

# Psmmp unit 1 – reading report – federalism

Government



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Purpose: To inform the reader by outlining the dialogue that took place at the ASSA/IPAA Federalism Roundtable in May, 2007. Wana summarises discussions on the: -historical trajectory and present characteristics of Australian federalism; -perceived shortcomings and challenges surrounding our current system of government; -relevance of federalism both from an increasingly globalised national perspective and within a nation of small population and relative cultural homogeneity; and -various suggestions from those present to bring about reform. 77) Argument/Findings The Paper articulates the collective findings of those present at the Roundtable. Wana makes comment on some main themes that emanated e. g. whilst considerable faith was placed in a clearer demarcation of governmental roles and responsibilities to address federalism's perceived current 'malaise', Wana notes there was nothing put forward to firmly support this assumption and consequently questions the true worth of articulating and clarifying roles and responsibilities.

The Paper highlights the Roundtable's observation that numerous federal nations have tended towards centralisation in recent times, coupled with declines in regional and localised identity; it predicted a gravitation of national issues to the Commonwealth level and a shift of regional and service delivery issues towards State governments over the next 20 years.

There was consensus that greater trust, 'strategic pragmatism' and improved intergovernmental relations were needed to reform federalism and provide enhanced policy outcomes for the Australian community. (149)

Evidence The Paper provides a firsthand summary of discussion, findings and suggestions from a Roundtable of politicians, senior state and federal public

servants, and academics, supported by background information papers from credible sources. (32) Observations The Paper is a record of a collective discussion, not an argumentative essay. The does not, nor does it purport to be, a balanced view of federalism in a broader or historical sense. - Roundtables by their very nature are high level and do not allow for drilling down to the finer details of an issue; this is worth bearing in mind when considering the article as some of the context may have been overlooked in relation to the finer points made by participants. The Paper highlights that federalism has by necessity proven to be a much more flexible and dynamic governance structure than was likely envisaged at its inception; it could be argued that federalism's seeming robustness and changeability is entirely appropriate to what is now a highly changeable local, national and globalised community, despite looking markedly different to what it may have first looked like at federation. - It is submitted that the need for greater levels of trust between levels of government to make federalism work is potentially made more challenging by the dynamic of our two-party system of government. 185) Other relevant or related readings 1. Keddie, J. N and R. F. I. Smith. 2009, ' Leading from Below: How Sub-National Governments Influence Policy Agendas. 'Australian Journal of Public Administration, No. 68 Vol. 1, pp. 67-82. Rather than outlining a perceived malaise and decrease in the relevance of the States in our federal system, Keddie & Smith argue that States have a responsibility to ensure they remain integral to broader policy and decision-making agendas. (45) 2. Hollander, R. And H. Patapan. 2007, ' Pragmatic Federalism: Australian Federalism from Hawke to Howard. ' Australian Journal of Public Administration, Vol. 6 No. 3 pp. 280-297 The Hollander & Patapan article provides broader historical analysis that seeks to

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explain fundamental aspects of our system of federalism and conclusions on why the trend of centralisation has occurred. (30) 3. Parkin, A. 2003, 'The States, Federalism and Political Science: A Fifty-Year Appraisal.' Australian Journal of Public Administration, Vol. 62 No. 2, June, pp. 101-112 The Parkin Paper provides broader analysis of the state of federalism than both the Wanna and Hollander & Patapan articles, providing a fifty year appraisal of Australian governance from the States' perspective. (32)