

The Australian Executive Model & Coordinated National Elections

Introduction

Australia stands at a crossroads, it must move to become a Republic in order to modernise and improve the country. This paper follows others¹ arguing for a transformative republican model, replacing the Governor-General and state governors with the Australian Executive Council (AEC), a collective head of state comprising the Prime Minister and the Premiers of the six states (New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania) and two territories (Australian Capital Territory, Northern Territory). This model not only severs ties with the monarchy but also repurposes Government Houses as museums for First Nations reconciliation and multiculturalism, aligning with the Albanese government's 2025 productivity drive to cut red tape and boost economic resilience. As a flagship initiative, the AEC will implement "Unity Vote Day," a national election day on the first Saturday in May every four years, synchronizing federal, state, and local elections to save costs, enhance voter turnout, and foster national unity. This article outlines the Australian Unity Republic, its constitutional framework, financial benefits, cultural significance, and the case for a synchronized electoral system.

The Australian Unity Republic: Core Components

The Australian Executive Council (AEC)

The AEC is a collective head of state that unites Australia's elected leaders to exercise federal and state reserve powers (e.g., dissolving parliaments, appointing leaders) and ceremonial duties. Comprising nine members—the Prime Minister and eight Premiers/Chief Ministers—the AEC ensures every region has a voice, reflecting Australia's federal structure. The Prime Minister holds a tie-breaking vote for procedural matters, with supermajorities (two-thirds) required for critical decisions like reserve powers, ensuring balanced governance.

The AEC's meeting schedule is designed for efficiency:

¹ Productivity, Republicanism and Improving Government Efficiency
<https://www.workingpapers.com.au/papers/productivity-republicanism-and-improving-whole-australian-government-efficiency>
Common Sense: Towards an Australian Republic that improves the country
<https://www.workingpapers.com.au/papers/common-sense>

- Monthly meetings via video conference or in Canberra to address routine matters like legislation approval.
- Quarterly in-person summits in rotating state capitals to foster strategic alignment.
- Emergency meetings via video conference for urgent issues, such as constitutional crises.

This streamlined approach contrasts with the current system's Commonwealth (Federal) Executive Council, which meets biweekly when Parliament sits, and state Executive Councils, which meet weekly or as needed, advising governors on administrative tasks. The AEC's use of technology minimizes costs and aligns with the Albanese government's productivity agenda, reducing bureaucratic overhead.

Transformation of Government Houses

Under the Australian Unity Republic, Government Houses in Canberra, Sydney, and the six state capitals will be repurposed as museums dedicated to First Nations reconciliation and the promotion of peace, tolerance, and multiculturalism. These cultural hubs will:

- Showcase Indigenous history, from pre-colonial cultures to colonial impacts and modern reconciliation efforts, honoring the 1967 referendum's legacy.
- Celebrate Australia's diverse communities through exhibits and programs on multiculturalism.
- Be managed by a national Reconciliation and Multiculturalism Council with Indigenous-led advisory boards, ensuring cultural sensitivity and local relevance.

This transformation addresses the 2023 Voice referendum's failure by providing tangible reconciliation outcomes, aligning with Labor's \$842 million Closing the Gap investment for Indigenous communities.

Financial Benefits

The AEC model eliminates the Governor-General and state governors' roles, yielding significant savings:

- Current costs: \$26.5–43.5 million annually (Governor-General: \$13–18 million; state governors: \$13.5–25.5 million), covering salaries (\$709,017 for the Governor-General), housing, and operations.
- AEC costs: \$0.5–1 million for travel and administration, leveraging existing elected officials.
- Net savings: \$25.5–42.5 million annually, averaging \$30–35 million.

- Museum setup: \$35–70 million for seven sites, funded by 1–2 years of savings.
- Museum operations: \$14–35 million annually, offset by \$10–20 million in revenue from entry fees and donations, potentially self-sustaining.

These savings support Labor’s productivity priorities, such as the \$22.7 billion Future Made in Australia plan and housing initiatives, freeing resources for economic growth and community wellbeing.

Alignment with Albanese’s Productivity Drive

The Albanese government, re-elected in May 2025, has prioritized productivity to reverse a 1% labor productivity decline, with initiatives like the August 2025 economic growth roundtable, streamlined project approvals, and increased R&D investment. The AEC model aligns by:

- Reducing governance costs through efficient, technology-driven meetings.
- Redirecting savings to economic priorities like manufacturing and job creation.
- Promoting social cohesion via reconciliation museums, enhancing workforce participation and aligning with Labor’s focus on inclusive growth.

Constitutional Framework

Implementing the Australian Unity Republic requires amendments to the federal Constitution and state constitutions, removing monarchical references and vesting powers in the AEC. The following outlines key changes:

Federal Constitution Amendments

- **Preamble:** Affirm Australia as the *Australian Unity Republic* with the AEC as head of state, committing to transform Government Houses into museums for reconciliation and multiculturalism, and align with productivity goals by saving \$25.5–42.5 million annually.
- **Covering Clause 2:** Remove the Queen’s role, establish the AEC.
- **Section 1:** Redefine Parliament as the Senate and House of Representatives, with bills assented by the AEC.
- **Section 2:** Repeal the Governor-General’s appointment, establish the AEC.
- **Section 61:** Vest executive power in the AEC.
- **Section 62:** Add Section 62A: "The Australian Executive Council shall consist of the Prime Minister, who presides with a tie-breaking vote, and the Premiers of the States and Territories, exercising federal and state head of state powers for the *Australian Unity Republic*."

- **Sections 5, 28, 57:** Transfer parliamentary powers to the AEC.
- **Section 68:** Vest military command in the AEC.
- **New Section: Transformation of Government Houses:** Repurpose Government House (Canberra) and Admiralty House (Sydney) as museums, funded by savings to support productivity initiatives.
- **Other Sections:** Update references to the Governor-General or Queen (e.g., Section 44).

State Constitution Amendments (Each of 6 States)

- **Section Establishing Governor:** Repeal governor appointments (e.g., NSW: Section 3, VIC: Section 6), recognizing the AEC.
- **Section on Executive Power:** Vest power in the AEC (e.g., NSW: Section 5, VIC: Section 7).
- **Section on Assent to Bills:** Assign assent to the AEC (e.g., NSW: Section 16, VIC: Section 15).
- **New Section: Transformation of Government Houses:** Repurpose state Government Houses as museums for local Indigenous history and multiculturalism, co-managed with Indigenous stakeholders.
- **Other Sections:** Update governor references.

Territories (ACT, NT)

- Amend the *Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988* and *Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978* to integrate Chief Ministers into the AEC and remove Administrator roles.
- Support museum initiatives using existing cultural facilities, contributing to productivity goals like job creation in remote communities.

Implementation

Federal amendments require a referendum under Section 128, needing a national majority and approval in four states. State amendments typically need parliamentary approval, with some requiring referendums (e.g., NSW, VIC). Indigenous consultation, following National Museum of Australia protocols, is critical for museum authenticity.

Unity Vote Day: A National Election Model

Australia's current electoral system is fragmented, with federal elections every three years, state elections varying (e.g., NSW: March 2027, VIC: November 2026), and local elections every four years, costing millions and causing voter fatigue. The 2022 federal

election cost \$522 million, with state and local polls adding significant expenses. Synchronizing elections on a national "Unity Vote Day" can save costs, boost turnout, and foster unity, aligning with the AEC's mission and Labor's productivity drive.

Proposed Model: Unity Vote Day

- **Fixed Date:** The first Saturday in May every four years, starting May 2, 2026. May ensures mild weather, avoids holidays, and aligns with fiscal year-end for policy continuity, unlike the US's November date, which suits colder climates.
- **Scope:**
 - **Federal:** House of Representatives and Senate (full or half-Senate elections).
 - **State:** All state assemblies, resetting cycles to align with federal polls.
 - **Local:** Optional alignment with federal funding incentives (e.g., 50% cost subsidy).
- **Implementation (6–12 Months Post-AEC Establishment):**
 1. **Legislation:** AEC enacts the *National Elections Act 2026*, amending the *Commonwealth Electoral Act* to set the date and override Section 394 (prohibiting state-federal election overlaps) with state consent. States pass mirroring laws.
 2. **Cycle Reset:** Use 2026 as the baseline, aligning all elections by 2030 via proportional term adjustments (e.g., shortening state terms).
 3. **Logistics:** Expand early voting (target 50% uptake, up from 8.4 million in 2022) and digital enrolment; allocate \$100 million from AEC savings for polling infrastructure.
 4. **Equity Measures:** Enhance Indigenous and remote outreach, inspired by ATSIC's mobile polling, targeting 95% enrolment for ~600,000–650,000 eligible Indigenous voters.
 5. **Oversight:** AEC establishes a bipartisan Electoral Coordination Committee for annual reporting.
- **Projected Impact:**
 - **Savings:** \$50–100 million per cycle (20–30% reduction), redirecting funds to R&D or housing.
 - **Turnout:** 5–10% increase, per India's ONOE evidence, engaging diverse voters.
 - **Unity:** Fosters a national "democracy festival," aligning with the AEC's federal ethos.

Case for Unity Vote Day

- **Cost Savings:** Synchronized elections reduce the \$522 million federal and hundreds of millions in state/local costs by consolidating resources, supporting Labor's goal of fiscal efficiency.
- **Voter Turnout:** Australia's 90% federal turnout drops to 70–80% in state/local polls; a unified day could boost participation by 5–10%, especially for Indigenous voters (600,000–650,000 eligible).
- **National Unity:** A single day creates a shared civic event, strengthening federalism by highlighting state roles, unlike the US where state issues can be overshadowed.
- **Productivity:** Reduces disruptions from multiple elections, aligning with Labor's streamlining efforts.
- **AEC's Role:** The AEC's federal-state composition ensures consensus, making it the ideal body to enforce this reform, unlike the current fragmented system.

Global Comparisons

- **United States:** Fixed first Tuesday after the first Monday in November ensures predictability, boosting turnout (66% in 2020). Australia's Saturday avoids workday disruptions.
- **India:** ONOE proposals estimate ₹10,000 crore (\$1.2 billion) savings and 5–10% turnout gains, relevant for Australia's federal system.
- **Sweden:** Synchronized elections every four years reduce costs and align governance, a model for Australia's Unity Vote Day.

Challenges and Mitigations

- **Federalism:** States may resist alignment, fearing loss of autonomy. **Mitigation:** Offer federal funding and highlight Premiers' AEC role.
- **Logistics:** Managing ~17 million voters is complex. **Mitigation:** Expand early voting and digital tools.
- **Equity:** Remote Indigenous turnout is low (~50% in 2019). **Mitigation:** Replicate ATSIC's mobile polling.
- **Constitutional Barriers:** Section 394 requires state consent. **Mitigation:** AEC-led legislation with incentives.

Public and Political Reception

- **Public Sentiment:** 92% openness to a republic supports the AEC, but 59% favored the monarchy in 2024, requiring clear messaging. Museums and Unity Vote Day appeal to reconciliation and civic pride.
- **Indigenous Support:** The \$842 million Closing the Gap plan aligns with museums, but ATSIC's 2005 abolition warns against tokenism. Extensive consultation is critical.
- **Political Climate:** Labor supports republicanism, but Liberal division and post-2023 Voice caution need bipartisan engagement.
- **Federalism:** States like Western Australia value regional identity. Premiers' inclusion and local museum focus mitigate concerns.

Campaign Strategy

- **Referendum Question:** "Do you approve amending the Constitution to establish the Australian Executive Council, comprising the Prime Minister and state and territory Premiers, as the head of state for the Australian Unity Republic, replacing the Governor-General and state governors?"
- **Pamphlet:** "The Australian Unity Republic saves \$30–35 million annually, transforms Government Houses into reconciliation museums, and introduces Unity Vote Day to streamline elections, boosting productivity and unity."
- **Social Media:** "Vote Yes for the Australian Unity Republic—saving millions, uniting Australia, and creating a national election day! #UnityVoteDay #VoteYesAEC"
- **Grassroots:** Host forums at Government Houses, engaging Indigenous leaders and promoting synchronized elections.
- **Media:** Ads emphasizing savings, reconciliation, and productivity: "The Australian Unity Republic delivers efficiency and unity with Unity Vote Day."

Conclusion

The Australian Unity Republic, through the AEC, offers a visionary path to a sovereign, united Australia, saving \$25.5–42.5 million annually, transforming Government Houses into cultural hubs, and aligning with Labor's productivity drive. Unity Vote Day on the first Saturday in May every four years modernizes democracy, saving \$50–100 million per cycle and boosting turnout. By leveraging the AEC's federal-state collaboration, Australia can achieve a more efficient, inclusive republic. Vote Yes for a stronger future.

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