values as a nation, reach agreement with each other on human rights and obligations, and access rights to express their will for the future.

Transition to a people's constitution also offers Australians their first chance to exercise the fundamental human right of self-determination – that is, the right by virtue of which all peoples of the world can freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. This right has been acknowledged in international law as central to every



individual's and every nation's capacity to realise a decent future of wellbeing and security, and it is a right that the First Nations peoples of Australia currently consider to be central to their future. They have emerged from their tragic experience of dispossession declaring something that is fundamental to all humanity. In the Uluru Statement from the Heart they have declared that when they have power over their destiny their children will flourish.

Accordingly, Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders have called upon Australians to walk together with them in a movement of *all* Australian people for a better future. In addition to an Indigenous Voice in the Constitution, they are calling for a coexistence of sovereignties based on justice and self-determination. This book strongly supports those calls and indeed suggests that a positive response to them in any forthcoming referendum on a constitutionally enshrined Indigenous Voice offers all Australians substantial benefits. But to capture those benefits it will be necessary to re-build our 120-year-old Constitution so that it empowers all Australians to have a Voice.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, across the Western world, the whole concept of sovereignty has been undergoing a transformation. It has been shifting, slowly but steadily, from a *supposition* that sovereignty is something granted to a government by the consent of a willingly submissive people, to a *proposition* that it is something to be shared by people who can exercise self-determination in political equality. That shift implies the need for a shift in the Australian Constitution. This is a paradigmatic shift but it is also entirely feasible if Australians build a *people's* constitution.

As they approach the question of whether they may wish to become a republic, this book argues that an Australian people's constitution would make such a decision truly meaningful and empowering by enabling them to describe the sort of republic they wish to become and the place they can rightfully take within it to increase the chances that all their children will flourish.

Visit <https://www.austcfp.com.au/publications> for the full publication of *The People's Constitution*.

**If you would like to become involved in building a plan for a better Australia, visit the Australian Community Futures Planning website at [www.austcfp.com.au](http://www.austcfp.com.au)  
Everyone is welcome to participate.**

**Further questions may be forwarded to ACFP at [info@austcfp.com.au](mailto:info@austcfp.com.au)**



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