



Tuesday 24 January 2023

### AUSTRALIA DAY

The Real Republic Australia says the advent of an Australian republic could provide a new and inclusive national day of celebration.

Chair of the Real Republic Australia, David Muir, said although the group did not actively campaign for a day to replace the existing Australia Day, it recognised growing community sentiment against marking 26 January as a national celebration.

“If Australians decide that an alternative to 26 January is needed, then a day linked to the advent of an Australian republic could provide a suitable alternative,” Mr Muir said.

“The new annual national day could be the date Australia officially transitions to a republic, the date relevant legislation is passed by federal parliament, or the day of any successful republic referendum.

“Becoming a republic involves a decision by all Australian voters and it will mark a new era in our nation’s history – a new era shared by all Australians. So it can provide a focus for inclusive recognition and celebration.”

Mr Muir said the Real Republic Australia’s focus continued to be the advocacy of an Australian republic with a genuine directly elected Head of State.

“We want a genuine directly elected Head of State. We do not support parliamentary appointment of our Head of State, nor do we support the idea of more than 800 federal and state politicians handing down to voters a shortlist of candidates.

“That is not direct election and echoes the ‘politicians’ republic’ model that failed at the 1999 referendum because voters did not want politicians picking their Head of State for them.”

Mr Muir said the Real Republic Australia had released a comprehensive discussion paper – **available at [realrepublic.au](http://realrepublic.au)** – seeking feedback on its model for a republic with a genuine directly elected Head of State.

“Our Head of State should not be chosen for us by a hereditary system and should not be picked for us by politicians. We should choose who is our Head of State through a genuine direct-election model,” he said.

“The discussion paper outlines our ideas but we want to hear the views of others and we especially don’t want regional voices to be drowned out by those in Sydney or Canberra.”

Mr Muir said other Commonwealth countries had become republics to ensure they were truly independent on the world stage – 36 out of 56 member nations were republics – and none had done so out of disrespect for the royal family.

“Our discussion paper puts forward ideas for eligibility criteria, how to limit campaigns and campaign spending, but most importantly it outlines the sort of powers we want to see codified in law or in the Constitution to ensure an elected Head of State is never a rival to the PM,” he said.

“The Republic of Ireland shows how a directly elected Head of State can work comfortably within a Westminster-style parliamentary system and never be a rival to a prime minister leading a cabinet government.”

Mr Muir said the Real Republic Australia also advocated other constitutional reforms including:

- eliminating costly by-elections with a referendum question creating a Senate-style casual vacancy system for the House of Representatives
- four-year, fixed, and synchronised terms for both houses of Federal Parliament to stop prime ministers gaming the system by picking election dates, cutting the number of elections now costing close to \$400 million, and ensuring government mandates were not hostage to Senators elected years earlier
- breaking the constitutional nexus that demanded the lower house was twice the size of the Senate – a reform that if not taken would one day see a lower house of 300 MPs and around 150 Senators
- cutting the number of Senators for each state while retaining two apiece for the NT and ACT, and
- constitutional recognition of local government.

**MEDIA CONTACT:** 0431 101 533