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PM needs to state his case

The start of the latest royal tour is a chance for Prime Minister Scott Morrison to declare where he stands on giving Australians their say on Australia becoming a republic.

David Muir, chair of the Real Republic Australia, said in the past Mr Morrison had [simply said](#) he favoured the current Constitutional arrangements.

“At the weekend it was reported in *The Australian* that he had returned the Queen’s portrait to a wall in the Prime Minister’s office and that he respects the Constitutional Monarch,” Mr Muir said.

“He’s almost as wishy-washy as Malcolm Turnbull was as PM because there is a difference between respecting the Constitutional Monarch and continuing a Constitutional Monarchy.

“Of course Australians including republicans respect Queen Elizabeth II and the Prime Minister should be no different.

“But the debate is not about disrespecting the Queen or the British Royal Family. It’s about the fact the Constitutional Monarchy is no longer suitable for Australia and its future.

“The debate is about Australians having an Australian as Australia’s head of state — preferably one they directly elect themselves.

“Even the Queen and the Royal Family would know the debate is not about them.”

Mr Muir said the Real Republic Australia supported the direct election of a head of state — the model Australians would support.

“The 1999 referendum proved Australians do not want a ‘politicians’ republic’ where politicians in the government pick our head of state and have their choice approved by other politicians in the federal parliament,” he said.

Mr Muir said Mr Morrison should state how he planned to give Australians their say on a republic.

“Opposition Leader Bill Shorten has a plan for a plebiscite in his first term if elected to test the question of becoming a republic, with another one to follow on the model for a republic,” he said.

“While it is better to ask the threshold question and a question on a preferred model in a single plebiscite, the fact is Mr Shorten’s is the only plan on the table.

“Mr Morrison, as the sixth prime minister since Paul Keating kick-started the debate, needs to outline his plan if he has one so voters can compare it with Mr Shorten’s at the next election.”

Mr Muir said Mr Morrison was missing a chance to tap public support for other reforms.

“The Real Republic Australia wants Australians to consider a wider package of other Constitutional reforms to deliver greater political stability, certainty, and cost savings.

“We must break the Constitutional nexus that demands the House of Representatives have ‘as nearly as practicable’ twice the number of seats as the Senate.

“A republic referendum should include a question allowing voters to scale back the number of Senators in each state — currently 12 — to the original six for each Australian state while keeping two each for the Territories.

“That would end the type of fractured Senate we see today where Senators elected with even just a handful of votes can frustrate governments formed in the lower house.

“If we don’t do that, then a future generation of taxpayers will be paying for a lower house of 300 MPs and around 150 Senators.

“Greater stability would also come if referendum questions were passed approving fixed and synchronised four-year terms for both houses of parliament.

“That would cut costs as fewer elections are held and would stop prime ministers gaming the system when setting election dates.

“Having four-year terms for both houses would mean the composition of both houses would reflect the wishes of voters at each election and end the situation where Senators elected well before a change of government can frustrate its mandate and cause instability.

“Greater stability would also come by extending to the House of Representatives the Senate’s casual vacancy system.

“The Real Republic Australia wants to see this package of Constitutional reforms — plus recognition of indigenous Australians and local government — put to voters with the republic question.

“But they all need a Prime Minister willing to drive the agenda and give Australians a chance to have their say,” Mr Muir said.

Media contact: 0431 101 533

www.realrepublic.com.au



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