

## Productivity, Republicanism and Improving Whole of Australian Government Efficiency



The allegory of good and bad governance

“..the greatest sum of individual happiness, with the least national expense.”

Dragonetti, 1769

There is a vacuum in Australia because there has never been a satisfactory Head of State that represents the ideals and values of Australians. This is not just a symbolic or cultural failure. It is a practical failure that has consequences for the productivity and quality of life of the nation. Australia is over governed. The original colonies with their own government processes overlap and duplicate each other. It is impossible to reign them back with the current mindset of Federalism. There is no central means of rationalising many spheres of government nor is there a way to determine what areas are best suited to State and local governance. All this must change.

In [Commonsense](#) (29 June 2025) a simple plan for an Australian republic that saved funds and improved the country was introduced. It was premised on a simple question being put to the Australian people at a national referendum: "[Do you approve amending the Constitution to establish the Australian Executive Council, comprising the Prime Minister and state and territory Premiers, as Australia's head of state, replacing the Governor-General and State governors?](#)"

An Australian Republic based on this model would save substantial sums at every level of government and also spearhead a whole new philosophy of governance across the country. At the heart of the plan is the removal of the Governor-Generals and all State Governors and the complete erasure of any link to a hereditary British head of State. All of the nominal representatives would be replaced by an *Australian Executive Council* responsible for summoning and dissolving Commonwealth and State parliaments and all of the duties associated with Head of State functions. In addition the AEC would be a monthly forum for political leaders to consider ways of improving government through constitutional changes and also non-constitutional agreements.

The *Australian Executive Council* would consist of the Prime Minister and the State Premiers and Territory Chief Ministers. This one council would amalgamate the Federal Executive Councils and all State and Territory Councils that currently advise governors. It would oversee all elections and parliaments and absorb all the reserve powers of the Crown. There would be an amalgamation of all of the current administrations that currently serve the Governor Generals and Governors.

There would be no head of state other than the executive council itself.

The creation of the Executive Council would forever protect the nation from a Presidential system not in keeping with Australia's main model of democracy (which primarily involves electing local electorate representatives at Federal and State and Territory and Senate levels).

There is a consistent principle of subsidiarity operating in Australian democracy. Australian citizens vote for local representatives based on one vote, one value, consisting of about 120-160,000 electors in 150 seats or divisions. Within the parliament these local representatives determine who will occupy the leadership and executive positions within government. The strong point of the Australian system is that local parliamentary representatives themselves influence the behaviour of leaders and can discipline their leaders by not supporting them in caucus. Any local member is free to support or not support leadership candidates. None of the current excesses of the US Presidential system can occur because of this mutual discipline and competition.

The AEC model would finally end the role of a hereditary head of state in Australian government as well as any future possibility of a popular demagogue challenging the smooth functioning of Australia's political system based on local democracy.

The AEC would also create a long term productivity dividend for the nation. The Australian Executive Council would energise the most efficient governance system for the nation at local and national levels.

There are numerous problems associated with the formation of Australia as separate colonies. The formation of the Federal Government in 1900 has resulted in a series of inefficiencies in the sphere of international diplomacy, the collection of taxation, the administration of health in the form of the Health Insurance Commission but often constitutional obstacles have resulted such as the failure to constitutionally recognise, even such obvious and necessary provisions such as the importance of the Federal regulation of aviation (May 1937). Another badly needed reform is for constitutional recognition of local government. The failures in 1988 and 2013, as well as the generally difficult task of changing the Federal constitution require consistent leadership from the combined national political leaders and the AEC would be the ideal forum for this to occur.

An AEC would continue to emphasise the importance of fixing intergovernmental inefficiencies as well as work on other efficiencies such as coordinating election timetables across the nation.

The primacy of the original colonies continues to impair government efficiency. Most recently the absurdity of the Federal system has been apparent in the debacle over each State separately working with children checks. This allowed a child care worker to abuse children despite convictions and red lights in another separate State jurisdiction. The same could be true of any profession subject to working with children checks such as general teaching and education.

**The obvious solution is to have one national criminal check system that is run by the Federal government and which is accessible across the nation.** Did the combined tiers of government recommend the abolition of the various State and Territory data collection functions concerning working with children, of course, not. Why not? They would be arguing for their own downsizing. The Children's Guardian in each State and Territory is ideally suited to providing qualitative support for children, it should not be involved in criminal data checks limited to its own State jurisdiction. This is just a waste of resources amongst other inefficiencies.

A monthly AEC is an opportunity for the combined leaders of the Federal and State governments to seek far greater efficiencies in the working of government. It might well

empower an inter-governmental reform group to provide recommendations for ongoing reforms. Where constitutional changes were needed the AEC would be the logical forum to call for a referendum across the nation.

There are many inefficiencies across Australia's spheres of government. Teachers qualifications, drivers licences and the licencing of many different professions and a myriad of other duplicated governance inefficiencies could all be changed. It is more efficient for the national government to oversee a range of country wide regulations and licences. State and territory governments are better suited to focus on qualitative improvements to government services.

The principal that the Federal government should use its economy of scale and be responsible for clear provisions regarding the fair allocation of collecting income taxation is well established. State and Local governments should focus on is about managing government in ways that benefit people at local levels such as overseeing the quality of teaching or health systems or through administration as close as possible to community and people.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) was established in 1992 as the primary forum for intergovernmental collaboration between the federal government, states, territories, and occasionally local governments. It focused on national policy reforms requiring cooperative action, such as economic, health, and environmental initiatives. COAG was chaired by the prime minister and operated through ministerial councils and working groups. In 2020, it was replaced by the National Cabinet amid the COVID-19 response, but its legacy persists in structures like the Joint Council on Closing the Gap.

COAG and the National Cabinet have failed to structure the nation more efficiently. Many of the nation's most significant problems such as closing the life expectancy and prosperity gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples are severely compromised by the un-evenness of governmental administration and duplications of bureaucracies that might be better coordinated. It is one thing for leaders to meet but it is another for there to be coordinated, long term action. Again the AEC could play a decisive role in organising the combined Australian governments efforts to streamline treaty, truth telling and compensation for Aboriginal nations across the country.

How would the AEC model help to re-shape the nation? The current executive councils meet weekly to advise the Governor General and similarly on a weekly or fortnightly basis at State levels. Each ec exists in its own jurisdictional bubble.

The remodelled AEC would be a monthly meeting of the Prime Minister and Premiers. As well as overseeing the mechanics of the various parliaments, the AEC would be a unique opportunity for the leaders of the country to talk about the need for ongoing constitutional reforms. For change to occur there would need to be consensus across party political lines. Important matters of state that needed constitutional amendment through referendums could be prioritised at the AEC. Party political issues would have no place at the AEC and with the weight of the combined National and State leaders consensus could be achieved at the Federal Government and State Opposition levels.