A DEMOCRATIC CONVERSATION

Date: Tuesday 8th September
Time: 6pm-7pm
Venue: House of Representatives Chamber, Old Parliament House

Lecture starts at 6pm and will be followed by drinks and canapés

ABOUT

In 2014 the Institute for Governance and Policy Analysis partnered with Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House on a unique research project to better understand the changing nature of political engagement in Australia and internationally. The first major outcome was to develop a survey tool and capture data for an ambitious exhibition The Power of 1: Does your voice count? (http://powerof1voice.moadoph.gov.au/) the partnership has subsequently grown to encompass education programs that explore the qualities of Australian Democracy. We have also developed a lecture series which explore the future of democratic governance, of which this lecture is a part. Through our partnership with the Museum of Australian Democracy we aim to make full use of the Museum as a space for disseminating our research findings and developing innovative public engagement programs for debating new forms of democracy.

For our second seminar in this series we have Emeritus Professor Gillian Triggs, President of the Australian Human Rights Commission.

SPEAKER

EMERITUS PROFESSOR GILLIAN TRIGGS, PRESIDENT OF THE AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Emeritus Professor Gillian Triggs is the President of the Australian Human Rights Commission, with a five year appointment. She was Dean of the Faculty of Law and Challis Professor of International Law at the University of Sydney from 2007-12 and Director of the British Institute of International and Comparative Law from 2005-7. She is a former Barrister and a Governor of the College of Law. Professor Triggs has combined an academic career with international commercial legal practice and has advised the Australian and other governments and international organisations on international legal and trade disputes. Her focus at the Commission is on the implementation in Australian law of the human rights treaties to which Australia is a party, and to work with nations in the Asia Pacific region on practical approaches to human rights. Professor Triggs is the author of many books and papers on international law, including International Law: Contemporary Principles and Practices (2nd Ed, 2011).

A YEAR OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY

As we celebrate the 800th anniversary of the sealing of the Magna Carta by King John in 1215, it is ironic that, over the last 15 years, Australia has seen an unprecedented expansion of the executive power of governments and a corresponding encroachment on individual rights and freedoms. While it is the natural inclination of all governments to augment their powers, it is the job of Parliament and the courts to provide checks and balances on any overreach. In fact, Parliaments at Federal and State and Territory levels have failed to exercise their traditional restraint to protect common law freedoms and have been compliant in passing laws introduced by governments in the name of national security and public interest. Senator Cory Bernard has described this phenomenon as a “power creep”. Moreover, recent laws such as the Northern territory’s “paperless arrest” and mandatory sentencing laws oust the role of judges to make individual determinations to the detriment of liberty. Increasing secrecy, the lack of transparent processes, Captain’s picks, the indefinite administrative detention of the mentally ill and asylum seekers and refugees, and the lack of meaningful access to the courts pose significant threats to Australian democracy. A belief in a ‘fair go’ provides a cultural expectation that human rights will be protected, but it is no longer enough. It is time to reopen the national debate about the value of a Federal Charter of Rights to provide the courts with a benchmark against which to measure compliance with fundamental liberties.

THIS EVENT IS FREE TO ATTEND. PLEASE VISIT EVENTBRITE TO CONFIRM YOUR REGISTRATION.