

Our Plan

Introduce legislation enabling citizen initiated referenda which would feature:

- A **petition of no less than 1.5% of registered voters**, lodged with an independent Referendum Commission, would trigger a popular vote, held during the next federal election poll.
- Any referenda seeking to change the **Constitution** would have to obtain a higher number than **5% of registered voters** within the shorter time of within 12 months of lodgement
- All referenda petitions lodged would have to comply with **international laws** and treaty obligations.
- Referenda petitions would have to obtain the necessary voter petition signatures within 18 months of lodgement
- A strict limit would apply to the amount of **funding of campaigns** for or against a proposition to prevent powerful financial interests dominating.
- Details of all donors and **donations** would be disclosed to the public to ensure transparency and expose sectional interest
- Taxation, appropriations, matters affecting the court system and questions arising from decisions of a court, would not qualify as matters to be put to citizen initiated referenda
- Once passed at a referendum the resolution would have to be **approved by the Federal Parliament** before becoming law

The people of Australia regularly express their *indirect* democratic will through federal, state and local government elections and on very rare occasions, their *direct* popular will through Constitutional referenda and local council surveys.

There is a widespread feeling in the community that politicians do not genuinely listen to their concerns and ideas. This has led to disenchantment with and disconnection from the political process. Instead of being proud of a political system that is one of the most stable and least restrictive in the world, many citizens feel angry and powerless about not having a direct say on important issues.

The Labor Government's highly stage-managed *2020 Summit* was no doubt a response to this disconnection. The recommendations of the 'country's brightest' were sound but not particularly new and the vast majority were ignored. Now Prime Minister Gillard 'Citizens' Assembly is to examine the evidence on climate change'. A far more reliable and transparent way for government to determine public opinion on major issues is by referenda. Perhaps governments have been reluctant to use this tool because they don't like the answers and neither does vested interest!

The Democrats support more use of referenda and greater access to direct democracy so people can have a direct say through Citizens Initiated Referenda, as they do in Switzerland, New Zealand and US states.