R.O.A.N

REPATRIATION OF A NATION

Did You Know

Fact library for the R.O.A.N site · Average AF Pty Ltd

Fifty-nine verified facts drawn from the research behind the nine pillars, written as pop-up questions.

Every entry carries its source. That is the point — these are not slogans, they are claims a visitor can check before they finish reading. Where a figure needs a caveat, the caveat is in the answer rather than hidden in a footnote.

A note on use. Do not run these as a random carousel. Tie each fact to the pillar it belongs to, so a visitor reading about judicial accountability sees judicial facts. The tag on each entry tells you where it goes.

Pillar 1 — Repatriation

1. Where is Australia's Constitution actually written down? In a British Act of Parliament. Our Constitution is still section 9 of the *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900*, passed at Westminster. It has never been re-enacted as an Australian instrument. *Source: Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900 (Imperial).*

2. Does Britain still have power to make laws for Australia? No. That ended with the *Australia Act 1986*. Anyone telling you otherwise is forty years out of date — and this is one of the most common errors in circulation. *Source: Australia Act 1986.*

3. So what gives our Constitution its authority today? The Australian people. The High Court held in *Sue v Hill* in 1999 that the Constitution's continuing force rests on its acceptance by Australians, not on the British Act that carried it. *Source: Sue v Hill (1999) 199 CLR 462.*

4. Who decides whether Australia signs a treaty? The executive government, alone. Treaty-making is executive power under section 61. Parliament has no formal role in ratification at all. *Source: Constitution section 61; Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, established 1996.*

5. Does signing a treaty change Australian law? Not by itself — implementation requires legislation. But under section 51(xxix), the external affairs power, entering a treaty expands what the Commonwealth can legislate about, including in areas otherwise left to the States. *Source: Constitution section 51(xxix); Commonwealth v Tasmania (1983) 158 CLR 1.*

6. When did Australians become Australian citizens? 1949. Australian citizenship was created by the *Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948*, which commenced on 26 January 1949. Before that, Australians were British subjects. *Source: Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948.*

7. What does the Constitution still call you? A subject of the Queen. Section 117 has never been amended. Parliament created "Australian citizen" in 1948 and removed "British subject" in 1984 by ordinary legislation — the legal status of the people changed twice without the people being asked once. *Source: Constitution section 117; Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948; Australian Citizenship Amendment Act 1984.*

Pillar 2 — Land and custodianship

8. Is native title property? Yes — the High Court settled it in 2025. In *Commonwealth v Yunupingu* the Court held that native title is property for the purposes of section 51(xxxi), and that extinguishing it is an acquisition requiring just terms. *Source: Commonwealth v Yunupingu [2025] HCA 6.*

9. Does that protection apply to the States? No, and this is the gap. Section 51(xxxi) binds the Commonwealth. It does not bind the States — and the States administer most of the land in Australia. *Source: Constitution section 51(xxxi).*

10. Has Parliament ever extinguished native title by ordinary legislation? Yes. Following the *Wik* decision, the *Native Title Amendment Act 1998* substantially altered native title rights by ordinary statute. The power exists and has been used. *Source: Wik Peoples v Queensland (1996); Native Title Amendment Act 1998.*

Pillar 3 — The popular initiative

11. How many referendums has Australia held? Forty-five proposals since Federation. Eight have been carried. *Source: Australian Electoral Commission referendum records.*

12. How many of those forty-five were proposed by citizens? None. Every referendum question ever put to Australians was chosen by the Parliament it might have constrained. Section 128 requires a proposal to pass both Houses before it can reach a ballot. *Source: Constitution section 128.*

13. What is the largest petition ever presented to the Australian Parliament? 1,210,471 signatures, from the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, tabled on 26 February 2014. *Source: Australian Parliament petitions records.*

14. And the largest electronic petition? 501,876 signatures, calling for a royal commission into media diversity, in 2020. It gathered more than half a million signatures in about four weeks. *Source: Australian Parliament e-petition records.*

15. What happened as a result of that petition? A letter. The Minister is asked to respond in writing within 90 days, and about 90 per cent of petitions get one. But **no rule requires a petition to be debated — not at 50 signatures, not at half a million.** No royal commission was established, and nothing required one. *Source: House of Representatives standing order 209(b); Standing Committee on Petitions.*

58. How long do you get to collect signatures on a federal e-petition? Four weeks, and there is no provision for extending it. The largest e-petition in the Parliament's history gathered 501,876 signatures in that window — **because four weeks is all anyone gets.** *Source: House of Representatives standing order 205(a).*

59. How many signatures does a petition need? None to be presented. **Fifty** for the Committee to refer it to a Minister for a written response. There is no threshold above that which triggers anything further. *Source: Standing Committee on Petitions, petitions guidance.*

16. How often do the Swiss vote on things? Around ten federal questions a year, on four scheduled voting days. Australia has averaged 0.37 referendum questions a year since Federation. *Source: Swiss Federal Chancellery; Australian Electoral Commission.*

17. Do Swiss citizen initiatives usually pass? No — and this surprises people. Of 235 citizen initiatives voted on since 1891, **26 were accepted. That is 11 per cent.** Australian parliament-initiated referendums pass at 18 per cent. Citizen initiative is more conservative than the system we have, not less. *Source: Swiss Federal Chancellery, to April 2025.*

18. How many Swiss initiatives never even make it to a vote? A large share. Of 539 launched since 1891, 153 failed to reach the signature threshold and 108 were withdrawn. Launch to enacted is roughly one in twenty. *Source: Swiss Federal Chancellery.*

Pillar 4 — Direct democracy machinery

19. Can Australians challenge a law after Parliament passes it? No. There is no mechanism, at any level of support, for electors to force a vote on an Act of the Commonwealth Parliament. *Source: Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918; Constitution section 128.*

20. Can the Swiss? Yes. 50,000 signatures within 100 days suspends a new law and puts it to a popular vote. Between 1874 and 2014 there were 176 such referendums, and **78 of those laws were struck down** — about 44 per cent. *Source: Swiss Federal Statistical Office.*

21. Has Switzerland ever made its own direct democracy harder? Yes, deliberately. In September 1977 Swiss voters approved raising the signature thresholds, because population growth and the introduction of women's suffrage in 1971 had made the old numbers too easy to reach. *Source: Swiss Federal Chancellery.*

22. Does Switzerland vote online? No. Switzerland suspended its e-voting programme in 2019 after researchers demonstrated flaws in the Swiss Post system. Paper ballots, counted in public. *Source: Swiss Federal Chancellery, 2019.*

23. During an emergency, who can impose requirements on you? Often one person. Section 477 of the *Biosecurity Act 2015* allows the responsible Minister, during a declared human biosecurity emergency, to determine **any requirement** the Minister is satisfied is necessary. *Source: Biosecurity Act 2015 section 477.*

24. Were the restrictions after 2020 federal or State? Overwhelmingly State. Most measures people experienced were made under State public health legislation, not Commonwealth law — which is why a protection that binds only the Commonwealth would miss the source of the grievance. *Source: Public Health Act 2005 (Queensland); Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Victoria).*

Pillar 5 — A Bill of Rights

25. Does Australia have a bill of rights? No. Australia is the only Western democracy with neither a constitutional nor a national statutory bill of rights. *Source: Australian Human Rights Commission.*

26. What rights are actually in the Constitution? A handful. Trial by jury for certain offences (section 80), freedom of religion (section 116), just terms for acquired property (section 51(xxxi)), and no discrimination between States' residents (section 117). Each has been read narrowly. *Source: Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900.*

27. Do any Australian jurisdictions have one? Three. Queensland's *Human Rights Act 2019*, Victoria's *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, and the Australian Capital Territory's *Human Rights Act 2004*. The Commonwealth has none. *Source: the named Acts.*

Pillar 6 — Electoral and executive

28. What happened in Central Queensland in 2025? Across five divisions — Flynn, Capricornia, Dawson, Hinkler and Herbert — 502,401 people voted. One party took **40.43 per cent of the vote and all five seats.** 59.57 per cent of Central Queensland voted otherwise and holds no seat. *Source: Australian Electoral Commission, final declared results 2025.*

29. Is preferential voting the cause of the two-party lock? No — and this is the most common mistake made by people who are right about the problem. Preferential voting helps minor parties compared with first-past-the-post. The cause is **single-member electorates**: one seat, one winner, everyone else gets nothing. *Source: Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918.*

30. How much bigger is Flynn than Herbert? One hundred and forty times. Flynn covers 132,824 square kilometres with 117,940 electors. Herbert covers 946 square kilometres with 121,315. The bigger electorate has fewer voters. *Source: Australian Electoral Commission divisional*

profiles, 2025.

31. How many Prime Ministers has Australia had since 2013? Six, in eleven years. None was removed by the Australian people at an election. *Source: Parliament of Australia records.*

32. Who decides when a federal election is held? Effectively the Prime Minister. Under section 5 the Governor-General dissolves the House on the Prime Minister's advice, so the timing sits with the person it most benefits. *Source: Constitution section 5.*

33. Does any Australian parliament have fixed terms? Most of them. New South Wales since 1995, and Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory all have them. Queensland adopted four-year fixed terms **by referendum in 2016**. The Commonwealth is the outlier. *Source: Constitution of Queensland 2001, as amended by referendum 19 March 2016.*

Pillar 7 — Judicial accountability

34. Where does a complaint about a federal judge go? To the head of that judge's own court. *Source: Courts Legislation Amendment (Judicial Complaints) Act 2012.*

35. And who decides whether a judge should step aside for bias? The judge complained of. *Source: Australian Law Reform Commission Report 138 (2022).*

36. Has that ever gone wrong? Documented, and overturned unanimously. In *Charisteas v Charisteas*, a trial judge and one party's barrister met for coffee and exchanged text messages during the proceedings. The Full Court of the Family Court found no apprehension of bias. The High Court disagreed, unanimously. *Source: Charisteas v Charisteas [2021] HCA 29.*

37. Did anyone recommend fixing this? Yes. The Australian Law Reform Commission recommended a federal judicial commission in Report 138, tabled 2 August 2022 after consulting more than 2,000 participants. **The Government agreed in principle on 29 September 2022. It still does not exist.** *Source: ALRC Report 138, Recommendation 5; Australian Government response, 29 September 2022.*

38. Do the States have one? New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory all do. The Commonwealth is behind its own States. *Source: Judicial Officers Act 1986 (New South Wales); Judicial Commission of Victoria Act 2016.*

39. Do Australians trust the courts? Mostly, and this belongs in the picture too. The ALRC found courts ranked second among institutions for trust, with 76 per cent of court users feeling fairly treated. It also found 8 per cent had no confidence at all and 17 per cent very little — a quarter of people who had actually been through a court. *Source: ALRC Report 138 (2022).*

Pillar 8 — Parliamentary integrity

40. Are politicians' declared interests audited? No. The registers of members' interests are self-declared, effectively unaudited, and straightforwardly defeated by trust and corporate structures. *Source: Registers of Members' Interests, House of Representatives and Senate.*

41. Hasn't donation law just been reformed? Yes, substantially — and it is worth knowing before anyone tells you nothing has changed. The *Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Reform) Act 2025* commences on 1 January 2027, dropping the disclosure threshold from about $17,300 to $5,000 and introducing caps on donations and expenditure. **It does not touch the registers of members' own interests.** *Source: Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Reform) Act 2025.*

Pillar 9 — A sovereign resource fund

42. How is money created in Australia? Mostly by lending against housing. Mortgages account for roughly $2.4 trillion of about $3.9 trillion in total credit, up from around 30 per cent in 1991. Physical currency is about 3 per cent of the money supply. *Source: Reserve Bank of Australia credit aggregates, April 2026.*

43. Have wages kept up with house prices? No. Since 2000 the Wage Price Index has risen 123 per cent. Capital city house price medians have risen between 249 and 561 per cent. *Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics; Wage Price Index.*

44. Doesn't Australia have a sovereign wealth fund? Not a resource one. The Future Fund was capitalised once, in 2006, with $60.5 billion from the sale of Telstra and budget surpluses. **It has received no further contributions since.** Its growth is investment return, not accumulated resource wealth. *Source: Future Fund annual results.*

45. What does Norway do differently? Captures the rent and saves it. Petroleum profits are taxed at a 78 per cent marginal rate, the entire net cash flow goes into the fund, and only the expected real return may be spent. The fund now holds around US$2.27 trillion — and its investment returns since inception exceed everything petroleum ever put in. *Source: Norges Bank Investment Management; Petroleum Taxation Act (Norway).*

46. Why can't Australia just copy it? Because the minerals are not the Commonwealth's. Onshore minerals are vested in the Crown in right of each State. The Commonwealth's only resource rent tax applies to offshore petroleum — the one resource it controls. *Source: Mineral Resources Act 1989 (Queensland); Mining Act 1978 (Western Australia); Seas and Submerged Lands Act 1973.*

47. Didn't Australia try a mining tax? Yes, and the design is the lesson. The Minerals Resource Rent Tax commenced 1 July 2012 and was repealed in 2014. It allowed a full credit for State royalties — so States could raise their rates at Commonwealth expense and at no cost to themselves. The Commonwealth built an instrument whose yield its counterparties could set to zero. *Source: Minerals Resource Rent Tax Repeal and Other Measures Act 2014.*

Tax — because the myths are everywhere

48. Is paying income tax voluntary? No. If you are on PAYG, your employer is legally required to withhold it before you are paid. The obligation sits on the employer under Schedule 1, section 12-35 of the *Taxation Administration Act 1953*. You are not a party to it and there is no opt-out. *Source: Taxation Administration Act 1953, Schedule 1, section 12-35.*

49. So where does the "tax is voluntary" idea come from? From a real sentence, read backwards. The Australian Taxation Office reports that over 94 per cent of income tax from individuals not in business is paid "voluntarily or with little intervention from us through our PAYG withholding system." In that sentence "voluntarily" means *without audit or debt recovery action*. It describes how the money arrived, not whether it was owed. *Source: Australian Taxation Office published compliance research.*

50. How much does individual income tax actually raise? $329.5 billion, which is 52.2 per cent of total Australian Taxation Office revenue of $630.9 billion. *Source: Australian Taxation Office annual report 2023–24.*

What happens when people tear a government down

51. Does overthrowing a government usually produce a freer one? Rarely. Of roughly two dozen forcible overthrows across four centuries, five or six produced a durable and more open system. **Every one of the four negotiated transitions did** — Spain, Poland, Czechoslovakia and South Africa. *Source: comparative constitutional histories; see the Framework's evidence paper.*

52. How long did France take to settle after 1789? Eighty-six years, and five republics, two empires and two restorations along the way. *Source: French constitutional history.*

53. How many constitutions has Thailand had since 1932? Around twenty, following around thirteen successful coups. Each coup writes a new one. *Source: Thai constitutional history.*

54. Syria's government fell in eleven days. What then? Twenty months later there is a transitional constitutional declaration with a five-year timetable, no permanent constitution, and a president who appoints 70 of the 210 members of the legislature. *Source: Congressional Research Service; House of Commons Library, 2026.*

The claims that get people hurt

55. Is there an "Imperial" Statutory Declarations Act of 1911? No. There has never been one. The *Statutory Declarations Act 1911* was an Act of the **Australian** Parliament, and it was repealed and replaced in 1959. Any document claiming to be made under an Imperial 1911 Act is either not a statutory declaration at all, or it is one — in which case knowingly making a false statement in it carries **four years imprisonment**. *Source: Statutory Declarations Act 1959, section 11.*

56. Are there two Commonwealths of Australia? No. The *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* distinguishes "corporate" and "non-corporate" Commonwealth entities for **financial management purposes**. A corporate entity is a body corporate like the CSIRO or the ABC. A non-corporate entity is legally part of the Commonwealth, like a government department. It is an accounting distinction between parts of one government. *Source: Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013.*

57. Has anyone ever won a case arguing the Constitution is invalid? No. Not once. Australian courts have dismissed every version of the argument, and the High Court has grounded the Constitution's authority in the Australian people rather than in the British Act. *Source: Sue v Hill (1999); consistent authority since.*

Build notes

Tagging. Each entry belongs to a pillar. Attach them to the matching page rather than shuffling the whole set, so a reader gets depth on what they came for.

Keep the source visible. The citation is not decoration. A visitor who checks one fact and finds it correct will believe the next twenty. A visitor who checks one and finds it wrong will believe none of them — which is why every figure here is one that can be verified.

Update discipline. Entries 41 and 37 go stale by design. The 2025 electoral reforms commence on 1 January 2027, and the judicial commission may one day be built. Diary a check of both. A "did you know" that has quietly become false is worse than no fact at all.

Suggested pop-up behaviour. One at a time, dismissible, never blocking the content, and never the same one twice in a session. A fact library is an invitation to look closer, not an advertisement.

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