

REPUBLIC CAMPAIGN STEPS UP

Discussion paper is key

By **DAVID MUIR AM**
Chair 



Queen Elizabeth II in Brisbane with Lord Mayor Clem Jones during her 1970 royal tour

The death of Queen Elizabeth II has, as expected, raised the issue of the prospects for Australia becoming a republic.

The Real Republic Australia never subscribed to the view that we needed to wait until the Queen's reign ended to start the discussion.

Our logic was simple. The debate has never been about the late Queen nor any single member of the royal family. Before Her Majesty's death, now, and in the future a public debate on a republic should never be seen as a slight or insult to the British monarch and our current Head of State, now King Charles III.

In coming weeks we will release our discussion paper outlining our model for a republic with a genuine directly elected Head of State. Providing a discussion paper as a focal point for debate and feedback has always been our plan.

Our campaign continues because we believe that an Australian should be Australia's Head of State.

We further believe that Australians should be free to choose that person through our democratic process.

The debate is and always has been about what we as Australians want for the future of our nation.

Many republic supporters, myself included, were great admirers of the late Queen.

One of the founders of the Real Republic Australia, former Lord Mayor of Brisbane, the late Clem Jones, was also a great fan of the Queen.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE:

Politicians' pick isn't direct election

The Real Republic Australia's forthcoming discussion paper will 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.

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.

The Australian Republic Movement's latest model adopts such an approach which echoes the failed "politicians' republic" that emerged from the 1998 Constitutional Convention held in Canberra.

The 10-day Convention spent far too long on a pointless republic-versus-monarchy debate instead of focussing its energies on devising a model that had the best chance of success at a referendum.

The final model did not command majority support even among the 152 elected and appointed delegates to the Constitutional Convention:

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

When the model was put to the November 1999 republic referendum it was soundly rejected by voters.

Opinion polls help explain the defeat.

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Opposition Leader says he's opposed



Peter Dutton

Federal Opposition Leader and leader of the Liberal Party, Peter Dutton, has made it clear that he does not support an Australian republic.

In a [radio interview](#) after the death of Queen Elizabeth II, Mr Dutton attacked suggestions by the Albanese Government that the image of King Charles III may not replace that of the late Queen's on \$5 notes.

Mr Dutton criticised the leader of the Greens,

Adam Bandt, for allegedly being quick to "eke out some political advantage from the Queen's death".

Mr Dutton also said: "I don't agree with a republic and frankly, I think, what we're seeing at the moment highlights the stability, the transition, that you get in a monarchy, and it's hard to imagine how that would happen if we were a republic."

It is not clear if Mr Dutton was expressing

a personal view or his Liberal Party's policy on the republic and its position on a future referendum.

The Real Republic Australia has held briefings with a number of Liberal Party MPs who support an Australian republic, but not necessarily the model for a directly elected Head of State.

Direct election must mean direct election

FROM FRONT PAGE:

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.

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 (*at right*) 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 monarchists will back a directly elected Head of State if the alternative is politicians picking one for them.

A "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"

involvement of politicians in picking a Head of State to include every MP in every federal, state, and territory parliament.

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.

DAVID MUIR

POLL DATA FROM NEWSPOLL and THE AUSTRALIAN

PREFERENCES FOR A REPUBLIC IF AUSTRALIA DECIDED TO BECOME A REPUBLIC	
QUESTION ASKED OF THOSE CHOOSING 'NOT CHANGE ANYTHING' OR 'UNCOMMITTED': And if Australians decided that Australia should become a republic, would you prefer to change to a republic with a president directly elected by the people or, a president appointed by parliament?	
President directly elected by the people	79
President appointed by parliament	18
Uncommitted	3

From Newspoll based on interviews with 1,200 voters across Australia on 1-3 November 2002

Discussion paper outlines our ideas. What are yours?

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE:

They had a tremendous rapport and I know Clem always looked forward to her visits to the City of Brisbane.

The Queen's historically long reign spanned more than seven decades and straddled two centuries during which the world changed dramatically and during which she fulfilled the roles and duties demanded of her with dignity, grace, and strength – and with no complaint.

It is right that Australians should recognise her service to our nation and as head of the Commonwealth, the many times she visited our shores, and the manner in which she accepted the transition of what is now a majority of its member states to republics.

We respected the Queen as the British monarch and as our Head of State under our current constitutional arrangements. We do the same now that King Charles III has assumed the throne.

It was always the view of the Real Republic Australia that we should be respectful of Her Majesty and we have never viewed the republic debate as a vehicle to criticise her or others in the British royal family.

Queen Elizabeth herself recognised that the republic debate was for Australians to have and that she would respect whatever decision we made. That is also the attitude of King Charles.

The aftermath of the Queen's death has seen strident protests

against the monarchy by some Australians, which is their right.

We think that some of the issues sparking such protests, for instance opposition to the current Australia Day on 26 January, can be addressed once we become a republic.

We do not join in any of the campaigns aiming to change our national day – viewing it as a separate issue – we do believe that the day on which we do become a republic could be set as a new day for national celebration and recognition.

It can be a day that unites, not divides, Australians.

The Real Republic Australia will in the coming months and years continue to advocate for a republic and to help inform

Australians in preparation for a future referendum.

Our next step will be to release a discussion paper outlining our model for a republic with a genuine directly elected Head of State. We will be setting out our ideas and looking for feedback and ideas as we engage with our fellow Australians.

Our advocacy will always be based on facts and we will continue to show respect for the monarch as our current Head of State and the British royal family.

Once released our discussion paper will be emailed to those on the mailing list for our quarterly newsletter.



Meetings with decision-maker

Representatives of the Real Republic Australia have recently twice met Assistant Minister for the Republic, Matt Thistlethwaite, while he was visiting Brisbane.

The meetings canvassed many of the key issues associated with plans for an Australian republic, especially the need for public discussion to start well ahead of any republic referendum.

The Real Republic Australia agrees with the government's decision to prioritise and progress overdue constitutional recognition of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

But we back Mr Thistlethwaite's view that discussion of the republic should start now so that voters have the information they need and a solid understanding of the issues involved before a referendum is held.

We also agree with his idea of a plebiscite prior



David Muir with Assistant Minister for the Republic, Matt Thistlethwaite

to a referendum to identify a model with the best chance of being supported by voters.

Mr Thistlethwaite agreed that having the right model put to voters would be crucial to the success of any referendum.

He said he looked forward to reading the Real Republic Australia's soon-to-be-released discussion paper on our model for a genuinely directly elected Head of State when it is released for public feedback.

The Real Republic Australia thanks Mr Thistlethwaite for his time and looks forward to continue working with him.

CWA motto wording may be throne out

The NSW branch of the Country Women's Association is reportedly asking members for their views on the lobby group's motto and whether to keep references to the monarchy.

[A story in The Guardian Australia](#) said the NSW branch conference earlier this year had initiated a review and a survey had been emailed to members across the state.



Howard rejects monarchists' bogus claim

Former prime minister and ardent backer of the current constitutional monarchy, John Howard, has rebutted an argument often used by opponents of an Australian republic.

Professor David Flint and other monarchists regularly [make the claim](#) that the British monarch is Australia's "Sovereign" and that the Governor-General is our "Head of State". They say that because all Governors-General since the mid-1960s have been Australian, there is no need to change the Constitution to satisfy republicans' calls for an Australian to be our Head of State.

It is the argument that Mr Howard flatly rejected in a recent article by Troy Bramston in *The Australian* newspaper. Mr Bramston has previously debunked the Flint-style argument, noting in a story in *The Australian* on [18 January this year](#) about the correspondence between various Governors-General and the late Queen Elizabeth II's advisers:

When Sir David Smith, the former official secretary at Government House, argued the governor-general was actually head of state, Buckingham Palace made it clear in January 1999 that this argument, often propagated by monarchists, was nonsense and the Queen was indeed Australia's head of state.



John Howard and Sir David Smith
Photo: AAP

Its distribution coincided with the death of Queen Elizabeth but had been under way prior to the news breaking.

The CWA is this year marking its centenary.

NSW members are being asked for their views on the current motto: "Honour to God. Loyalty to the throne. Service to the country. Through country women. For country women. By country women."

In particular they are being asked if they believe references to God and the monarchy should remain.

The Guardian Australia story said the CWA in NSW had about 8,000 members across 370 local branches.

The conference motion seeking to review the motto referenced previous unsuccessful efforts, saying in part: "It is clear from unsuccessful conference motions relating to the motto over the past 20 years, that a significant number of members would like to modernise the motto."

A Canadian republic – a complex concept

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau believes Canadians are not focussed at the moment on the constitutional "complexities" of changing from a constitutional monarchy to a republic.

[Speaking to the BBC](#) when in London for Queen Elizabeth II's funeral, Mr Trudeau said he did not believe Canada would become a republic in the near future. The BBC reported him as saying that "complexities" of changing from a constitutional monarchy were not what "Canadians are overly taken up with right now".

Under the Canadian [Constitution](#) a change to a

republic demands "unanimous consent" – the agreement of both the Canadian Parliament's House of Commons and Senate as well as the unanimous consent of all 10 provinces.



Justin Trudeau

MORE ON PAGE 9

National Party leader supports recognition of local government

While the Albanese Government has already outlined plans for two constitutional referendums, National Party leader David Littleproud has put a third issue on the public agenda.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese wants to hold a referendum in the current parliamentary term to establish a First Nations voice to the Federal Parliament and plans a referendum on Australia's transition to a republic if he is elected for a second term.

Mr Littleproud has [outlined his support](#) for constitutional recognition of local government which would require a third referendum.

His comments were framed as an initiative aimed at updating Australia's federal system by reducing inefficiencies between its three levels of government and improving service delivery.

Recognition of local government by a referendum to amend



'If the federation is becoming dysfunctional, it needs to be changed. We can fix it by working together'

DAVID LITTLEPROUD
Leader of the National Party

[Section 96](#) of the Australian Constitution would clarify existing uncertainty about direct federal funding of local government programs.

But Mr Littleproud went further, saying he viewed constitutional recognition of local government

as a step in overhauling relations among the three levels of government in Australia and ending the blame game played by states and councils who regularly claim the federal government was not delivering sufficient funds to them.

"States and territories of all political persuasions will tell the media and anyone else who wants to hear that the commonwealth isn't giving them 'their fair share' for hospitals, roads or some other problem," he said.

"It is a tool for politicians to make excuses, instead of finding solutions for the people of Australia.

"It has become lazy and unproductive and frankly we can do better.

"If the Federation is becoming dysfunctional, it needs to be changed. We can fix it by working together," he said.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS WENT NOWHERE

A key argument in favour of the explicit recognition of local government in the Australian Constitution has been the need to remove uncertainty over the legality of direct federal funding of local government, meaning more efficient administration.

The most recent plans to amend [Section 96 of the Constitution](#) were designed to remove the uncertainty which now exists under the Constitution about the legitimacy of direct funding of major local government programs such as Roads to Recovery.

Voters have [twice rejected questions](#) on the status of local government and its relationship with the federal government – in 1974 and 1988 – and a more recent attempt to hold a third referendum did not come to fruition.

Labor Party government of Julia Gillard [planned a referendum on the issue](#) in conjunction with a previously announced federal election on 14 September 2013.

The [Constitution Alteration \(Local Government Bill\) 2013](#) was passed by Federal Parliament on 24 June 2013 which triggered the mandatory provisions for holding a referendum no sooner than two months and no later than six months after a proposal has been passed.

But Kevin Rudd deposed Gillard just days later and on 4 August called an election for 7 September which meant the mandated time frames for holding the referendum on polling day could not be met.

The local government sector has [expressed support](#) for revisiting the issue.

A-G on the record backing reform

Current and former federal Attorney-General, Mark Dreyfus, is a longstanding supporter of constitutional recognition of local government.

As Attorney-General in the Gillard Government, Mr Dreyfus [introduced legislation](#) designed to implement recognition through a referendum which ultimately was overtaken by political events. (See box at right)

Nevertheless, at the time he described the initiative as being aimed at delivering a "modest and common sense change to our Constitution".

"Local government would be recognised in the Constitution by inclusion of an express statement that the Commonwealth can grant financial assistance to local government," Mr Dreyfus said when speaking to the Bill in federal Parliament.

"This would include assistance for community and other services.

"Through this proposed alteration, the government and this parliament will ask the Australian people to support a change to our Constitution so that the existing practice of federal government support for local communities is formally recognised in our Constitution.

"Local governments play an increasingly important role in Australian government relations and our daily lives.

"The fact they receive no constitutional mention, and that there is no express provision for local government bodies to receive financial assistance directly from the Commonwealth, is increasingly difficult to reconcile with the very document guiding government scope and powers."

At the time Mr Dreyfus said the change to the Constitution would include the addition of the words "or local government body formed by a law of a state" to Section 96 which already referenced federal powers to "grant financial assistance to any State".

The Real Republic Australia has consistently supported constitutional recognition of local government.



Mark Dreyfus



An evolving global organisation

Former forum for ex-colonies now crucial to new King

King Charles III appears set to embrace the paradox of striving to retain relevance for the British royal family by seizing upon his role as the new head of the Commonwealth of Nations – an organisation whose membership is being increasingly dominated by an expanding list of republics.

Britain’s new monarch and Australia’s new Head of State will take over as head of the Commonwealth – succeeding his mother, the late Queen Elizabeth II.

Although the British monarch has no entitlement to the position, in a clever manoeuvre in 2018 the Queen sought and received the agreement of member states [to fulfill her wish](#) that her son would take on the role.

Her Majesty obviously realised that the British monarchy needs the Commonwealth more than it needs them, as evidenced by the volume of nations within the group that are republics – 36 out of a total of 56.

Only 15 members, including Australia, retain the British monarch as their Head of State. The remaining five members have their own monarchies.

Two of those are in Africa – Lesotho and Eswatini (formerly Swaziland) and the map at right shows the remaining 19 member states that are republics.

The newest Commonwealth members – the African nations of Gabon and Togo – also epitomise its changing nature.

Their memberships were approved at the June 2022 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in Rwanda. Both are republics and neither Gabon nor Togo was a former British colony. Both were former French colonies which became independent in 1960.

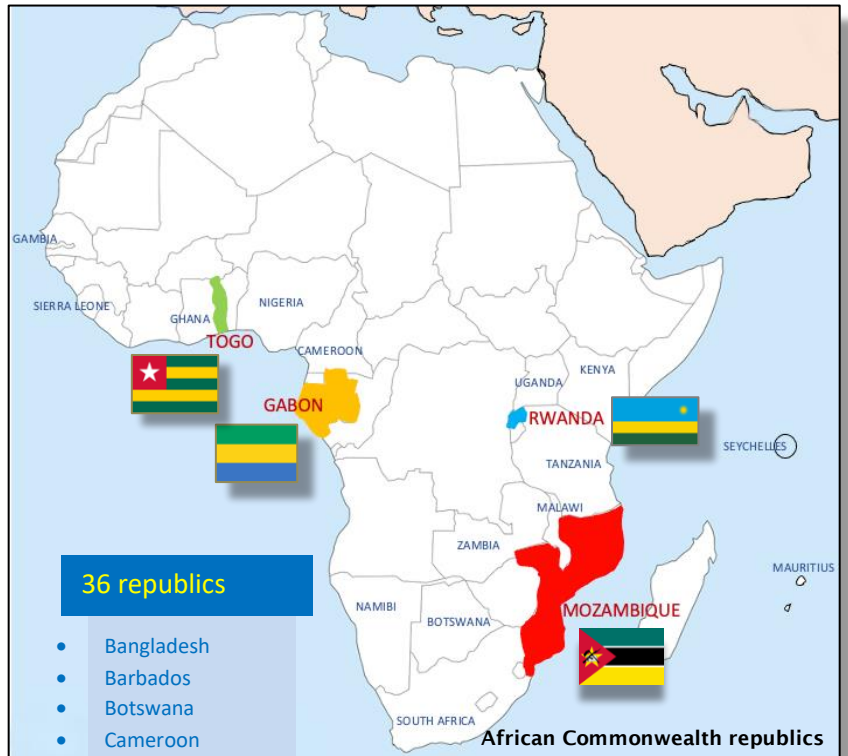
Rwanda itself is a former Belgian territory and a republic. It became a Commonwealth member in 2009. The east African nation of Mozambique which joined in 1995 is a former Portuguese colony and another republic.

But it is the Caribbean where pro-republic sentiment appears strongest right now, largely as a result of a desire to leave behind any formal connections with a Britain whose colonial history in the region has always provoked strong emotions. The Caribbean nation of Mauritius was the last Commonwealth member to become a republic in 1992 but more recently Barbados made the move effective from November last year and more are contemplating a similar transition.

National leaders there are unafraid of promoting a shift to a republic and earlier this year Jamaica’s Prime Minister Andrew Holness was upfront enough to publicly advise then Duke and Duchess of Cambridge on their royal tour that his nation was “moving on”.

The Real Republic Australia believes that our nation, like other member states before us, should remain a committed member of the Commonwealth once we become a republic.

Lindsay Marshall



36 republics

- Bangladesh
- Barbados
- Botswana
- Cameroon
- Cyprus
- Dominica
- Fiji
- Gabon
- Gambia
- Ghana
- Guyana
- India
- Kenya
- Kiribati
- Malawi
- Maldives
- Malta
- Mauritius
- Mozambique
- Nauru
- Namibia
- Nigeria
- Pakistan
- Rwanda
- Samoa
- Seychelles
- Sierra Leone
- Singapore
- South Africa
- Sri Lanka
- Tanzania
- Togo
- Trinidad and Tobago
- Uganda
- Vanuatu
- Zambia

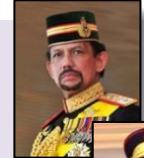
THE MODERN COMMONWEALTH



King Charles III

15 constitutional monarchies

- Antigua and Barbuda
- Australia
- Bahamas
- Belize
- Canada
- Grenada
- Jamaica
- New Zealand
- Papua New Guinea
- Saint Kitts and Nevis
- Saint Lucia
- Saint Vincent and The Grenadines
- Solomon Islands
- Tuvalu
- United Kingdom



Sultan of Brunei



King Mswati III of Eswatini



King Letsie II of Lesotho



King of Malaysia



King of Tonga

5 non-British monarchies

- Brunei Darussalam
- Kingdom of Eswatini (formerly Swaziland)
- Lesotho
- Malaysia
- Tonga



Caribbean nations embrace the republic debate

Caribbean member states of the Commonwealth are showing a willingness to debate and embrace the transition to a republic.

The trend was confirmed by the Prime Minister Gaston Browne of the island nation of Antigua and Barbuda who has outlined plans to hold a referendum to abandon its current constitutional monarchy.

After the death of the Queen, the Prime Minister of The Bahamas, Phillip Davis, also [spoke about his nation becoming a republic](#), saying he would hold a referendum on the issue.



It's about complete independence

In foreshadowing plans for referendum on his nation becoming a republic, the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Gaston Browne (*above*) explained the move was not a negative attack on the British monarchy, but a positive step towards become truly independent.

He [told ITV News](#): "This is a matter that has to be taken to a referendum for the people to decide.

"It does not represent any form of disrespect to the monarch.

"This is not an act of hostility, or any difference between Antigua and Barbuda and the monarchy. It is a final step to complete the circle of independence to become a truly sovereign nation."

Mr Browne, leader of the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party, won office in 2014.

He is widely expected to be re-elected next year, and if he does he plans to hold a republic referendum within his next term of office.

Speaking after a formal ceremony to confirm King Charles II as the nation's Head of State following the death of Queen Elizabeth, Mr Browne said the advent of a republic would be part of the country's natural progression. (*Story at right*)



Then Prince of Wales addresses the President of Barbados. Sandra Mason

Barbados was the latest Caribbean nation to move away from the system of constitutional monarchy under a British monarch to become a republic.

The then Prince Charles, now King Charles III, attended the transition ceremony in November 2021 representing the then Head of State, Queen Elizabeth II.

"The only challenge with us moving to a republic is that I can't, as much as I would wish to do it, I cannot do it without [voter] consent," he said. "I will have a referendum and the Bahamian people will have to say to me, 'yes'."

Ambassador foreshadows exodus from constitutional monarchy

In January of this year Antigua and Barbuda's ambassador to the USA, Sir Ronald Sanders, [predicted](#) all 12 Commonwealth member states in the Caribbean would be republics by 2030.

Sir Robert said by then the eight remaining constitutional monarchies would have joined the existing four republics. (*See next page*)

But he also warned that a bipartisan approach would be the key to any changes.

"In those countries that have converted to republican status with non-executive presidents, the role of the president is no different in substance to the

duties performed by a governor-general," Sir Robert said.

"The simple but fundamental difference is that the Head of State is not a person living in a distant land and who is not participating in the daily concerns of the society.

"The further important difference is that the Head of State is not also the hereditary sovereign of Britain, the country that exercised colonial control for centuries.

"The anachronism of the sovereign of Britain also being the sovereign of Caribbean states has long been recognised in the region.

Sir Robert said a pivotal issue was the requirement of the constitutions

of each of the eight remaining nations with a constitutional monarchies for a referendum to bring about a republic.

He said unless consensus was secured among all parties in each nation, a republic referendum may be a forum for political dispute.



Sir Robert Sanders

"The course open to the prime ministers of the eight monarchical states was to start discussions with the leaders of all political parties in each of their states to agree on the transition to republican status and the type of presidency they want – ceremonial or executive."

Sir Robert said the prime ministers would also need to reach broad agreement among party leaders on consequential changes that would have to be made to their existing constitutions with all changes outlined and being published in a memorandum of understanding.

A follow-up step would be to hold "town hall" meetings or other forms of consultation with voters.



The Caribbean:

There are currently 12 former British colonies in the Caribbean that are members of the Commonwealth.

While all 12 have gained independence from Britain, most remain constitutional monarchies and, like Australia, have the British monarch, now King Charles III, as their Head of State.

Four of the 12 have already made the move to become a republic, most recently Barbados in November last year.

The tables below show the year they gained independence and, for republics, the year they left the monarchy behind.

CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHIES (Year of independence from Britain)

- Antigua and Barbuda (1981)
- The Bahamas (1973)
- Belize (1981)
- Grenada (1974)
- Jamaica (1962)
- Saint Kitts and Nevis (1983)
- Saint Lucia (1979)
- Saint Vincent and The Grenadines (1979)

REPUBLICS (Independence/change to a republic)

- Barbados (1966/2021)
- Dominica (1978 – republic at independence)
- Guyana (1966/1970)
- Trinidad and Tobago (1962/1976)

Jamaica could be next

There appears to be no moratorium, informal or otherwise, on public discussion of a shift to a republic in the Caribbean nation of Jamaica following the Queen’s death.

Just days following news of Her Majesty’s passing and the ascension of King Charles III one of the island nation’s major news outlets, *The Gleaner*, published an editorial (*below*) urging swifter action by Prime Minister Andrew Holness and his Minister of Legal and Constitutional Affairs, Marlene Malahoo Forte.

The editorial said there already was political consensus and public support for a republic.

It said Jamaica’s political parties had previously agreed on a republic with a president as Head of State in a non-executive, ceremonial role.

The only question remaining was the method for choosing a president – by a minimum two-thirds majority of both houses of the Jamaican Parliament sitting together or separately.

The newspaper said so far Ms Malahoo Forte had been “fuzzy” about a timetable for reform.

Prior to the Queen’s death the Jamaican Opposition Leader Mark Golding had criticised the government’s “lethargic” approach to implementing its plans for a republic as “unacceptable”.

Mr Golding, the leader of the People’s National Party (PNP), [questioned](#) the statements made in June by Ms Malahoo Forte, that the transition process had started.

Speaking last month he said the Prime Minister had [told](#) Prince William during a March royal tour that the nation would become a republic but since then “there has been no movement towards moving on”.

“It is not the case that we don’t know where we are going, and that the ideas have not been fleshed out,” Mr Golding said.



Mark Golding



Andrew Holness

Newspaper urges PM to ‘move quickly’ on republic

This is an edited version of *The Gleaner’s* [editorial](#) published on 11 September 2022.



Even as we mourn her passing as an individual, the death of Queen Elizabeth is another inflection point as Jamaica considers its constitutional future.

It highlights not only the absurdity of the island’s head of state being the sovereign of another country, but that Jamaicans have no say in who gets the job.

So, King Charles III, Britain’s hereditary king, is now Jamaica’s sovereign, without the need for our advice or consent.

So, Jamaican parliamentarians will now swear allegiance to the King, which, with other issues, large and small, underline that

anachronism of this constitutional arrangement that is impatient for overhaul.

None of this, of course, casts aspersions on Charles, who will probably be a fine king of the United Kingdom, or of his late mother, whose 70 years on the throne was a decade longer than Jamaica’s existence, so far, as an independent country.

In fact, there is much to emulate in the Queen. She persevered with stoicism and dignity and a clear sense of duty. Her work ethic was legendary.

The considered assessment of the Queen is that she was good for

Britain and brought value to the UK’s constitutional arrangements.

She has left King Charles a seemingly viable institution, but a hard act to follow.

While we celebrate these things about the Queen and hold her in personal high esteem, and can perhaps look back with fondness at some of her engagements with Jamaica, we remain clear about the irrelevance of the institution of monarchy for our country.

And worse, that version of it where Jamaica outsourced to a foreign person, who is neither kith nor kin, and whose historic antecedents make for an improbable or incompatible symbol of the island’s sovereignty and aspirations.

Indeed, the death of the Queen and the beginning of the reign of the new monarch, is a signal for Jamaica to accelerate its “moving on”, as Prime Minister Andrew Holness called it, when he indicated to the current heir to the throne, Prince William, Prince of Wales, his government’s intention to leave behind the Queen, or her successors, as Jamaica’s head of state.

The prime minister and his legal and constitutional affairs minister, Marlene Malahoo Forte, should, therefore, move quickly to advance a clear mission on constitutional reform, with specific timetables for transitioning Jamaica to the republic.



UK group favours more direct action

In the home of the Commonwealth of Nations and the British royal family the UK-based campaign group [Republic](#) is taking adopting a direct and provocative approach to the constitutional monarchy in the wake of Queen Elizabeth II's death and funeral.

Unlike the Real Republic Australia which continues to advocate a respectful attitude towards the royal family, the Republic often directly attacks it and has even promised "large protests" at the King's coronation anticipated to be held next year.

Republic CEO Graham Smith has criticised suggestions that the coronation and the monarchy itself would be "slimmed down" or "modernised".

"Charles is already king. There is absolutely no need to go through with this expensive pantomime," Mr Smith said.

"Sweden and Norway scrapped coronations more than a century ago, if Charles wants to modernise he would start by doing the same.

"But we know the claim of modernising or slimming down the monarchy is hot air.



Graham Smith protests planned

"The cost will keep going up and the institution will remain stuck in the past.

"When next year's coronation goes ahead it will be met by large republican protests."

Mr Smith said the pro-republic movement in the UK had gained support since the Queen's death and funeral.

"It will continue to grow over the next 12 months," he said.



Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon greets King Charles II and the Queen Consort

Photo: Scottish Parliament

Implications for independence bid



The Queen's death came at a time the Scottish Government is pushing ahead with plans to stage another referendum aimed at leaving the United Kingdom. (See page 11)

A referendum on Scottish independence was defeated in 2014 but the government is pressing ahead with plans for another in 2023.

A number of [political observers suggest](#) the new monarch may be a factor in the outcome if a referendum is held because King Charles may not have the same level of public support and affection

within Scotland enjoyed by his mother.

The ruling Scottish Nationalist Party led by First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has stressed that independence [did not mean a republic](#).

In the lead-up to the 2014 referendum the then first minister Alex Salmond said if independence was achieved the Queen [would remain as Scotland's Head of State](#).

Mr Salmond also ruled out Scotland re-establishing its own monarchy which existed prior to the UK's formation.

NZ leaders in no hurry for a republic



New Zealand's Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, says a shift to a republic is not a priority for her government.

Following the death of Queen Elizabeth II and the ascension of King Charles II, [Ms Ardern said](#) she believed NZ would eventually become a republic.

She added that it would likely do so within her lifetime, but that she would not be advancing the issue yet because there were more pressing issues for her government.

"There's been a debate, probably for a number of years," Ms Ardern, the leader of the NZ Labour Party, said.

"It's just the pace, and how widely that debate is occurring.

"I've made my view plain many times.

"I do believe that is where New Zealand will head, in time. I believe it is likely to occur in my lifetime.

'I don't see it as a short-term measure or anything that is on the agenda any time soon'

NZ PM Jacinda Ardern



"But I don't see it as a short-term measure or anything that is on the agenda any time soon," she said.

The group [New Zealand Republic](#) was formed in 1994 and advocates for a republic while retaining the current traditional Westminster system of government.

New Zealand Republic does not express a preference for a directly elected Head of State or one chosen by the NZ Parliament.

It says such a decision is one for voters to make at a referendum. Its website says it supports transitioning the office of Governor-General of New Zealand from being the Queen's representative in New Zealand to becoming New Zealand's Head of State.

The group wants the Head of State to have the same limited reserve powers that the NZ Governor-General currently has – effectively being a non-executive head of state whose role is focused on ceremonial and community duties.

NZ Opposition and National Party Leader Christopher Luxon's position echoed that of Ms Ardern.

"I don't see any need for constitutional change right now," he said.

"I think that it might happen at some point, but that could even be decades away."



Canada sets a high bar for a republic



The then Prince Charles and the Queen in Canada

In common with the residents of most Commonwealth countries as well as non-member nations, Canadians held strong affection for the late Queen Elizabeth II. But the nation does include many campaigning to become a republic.

In the wake of the Queen's death Canadian national television news network CTV News canvassed the views of several political scientists to test their views on the likelihood of a shift to a republic. Those interviewed pointed out the constitutional demands that may prevent the transition to a republic, demands unlike those we face in Australia.

Canada, like Australia, is a constitutional monarchy with the British sovereign – now King Charles III – as its Head of State. Also like Australia, the monarch is represented in Canada by a Governor-

General, Mary Simon, who was appointed by the government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in July 2021.

Most other changes to the Canadian Constitution require agreement from two-thirds of the provinces, if they represent at least 50% of the country's population. But for Canada to scrap its constitutional monarchy and become a republic agreement would be needed among its two house of parliament – the House of Commons and the Senate – as well as all 10 provinces (the equivalent of Australian states).

This requirement is known as "amendment by unanimous consent" and is outlined in [Section 41 of the Constitution Act](#). Input from Canada's three territories or a national referendum of voters is not required.

Three experts, three views:

Professor of law and political science and constitutional law expert at the University of Toronto, [David Schneiderman](#), said it would be "virtually impossible" to achieve unanimous consent on the republic issue.

"You would have to have an overwhelming consensus in Canadian public opinion that would warrant premiers passing resolutions in their legislatures calling for abolition of the monarchy. I don't see that happening anytime soon.



"I think we should have been considering our ties to the monarchy even before the death of Queen Elizabeth.

"It's a moment to reflect on who we have had as a Head of State, and whether we want to continue on with a Head of State that is hereditary, from a particular family that breeds leaders to serve in this role, or

whether in a modern, democratic and multicultural society, we might want a Head of State that's a little bit more representative of the people that the Head of State serves."

[Allan Hutchinson](#), a legal theorist and law professor at York University in Toronto said constitutional reform in Canada was a fraught process.



"I think it would be very difficult. Any change in the [constitutional] arrangements around the Crown would require the unanimity of all provinces and the federal government.

"The chances of getting that are not good.

"We know from our own history that changing the Constitution is a bit of a fool's errand.

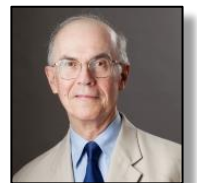
"Once you start opening it up, people will say: 'Well, if we're going to change the

Constitution, what about this? What about that?' I think it would lead us down a path that is fraught with a lot of challenges."

"The idea that we have some hereditary head of state is rather pitiful in 2022 in a so-called democracy.

"I don't know what we lose by calling the Governor-General something else, and then cutting ties with the monarchy."

[Peter McNally](#) is a retired information studies professor who taught at McGill University in Montreal and a self-proclaimed monarchist and "palace watcher".



"The reason Canada exists historically because of 18th century loyalty to the monarchy.

"Today, the monarchy is the living embodiment of Canada's parliamentary tradition. It's also a bulwark against American cultural imperialism."

Source: CTV News

Canadian groups push for change

A number of pro-republic groups operate in Canada including [Citizens for a Canadian Republic](#) (CCR) and [Republic Now](#).

CCR has previously rejected claims that transition to a republic was not likely because of the requirement for unanimous consent (see above) for a constitutional change.

Pointing to recent [opinion polls](#) showing 51%

support for a republic and 26% wanting the constitutional monarchy to continue beyond Queen Elizabeth II's reign, the group says provincial legislatures did not necessarily hold views that were the opposite of those held by their voters.

CCR, also recognises that senior members of the royal family have stated that a decision on a republic was for Canadians to

make and they would respect their decision.

Like the Real Republic Australia, CCR does not spend time attacking or denigrating members of the royal family while Republic Now takes a more critical approach to them.



Citizens for a Canadian Republic

Citoyens pour une république canadienne



IT'S ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT AUSTRALIANS AND OUR FUTURE

OUR VIEW



It was bemusing to witness the approach taken by many in the mainstream media to the republic debate following news of the passing of Australia's Head of State, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Soon after her death there emerged a consensus that it would be inappropriate, indeed disrespectful, even to discuss the idea of our nation becoming a republic until after the Queen's funeral had taken place.

Yet from the day Her Majesty died it has been difficult to think of a time in the past quarter century when more stories about a republic had appeared in Australian publications.

As pro-republic groups such as the Real Republic Australia and the Australian Republic Movement issued statements of condolence and then largely kept silent, an army of commentators, columnists, and others set about giving us their views – often in some detail – about the republic debate and the pros and cons of possible republic models. Just a handful of such articles are reproduced above.

Waiting an excuse

This contradictory, perhaps hypocritical, stand just confirmed what the Real Republic Australia always maintained – that as a nation we had never needed to wait for the Queen's reign to end before discussing a possible republic. The request to wait, especially when coming from our national leaders, was simply an excuse for inaction.

Senior royals from the late Queen down had all expressed the view at various times that the republic debate was for us as Australians to have and that they would respect our decision. It's the same approach they have taken to former British colonies that have evolved to become independent and then to transition to a republic.

The debate has never been about the royals.

It has always been about us as Australians and what we want for the future of our nation. There is now no excuse left for not engaging in a very reasoned and polite public discussion about how Australia becomes a republic.

We accept that seeking constitutional reform to that enshrines a Voice to Parliament for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders should be a priority in this term.

But that should not stop us having a discussion about a republic and how to get there so that we can all be better informed when a referendum is held. Indeed the two issues are related in a very basic and significant way.

Those who oppose a republic never really say why an Australian should not be Australia's Head of State. They also cannot explain away the injustice of the current system under which no descendant of the First Nations can ever be our Head of State. Ever.

Genuine direct election

The position of the Real Republic Australia has always been and remains that if we are to be a truly independent nation on the world stage we should have a republic with a Head of State who is an Australian and who is elected directly by Australians.

We believe – and history shows – that a model with a genuine directly elected Head of State is the model that will be supported by Australians and is the model that has the best chance to pass a referendum.

We do not support politicians picking a Head of State for us. We do not support a model under which politicians hand down to voters a shortlist of candidates. Having politicians tell voters the people they are allowed to vote for is not direct election.

In fact that type of model, as proposed by the Australian Republic Movement, is just a supercharged version of the "politicians' republic" that was brutally repudiated by voters at the November 1999 referendum.

Rather than confining the selection process to federal MPs, the ARM model now wants to



include every politician in every federal, state, and territory parliament.

Fuss over nothing

Some media commentators have tried to make an issue out of the fact Prime Minister Anthony Albanese – a republic supporter – had a portrait of the Queen on his office wall. He is likely to have it replaced with a portrait of the new King Charles III.

Should Australians be concerned? We don't believe so.

The presence of a portrait of our nation's current Head of State on the PM's office wall highlights the fact that the republic campaign is not some type of radical, bomb-throwing, institution-smashing revolution.

We see it as a respectful, deliberate process in which every Australians should have a chance to have their say on what type of republic we should have. That's why we will soon release a discussion paper on our model.

We are not engaged in a revolution, but an evolution of our nation's political system.

Once we make a democratic decision as a nation to become a republic, the portrait on the PM's office wall will be of an Australian.

That is the task ahead of us.

The Editor

REFERENDUM ROUND-UP

Voters return directly elected Head of State

CHILEANS REJECT 'RADICAL' CHANGE

Previously strong support for reforms to Chile's constitution [collapsed on referendum day](#) with observers suggesting the proposed changes were simply too radical.

The 4 September referendum saw just under 62% of voters reject the proposed changes which had been drafted by a constitutional convention.

The convention, with elected delegates, was set up after an October 2020 referendum which saw an 80% vote in favour of replacing the old constitution dating from the era of military dictator Augustus Pinochet.

The rejected referendum had [asked voters](#) to approve a restructuring of the national the parliament to give the lower house Chamber of Deputies more power at the expense of the Senate by replacing it with a Chamber of Regions.

It also contained political and social reforms including:

- guaranteeing social rights including access to housing, social security, health, work and food,
- environmental reforms making fighting climate change a state duty,
- requiring protection of biodiversity, native species and natural spaces.

After the failed referendum President Gabriel Boric, who took office in March said he planned another referendum but did not provide firm timing.

COURT TO RULE ON DRAFT LAW

The UK Supreme Court is considering the legality of draft legislation aimed at paving the way for Scotland to hold a second independence referendum.

A 2014 referendum was defeated when 55% of voters opted to stay in the United Kingdom with England and Wales while 45% expressed a desire to leave.



Gabriel Boric



Nicola Sturgeon

The UK Government has refused to allow another referendum but in June this year Scotland's First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, [announced](#) plans for a second referendum.

She also unveiled the [Scottish Independence Referendum Bill](#) which provided for holding another vote on 19 October 2023.

Ms Sturgeon said the opponents of independence for Scotland would seek to denigrate or challenge the Bill which was why the [application](#) to the court was made.

She said a ruling by the UK Supreme Court would determine the legality of the draft law and hopefully establish as "a legal fact" the ability of her government to hold a referendum without approval from the UK Government as happened in 2014. The court is [expected to hear the case](#) soon.

CUBANS BACK SAME-SEX REFORMS

A 25 September referendum approved same-sex marriage and adoptions in Cuba.

[News reports](#) suggest the proposals were approved by more than 3.9 million voters (66.9%) with 1.95 million (33%) opposed.

About 74% of the 8.4 million Cubans eligible to vote took part in the referendum which also saw voters approve civil unions and the promotion of equal sharing of domestic rights and responsibilities between men and women.

Austria's directly elected Head of State, [President Alexander Van der Bellen](#), has won a second six-year term in office.

After the 9 October election [news reports](#) said the 78-year-old former leader of the Greens party had more than 56% of the vote with 95% of ballots counted. The outright win avoids a run-off election.



Van der Bellen

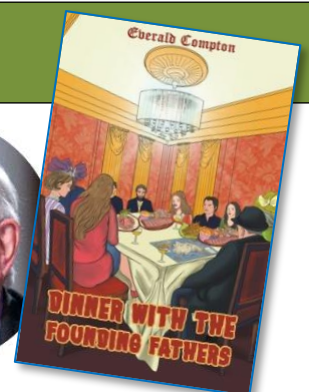
The office of president is largely ceremonial. But the president has the power to sack the national government or the chancellor. The president is also the nominal military commander in chief.

Although a former party leader, Van der Bellen [ran as an independent](#).

The only political party to endorse a candidate against him was the far-right Freedom Party which achieved less than 18% of the vote.

Plenty of food for thought.....

Activist, thinker, philanthropist, and author [EVERALD COMPTON](#) has imagined a number of dinners involving the framers of the Australian Constitution and some of our nation's more colourful political identities from the decades that followed Federation. His book **DINNER WITH THE FOUNDING FATHERS** is an entertaining and provocative read for anyone interested in learning the lessons of our past that can help shape our future.



CLICK ON [THIS LINK](#) TO BUY YOUR COPY!

A good idea that went off the rails

Colonial decision-makers met in a series of conferences and conventions in the late 19th century leading up to Federation and the creation of the Commonwealth of Australia.

The meetings discussed drafts of a proposed Australian Constitution, with the final form of being approved by voters at referendums in each of the then colonies.

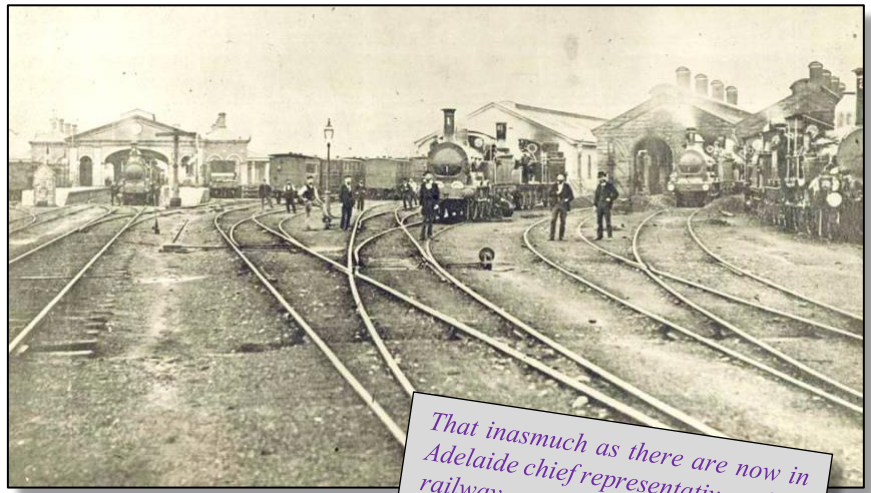
In 1897 Adelaide was the venue for one of the conferences. There delegates thrashed out the details and wording of the Constitution that was eventually to provide the broad guidelines under which our nation has been run – with relatively few amendments via referendums – since 1901.

During the Adelaide meeting Tasmanian delegate Charles Henry Grant – a member of the island colony's upper house – sought to have delegates [agree to a uniform gauge for railway tracks](#) throughout what was meant to be a single united nation.

[Mr Grant](#) had an extensive background in railway management and engineering.

Born in England in 1831, Grant had studied applied sciences and worked in the London engineering office of famed UK railway engineer Robert Stephenson.

In 1872 he was appointed as engineer to the Tasmanian Main Line Railway Co and oversaw the construction of the rail line between Hobart and Launceston. He later served as the company's general manager before establishing and becoming a director of the Hobart Electric Tramway Co in 1892.



Charles Henry Grant MLC (below) and his motion (right)



That inasmuch as there are now in Adelaide chief representatives of the railway systems of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and West Australia, this Convention consider the present time a favourable opportunity for these representatives conferring together as to the possibility of agreeing upon an uniform gauge for the railways of Australia, and request that they would forthwith take this matter into their consideration.

Some delegates agreed that an in-principle decision should be made even though railway gauges were not a constitutional issue.

Others urged him to withdraw his motion.

In the end Mr Grant did withdraw his motion while reminding delegates that the problem of different colonies having different rail gauges had already been the subject of fruitless discussion for 20 years.

Sadly, Grant did not live much beyond the inauguration of the Commonwealth of Australia.

He died in Hobart from diabetes in September 1901 not long after returning from Sydney where he had been attending Federation celebrations.

Our newsletter

Constitutional Conversation is published quarterly 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 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 with support from the Clem Jones Group.



Clem Jones



Contact us if you wish to receive a free copy every quarter.

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