

Australian Collaboration and Accountability Roundtable recommended democratic and accountability reforms

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CONSOLIDATED AUSTRALIAN COLLABORATION & ACCOUNTABILITY ROUNDTABLE RECOMMENDATIONS	2020 SUMMIT FUTURE GOVERNANCE "TOP IDEAS"	RUDD GOVERNMENT PRE-ELECTION PROMISES	RUDD GOVERNMENT POST ELECTION ACTIONS
Electoral reform			
Four year terms with fixed election dates.	–	Promised.	No action likely this electoral term..
Repeal of recent amendment to Electoral Act related to enrolments and electoral donations	–	Promised.	New legislation prepared: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disclosure required for donations above \$1,000; • Foreign political donations banned; • Other loopholes closed. • Twice yearly disclosure requirement for political donations.
Caps on donations to political parties.	Adoption of the Canadian model to restrict corporate and private campaign finances.	–	Canvassed by the PM. To be discussed in forthcoming green paper.
Automatic enrolment at the age of 18 and automatic correction of enrolment information by the Australian Electoral Commission.	Automatic enrolment at the age of 18 and automatic re-enrolment for eligible voters.	–	–

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The redesign of Senate ballot papers to ensure transparency of preferences.	–	–	–
Independent system for managing leaders pre-election debates.	–	Promised.	Not yet arranged.
Overall review of electoral reform needed.	Supported.	–	Two green papers are being prepared. The first, to be released in July 2008, will look at disclosure, funding and expenditure issues; the second, to be released in October, will examine a broader range of options aimed at strengthening a range of other elements of electoral law.
A wholesale review of the federation to enhance Australian democracy.	A major review including an expert commission, a convention of the people and a referendum.	–	–
Government spending in marginal seats (pork barreling).	–	–	–
Strengthening of the Parliament			
Restoration of Senate as house of review with full Senate committee scrutiny of Executive.	Electoral and constitutional reform to renew the role and composition of the Senate as a house of review.	Promised.	Some initiatives taken.

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Strengthen government accountability to parliament.	Independent arbitration of ministerial public interest immunity claims. Appropriation bills to specify individual projects and programs.	–	–
Improve legislative processes.	Minimum time and other standards for the passage of legislation. Improved community engagement in scrutiny of bills and policies.	–	–
Parliamentary inquiries with scope to include outside experts.	Supported.	–	–
A Parliamentary Standards or Ethics Commissioner reporting to the Parliament to give advice and investigate and report alleged breaches.	Establishment of an Ethics Commissioner.	–	–
Parliamentary code of ethics.	Development of a parliamentary code of ethics.	–	–

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Independent parliamentary presiding officers for House of Representatives and Senate.	-	Raised as a possible action without commitment.	-
Reform of question time.	Supported.	Raised as a possible action without commitment.	-
Accountability of the Executive			
Legislation to codify ministerial responsibility.	-	-	-
Guide for Ministerial Behaviour.	-	Promised.	<p>New Standards of Ministerial Ethics (replacing Chapter 5 of previous guide) introduced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministers required to divest their share-holdings except in trusts and super funds; • A Register of Lobbyists established; • No post separation dealings for 18 months after leaving office in any area in which the Minister has worked in previous 18 months; • No fund-raising at the Lodge or Kirribilli House.
Private ministerial staff obliged to provide information to parliamentary inquiries.	Ministerial advisers required to appear before parliamentary committees when taking executive decisions.	Promised if they have exercised executive power.	-

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Restoration of Westminster system of public service.	Public Service to be instructed that it must co-operate with parliament..	Promised.	Partially set in motion. Departmental heads from previous govt retained. 5 year contracts for senior public servants and previous Government’s performance review modified. Strengthened transparency and merit based selection when appointing senior public servants.
Restrictions on government advertising.	–	Promised.	New rules requiring Auditor General approval for advertising campaigns above \$250,000.
Transparency, freedom of information and freedom of speech			
Media concentration & media laws.	Improved media diversity and accountability.	–	–
Reform of federal FOI including formal role for Ombudsman.	Reform of current FOI system including: abolition of conclusive certificates, Commissioner for Freedom of Information, an exemption-test based on matters of essential public interest & a full merits review.	Implementation of Australian Law Reform Commission Open Government report promised.	Australian Law Reform Commission carrying out a review for the Government.
Strengthened protection for whistleblowers.	Strengthened whistleblower protection.	Promised.	Parliamentary Committee investigating.

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Strengthened protection for journalists.	A Charter of Free Speech including shield laws for journalists.	Promised.	Not yet.
Greater funding support for ABC.	Secure independent public broadcasters.	-	-
Lodgement of final reports of publicly funded opinion polling in the National Library and National Archives.	Greater transparency supported. Free and easily accessible public service documents when released.	-	-
Anti-corruption			
An effective national anti-corruption Commissioner.	-	Greater support promised for the Integrity Commissioner and Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity.	Token and inadequate budget increases only in May 2008 budget. The scope of the Commission also limited to the detection, investigation and prevention of corruption in the Australian Crime Commission and the Australian Federal Police.
An independent appointment system for <i>all</i> public offices.	-	Promised for ABC, SBS and National Museum of Australia only.	ABC, SBS and National Museum of Australia appointments reform not yet carried out.

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Citizen engagement, collaborative governance and civil society			
Improve citizen engagement	Online portal, free searchable govt information, an Australian C-Span, deliberative inclusive processes that feed into decision-making and citizenship education & training.	–	–
Improve deliberative democracy	Online participation, citizen juries, citizen parliaments, participatory budgeting & electronic town meetings.	–	–
Removal of gagging clauses from funding arrangements.	–	Promised.	Carried out.
Commitment to a model of democracy which acknowledges the key role of civil society organisations – as argued by the House of Reps Standing Committee in 1991.	Greater recognition of the importance of the third sector (civil society bodies) and strengthening of the sector.	–	–

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Human rights			
National charter of rights and responsibilities.	A national process to consult all Australians about the protection of human rights. A national charter or bill of rights.	Inquiry promised.	Indicated but not yet established.
Reform of sedition laws according to Law Reform Commission recommendations.	–	Promised.	Not yet.
Review of terrorism laws to examine where the laws lead to breaches of human rights.	–	–	None as such but Haneef Inquiry examining application of those laws in a specific situation.

1. Table based on the consolidated recommendations of the Australian Collaboration (AC) and the Accountability Roundtable (AR).

2. Only the relevant “top ideas” from the Governance group at the 2020 Summit are listed opposite the AC and AR recommendations. Many other ideas were put forward at the Summit, including some which received considerable support but were not able to be debated thoroughly. The five priority themes for the Future of Australian Governance theme under which the “top ideas” were grouped were:

- Constitution, rights and responsibilities (an Australian Republic, a new constitutional preamble and a bill of rights);
- A modern federation;
- Collaborative governance revolutionising interactions between government and citizens;
- Parliamentary reform; and
- Open and accountable government. To read the full the Summit report see: www.australia2020.gov.au/final_report/index.cfm.