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COSTELLO TAKES THE EASY WAY OUT

Former federal treasurer Peter Costello's pessimistic view on the prospects of an Australian republic relies entirely on a do-nothing approach by our political leaders, according to the chair of the Real Republic Australia, David Muir.

Mr Muir said the Real Republic Australia wanted the republic question considered as part of a wider package of Constitutional reforms to deliver cost savings and more stable government.

"Mr Costello has embraced a self-fulfilling prophecy by waving the white flag before putting any effort into arguing the case for a republic as part of wider Constitutional reform," Mr Muir said.

"His comments suggest Australians should have supported the second-rate model for a republic that emerged from the 1998 Constitutional Convention only to be understandably rejected at the 1999 referendum.

"As a delegate to that convention I knew that Australians wanted a directly elected head of state and that the model put before Australian voters that emerged from the convention gave Prime Minister John Howard the best chance of defeating a republic.

"It is wrong for Mr Costello to lay the blame for that at the feet of people who opposed the model when it was the model itself that was wrong.

"Mr Costello's claim that a republic will not eventuate will be true only if our political leaders continue to do nothing to revamp our Constitution.

"This is an issue that requires true leadership. There will always be varying views on a republic and on the model for a republic.

"It is up to our political leaders to set out a plan for debating the issues involved, consulting Australians, enabling them to settle on a model and then a referendum — and not just for a republic but for other reforms to our Constitution that can deliver real benefits.

"In the past 25 years only Paul Keating used his position as our nation's leader to initiate and shape the debate. Every person who followed him as prime minister — including supposed vehement republican Malcolm Turnbull — did nothing to advance the debate.

"Rather than throw up his hands and say a republic will never happen, Mr Costello could be contributing his knowledge and experience to an informed public debate on a republic as part of a package of reforms to update our Constitution.

“Mr Costello’s current view seems to be a recipe for making our Constitution even more moribund.”

The Real Republic Australia supports a republic with a directly head of state as well as other basic Constitutional changes to benefit Australians, including:

- investing in our elected head of state the role of appointing and overseeing those responsible for integrity and anti-corruption agencies at the federal level;
- recognition of indigenous Australians,
- parliamentary reforms to deliver greater stability through cutting Senate numbers for each state from 12 to the original six while maintaining two for each Territory;
- implementing synchronised, fixed, four-year terms for both Houses of Parliament to ensure voter mandates are reflected in both Houses; and
- adopting a casual vacancy system for the House of Representatives to deliver greater stability and cut costs to taxpayers; and
- recognition of local government.

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The Real Republic Australia is supported by the Clem Jones Group which carries on the work of Brisbane’s longest-serving Lord Mayor, businessman, community worker, and philanthropist, Dr Clem Jones, who was a delegate to both the 1975 and 1998 Constitutional Conventions. Dr Jones died in December 2007 and in his will he expressed his wish for a national campaign for a republic based on his preferred model of a directly elected head of state. The Real Republic Australia continues his campaign.