

Australia United:

A Unification Plan for Australia for the Period 2009 to 2020

as at 12 October 2009

I invite the honorable and learned member (Mr. Higgins) to consider this point: If the people of the smaller states are willing to adopt the type of government suggested by our Victorian friends, we can save the expense of ten Houses of Legislature and five Governors, and we can become a truly united people. But we have been sent here to frame a scheme of federation, not of amalgamation.

(Sir Richard Baker of South Australia, speaking at the Third Session of the National Australasian Convention, in Melbourne on 17 March 1898, as recorded on page 2482 of the official report)

The **Australia United** plan comprises objectives, outcomes and a five stage transition plan designed to achieve full Unification for Australia by the year 2020, as follows:

Reform Objectives

- **Unification (or amalgamation) of Commonwealth, State and Territory governments to achieve a strong national government**
- **strengthened local governments**

Outcomes

- **financial benefits of about \$20 billion per annum in the public sector, \$40 billion per annum in the private sector, and at least \$50 billion (or about five per cent of GDP) across the Australian economy as a whole (in 2009 dollar terms)**
- **improved democracy and government at national and local levels**
- **no State or Territory governments**
- **a seamless national economy**
- **a seamless national approach to the environment**
- **a national education system**
- **a national health system**
- **a single set of laws for the whole of Australia as part of a national system of law, order and safety**
- **regional administration and cooperation not constrained by State and Territory borders**

Five Stage Transition Plan – to be reviewed on completion of each stage

Stage 1: Foundation Laying (~ 2009 to 2013)

- local government strengthened by constitutional recognition, functional empowerment and increased funding from the Commonwealth government
- abolish State and Territory taxes
- ongoing efforts to establish national health, education and legal systems (such as the efforts to establish the national curriculum, national occupational health and safety laws, and national registration systems for businesses, tradespeople and professionals)
- explain to the public that financial benefits in the order of at least \$50 billion per annum in 2009 dollar terms, or about five per cent of GDP, can be achieved across the economy overall under a two-tier government structure comprising national and local governments, but no State and Territory governments

Stage 2: Confirmation (~ 2013)

- referendum calling for the amalgamation of Commonwealth, State and Territory governments to form a single national government under Commonwealth control, leaving local government and regional administration of government functions otherwise unchanged in the first instance

Stage 3: Preparation – After the Referendum at Stage 2 is Carried (~ 2013 to 2016)

- establish a single national set of laws and regulations across all fields, where such laws can host local variations where required for different geographic and climatic conditions (for building regulations, for example), and can be applied at the discretion of local governments, to achieve a seamless national economy and seamless national legal and environmental management systems
- establish fully national funding systems under Commonwealth control for education, health and other functions currently funded at least in part by State and Territory governments
- Commonwealth Grants Commission designs methodologies to provide Commonwealth funding direct to local governments rather than State and Territory governments

Stage 4: Unification Day (2016)

- Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments form a unified national government under Commonwealth control
- Courts previously operating in States and Territories become Commonwealth Courts
- Lands and assets of State and Territory governments are transferred to the Commonwealth
- Unification Transition Bureau is Formed
- State and Territory Parliamentarians have the choice to retire or become part of the Unification Transition Bureau for a maximum of four years
- all employees of State and Territory governments become employees of the Commonwealth government, including education and health sector employees and the police

Stage 5: Consolidation to Achieve Full Unification (2016 to 2020)

- rationalisation of former Commonwealth, State and Territory bureaucracies to achieve a single national government bureaucracy
- generous (all carrot, no stick) incentives and redundancy payout plans for surplus public servants
- transfer of financial and human resources from bureaucracy to local government, schools, hospitals and other "coalface" public service units
- refinement of boundaries used for regional administrative units so they no longer stop at State and Territory borders
- financial benefits amounting to approximately \$20 billion per annum in the public sector, \$40 billion per annum in the private sector, and at least \$50 billion per annum (or about five per cent of GDP) across the economy as a whole, are likely to be achieved from about 2020 onwards after the initial costs of transition more or less cancel out such benefits over the period 2016 to 2019

Dr Mark Drummond

Co-convenor of Beyond Federation (see www.beyondfederation.org.au)

5 Loddon Street Kaleen ACT 2617

phone: 02 6255 0772

email: markld@ozemail.com.au

website: <http://members.webone.com.au/~markld/PubPol/GSR/gsr.html>