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PRIME MINISTER'S APPROACH SETS UP PRINCE CHARLES

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull could rightly expect a frosty reception if he crosses paths with Prince Charles who is due to start his Australian tour tomorrow (4 April), according to the chair of the Real Republic Australia, David Muir.

Mr Muir said Mr Turnbull's insistence that moves for a referendum on Australia becoming a republic should not start until the reign of Queen Elizabeth II ends is a recipe for an unfair and unnecessary "get Charles" campaign.

"The Queen and Prince Charles no doubt recognise the risk and would be comfortable with our nation starting its journey to becoming a republic now not later," Mr Muir said.

"Discussion of our nation becoming a republic should never be about the current monarch, the heirs to the British throne, any other member of the royal family, or the family as a whole.

"It should certainly never be built around a strategy that effectively sets up Prince Charles as the focus of a negative campaign.

"Australians, even diehard republicans, should respect the royal family and especially the Queen for her service over a record-breaking reign. She is truly one of the great figures of world history.

"That respect, the welcome given to the royal family whenever any of them visit, and our role within the Commonwealth will not change when we are a republic.

"The Commonwealth Games help prove that. Of the 53 countries in the Commonwealth of Nations attending the Gold Coast event, only 16 have the Queen as their head of state.

"The majority, 32 nations, are republics and five have their own national monarchies."

Mr Muir said unfortunately, Mr Turnbull's approach was again found wanting.

"The Real Republic Australia — and I believe most Australians — want a directly elected head of state," he said.

"But Mr Turnbull helped deliver the unpopular model for a 'politicians' republic' almost a decade ago that was inevitably rejected by voters who clearly wanted to elect their own head of state, not have someone foisted on them by Canberra.

"Now, his plan to wait until Charles is king before starting a republican debate is a sure-fire way to turn the debate into a negative referendum campaign to reject Charles when it should be a positive step to building a better, stronger, and more confident nation.

"Given her experience, knowledge, and recognition of the issue as being one for Australians to decide, the Queen is the ideal person to ensure a transition to an Australian republic goes smoothly.

“For that reason plans for a referendum should start now, not later when we risk it focussing on personalities and not the real issues vital to our nation’s future,” Mr Muir said.

He said recent [statements by former Prime Minister Paul Keating](#) show the royal family would be comfortable with Australia moving towards a republic.

The Real Republic Australia was founded after the 1998 Constitutional Convention held in Canberra by delegates including:

- the late Dr Clem Jones AO former Lord Mayor of Brisbane,
- Ann Bunnell former Deputy Mayor of Townsville in Queensland,
- Brisbane lawyer David Muir, also chair of the Clem Jones Trust
- Ted Mack former mayor of North Sydney and independent MP in both the NSW and Federal parliaments, and
- Phil Cleary former independent federal MP for the Victorian seat of Wills.

Mr Muir said the Real Republic organisation continued to be supported by the Clem Jones Group.

“As a truly remarkable grassroots politician Clem Jones knew that Australians want real reforms not empty symbolism, and that means a directly elected Australian as our nation’s Head of State, not one chosen for them by politicians,” he said.

“The Real Republic wants to go further and give a directly elected Head of State a role in appointing and overseeing anti-corruption and integrity bodies at the federal level instead of the current unhealthy practice of politicians appointing the agencies and individuals overseeing their behaviour.”

Mr Muir said a referendum on Australia becoming a republic should also include questions for other Constitutional changes delivering real reforms including:

- recognition of Indigenous Australians,
- changes to the Senate including fewer Senators for each state,
- synchronised elections for the lower and upper houses of Federal Parliament and four-year terms,
- applying to the House of Representatives the casual vacancy system now used by the Senate to cut costs by avoiding by-elections, and
- local government recognition to remove any doubt about the validity of direct federal funding.

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