



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs

Inquiry: Harmonisation of Legal Systems

MEDIA RELEASE

Issued: 17 March 2006

Chairman: Peter Slipper MP

Public hearing on uniform laws

The House of Representatives Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee is holding a public hearing in Canberra on 21 March on differences between laws within Australia and between Australia and New Zealand. This hearing follows a public hearing held in Melbourne on 7 March.

The Committee has been asked to examine how differences between the legal systems of the States/Territories and the Commonwealth affect trade and commerce, as well as issues affecting businesses operating in both Australia and New Zealand.

In referring this matter, the Attorney-General has asked the Committee to consider a number of areas including legal procedures, partnership law, evidence law and standards of products. The Committee may also consider other relevant issues as they arise.

“We will not be making judgements on the relative merits of the different systems, and what should be the standard”, Committee Chairman Peter Slipper said.

“That will be a decision for the Governments of the various jurisdictions. What we aim to do is to identify the areas of difference that are having the greatest impact, see where harmonisation might be possible, and find out if costs can be reduced and duplication avoided”.

“The Committee will also consider the different ways in which harmonisation might be achieved, looking beyond what has occurred in the past, to see if new models might be developed”, Mr Slipper added.

“High Court decisions have already affected co-operative schemes developed by the State and Federal Governments. Is amending the Constitution the only way to guarantee such schemes or are there other options?”

The public hearing will be held on **Tuesday, 21 March** at Parliament House, Canberra, in **Committee Room 2R1**. Witnesses will be as follows:

9:30am: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
10:15am: Department of the Treasury
11:00am: Science Industry Action Agenda
11:30am: Attorney-General’s Department
1:30pm: New Zealand Government

For further information, including the full terms of reference, a background paper, and copies of submissions, please contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 2358 or visit the inquiry website at <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/laca/index.htm>