

Constitutional Conversation

SPECIAL EDITION

No.14 — AUTUMN EXTRA 2023



OUR KEY POINTS OF DIFFERENCE



Coronation provides a stark contrast

The coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla has come and gone, and he remains Australia's Head of State.

The lead-up to the event and the days that followed provided several examples of where the Real Republic Australia and the Australian Republic Movement (ARM) diverge on issues such as our respective republic models, our attitudes to the British royal family, and the way we conduct our respective advocacy campaigns.

It is timely then for us to set out on the following pages just how we each agree or disagree on key elements of the republic campaign.

That is why we have decided to take the unusual step of publishing this special edition of our usually quarterly newsletter so soon after the release of our autumn edition just prior to the coronation.

We do so because we are genuinely concerned that the tactics and approach being adopted by the ARM may do more harm than good to what is meant to be our

By **DAVID MUIR AM**
Chair 



common goal of achieving an Australian as Australia's Head of State.

For example, we see no benefit for the Australian republican cause in denigrating any member of the British royal family.

'We see no benefit for the Australian republican cause in denigrating any member of the British royal family'



The Real Republic Australia has never indulged in personal or disrespectful attacks or stunts aimed at the royal family.

We will continue to maintain that position

because we firmly believe that most Australians want to see a republic campaign that is factual, respectful, and informative.

Most importantly, we will continue to focus on fostering discussion about the model we offer – a genuine direct election model which we maintain is the only model with the best chance of success at a referendum.

As I have personally advised the ARM, its performance during coronation did nothing to advance that key element of the long campaign we have ahead of us if a republic referendum is to be held in the next term of Federal Parliament.

As the last and failed republic referendum held in November 1999 proved, if the right model is not on the ballot paper the referendum is lost even before polling day arrives.

Preferencing cheap stunts or attacks on the royals means forsaking opportunities to promote substantive issues.

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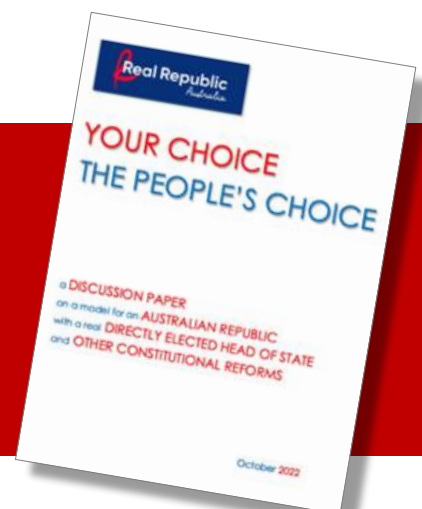
TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

The Real Republic Australia has published a comprehensive discussion paper – *Your Choice, The People's Choice*.

It outlines our ideas for how to achieve a genuine directly elected Head of State.

Download a copy from realrepublic.au and read our suggested plan.

Then tell us what you think.





Two very distinctive approaches

FROM FRONT PAGE:

At this stage we have no firm idea of how the Prime Minister Anthony Albanese (if re-elected) will progress the republic issue to a referendum in his potential second term.

We have no firm idea if Peter Dutton – who has said he is a constitutional monarchist – would match the PM’s promise and hold a referendum if he gains office in 2025.

What we do know is that voters need to be comfortable and familiar with the model being offered to them at any future republic referendum.

And while we also recognise that public attention right now

is, quite rightly, on the debate over a voice to parliament for First Nations, we feel that we should still engage on the republic issue because there are many questions voters have that should be answered.

The sooner they are answered the better.

That’s why we feel it is vital right now to focus on informing and consulting Australians and to seek their ideas through our detailed discussion paper, our equally comprehensive “roadmap” for achieving other constitutional reforms, and other avenues such as newsletters like this.

We feel it is time and effort we need to invest now rather than indulging in pranks and ongoing



Albanese and Dutton ... approaches to republic referendum unknown

While we have sought feedback on our model the ARM appears to assume its model is a fait accompli.

We can only suggest that the ARM focusses less on attacking the royal family and more on consulting voters to explain to them its problematic model instead of assuming it will be the one put to a referendum.

I trust you enjoy reading this special extra edition of our *Constitutional Conversation* newsletter and I hope you find it informative.

Following this special edition, the #15 winter edition of our quarterly newsletter will appear as usual in coming months.

negative commentary about the members of the British royal family from King Charles down.

As you will see below the Real Republic Australia does not back the ARM’s model for choosing a Head of State because we feel it closely echoes the so-called “politicians’ republic” that was unequivocally rejected in 1999.

How we compare:

Below and on following pages are some key issues involved in the public debate leading up to a republic referendum and explanations of how the Real Republic Australia’s position on each aligns with or departs from that of the Australian Republic Movement.



AGREE

MAINTAINING THE WESTMINSTER SYSTEM

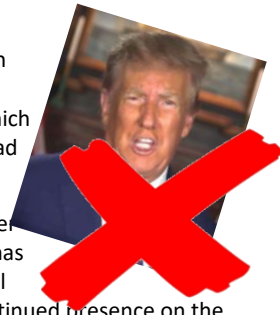
Both the Real Republic Australia and the Australian Republic Movement (ARM) want to see an Australian republic that maintains our current Westminster-style system of government with a prime minister leading a government formed in the lower house of our federal parliament.

No serious or mainstream advocate of an Australian republic is proposing that we change to an America-style system in which the US President is head of state and head of government.

This is an issue that often arises whenever an Australian republic is discussed, and has arisen more often since the controversial presidency of Donald Trump and his continued presence on the political stage.

The Republic of Ireland proves that an elected head of state can work successfully within the Westminster system.

The President of Ireland, currently Michael Higgins who is serving



his second and final term, has powers that are clearly codified in the nation’s constitution.

That ensures that the President is never a rival source of power to the Prime Minister who leads a cabinet government.

The same can happen here in Australia.

Becoming a republic does not mean that we would abandon the Westminster system and certainly does not mean that we would embrace the US system of government.

Our background note (right) on the Irish system is available to read or download from the Real Republic Australia website.





AGREE

AN AUSTRALIAN AS AUSTRALIA'S HEAD OF STATE

Both the Real Republic Australia and the Australian Republic Movement wish to see an Australian as Australia's head of state.

Both groups have always maintained that our nation will never be truly independent on the world stage until we are a republic with a head of state who is one of us and not the British monarch as outlined in the current [Australian Constitution](#).

But, as shown below, there are significant differences between us when it comes to how we want to see a head of state chosen, and how we go about campaigning for the constitutional reforms needed to achieve that aim – especially in the style and substance of the arguments we employ in the lead-up to the referendum necessary to make the change.

ATTACKING THE ROYAL FAMILY

DISAGREE

The Real Republic Australia says that the republic debate should never be a platform for attacking the British royal family.

Most Australians — including many republicans — rightfully acknowledged the late Queen Elizabeth's dedicated service over more than 70 years. She was regarded with great respect and affection as a person and as our constitutional head of state.

But that has never meant we shouldn't pursue an Australian republic. It has never meant that our advocacy of a republic is a sign of disrespect to the royal family. It isn't – unless we choose to use disrespectful tactics as the ARM has done during the recent coronation period.

King Charles is currently our head of state under the terms of the Australian Constitution and he is entitled to be respected.

Once again, that respect does not prevent us from advocating for a republic but we should always do so in a reasoned, factual, and respectful way. Anything less risks alienating potential republic supporters, especially current supporters of the constitutional monarchy who may be open to persuasion.



We have a long campaign ahead of us to convince Australians to support a republic. The bar is set very high for changes to our Constitution and we should not waste our energies on trivial personal attacks on the royal family.

Importantly, the royal family knows that the debate is not about them. The late Queen Elizabeth, the Duke of Edinburgh, and King Charles as Prince of Wales all expressed the view that the republic issue is one for us as Australians to decide and that they would respect our decision.

Ours is not an anti-royal family campaign but a positive cause for a truly independent Australia.

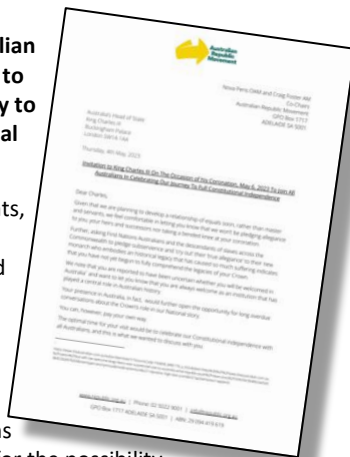
A DISCOURTEOUS LETTER TO KING CHARLES

DISAGREE

During the coronation the Australian Republic Movement sent a letter to the King and took the opportunity to rebuke him for past British colonial injustices.

Writing to kings, queens, presidents, prime ministers, or many other public figures is a tactic often used by individuals or organisations to attract attention and publicity for their cause.

But in the case of the republic campaign – and given the concerns the Real Republic Australia holds for the possibility that ARM tactics will alienate potential supporters – we suggest the discourteous tone of the letter was at the very least ill-judged.



The letter included demands of the King for recompense to indigenous Australians for past colonial era injustices, and "reparations for historical wrongs committed by the Crown and the return of cultural artefacts and ancestral remains".

The Real Republic Australia acknowledges the seriousness of such matters and the very real emotions they spark in many people.

However, we do not believe such issues should be conflated with the republic debate, especially since a truth-telling process has been foreshadowed as part of the implementation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

The republic debate is complex enough without broadening the front on which we must fight. Once again the ARM risks losing supporters for the republic cause.

The Real Republic Australia itself has outlined several potential reforms other than a republic which we would like to see considered for future referendums.

But our suggestions are all related directly to potential constitutional changes that we believe would deliver real benefits to Australians and our nation's governance.

An information booklet outlining the other beneficial reforms to our political system we propose is available on our website.

OUR IDEAS FOR OTHER REFORMS

Real Republic Australia

THE ULURU STATEMENT

The Real Republic Australia booklet is available on our website. It outlines several potential reforms other than a republic which we would like to see considered for future referendums. It also includes a list of other potential reforms to our political system.



Our key points of difference

DISCOURAGING ROYAL VISITS

DISAGREE

In its letter to King Charles the Australian Republic Movement also informed him that it did not want Australians to foot the bill for any future royal tours. The ARM also issued a news statement to the same effect.

While such cheap shots may gain media attention they do nothing to advance the republic debate in a meaningful way and, once again, risk alienating potential republic supporters.

The Real Republic Australia believes the sign of a mature, confident, and truly independent nation would be for Australia as a republic to continue welcoming visits by British royals just as we now welcome visits by members of other royal households around the world.

We see no reason to try to ban or discourage our legitimate constitutional head of state from visiting before we are a republic.

We see no reason to try to ban or discourage him from visiting after we are a republic.

The ARM appears not to have thought through its position.

Does it also wish to withdraw funding for the travel of our Governor-General and state Governors as the monarch's representatives?

A prohibition on official visits and tours by British royalty, when applied equitably, would also ban or deter royal visits from other nations – Japan, Spain, Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, Tonga, Malaysia and others. Presumably even Australian-born Princess Mary of Denmark (*pictured*) who was here just weeks ago would no longer be welcome.



DISAGREE

A "POLITICIANS' REPUBLIC" REVISITED

The Real Republic Australia and the Australian Republic Movement part ways on the different models we have proposed for choosing a head of state in an Australian republic.

The Real Republic Australia advocates for a republic with a genuine directly elected head of state.

We do not support the appointment of our head of state by politicians or parliaments.

We also do not support politicians handing down to voters a list of approved candidates from which they can take their pick as the ARM proposes. That is not a genuine direct election.

The 1999 referendum failed because the wrong republic model was put to voters – one labelled a "politicians' republic" since it involved the appointment by federal parliament of our head of state.

When history shows beyond doubt that voters will not accept "a politicians' republic" the ARM suggests a model involving not just federal politicians but every politician in every state and territory.

It involves more than 800 politicians picking 11 candidates – one from each state and territory and three picked by the federal parliament – who are then presented to voters for their choice.

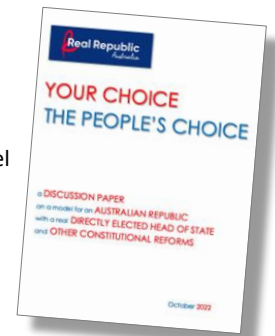
Again, that is not a genuine direct election and it appears even more

problematic than the one rejected by voters in 1999.

Under our genuine direct-election model nobody – especially politicians – stands between voters and those who seek election as head of state after meeting the type of eligibility criteria we suggest in our discussion paper outlining how we see our model working.

We have also released a "roadmap" showing how we can ensure voters are involved in the process of becoming a republic and in any future constitutional reforms.

Read more in [our discussion paper](#) *Your Choice/The People's Choice* and in our ["roadmap" for reform](#).



For more information visit realrepublic.au

Our newsletter

Constitutional Conversation is published by the Real Republic Australia to promote debate about potential changes to the Australian Constitution including a republic with a directly elected Head of State.

The Real Republic Australia was founded by Brisbane's longest-serving Lord Mayor, the late Clem Jones (1918-2007) who led a team of Queensland delegates to the Constitutional Convention held in Canberra in February 1998.

They and delegates from other states believed that only a model for a directly elected Head of State would be approved by voters at a republic referendum.

Unfortunately, the failed 1999 republic referendum proved them correct. In line with his wishes, the Real Republic Australia continues to campaign for a republic based on the direct-election model supported by



Clem Jones



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