

The Herbert & Valmae Freilich Foundation Present:



ALICE TAY LECTURE IN LAW & HUMAN RIGHTS 2010

# THE FUTURE OF THE AUSTRALIAN BILL OF RIGHTS DEBATE

Professor George Williams  
Director, Gilbert + Tobin Centre for Public Law  
University of New South Wales



Thursday 16 September 2010, 5.30pm

Conference Room, Sir Roland Wilson Building, McCoy Circuit, ANU

This lecture is free and open to the public

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Repeated attempts have been made since World War II to bring about a national Bill of Rights for Australia. More recently, the Federal Government established a consultation panel headed by Father Frank Brennan that generated high levels of support from the community for a National Human Rights Act. Despite this, in early 2010 the Government rejected the panel's recommendation on the Act. Instead, the Government announced a new human rights framework that focuses on new scrutiny mechanisms for the federal parliament. This lecture will address whether this decision marks the end of the push for an Australian Bill of Rights. Is it time to recognise that the debate has reached to the end of the road, or will it have yet another lease of life? If the debate does continue, what direction might it now take?

Professor George Williams is the Anthony Mason Professor and Foundation Director of the Gilbert + Tobin Centre of Public Law at the University of New South Wales. He is also an Australian Research Council Laureate Fellow and has held visiting positions at Osgoode Hall Law School in Toronto, Columbia University Law School in New York and University College London. Professor Williams has written and edited 25 books, including *A Charter of Rights for Australia* and *Australian Constitutional Law and Theory*. As a barrister, he appears in the High Court of Australia, while in 2005 he chaired the Victorian Human Rights Consultation Committee that led to the enactment of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. Professor Williams is a well-known media commentator and currently writes a fortnightly column for *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

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