



# The Australian Constitution Centre



Promoting education about the history and operation of the Australian Constitution.

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## **For enquiries please contact:**

Education Fund Australia,  
Suite 51, Level 3  
330 Wattle Street  
Ultimo NSW 2007

Email: [info@cefa.org.au](mailto:info@cefa.org.au)  
Ph: 1800 009 855  
Fax: (02) 9251 8677  
Web: [www.cefa.org.au](http://www.cefa.org.au)

ABN: 76 750 439 829

# Message from CEFA's Chief Executive Officer



Australians from all walks of life are disillusioned and many don't trust our system of government. They have lost faith with our political institutions and constitutional processes. Voters are turned off from current constitutional debates.

Democracy is a man-made idea which has been developed by generations over centuries, and it has to be learnt. We have been failing our nation and particularly our young Australians by not providing effective Constitutional education.

*To address this, CEFA will establish the educational Australian Constitution Centre at the High Court of Australia, Canberra.*

The Australian Constitution Centre will increase young Australians' engagement with the history and operation of our Westminster based parliamentary democracy. It is an urgent national priority to develop an informed and engaged voter of the future. After all it is our children that will inherit our democracy.

The mission of the Australian Constitution Centre includes improving knowledge of, and attitudes towards our democracy. Implementing the Australian Constitution Centre over the next five years will increase understanding of shared Australian values such as freedoms balanced by our rights and responsibilities and honouring the rule of law.

*The Australian Constitution Centre will galvanise Australians, particularly our youth, currently cynical, apathetic and disengaged with our democracy.*

The Centre will collaborate with outstanding Australian institutions. We will link all key institutions and providers of Civics and Citizenship education through the Centre's virtual library. We will beam into every classroom in Australia. The Centre will lead non-partisan constitutional discourse in the spirit of a fair go, as has permeated our peaceful federation since 1901.

I am an educator with a long career in school education, curriculum development and political engagement. I know the Australian Constitution Centre will need to be cutting edge to breakthrough to the children and teachers in our schools. We will use best pedagogical practice and approaches for both developing content, and the methods in which we will deliver it. Nelson Mandela said "education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world".

As constitutionally informed Australians, united by the values that underpin our democracy, we can proudly face the challenges of our future together.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Kerry Jones". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mrs Kerry Jones  
Chief Executive Officer

# Education a “national scandal”

*Education – what a phenomenal example, perhaps the biggest national scandal of all, where we’ve managed to destroy to some degree the competitiveness of our children.... We’ve spent 40 per cent more in the last 10 years on education and we’ve got something like a 300–500 per cent worse result measured by the OECD...for 15 year olds.*

Michael Thawley, Head of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, The Weekend Australian November 7–8, 2015.

It is equally disgraceful that young Australians are not taught about the history and workings of our Australian Constitution. Our nation’s rule book stands as a beacon of stability in a time of great upheaval and political turbulence throughout the world. It is a national priority to educate, particularly young Australians, about the heritage and processes of the Australian Constitution and the democratic values inherent in it.

## **Declining support for Australian Democracy**

Report after report for over 25 years show Australian people, particularly young Australians, lack confidence, trust and respect for our political system. They are generally dissatisfied with the quality of our democracy.

Despite many millions of dollars spent annually on projects, programs, museum displays, events and activities for democracy education, they are not breaking through. Just 60% of Australians say democracy is preferable to any other kind of government and only 39% of those aged 18–29 prefer a democratic government. Constitutional education in Australian schools, known as Civics and Citizenship Curriculum is hardly taught.

## **Democracy doesn’t come easy and shouldn’t be taken for granted.**

For our nation to move forward harmoniously we need to inspire pride in our constitutional heritage and processes. CEFA’s mission is to improve attitudes towards democracy and knowledge of the Australian Constitution. CEFA has a proven track record and is capable of providing effective constitutional education which has become a national priority for our schools.



# Students are missing out on a real education on democracy

*Considering the current debate about citizenship and the radicalisation of youths, why is it proving so hard to get a specific curriculum on democracy taught in all Australian schools? Democracy is not a natural condition. It has to be learnt. And where, how much, when, and in what ways it is learnt helps determine a person's understanding and practice of democracy.*

Professor Murray Print, Professor of Education, University of Sydney and specialist in Civics and Citizenship Education, ABC Drum, 20 October 2015.

Schools should be the place where our youth learn about Australian democracy and the Australian values inherent in it. We need to give young people the opportunity to become informed and participative voters of the future. Schools should be able to provide education about democracy in a non-partisan, informed and balanced way.

Murray Print asks the important questions:

*What is the situation in Australian schools? Do our students learn about democracy? Are they able to acquire the skills and values needed to be democratic citizens and be resilient against extremism?*

In reality most young Australians are lucky if they get a small smattering of Civics and Citizenship education across their entire schooling. They might experience a one-off Australian Government funded visit to Canberra Years 5-6 (PACER) or study a civics topic for a couple of months such as through social science, history or geography in high school.

Most Australian teachers are not trained in any aspect of the processes of the Australian system of government. Nor are they informed about the constitutional history of our Westminster-based parliamentary democracy and the values that underpin it, such as freedom, tolerance, respect, mateship, harmony and fairness.

*Civics and citizenship is mandatory in UK and USA schools so why don't we have it in Australian schools? Establishing the Australian Constitution Centre gives us the opportunity to lead the world in constitutional education.*

The Constitution Education Fund Australia (CEFA) has had over ten years of experience in delivering initiatives that improve attitudes to, and engagement with our Constitution. CEFA will build and deliver the Australian Constitution Centre over the next five years. The Centre will consist of a Constitution exhibit and a Virtual Australian Constitution Centre to reach primary and secondary school students, undergraduate and first time voters and the general public.

*Read on to uncover the treasures you will find in our Centre.*

Explore some of the content we will make available to every teacher and child in every classroom in every school in Australia. Learn how our Centre will use the best pedagogical practices and approaches available to educators in the world today.

# The content focus for the Australian Constitution Centre

In the words of The Honourable Barrie Unsworth, member of the CEFA Board of Directors 2006–2014, and former NSW Premier:

*As a former director of CEFA I am delighted the longstanding proposal to establish the Australian Constitution Centre will be implemented. In many CEFA Board meetings I emphasised how lucky we are as Australians to live in a peaceful and stable democracy compared to the political upheavals in so many countries overseas. I am appalled that Australians do not value our Constitution and our system of government and that support for it continues to go down. The proposed Australian Constitution Centre should go a long way to reverse such dangerous trends.*

## **What do all Australian education experts agree needs to be taught in constitutional education?**

Many experts have provided important feedback and produced reports over the years about Civics and Citizenship Curriculum in Australia.

The Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) measure knowledge through the National Assessment Program – Civics and Citizenship (NAP – CC). They define the focuses of the Australian Curriculum:

*Civics: Knowledge and understanding of formal institutions and processes of civic life (such as voting processes in elections and the application of rules and laws).*

*Citizenship: Knowledge and understanding of, and opportunities for, participation and engagement in both civic and civil society (such as formal and informal ways in which citizens' actions can influence government decision-making).*

In 2014 the Australian Government, Education Minister, the Honourable Christopher Pyne, commissioned Professor Anne Twomey to provide expertise on the Civics and Citizenship part of the Review of the Australian Curriculum. Twomey, Professor of Constitutional Law, University of Sydney states:

*There is a notable absence in the proposed curriculum of any history that would explain the source of our system of government.*

Professor Twomey was very critical of the balance and sequencing of the curriculum:





*[There are] some gaps in content which should be addressed... Greater guidance is needed for teachers in relation to some of the less concrete material, such as values and principles. A more sophisticated assessment of how rights and values might conflict and how such conflicts should be resolved is also needed.*

### **The definition in Europe**

The Council of Europe's definition of Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) sees it as a set of practices and principles aimed at making young people better equipped to participate actively in democratic life. This is achieved by assuming and exercising their rights and responsibilities in society.

### **Content focus**

*The Australian Constitution Centre will focus its content using best pedagogical practice to inform and excite young Australians about democracy.*

CEFA will educate about the Australian Constitution as the nation's rule book, which most people don't realise is at the very heart of our daily life. The values that underpin the Constitution peacefully unite all of us, as they did all those decades ago when we voted to implement the Constitution in referendums between 1898-1900.

It is important that we provide information about the processes utilised by Government about contemporary issues to our kids. These non-partisan teaching resources must be in our schools.

Associate Professor at Monash University, Dr Libby Tudball, President, Social and Citizenship Educators Association of Australia (SCEAA) states her support for the Australian Constitution Centre:

*SCEAA will work collaboratively with the Australian Constitution Centre in developing educational initiatives and programs that raise awareness and improve understanding about Australia's system of government, civics and citizenship experiences, civic engagement, development of understanding, and best pedagogical practice and approaches for future delivery.*

# Promoting the Australian Constitution, Values and Civics and Citizenship education



## *The Australian Constitution*

Major General the Honourable Michael Jeffery AC AO (Mil) CVO MC (Retd) CEFA Chairman and former CEFA Patron-in-Chief as Australia's Governor-General

*All Australians, young and old, those born here and those who have come from other lands, should have a broad understanding of the system of government that has made our country one of the most successful democracies in the world.*



## *Australian Values*

His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd) Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia CEFA Patron-in-Chief

*I am at once humbled and proud to assume the role as Governor-General... I will be attentive to any and all agenda... that sit within a broad and fundamental set of Australian values—values that respect and uphold equity, compassion, generosity, tolerance and energetic ambition.*



## *Australian Citizenship*

The Honourable Dame Quentin Bryce AD CVO CEFA's Governor-General's Prize judge 2015 and former CEFA Patron-in-Chief as Australia's Governor-General

*What a splendid concept, to empower young Australians to become active, engaged and responsible citizens... it is vital that all young Australians understand our governance systems, to enable them to participate effectively in current and future political discussions.*



## *Civics Education*

The Honourable Robert French AC Chief Justice of Australia and CEFA's High Court reception host 2015

*We all recognise the importance of effective civics education in Australia and a deeper appreciation by young Australians of their Constitution in the 21st century.*



# The Australian Constitution Centre

*Community values in Australia are under-appreciated.*

Day after day we wake up to headlines regarding racism, the refugee crisis and isolated instances of radicalisation of our youth. But people are disengaging. Informal and donkey votes go up at each election. If we don't develop a more informed voter this will get worse.

To ensure that Australians don't take their democracy for granted CEFA is establishing the Australian Constitution Centre at the High Court of Australia, Canberra.

The educational Australian Constitution Centre will include a major exhibit to be built in Canberra. This will be complemented by a Virtual Australian Constitution Centre that will beam into every Australian classroom and incorporate a key stakeholder library.

*The Australian Constitution Centre is much more than a museum. It is a national educational initiative.*

*Quality education is a process, incorporating best pedagogical practice with dynamic content, utilising innovative delivery methods.*

The Australian Constitution Centre will target three key audiences:

- Primary and secondary schools
- Undergraduates and first time voters
- The general public

In its first five years the Australian Constitution Centre is expected to result in measurable improvements in Australian's attitudes towards our democracy.

The educational Australian Constitution Centre will become as iconic as the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, USA. In 20 years time we will look back and wonder why it wasn't set up earlier.



# The Australian Constitution Exhibit

A major exhibit will be installed in the High Court of Australia, Canberra. The display will be an interactive multimedia exhibit of the Australian Constitution and will include a touchscreen and immersive video wall. The text and the story of the Constitution will be available to all, but what really matters is what it represents to all Australians. This state-of-the-art exhibit will be an opportunity to take visitors on a transformational journey.

Australians will receive an enhanced awareness of the Australian Constitution as the foundation of our nationhood, and an understanding of how it has supported Australia to be one of the few countries to have been continuously democratic and stable throughout the 20th century.

*This is an opportunity for visitors to learn how our constitution was written, not as a result of civil conflict but through a process of peaceful agreement between the colonies. They will discover that it can only be altered by the will of the Australian people through a referendum in which every citizen has a vote.*

The exhibition will be informed by focus-testing and will also be a repository for an ongoing collection of comments from visitors, onsite and online.

Our exhibit will be a major draw-card expanding visitor interest in our democratic heritage.





*The vision is to provide a cutting edge interactive educational exhibit that will:*

- Bring the Constitution into a living experience with which people can connect.
- Link old and new, past and present.
- Engage new visitors to participate in Australian democracy through virtual and physical activities.
- Create an opportunity for visitors to interact with and explore the concepts that underpin the Constitution, building a browsable, sharable collection of user contributions.
- Share the definitive digital representation of the Australian Constitution document.
- Share Australian Constitutional insights and conversations across the Internet.
- Provide education by stealth – the visitor will engage because it’s entertaining and gain new knowledge in the process.
- Inspire and support Australians to be informed and active citizens.
- Provide engagement with our Constitution so that visitors leave with an understanding of each and everyone’s constitutional freedoms, rights and responsibilities.

*Once the exhibit is built, it will feed into the new Virtual Australian Constitution Centre that will beam out as an education resource into every classroom in Australia, supporting the teaching of Civics and Citizenship Curriculum.*

# The Virtual Australian Constitution Centre

*Beamed into every school, accessible to every student and linking all Australian stakeholders dedicated to constitutional education.*

The latest technology gives us the opportunity to reach a wider audience. Those who can't make it to the exhibit in Canberra can still access all of the content at the Virtual Australian Constitution Centre. We're going to harness the best technology available today and over the five year build we will incorporate evolving and innovative technology we don't even know about yet. The NBN expanding into all schools including remote communities gives us greater opportunities.

*The Virtual Australian Constitution Centre will seamlessly point to all components of the Australian Constitution Centre, targeting primary and secondary schools, undergraduates and first time voters and the general public.*

In addition the Virtual Australian Constitution Centre will provide content for a wider audience including: Governments, institutions, think tanks, learned societies, the media and organisations with the ability to spread our message.

*The Virtual Australian Constitution Centre will leverage evolving technologies.*

Enhancing the delivery of the following:

- AMA's (Ask me anything) with Constitutional experts and a virtual message board.
- Web and podcasts.
- A pop-up chat function where users can ask the Australian Constitution Centre a question and receive an instant response.
- Polling and surveys of public knowledge that can be fed into ongoing evaluation.
- A calendar of collaborators/stakeholders constitutional events.





- Social media and newsfeeds such as Twitter/Facebook.
- A crowdsourcing and contributor community.
- A games, quiz and competition room.
- Special projects, events and annual constitutional themes to be promoted through a noticeboard.
- A virtual media room.
- Photo galleries.
- A promotion channel for all other initiatives of the Australian Constitution Centre.
- Each Section of the Constitution will be listed with all relevant information and changes through referendums and interpretations, eg; High Court challenges.
- The Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act, Statute of Westminster Adoption Act, and the Australia Act will be made available in a similar format.

Membership of the Virtual Australian Constitution Centre will provide visitor access via Open ID authentication so that members can control their user profile.

### **Promote the Australian Constitution**

The Virtual Australian Constitution Centre will promote key information about the Australian Constitution, the preamble and all other parts of the Constitution Act so that:

- The text will be available as a whole searchable document.
- The Constitution will be presented in chapter format with an explanation about each chapter.

### **Constitutional resources library directory**

In 2014 the Australian Government, Department of the Attorney-General, Minister the Honourable George Brandis, commissioned CEFA to write a Project Plan for the Australian Constitution Centre. Our research discovered that much of the available resources for constitutional education are fragmented and hard to find. To improve the accessibility of constitutional resources the Virtual Australian Constitution Centre will build a virtual library. This library will integrate all key stakeholders and their resources.

More than 40 potential institutions have been identified to form partnerships to link and promote resources. This will provide an easy, searchable database of all civics and citizenship resources, state and territory curriculum's and constitutional resources. The Australian Constitution Centre library will continue to build relationships with further partners and collaborators for many decades to come.

# Measurement and evaluation

The Australian Constitution Centre will continually measure the expected increase in knowledge, understanding, attitude, and engagement in democracy across Australians of all ages.

*The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) will be contracted by the Australian Constitution Centre to measure this improvement and evaluate the programs and delivery. The attitudes of young Australians, teachers and trainee teachers and adults towards the Australian Constitution will also be measured.*

ACARA results in their past testing of years 3 and 10 in schools have continually demonstrated very low knowledge in Civics and Citizenship.

We will measure improvements in Australians knowledge through specific initiatives with the Australian Constitution Centre.

The first phase will begin in 2017 to determine the baseline measures on key knowledge and attitude indicators. From 2018 ACARA will track progress against these baseline measures.

*The methodology will be mixed mode and include: focus groups, surveys of students and adults and observation of Australian Constitution Centre activities.*

The reports will be published on the Virtual Australian Constitution Centre as they become available each year.



# Australians supporting Constitutional education

## **Steve Waugh AO**

Australian of the Year and Australian Test Cricket team captain, 1999–2004

*In my travels playing cricket for Australia, I saw a number of countries without the freedoms we enjoy. These experiences brought home to me the importance of the Australian Constitution. The more Australians understand the important role played by our Constitution, the stronger we will be as a community.*

## **Rev. Anthony Fisher, O.P. Archbishop of Sydney**

Homily at St. Mary's Cathedral – 12 November 2014. Solemn Mass of Instillation.

*Peaceful democracies, affluent economies and cohesive societies don't just happen: they depend upon a complex of ideals, practices and institutions and in this country these are largely a Judeo-Christian inheritance, however under-appreciated that often is. There is much to be done to renew that social capital.*

## **Thomas Keneally AO**

Author and member of CEFA Board of Trustees

*We've got something to celebrate, Australia. Our democracy, our freedom, our system...our Australian Way. "The Australian Way" film, CEFA, 2010–2014.*

## **Emeritus Professor Dame Leonie Kramer AC DBE, CEFA Foundation Councillor (deceased)**

Chancellor of the University of Sydney, 1991–2001, member of CEFA Board of Trustees 2000–2009

*CEFA's mission is to strengthen the Australian community's understanding of the history and operation of the Australian Constitution... The success of the CEFA project will demonstrate our faith in the Constitution and our commitment to passing on a solid understanding of it to our successors.*

## **Professor George Winterton, CEFA Board of Trustees 2000–2008 (deceased)**

Professor of Constitutional Law at the University of Sydney, 2004–2008

*The advent of CEFA [is] a propitious development... [CEFA's] project is so important to Australia's future that governments and the public should have little difficulty in seeing its benefits. Those responsible for establishing CEFA deserve our gratitude and support for undertaking this long-overdue initiative.*

## **The Honourable John Howard OM AC** Prime Minister of Australia, 1996–2007

*As a pioneer of democracy amongst free nations, Australia is one of the few countries to have been continuously democratic throughout the course of the twentieth century. Australia's Constitution is the foundation of our system of government. It is uniquely Australian, shaped by Australians whose vision for this country embraced the democratic values and principles which still unite us today. Educational initiatives that raise awareness and improve understanding about Australia's system of government and how it operates play a vital part in making us as a nation better informed about our constitutional heritage and better equipped to determine our future. I commend the Constitution Education Fund for encouraging Australians to learn more about the Constitution and our system of government.*

## **The Honourable Julia Gillard MP** Prime Minister of Australia, 2010–2013

*Participation in The Parliamentary Clubs [School Parliaments] give students opportunities to develop 'an understanding of, and commitment to, Australia's democratic system of government, law and civics life' and 'the knowledge, skills and values that support active citizenship and the capacity to act as informed and responsible citizens'; both of which are highlighted in the Statements of Learning.*



Constitution  
Education Fund  
Australia

It is vital for the future of our democracy that we implement new and innovative education programs to better inform people regarding the history, processes and operation of the Australian Constitution.

For the first time since the federation debates, the educational Australian Constitution Centre will give all Australians the tools to constructively engage with our democracy. The things that divide us should not be greater than the things that unite us. Within just five years, the Australian Constitution will again be treasured as the rule book of our nation. It will be restored to its rightful place and continue to deliver stability, harmony, peace and tolerance for many future generations to come.

## **Constitution Education Fund Australia**

Since 2000 CEFA has operated as an independent, non-partisan organisation educating and engaging all Australians, particularly young Australians, about our Australian Constitution, promoting its history, heritage and workings.

ABN 76 750 439 829

Level 3 Suite 51  
330 Wattle Street  
Ultimo NSW 2007

E: [info@cefa.org.au](mailto:info@cefa.org.au)  
T. 1800 009 855  
F. 02 9251 8677

[www.cefa.org.au](http://www.cefa.org.au)