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STATEMENT BY DAVID MUIR, CHAIR OF THE REAL REPUBLIC AUSTRALIA

GENUINE DIRECT-ELECTION MODEL IS THE KEY

The [Real Republic Australia](#) continues to support a genuine direct-election model for choosing the Head of State of an Australian republic, says chair David Muir.

In the pro-republic group's latest quarterly newsletter *Constitutional Conversation*, Mr Muir said history showed that any model resembling a "politicians' republic" would be rejected at a future referendum as it was in November 1999.

He said the Real Republic Australia's discussion paper to be released next week would outline the major elements of an Australian republic with a genuine directly elected Head of State.

"The Real Republic Australia has always advocated for an Australian to be directly elected by voters as Australia's Head of State," Mr Muir said.

"We do not support the concept of politicians picking a Head of State for us. We do not support the idea of politicians handing down to voters a shortlist of candidates. That simply isn't direct election."

Mr Muir said the Australian Republic Movement's latest model adopted such an approach which echoed the failed "politicians' republic" that emerged from the 1998 Constitutional Convention held in Canberra to which he was an elected Queensland delegate on the team led by former Brisbane Lord Mayor, the late Clem Jones.

Mr Muir said the 10-day Convention spent too long on a pointless republic-versus-monarchy debate and not enough time devising a model that had the best chance of success at the 1999 referendum.

In addition, the final model put to the referendum had not commanded majority support even among the 152 elected and appointed delegates to the Constitutional Convention:

- 73 "yes" votes
- 57 "no", and
- 22 delegates abstaining.

Mr Muir said opinion polls at the time pointed to the model's defeat.

"Historical [Newspoll figures](#) show that even immediately before the November 1999 referendum, the model to be put to voters – parliamentary selection of a Head of State – had less than half the level of support recorded for keeping the current system," he said.

"Direct election had around 50% voter support compared with just 14% to 15% for the type of 'politicians' republic' rejected in 1999.

"Significantly, support for directly electing a Head of State was still far ahead of other options in polling three years later in November 2002.

"The 2002 Newspoll figures also show that when those who were opposed or uncommitted to a republic were faced with the hypothetical inevitability of a republic, they opted by a huge majority for a directly elected Head of State – 79% compared with 18% for the 'politicians' republic'.

"This suggests that even constitutional monarchists will back a directly elected Head of State if the alternative is politicians picking one for them."

Mr Muir said the "politicians' republic" model failed in 1999 when it involved MPs sitting in the Federal Parliament making a choice instead of voters.

"The ARM's model is a 'politicians' republic' that has been turbo-charged by widening the involvement of politicians in picking a Head of State to include every MP in every federal, state, and territory parliament," he said.

"We must remember the lessons of history which shows that such a model will not gain sufficient support to pass at a referendum. A direct election model – a genuine direct election model – has the best chance."

Mr Muir said the Real Republic Australia would next week release its discussion paper outlining its model for a republic with a genuine directly elected Head of State.

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