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REPUBLIC DISCUSSION ON THE GOLD COAST

The issue of Australia becoming a republic will be the subject of discussion at a meeting on the Gold Coast tomorrow.

Chair of the [Real Republic Australia](#), David Muir, and noted author, community activist, and republic supporter Everald Compton, will talk about their ideas for an Australian republic at a meeting of the [Gold Coast Retirees](#).

Mr Muir said a shift to a republic would complete Australia's historical journey from a British penal colony to a fully independent nation on the world stage.

"The republic debate is not and should never be about the royal family," Mr Muir said. "It is not 'us-versus-the Queen'. It is about Australians making decisions about the future of their nation.

"The Queen herself and senior members of the royal family including the late Duke of Edinburgh acknowledged that and have said they will accept whatever decision Australians make on a republic."

Mr Compton will discuss Australia's federal system of government and the lessons for our future from Federation in 1901.

Mr Compton has written a book *Dinner With The Founding Fathers* that canvasses the events surrounding federation.

President of the Gold Coast Retirees, Rob Grover, said the group invited guest speakers to its regular meetings to discuss issue of interest to members.

"We don't necessarily endorse any position taken by our guest speakers, but we feel it is important that our members have a chance to join important public debates," Mr Grover said.

"Thursday's meeting will help promote discussion about a republic which is an issue Australians will need to confront again at some time in the future."

Mr Muir said the biggest issue to settle was the model for a republic that was acceptable to Australians.

"As a delegate to the 1998 Constitutional Convention elected on the ticket of former Brisbane Lord Mayor, the late Clem Jones, I supported a directly elected head of state as the model that Australians would support in a referendum," he said.

"Nothing since has changed my mind. The failure at the 1999 referendum of the 'politician's republic' with a head of state essentially appointed by the PM cemented my belief.

"While the ultimate choice of model is up to voters, I firmly believe they will accept only the direct election model which gives them the choice about who becomes head of state in an Australian republic."

Mr Muir said the Real Republic Australia wanted the republic issue to be considered as part of other reforms that could be put to voters through a long-term series of referendum questions to update Australia's Constitution including:

- constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians
- eliminating costly by-elections with a referendum question creating a Senate-style casual vacancy system for the House of Representatives

- four-year, fixed, and synchronised terms for both houses of Federal Parliament to stop prime ministers gaming the system by picking election dates, cutting the number of elections now costing more than \$300 million, and ensuring government mandates are not hostage to Senators elected years earlier
- breaking the constitutional nexus that demands the lower house is twice the size of the Senate – a reform that if not taken would one day see a lower house of 300 MPs and around 150 Senators
- cutting the number of Senators for each state while retaining two apiece for the NT and ACT, and
- constitutional recognition of local government.

“We would like to see all these type of issues debated through a staged, long-term program of public consultations that can draft referendum questions to be put to voters where necessary,” Mr Muir said.

“This process could run over several terms of our Federal Parliament, but once again, the sooner we start the better.”

For information about the Gold Coast retirees visit www.goldcoastretirees.com. Non-members attending a meeting are asked to pay \$5.00 to cover hall hire costs.

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