

What is a Constitution?

- A constitution is the instruction book for how things work.
- Many Territorians as members of clubs and associations are often familiar with what a constitution does.
- The *Northern Territory Self Government Act* is similar to a constitution because it sets up the system of NT Government BUT it is not the same because the *Self Government Act* can be changed by people outside the Territory, the Australian Parliament, at any time.
- A Northern Territory State Constitution will come from the people agreeing to its creation and including its own rules about how it can be changed.
- In Australia, we have an Australian Federal Constitution establishing the parliament for the entire country and making the rules for the relationship with the States.
- This Constitution came into force on January 1 1901. When the States agreed to create a nation called Australia.
- The system we use in Australia is described as the “Westminster system” coming from the British system.
- Existing State constitutions invariably came from colonial acts of parliament. The opportunity for a brand new State constitution offers a unique chance for Territorians to take part in how their new State works.
- A new constitution for the Northern Territory should contain provisions for:
 - An elected parliament
 - A Governor representing the Queen of Australia.
 - An Executive Government
 - The Courts and the judiciary
 - Financial provisions making sure the government is accountable for spending of money
- Two draft constitutions were developed and published in the Northern Territory during the 1990s. One was adopted by a Committee of the Parliament and another was adopted by a Constitutional Convention.
- Together with the principles in the *Northern Territory Self Government Act*, these can assist us decide what we want in a future constitution.

To make your views known on a constitution for the Northern Territory you may contact the Statehood Steering Committee.

