



Thursday 20 October 2022

**YOUR CHOICE/THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE REPUBLIC DISCUSSION PAPER**

The Real Republic Australia today released a discussion paper outlining key features of its model for a genuine directly elected Head of State in an Australian republic.

Chair of the Real Republic Australia, David Muir, said the aim was to foster discussion of the issues involved in Australia's transition to a republic at a future referendum.

"It's safe to say that just under 100% of Australian voters are not constitutional lawyers," Mr Muir said. "But all Australian voters get to decide the fate of any referendum so the sooner we start the discussion the better informed we will all be and the better the chances of a successful referendum.

"That's why we haven't presumed to redraft or rewrite the Australian Constitution or sections of it. That's a task for the government and its legal experts at a later date.

"Right now we want Australians to discuss ideas for achieving an Australian republic with a genuine directly elected Head of State.

"Our discussion paper outlines our ideas for possible eligibility criteria, how an election might be run, restrictions on donations to candidates and the concept of a cap on campaign spending, plus the codification of a Head of State's powers to ensure they are never a rival to the Prime Minister.

"We also point to Ireland which has a directly elected President with codified powers who works comfortably within a Westminster-style parliamentary system and is not a rival to the Irish prime minister."

Mr Muir said the Real Republic Australia agreed with Assistant Minister for the Republic, Matt Thistlethwaite, that public discussion needed to begin now.

"It's been a long time since any referendum questions to amend the Australian Constitution were put to voters, let alone passed," Mr Muir said.

"The last referendum questions were put to voters in November 1999 – on the republic and a preamble in the Constitution recognising First Nations," he said. "Both failed to clear the high bar set for amending the Constitution – the so-called 'double majority' requiring a nationwide 'yes' vote across all states and the NT and ACT plus a majority 'yes' vote in a majority of states but excluding the territories.

"Those criteria have seen only eight out of 44 referendum questions approved since Federation in 1901. In addition it was 45 years ago in 1977 when the last successful referendum was held and three out of four constitutional changes were approved.

"Back then *God Save the Queen* was our national anthem. Anthony Albanese would have been 14 and Peter Dutton would have been 6.

"Australia and the world have changed so much since and our attitudes to our constitutional monarchy has changed too, but many voters today may not be familiar with the referendum process for achieving constitutional reforms.

"That's why we must invest time and effort in discussing ideas and the best process for achieving a successful republic referendum."

Mr Muir said discussion of a republic and how to achieve it must also involve Australians wherever they live – not just those in Canberra or in the bigger capitals.

Former Queensland leader of the Liberal Party, Bob Quinn, said republic supporters came from across the political spectrum and the discussion paper could help avoid any partisan politicking that too often sank referendums.

"I believe the central feature of having an Australian as our Head of State and having them elected directly by their fellow Australians – not foisted on them by politicians – will be supported by voters ahead of other models," Mr Quinn said.

"Everyone will have their own ideas about other features and no doubt some will agree and others will disagree with ideas being put forward in the discussion paper.

“But that’s what a healthy public discussion paper should be about and it’s a solid starting point for Australians to familiarise themselves with the issues involved in becoming a republic with a Head of State that they elect.”

Mr Quinn warned that it was not only voters who should start discussing a republic.

“State and territory governments need to put the republic on their agenda now so that if a future referendum passes, there is no delay in them delivering the necessary responses which could include their own state-based referendums to accommodate the changes at the national level,” he said.

Mr Muir said the Real Republic Australia, formed by former Brisbane Lord Mayor, the late Clem Jones, and others following the failed referendum had always advocated for a genuine directly elected Head of State.

“We firmly believe Australians don’t want politicians picking their Head of State for them, and they don’t want politicians handing them a shortlist of candidates as the Australian Republic Movement proposes,” he said.

“That is not a direct election. The ARM model is a turbocharged ‘politicians’ republic’ that injects into the process every single politician in the country in every federal, state, and territory parliament,” Mr Muir said.

He said the discussion paper was available at [realrepublic.au](http://realrepublic.au) and the Real Republic Australia would welcome comments.

“At this stage we are not setting a deadline for comments but will be reporting on feedback through our quarterly newsletter [Constitutional Conversation](#),” he said.

**MEDIA CONTACT:** 0431 101533