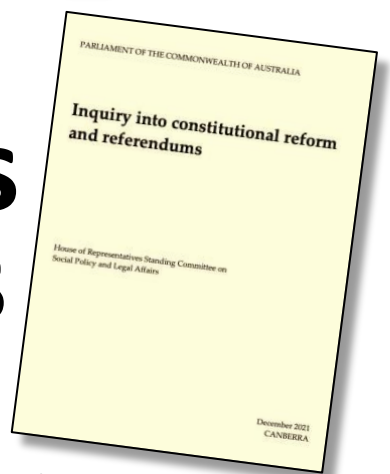


Labor MPs suggest regular conventions to consider reforms



Opposition MPs serving on a federal parliamentary committee have suggested regular Constitutional Conventions to help Australians better understand the Constitution and increase the likelihood of success for future referendums.



By **DAVID MUIR AM**
Chair
Real Republic Australia

The three Labor Party MPs on the House of Representatives' [Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs](#) agreed with government MPs in its [report](#) that more needed to be done to promote awareness and understanding of the [Australian Constitution](#) and the role played by it and the referendum process in our democratic system.

regular basis – to help strengthen public knowledge and participation in all matters relating to our Constitution.”

The three Labor MPs said evidence put to the Committee “strongly supports the contention that holding regular Constitutional Conventions or other deliberative processes with citizen

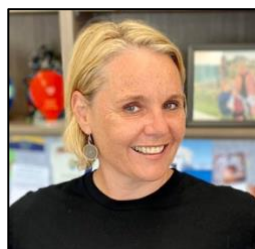
be chosen, how a Convention would operate, and what force if any its recommendations would carry.

However, they did say that in designing the Constitutional Convention process “the government should have consideration of the Irish constitutional reform process and Australia’s First Nations [Regional Dialogues](#) and National Constitutional Convention (known as the ‘Uluru dialogues’).”

But in a statement additional to the recommendations endorsed by all members of the Committee, the Labor MPs – Sharon Claydon (Newcastle NSW), Peta Murphy (Dunkley - Vic), and Dr Mike Freeland (Macarthur - NSW) – said while they recognised “the need to increase public literacy about Australia’s Constitution” any “increase in awareness should be met with increased public engagement”.



Sharon Claydon



Peta Murphy



Dr Mike Freeland

The Real Republic Australia has outlined its own detailed “roadmap” for constitutional reform involving proposed series of new Australia Constitutional Assemblies.

These are based in part on the Irish system of [Citizen’s Assemblies](#) which involve 100 voters chosen to provide a broadly representative sample of the nation.

Twelve Uluru Dialogues held across Australia each involved 100 delegates

“It is the view of Labor Members that we need to inspire Australians to engage with our Constitution – to understand its significance as the founding document, to seek reforms to ensure its relevance to contemporary Australia, and to debate how it might better shape our nation going forward,” the three MPs said..

“Moreover, this engagement should be on a

involvement, contributes to a better understanding of Australia’s constitutional framework”.

The MPs did not provide detailed information about how their suggested initiative would work, who would be involved, how they might

representing local traditional owners and indigenous people and organisations. They led to the 2017 [Uluru Statement from the Heart](#) advocating recognition of First Nations people in the Constitution.

‘Australia’s Constitution was brought into being via a series of Constitutional Conventions, but the history of constitutional review in Australia is ad hoc and has met with very limited success to date.’

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Conventions could 'inspire' voters

A focus on education

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The three Labor MPs said there was a need "to inspire Australians to engage with our Constitution – to understand its significance as the founding document, to seek reforms to ensure its relevance to contemporary Australia, and to debate how it might better shape our nation going forward.

"Moreover, this engagement should be on a regular basis – to help strengthen public knowledge and participation in all matters relating to our Constitution," they said.

They said the Constitution was not set in stone but was a living document that could be adapted to meet Australians' needs now and in the future.

"That's what the original framers intended and that's the evolving nature of nationhood," the MPs said.

The House of Representatives' Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs **was asked to consider:**

- ways to improve public awareness and education about the Constitution,
- methods to review the Constitution including community consultation on any proposed amendments before they were put to a referendum, and
- the effectiveness of arrangements in the *Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984* and any need for amendments.

Andrew Wallace, the LNP Member for the Queensland seat of Fisher, was chair of the Committee until his elevation to the job of Speaker of the House of Representatives in November 2021.

Before he vacated the chair's job he said the Committee's inquiry was not about specific changes to the Constitution, "but about ensuring that as a nation we can have informed discussion and debate about any proposals for constitutional change, and a fit-for-purpose referendum process to decide on them".

The Committee said it was concerned about the apparent low levels of understanding of the Constitution and related issues especially among school students.

But it also concluded that education campaigns and initiatives aimed at the wider population on the Constitution were "limited and inadequate".

Committee MPs said their own experiences with constituents showed that there was "a concerning number of Australians who don't know about the Constitution or are misinformed about what is actually contained in it".

"The Committee notes that almost a third of Australia's population are migrants and considers that there is also a need to reach out to this population to ensure that there is a widespread understanding of Australia's Constitution and democratic system," the inquiry report said.



Andrew Wallace

Recommendations to boost understanding

The Committee made 10 recommendations to the Australian Government:

- Expansion of the National Schools Constitutional Convention program with the aim of including more students every school year.
- The Attorney-General's Department should commission a study on Australians' awareness of the Constitution, referendums and constitutional matters with outcomes to shape future initiatives to increase public literacy about Australia's Constitution.
- A public awareness and education program on the Constitution, constitutional framework and Australia's democratic system with a possible ongoing presence online and through social media.
- Establishment of a Joint (House of Representatives and Senate) Standing Committee on Constitutional Matters to operate from the commencement of the 47th Parliament to review the Constitution and consider proposals for change.
- Using any constitutional convention established on the recommendation of the Joint Standing Committee to conduct a public engagement program to ensure broad awareness of the convention and increase understanding of the Constitution.
- Amendment of Section 11 of the *Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984* to enable the Electoral Commissioner to distribute the yes/no pamphlet to all electors using any additional methods considered appropriate.
- Amendment of Section 11(4) of the Act to provide for the Australian Government to fund referendum education and promotion of the arguments for and against a referendum proposal.
- Amendment of the Act to be consistent with relevant provisions in Part XX of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*, to:
 - prohibit referendum campaign organisations from receiving gifts or donations of \$100 or more from foreign donors
 - require referendum campaign organisations to disclose gifts or donations above a certain threshold.
- An independent expert panel should be established to advise the Joint Parliamentary Committee (Recommendation 4) in the lead-up to a referendum on aspects of the referendum process, including but not limited to:
 - the form of the wording of the referendum question
 - the inclusion of neutral information in the yes/no pamphlet
 - other neutral information and education activities, and
 - establishment of yes/no committees.
- Ensure that the *Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984* and the referendum process more generally is modernised well in advance of any referendum on the question of constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians, which is expected to occur in the next term of Parliament, or any other future referendum.

Report points to low success rate

The Committee's [report](#) noted the lack of success of referendum questions put to voters since federation.

Its report said that since 1901 when the Constitution came into effect voters had been asked on 19 occasions to consider a total of 44 proposed changes. But only eight were approved after attaining the necessary "double majority" – a majority of votes nationwide including in the territories plus a majority of states excluding the territories.

The last successful referendum was in 1977 in which three out of four changes were approved:

- filling casual vacancies in the Senate with a replacement of the same party,
- a retirement age of 70 for federal judges, and
- allowing territory electors to vote in referendums.

The fourth unsuccessful proposal would have required House of Representatives and Senate elections to always be held on the same day.

The Committee said that in the almost 45 years since then eight referendum questions had been put to the Australian people in 1984, 1988 and 1999 and all were defeated. The 1999 referendum questions dealt with an Australian republic, and insertion of a preamble into the Constitution.

Government takes legislative path

Inclusion of Indigenous Voice in the Constitution rejected

The Morrison Government has outlined its proposals for an indigenous voice to Federal Parliament by suggesting a legislative response instead of pursuing changes to the Australian Constitution.

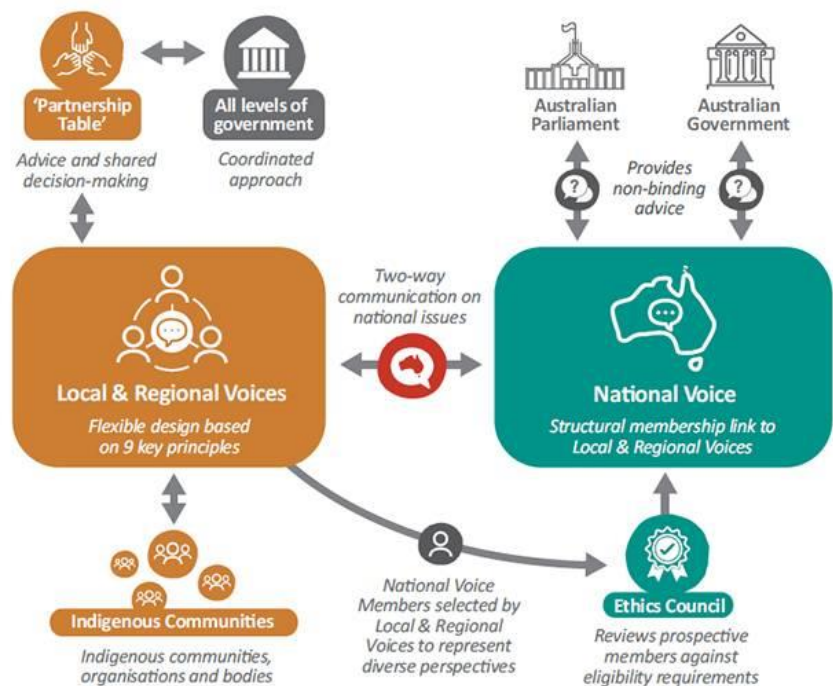
[The final report](#) on the indigenous voice proposal released in December outlines a two-level model aimed at achieving input to both the Federal Parliament and government from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:

- 35 Local and Regional Voice representative bodies, and
- a National Voice consisting of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives to receive input from the local and regional bodies.

The report said a National Voice would ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples had a direct say on national laws, policies and programs that affected them.

The scope and strength of proposed consultations varies from an obligation to consult on issues such as native title or actions under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act* to an expectation to consult on matters such as anti-domestic violence measures.

The 2017 [Uluru Statement from the Heart](#) called for a voice to be enshrined in the Constitution by way of an amendment by referendum. It also sought a Makarrata or treaty commission and a process for national truth-telling.



How the proposed system works from the final report

The Labor Party's shadow minister for Indigenous Australians, Linda Burney, [described the announcement](#) as "a fail".

Ms Burney said the government proposals bore little resemblance to the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

The government has given no commitment to introduce laws establishing the new system before the next federal election.

The Minister for Indigenous Australians, Ken Wyatt, [said](#) the government would now begin discussions with state, territory, and local governments to encourage participation in the Local and Regional Voice arrangements.

Mr Wyatt said the government would also appoint a Local and Regional Voice establishment group to help form the 35 new bodies.

MPs central to ARM model

Politicians play a dominant role in the Australian Republic Movement's recently released model for choosing an Australian head of state.

After not promoting a specific model since its parliamentary-appointment model was rejected at the 1999 referendum, the group has [released a hybrid model](#) under which federal and state MPs will decide the list of people Australians can vote for at an election for head of state.

Under its proposal politicians in each state and territory parliament would choose a single candidate from their jurisdiction who would join a shortlist along with three people chosen by the federal parliament.

Voters would then be given the chance to choose one of the 11 as their head of state at a national election.

Each parliament would be able to develop its own selection process to decide its

nominee or, in the case of the federal parliament, its nominees.

"This will ensure a diverse cross-section of nominees are put forward from across the country, each of whom has a reasonable prospect of achieving both local and national support."

The Real Republic Australia continues to support a model that as far as possible eliminates politicians from the process of filtering candidates for Head of State.

In coming months the Real Republic Australia will release a discussion paper seeking public comment on its proposals for the nomination and election of candidates seeking to be the nation's Head of State.

The discussion paper will also outline the powers, duties, and responsibilities of a Head of State in an Australian republic.

The Real Republic Australia will continue to

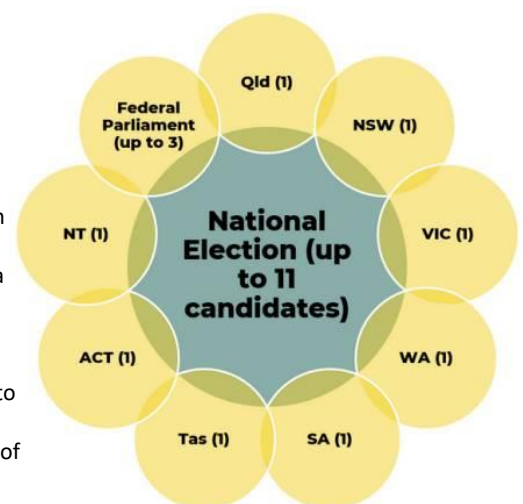


Diagram of the ARM model

advocate a model drawing elements from the system used in Ireland where a Westminster-style executive government led by a prime minister operates successfully with a Head of State elected directly by voters.

A glimpse of the future for Charles

Another Commonwealth nation turns republic

The heir to the British throne, Prince Charles the Prince of Wales, has described the decision by Barbados to become a republic as “a new beginning” for the Caribbean island nation.

Prince Charles represented Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at the 30 November 2021 ceremony to mark the country’s transition to a republic. His involvement in the ceremony may well be repeated elsewhere in coming years.

Prior to the constitutional change in Barbados, other former British colonies in the Caribbean such as Dominica, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago had achieved republic status after gaining independence from Britain. All of them maintained their [Commonwealth](#) membership.

A [2020 opinion poll](#) taken in Jamaica found 55% of all respondents wanted to move away from having the British monarch as their head of state and to become a republic. The poll also found 30% of respondents supported the existing constitutional monarchy and 15% identified as “don’t know”.

Jamaica, with more than 2.8 million people, is the Caribbean’s biggest Commonwealth country. It secured independence from Britain in 1962.

The British monarch does not automatically become head of the Commonwealth, but in 2018 the Queen [secured agreement among member nations](#) for her son to take over the role when she vacated it. So in the future he will be called to preside over other events such as the one in Barbados to mark the creation of a republic.

[In his speech](#) in Barbados, Prince Charles said: “The creation of this republic offers a new beginning, but it also marks a point on a continuum – a milestone on the long road you have not only travelled, but which you have built.



Prince Charles and former governor-general and first President of Barbados, Dame Sandra Mason
Photo: Prince of Wales website

“Your long journey has brought you to this moment, not as your destination, but as a vantage point from which to survey a new horizon.”

Prince Charles said as the constitutional status of Barbados changed, it was important for him to “reaffirm those things which do not change”.

“For example, the close and trusted

partnership between Barbados and the United Kingdom as vital members of the Commonwealth; our common determination to defend the values we both cherish and to pursue the goals we share; and the myriad connections between the people of our countries – through which flow admiration and affection, co-operation and opportunity – strengthening and enriching us all.”

Republics not Britannia rule the Commonwealth



Currently, of the 54 member nations of the modern Commonwealth:

- 34 are republics,
- 15 have Queen Elizabeth II as their head of state, including Australia,
- five have their own monarchies.

REPUBLICS

1. Bangladesh
2. Barbados
3. Botswana
4. Cameroon
5. Cyprus
6. Dominica
7. Fiji
8. Gambia
9. Ghana
10. Guyana
11. India
12. Kenya
13. Kiribati
14. Malawi
15. Maldives
16. Malta
17. Mauritius
18. Mozambique
19. Namibia
20. Nauru
21. Nigeria
22. Pakistan
23. Rwanda
24. Samoa
25. Seychelles
26. Sierra Leone
27. Singapore
28. South Africa
29. Sri Lanka
30. Tanzania
31. Trinidad and Tobago
32. Uganda
33. Vanuatu
34. Zambia

COMMONWEALTH REALMS

1. Antigua and Barbuda
2. Australia
3. Bahamas
4. Belize
5. Canada
6. Grenada
7. Jamaica
8. New Zealand
9. Papua New Guinea
10. Saint Kitts and Nevis
11. Saint Lucia
12. Solomon Islands
13. St Vincent and the Grenadines
14. Tuvalu
15. United Kingdom

MONARCHIES

1. Brunei Darussalam
2. Eswatini
3. Lesotho
4. Malaysia
5. Tonga

A CLEAN SWEEP

Following the change to a republic, Prime Minister Mia Mottley has [secured a landslide win](#) in a snap election.

Her Barbados Labour Party (BLP) won all 30 seats in the nation’s House of Assembly at the 19 January poll.

Ms Mottley won office in May 2018 when the BLP won 29 seats. The next election had been due in 2023.

In addition to the lower house, the Barbados Parliament also includes a Senate with 21 appointed members.

Barbados shows ‘it’s time to move forward’



Canadian political columnist for the *Toronto Star*, BOB HEPBURN, [argues](#) that his nation should follow the lead of Barbados and become a republic. His arguments apply equally to Australia.

In the end, the split was painless! Despite excessive hand-wringing and warnings in advance of dire consequences, Barbados cut its 396-year-old ties with the British monarchy.

In a ceremony filled with pomp and celebrities, including Barbados superstar singer Rihanna, the Caribbean nation officially became a republic — 55 years to the day after it declared independence from Britain.

Even Queen Elizabeth didn’t object to yet another country — the 17th under her reign — dispensing of her as its head of state. In fact, she despatched her son Charles, the future king of England, to participate in the ceremony.

Now that Barbados has ditched the British monarchy, what’s stopping Canada from doing the same thing?

Isn’t it time Canada shed the last vestiges of our British colonial past that sees us still beholding to a queen or king living in England, that bars any Canadian from being our head of state and that demands new citizens swear an oath to the queen.

For Barbados, often called “Little England,” the switch was ultimately easy.

Dame Sandra Mason, who had been the island’s governor-general, became the country’s first president. She was elected to the new post in October by Barbados’ Parliament. It’s a largely ceremonial job, with Barbados’ Prime Minister Mia Mottley

and the ruling party handling the day-to-day business of government. The biggest change is that it’s now possible for a Barbadian to become head of state, signalling that the country has fully left its colonial past behind.

With Barbados now a republic, only 15 countries outside of Great Britain still hold the Queen as the head of state.

In Canada, most people want to dump the monarchy — and that number is growing rapidly.



While Queen Elizabeth is on the throne, most Canadians don’t want to ditch the monarchy or any of its symbols, such as swearing oaths to her or having her image on our currency.

A study released this week by the non-profit Angus Reid Institute (*see below*) found 52% of those surveyed say Canada should not remain a constitutional monarchy indefinitely compared to 25% who say it should.

Quebec had the highest level of opposition to keeping the monarchy, with 72% saying it’s time for a change.

In Ontario, 46% favoured ending ties with the monarchy and 25% wanted to keep it.

The national results reflect “a significant decline in support for the system as Canadians grow increasingly weary of their relationship with the crown,” the institute said in a press release. Barely five years ago, more than 40% of Canadians favoured the country remaining a constitutional monarchy for generations in the future.

Also, most Canadians say the monarchy is less relevant than it was a few years ago or isn’t relevant at all.

Still, while Queen Elizabeth is on the throne, most Canadians don’t want to ditch the monarchy or any of its symbols, such as swearing oaths to her or having her image on our currency.

However, that support plunges when the prospect of Prince Charles becoming king is added to the mix.

One Canadian group thrilled that Barbados has made the move is Citizens for a Canadian Republic.

Tom Freda, head of the group, said he expects Barbados to be an inspiration to “the millions of Canadians who believe it’s time for our country to also sever its last colonial link.”

No disrespect to the queen, but the dwindling number of monarchists in Canada need to get over it.

It’s time to move forward — just as Barbados has done.

Canadians like the Queen but are ripe for change too

A study of Canadian voter attitudes by the not-for-profit [Angus Reid Institute](#) reveals resistance to maintaining the nation’s constitutional monarchy for generations to come by a margin of two-to-one – 52% say Canada should not remain a constitutional monarchy indefinitely, while 25% say it should.

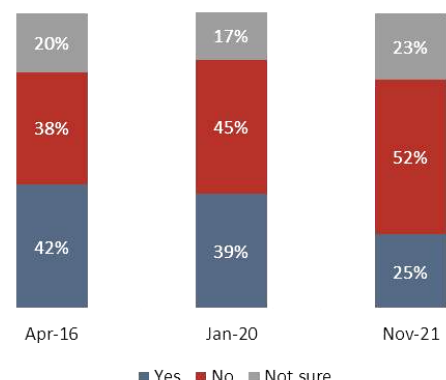
The results shows a drop in support for the current system. In 2016 a similar survey found 38% not wanting to stick with the current system indefinitely and 42% supporting its continuation. (*at right*)

However, the poll also shows 55% of respondents being reasonably content with Queen Elizabeth as monarch. The support drops to 34% with her assumed successor Prince Charles as the hypothetical king. The Institute said the findings showed Canadians had a stronger connection with the Queen than the institution she represents. Asked how her death might affect them, 56% said will feel sad while 19% say they won’t feel anything.

The findings are based on an online survey from 26-29 November 2021 among a representative random sample of 1,898 Canadian adults.

[FOLLOW THIS LINK FOR FULL DETAILS](#)

Regardless of what you think about individual members of the royal family, do you think Canada should continue as a constitutional monarchy for generations to come?



LESSONS FOR US

FROM THE U.S.

CAPITOL ATTACK



The anniversary of the 6 January invasion of the US Capitol and its resultant deaths was an unhappy reminder of an event arising from a concerted campaign by a US President to cancel democracy. Chair of the Real Republic Australia, DAVID MUIR, believes we must consider changes to the Australian Constitution to prevent a similar attack on our own democracy.

Last January's attack on the US Capitol was a reminder that not everyone believes democratic institutions are sacrosanct.

The reality is that our institutions may be tested at any time by those seeking power or seeking to hold on to power at any cost.

The events in Washington DC were resolved largely by force, so it is disturbing to think what might have happened if the violent mob had carried out whatever plans they had in mind.

If an election can be overturned or come close to being overturned in the world's most powerful democracy, it can be overturned anywhere.

The far right forces that sought to overturn the 2020 US presidential election have been influencing the protests against COVID-19 vaccinations and restrictions in nearly all of the Western World, including Australia.

By portraying any sort of government action as tyranny and a destruction of personal or political entitlements, far right radicals seek to undermine our institutions.

Attempting to overturn democratic elections through misinformation and insurrection can happen again.

Those who value our democracy must ensure our institutions will be ready.

The [Australian Constitution](#) requires the direct popular election of members and senators to our two Houses of Parliament.

Ministers are formally appointed by the governor-general under [Section 64](#) of our Constitution.

However, the position of prime minister itself is not specified in our Constitution.

The installation of a PM is underpinned solely by the convention and practice that he or she retains the confidence of a majority of those sitting in the House of Representatives.

By contrast, the [Constitution of Ireland](#) is very specific.

Ireland has a [Westminster-style parliamentary system](#) with lower and upper houses, an [executive government](#) led by a [prime minister](#), but also a [directly elected president](#) as head of state with clearly specified powers and responsibilities.

The Irish Constitution spells out that the president appoints a PM "on the nomination of" the lower house of the parliament and that a PM advises the president on ministers' appointments or terminations.

It is worth pondering the possibility if an Australian PM could insist on staying in office, even if an opposition party wins a House of Representatives majority at an election.

Unlike the [limited terms of a US President](#), an Australian prime minister's term in office ends only if they resign or have their commission terminated by the governor-general.

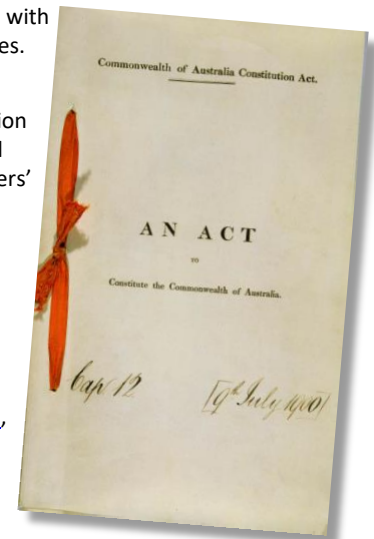
If a prime minister does not resign, and is not removed by the governor-general, a PM's chief requirement to stay in office is having the parliament pass budget bills to retain supply.

An Australian PM who sought to cancel democracy could have time to manipulate the numbers in Parliament to stay in office.

In the case of a PM facing the chop, he or she might resort to advising the governor-general to call an election.

While both the Irish and Australian constitutions enable the president or governor-general to summon or dissolve parliament, it is on the advice of the PM.

But the Irish Constitution gives the president "absolute discretion" to refuse to dissolve the parliament on advice of a PM who has lost the confidence of parliament.



The Australian Constitution and Irish President Michael Higgins



CONTINUED NEXT PAGE.....

LESSONS FOR US FROM THE U.S. CAPITOL ATTACKS

(CONTINUED)

An Australian PM may still play the snap election card, or if he or she has just lost an election, may seek to retain office in defiance of democracy.

In such a scenario it would be the expectation of almost all Australians that the governor-general would intervene by dismissing the rogue prime minister. But could we always rely on this expectation?

The governor-general is formally appointed by the Queen but in reality this is done on the advice of the prime minister. In practice the governor-general is ultimately the prime minister's choice so a Trump-style PM could install a lackey as G-G as insurance.

After an election such a governor-general could merely ignore convention and refuse to terminate the prime minister's commission.

At this point there would be cries for the Queen to intervene and sack the stooge governor-general and appoint another to restore normality.

[The 1975 "Palace Papers"](#) show the British Crown very reluctant to make any formal constitutional interventions.

Even during the UK Parliament [prorogation crisis of 2019](#), the Crown took a hands-off approach to the Westminster Parliament.

Fundamentally, the robustness of our Australian democracy relies on an honest, fair-minded and independent governor-general. The current system under which the prime minister essentially controls the appointment and dismissal of the G-G is a potential fatal flaw in our governance.

Since 6 January 2021 we cannot take for granted that all leaders will respect democratic institutions. Our democratic institutions must be strong enough to defeat those tempted to break them.

The question of an Australian republic, and how our head of state would be determined, is now more than a question of symbolism. It is potentially a question of the security of our democracy.

The selection and tenure of our head of state needs true independence. The current constitutional arrangements can easily be hacked by a prime minister with no respect for them.

A republic with a directly elected head of state, independent of partisan politics, serving for a fixed term, and with clear and codified powers and responsibilities, would provide the security against a PM trying to ignore the will of voters.

Our democratic institutions would be further strengthened by constitutionally mandating a directly elected head of state to be responsible for an independent Australian Public Service Commission and



The 1975 Palace Papers showed the Queen was reluctant to intervene

to oversee appointments to anti-corruption and integrity agencies or commissions, the Australian Electoral Commission, and Remuneration Tribunal as well as what are now the supposedly independent officers of the parliament – the Auditor-General, the Commonwealth Ombudsman, Australian Information Commissioner and others.

In previous debates on the republic, the proposal of a directly elected head of state has been labelled as risky compared with the current arrangements or a republic with a head of state appointed by Federal Parliament. With the growth of the far right and illiberal forces which do not respect democracy across the Western World, it is now risky to leave our current constitutional arrangements as they stand.

Only a directly elected head of state would keep a rogue prime minister in check and secure our democracy.

The old maxim, if it ain't broke don't fix it, will never protect us from those who believe rules are meant to be broken.

[The article was first published by Independent Australia](#)

Buckingham Palace torpedoed monarchists' favourite G-G claim

The recent release by the Australian National Archives of correspondence from recent Australian Governors-General to Her Majesty the Queen have provided a fascinating insights into vice-regal activities and thoughts.

The letters were released in the wake of the decision to provide public access to the so-called "Palace Letters" written by Sir John Kerr around the time of his sacking of the Whitlam Government in 1975.

The Australian newspaper recently carried a story about letters exchanged in 1999 between then Governor-General Sir William Deane which among other issues canvassed the planned republic referendum in October that year.

The story noted the firmness with which royal officials dismissed as false one of the pet arguments peddled by monarchists

When Sir David Smith, the former official secretary at Government House, argued the governor-general was actually head of state, Buckingham Palace made it clear in January 1999 that this argument, often propagated by monarchists, was nonsense and the Queen was indeed Australia's head of state.

then and now – that there was no need for a republic because the Governor-General was the nation's head of state and was an Australian.

The newspaper said the argument was described by those at Buckingham Palace as "nonsense" and that they confirmed the fact that the Queen was indeed head of state of Australia.



The Australian 19 January 2022

Environment features in Chile's rewrite plan

Environmental issues, especially the impacts of mining and climate change, are expected to be major concerns addressed in a planned rewrite of the Constitution of Chile.

As reported in the Spring 2020 edition of *Constitutional Conversation*, Chileans voted strongly in October 2020 to replace their existing constitution which is a hangover from the days of the nation's military dictatorship under Augusto Pinochet who rule from 1973 to 1990.

The Constitution will be rewritten this year by a panel of 155 citizens elected last year to undertake the task.

The effects on the environment from the mining of lithium – a key element in renewable energy industries and products – is likely to be [a major consideration](#) of the panel members.



President-elect Gabriel Boric and our previous Spring 2020 story



So too will be the impacts of climate change. Other proposals for consideration include a constitutional right to access water.

The rewrite process also has echoes of the current debate in Australia with proposals

for constitutional recognition of Chile's indigenous peoples.

Environmental and social issues were high on the agenda of Gabriel Boric who in December 2021 was elected as the new President of Chile and will take office in March.

A group of academics and policy experts and advocates calling themselves the [New Constitution Observatory](#) has identified other key issues the elected delegates will consider in the rewrite process, including:

- the balance of powers between the nation's executive and legislative branches,
- potential redistribution of currently centralised government powers,
- citizens' social rights, and
- potential nationalisation of some natural resources.

UK republicans launch campaign

A group campaigning for a British republic says it will step up its efforts as celebrations start marking the Queen Elizabeth's 70 years on the throne.

The [Republic](#) organisation said it would begin a "Not Another 70" campaign to call for an end to the institution.

"While a vocal minority will want to celebrate the queen's 70 year reign, we must all start looking to the future," a [Republic spokesperson Graham Smith said](#).

"The prospect of King Charles is not a happy one, and there is a good, democratic alternative on offer. It's time to have a serious debate about our constitution, accept that Charles is not the best the country has to offer, and that as a nation we are quite capable of choosing our head of state.

"It's time to reject the nonsense arguments about tourism, stability and widespread affection for the royals, and take a more sensible look at what the monarchy really is,



and what it really costs the country.

"That cost isn't just financial, it is a cost to our democracy, to our status as citizens and to our principles.

"In just 12 months the royals have been accused of racism, climate change hypocrisy, abuse of public funds, secrecy, cash-for-honours, cash-for-access and all the various things associated with Prince Andrew, including sheltering him from justice," Mr Smith said.

Queen Elizabeth assumed the British throne on 6 February 1952 following the death of her father King George VI.

Buckingham Palace has [released a list of events](#) to celebrate her platinum jubilee during 2022.

Right royal rebuff

The Real Republic Australia recognises that the republic campaign has support, and opposition, across party lines.

An Australian republic is backed by many people who support or who are members of the Liberal Party. So we were puzzled by the response to our previous quarterly newsletter emailed to the Monash University Liberal Club in Melbourne.

We would like to unsubscribe to this mailing list.
God Save the Queen,
Monash University Liberal Club

We like to think that there may be some club members who might like to read our thoughts even if they disagree with them.

That's their choice in a liberal democracy.

The Editor

Our newsletter

Constitutional Conversation is published quarterly by the Real Republic Australia to foster public debate about potential changes to the Australian Constitution including a republic with a head of state elected directly by Australians.

The Real Republic Australia was founded by Brisbane's longest-

serving Lord Mayor, the late Clem Jones (1918-2007) and other delegates to the Constitutional Convention held in Canberra in 1998.

In line with his wishes, the Real Republic continues to campaign for a republic based on the direct-election



model with support provided by the Clem Jones Group.

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