



2017 Constitution Day Message 3 July 2017

The first Monday in July is a public holiday in the Cayman Islands to mark the significant changes in our constitutional arrangements that came into effect on 4 July 1959. In 2017, Constitution Day falls on the 3 July and on this day we will commemorate the 58th anniversary of the 1959 Constitution.

The 1959 Constitution was an important milestone, not least because it enabled the Cayman Islands to stand apart from Jamaica and remain a British territory, while Jamaica sought to negotiate its independence. At the same time, however, the 1959 Constitution also facilitated a re-structuring of the arrangements by which these Islands were governed internally. In the intervening years, these arrangements have been amended and enhanced on several occasions. By all accounts, the Cayman Islands Constitution Order of 2009 brought about the most wide-ranging constitutional revisions since 1959, although it is notable that there has been a further amendment to that restatement of the Constitution in the course of the last year.

This 2016 Amendment revised the 2009 Constitution Order in the following ways, all of which relate to the judicial branch of government. Firstly, the tenure of judges of the Grand Court was extended from the age of 65 to 70. Secondly, the Governor's power to exercise disciplinary control over the Chief Justice and the President of the Court of Appeal was removed. And thirdly, the power to exercise disciplinary control over judges of the Grand Court and magistrates and judges of the Court of Appeal was transferred to the Chief Justice and the President of the Court of Appeal respectively.

In the year since we last observed Constitution Day, the Cayman Islands has also successfully conducted a general election. Once again, this undertaking and the process by which the government came to be formed gave rise to some thought-provoking constitutional issues and the Constitutional Commission welcomes the consequent upsurge in interest in our constitutional arrangements that this experience appears to have generated.

Having been established as one of the Institutions Supporting Democracy in Part VIII of the 2009 Constitution Order, the Constitutional Commission is charged with promoting understanding and awareness of the Constitution and its values and, in pursuance of this mandate, we encourage all persons concerned to view this public holiday as an opportunity to find out more about your Constitution. To this end, we hope that the Constitutional Commission's new website – www.constitutionalcommission.ky – will prove a good place to start one's enquiries.

Building on the current wave of curiosity, the Constitutional Commission would also welcome any input as to how it could help engender a wider appreciation both of our constitutional history and of the contemporary issues relating to the operation of our current Constitution. Please e-mail us at info@constitutionalcommission.ky or call 244-3685 if you have any suggestions or indeed if you would like to contact the Constitutional Commission for any other reason.

Ends.