

Introduction

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The chapters in this book on the subject of an Australian republic are published in honour of Professor George Winterton, a leading commentator. Tragically, Professor Winterton passed away shortly before the seminar at which these chapters were presented was held. Chief Justice French has, in the Dedication which precedes this Introduction, marked Professor Winterton's outstanding contribution to this field; it is sufficient for me to acknowledge the enormous benefit which all of those with an interest in the *Commonwealth Constitution* have received from George's scholarship and insight.

This book is not about whether or not Australia, or any of the polities which make up Australia, should become a republic. That question has been the subject of great popular debate. A number of significant issues of public policy and political philosophy have been canvassed in the course of that debate. This book is not primarily concerned with those issues.

Rather, the primary focus is on the legal issues which would arise if and when it is decided that Australia, or one or more of the States of Australia, will adopt a form of government in which the monarch is not the head of state. Although at one level these issues might be described as technical legal issues, at another level they have a profound impact upon the range of constitutional structures which are legally possible, and the manner in which change to any of those structures could be achieved.

The authors were all speakers at a conference organised by the Australian Association of Constitutional Law and the Constitutional Centre of Western Australia held in Perth on 29 November 2008. They are all eminently qualified to express views in this complex and specialised legal field. They include Australia's foremost constitutional thinkers and authors. Between them they have covered the range of interesting and complex issues which would arise if and when it is decided to move to a republican form of government.

The chapters have been presented in four general subject areas. The first area concerns the amendment process. The interesting questions addressed in this area include:

This is a preview. Not all pages are shown.