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### **REPUBLIC DEBATE DEPENDS ON MODEL OFFERED**

Australians will strongly support a move to a republic if they have chance to vote for the direct election of our head of state, says the group pushing the direct-election model, the Real Republic Australia.

Real Republic chair, David Muir, said the addition of other possible constitutional changes as well as a republic would also strengthen support.

Mr Muir welcomed the headline results of a Newspoll showing 50% of those polled backed a republic with 41% opposed — figures that compared with the November 1999 referendum results of approximately 45% for and 55% against nationwide.

“The key to the debate is not the personalities of the royal family but the model that will be placed before voters, and the best model is for the direct election of our head of state,” Mr Muir said.

“The 1999 referendum failed because Australians did not want ‘a politicians’ republic’ with an appointed head of state. They wanted to have their say.”

Mr Muir said it was unproductive to frame the republic debate solely through the prism of Australia’s relations with the British royal family as a whole or individuals within it.

“Most Australians realise that the warmth and respect they show towards Queen Elizabeth II and members of the British royal family will not diminish when we are a republic.

“We have seen that sentiment during the tour by Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall.

“The Commonwealth Games prove the point. Of the 53 countries in the Commonwealth of Nations attending the Gold Coast event, 32 are republics, only 16 have the Queen as their head of state, and five have their own national monarchies.

“It is why the Prime Minister is wrong in seeking to defer debate until the Queen’s reign ends. That presents the real risk of the debate becoming a ‘get Charles’ discussion.

“We should not have a negative debate based on one individual. We need a debate focusing on the positives of change and that means the model of a republic is crucial.”

Mr Muir said the Real Republic wanted other real reforms to be considered during the republic debate including:

- Constitutional recognition of indigenous Australians.
- changes to the Senate including fewer Senators, synchronised terms for both houses of parliament so a government’s mandate was not held hostage by Senators elected years before,
- adopting a casual vacancy system to filling lower house seats between elections to avoid costly by-elections, and

- recognition of local government.

“But the central issue in the republic debate will always be the desire by Australians for one of our own as our head of state and to have the opportunity to choose that individual through a direct election,” he said.

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