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### **Shorten plebiscite plan needs to focus on model**

The Real Republic Australia says Opposition Leader Bill Shorten's plan for an initial "yes/no" plebiscite on an Australian republic should also give voters the opportunity to express their views on what model they want for choosing their head of state.

Chair of the Real Republic Australia, David Muir, said by offering no choice of model at the time of a plebiscite on the threshold yes/no question, voters may decide against approving what could be portrayed as "a blank cheque".

"This could spell disaster and end the republic debate even before a second plebiscite on a model was held," Mr Muir said.

"A plebiscite is a cost to taxpayers so it needs to get more bang for buck by also asking voters to choose between at least two potential models — parliamentary selection of a head of state or direct election by voters.

"The Real Republic Australia advocates for a directly elected head of state which we believe is the model Australians will support if given the opportunity.

"Asking about the model at the same time as the threshold question on a republic will unify pro-republic groups behind the people's choice and prevent a repeat of the split seen at the 1999 referendum.

"The plan Mr Shorten promises to implement if Labor wins office involves a plebiscite on the question of becoming a republic to be held in the first term of government to be followed some time later by a second plebiscite to choose a preferred model to put to a formal referendum.

"The plan should be modified to ensure the key issue — the model for an Australian republic — is given early and due consideration which in turn would give a republic referendum the best chance of success.

"In other words, ask voters to express their views on the republic question itself and a preferred model at the same time."

Mr Muir said despite his reservations about Mr Shorten's plan, it was the only one on the table by the prime minister or alternative prime minister.

"So far Scott Morrison hasn't given any inkling of how he intends to give Australians their say on a republic," he said.

Mr Muir said the Real Republic Australia wanted the republic question considered as part of a wider package of Constitutional reforms that can deliver cost savings and more stable government.

The Real Republic Australia supports a republic with a directly head of state as well as other basic Constitutional changes to benefit Australians, including:

- investing in our elected head of state the role of appointing and overseeing those responsible for integrity and anti-corruption agencies at the federal level;
- recognition of indigenous Australians,
- parliamentary reforms to deliver greater stability through cutting Senate numbers for each state from 12 to the original six while maintaining two for each Territory;
- implementing synchronised, fixed, four-year terms for both Houses of Parliament to ensure voter mandates are reflected in both Houses; and
- adopting a casual vacancy system for the House of Representatives to deliver greater stability and cut costs to taxpayers; and
- recognition of local government.

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*The Real Republic Australia is supported by the Clem Jones Group which carries on the work of Brisbane's longest-serving Lord Mayor, businessman, community worker, and philanthropist, Dr Clem Jones, who was a delegate to both the 1975 and 1998 Constitutional Conventions. Dr Jones died in December 2007 and in his will he expressed his wish for a national campaign for a republic based on his preferred model of a directly elected head of state. The Real Republic Australia continues his campaign.*