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## TOWNSVILLE HOSTS REAL REPUBLIC MEETING

Townsville has been chosen as the first venue for a series of public meetings pushing for an Australian republic with a directly elected Head of State and other real reforms.

Chair of the Real Republic group, David Muir, said two events had been organised in Townsville for Thursday 22 March 2018 to give locals the best chance to have their say.

“Events have been scheduled at the James Cook University’s Townsville campus during the day and at Rydges Hotel in the CBD in the evening so people can pick which one suits them best to attend,” Mr Muir said.

“We are inviting locals to come and listen and to have their say on an Australian republic with an elected Head of State.

“The Real Republic campaign recognises Australians want real reform and that means a directly elected Australian as our nation’s Head of State.

“They don’t want a Head of State of an Australian republic chosen for them by politicians,” Mr Muir said.

The meetings will be held on Thursday 22 March at:

- 11am — Room 101 Building 17 Faculty of Science and Engineering at JCU
- 7pm — Rydges Hotel, 23 Palmer Street.

“We have chosen Townsville for the first public meeting because the republic issue is one that is relevant to all Australians wherever they live, especially in our regional communities. It is not just an issue for inner-city ‘elites’,” Mr Muir said.

“The Real republic is proposing real reforms — meaningful change and benefits for our nation, not just empty symbolism.”

Mr Muir said the Real Republic also wanted to give a directly elected Head of State a real role in appointing and overseeing anti-corruption and integrity bodies at the federal level.

“At the moment that is left to politicians in the executive government who are in effect appointing Caesar to judge Caesar,” he said.

“This is an appalling state of affairs and is one reason our politicians and our system of government are held in such low repute.”

Mr Muir said a referendum on a republic was a chance to push for other real reforms:

- recognition of Indigenous Australians in our Constitution,

- changes to the Senate including fewer Senators for each state,
- synchronised elections for the lower and upper houses of Federal Parliament,
- applying to the House of Representatives the casual vacancy system now used by the Senate, and
- local government recognition.

“All these possible reforms mean cost savings to taxpayers through fewer politicians, and fewer elections and by-elections,” he said.

Mr Muir said it had been almost 20 years since the 1999 republic referendum which failed to secure a majority of votes in a majority of states as required for Constitutional changes.

“The 1999 referendum that followed the 1998 Constitutional Convention failed because an unacceptable model was rejected by Australian voters,” he said.

“Australians clearly wanted a say in who would be their Head of State, and they still do.

“But at the November 1999 referendum they were asked only if they backed what was a politicians’ version of a republic, with the Federal Parliament saying who it would be, and giving any Prime Minister the power to get rid of them.

“The Real Republic supports real reform and that means a directly elected Head of State.”

Mr Muir said the Real Republic organisation — established after the last Constitutional Convention by former Brisbane Lord Mayor, the late Clem Jones, and advocates of a directly elected head of State — was supported by the Clem Jones Group.

“Clem’s track record in local government and his belief in talking to people at the grassroots level is another reason our first meeting is in regional Queensland,” he said.

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