

ABC NEWS

Kenneth Hayne says trust in institutions has been 'destroyed' in scathing attack on modern politics

By political reporter Jade Macmillan

Updated Wed 7 Aug 2019, 10:31pm

Trust in institutions has been "destroyed" and policy debates have been replaced by "three or four word slogans", according to the man who led the royal commission into the banking sector.

In a scathing attack on modern politics, Kenneth Hayne also suggested the debate around calls for an Indigenous voice to Parliament had been reduced to "slogans coined by partisan participants".

The comments are contained in a copy of a speech Mr Hayne gave to the Melbourne Law School last month, which has now been published online.

"Reasoned debates about issues of policy are now rare. (Three or four word slogans have taken their place)," the speech read.

"And political rhetoric now resorts to the language of war, seeking to portray opposing views as presenting existential threats to society as we now know it.

"Trust in all sorts of institutions, governmental and private, has been damaged or destroyed."

Mr Hayne is a former High Court judge whose final report from the banking royal commission recommended sweeping changes to the sector.

He said political decision making processes were not only "opaque" but also, too often seen "as skewed, if not captured, by the interests of those large and powerful enough to lobby governments behind closed doors".

Mr Hayne said increasingly frequent calls for royal commissions in Australia should not be dismissed as a "passing fad or fashion", and instead examined for what they said about the state of democratic institutions.

"Notice how many recent inquiries relate to difficult issues of public policy: how can we, how should we, look after the aged? How can we, how should we, respond to mental health?," he said.

"Does reference of matters of these kinds to royal commissions suggest that our governmental structures can deal effectively only with the immediate spot fire and cannot deal with large issues?"

He said he was not sure that greater transparency about the inner workings of government would promote better policy debate, citing the Uluru Statement from the Heart which called for an Indigenous voice to Parliament to be enshrined in the constitution.

RELATED STORY: What's the deal for consumers in the wake of the banking inquiry?

RELATED STORY: 'He's squibbed it': Hayne's report left bankers perplexed but relieved

RELATED STORY: 'Legislative mathematics that defies calculation': The difficulty of acting on Hayne's report

Key points:

- Kenneth Hayne wrote the final report from the banking royal commission that recommended sweeping changes to the sector
- The former High Court judge has called for increasingly frequent calls for Royal Commissions not to be dismissed
- Mr Hayne said such calls need to be examined for what they say about the state of democratic institutions

Understanding constitutional recognition



The Indigenous Australians Minister Ken Wyatt wants to hold a referendum within three years. But what does it take to deliver that?



PHOTO: Scott Morrison does not believe the constitution should include an enshrined voice. (AAP: Joel Carrett)

"Too often, the information that is available is neither read nor understood.

"And even if the information has been read and understood, debate proceeds by reference only to slogans coined by partisan participants," he said.

"We have seen that in this country in the debate about the Uluru Statement from the Heart. We have seen that in the United States in the debate about the Mueller report. The examples can be multiplied."

The Federal Government wants to hold a referendum on the recognition of Indigenous people in the nation's founding document within three years, however Prime Minister Scott Morrison does not believe that should included an enshrined voice.

Former deputy prime minister Barnaby Joyce has apologised for previously describing a voice to Parliament as a "third chamber".

Topics: banking, industry, business-economics-and-finance, politics-and-government, australia

First posted Wed 7 Aug 2019, 10:27pm

Contact Jade Macmillan