

Back to the Future of New Zealand

McGuinness Institute bringing *EmpowerNZ* together again

Following the success of the *EmpowerNZ: Drafting a Constitution for the 21st Century* workshop late last year, the Institute is inviting the participants to come together to finish the task. On the 5 – 7 July they have been invited back to Wellington to prepare a submission for the Constitutional Advisory Panel (CAP).

The intensive three day workshop last August gave 50 law, history and political science students and social networkers the opportunity to hear the perspectives of Ministers of Parliament, members of the Constitutional Advisory Panel and prominent constitutional scholars, before working together to draft a constitution fit for New Zealand in the 21st century.

‘Everyone left the workshop with a new level of understanding about New Zealand’s constitutional arrangements and why they matter ... it developed 50 constitutional ambassadors’, said participant Louis Chambers.

While the focus of the three-day workshop was upon reaching consensus and producing a draft constitution, the aim of this weekend is to delve deeper and work through particular issues such as whether or not New Zealand should have a written constitution, the place of the Treaty of Waitangi in our constitutional arrangements, and whether New Zealand should become a republic.

Although the diverse group of participants struggled to agree on some of the most important and challenging questions, there appeared to be broad consensus around the need for a four year electoral term, for environmental protection to be included as part of the constitution and for more civics education in our secondary school curriculum. The *EmpowerNZ* participants will now have had over six months to reflect on what they learnt at the workshop, so it is timely to gather their thoughts together into one document.

The central aim of the *EmpowerNZ* initiative is to ‘create a space for young New Zealanders to explore the nation’s constitution and how this might be improved in order to make it fit for the 21st century’ says Wendy McGuinness, CEO of the McGuinness Institute.

To read the *EmpowerNZ* draft constitution and watch the thought provoking speeches given by experts at the workshop visit the *EmpowerNZ* workshop [website](#).

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About the McGuinness Institute: The McGuinness Institute is a non-partisan think tank working towards a sustainable future, contributing strategic foresight through evidence-based research and policy analysis. The Institute's overarching project, *Project 2058*, aims to explore New Zealand's long-term future and develop an appropriate national sustainable development strategy. Along the way we have identified areas of research interest such as a talent-based economy, genetic modification, the use and protection of our ocean, and resource management.

Useful links:

EmpowerNZ website - www.empowernz.org.nz

EmpowerNZ Draft Constitution: <http://empowernz.co.nz/empowernz-workshop/draft-constitution/>

McGuinness Institute - www.mcguinnessinstitute.org

Constitutional Advisory Panel Review - <http://www.cap.govt.nz/>

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