

As a former senior lecturer in political science I would suggest that three basic issues need to be raised about these bills and the process

1 is the will of the Australian people being truly reflected, are democratic principles being observed...or do the bills and processes appear to reflect more

2 the ambitions of political party politicians and the Australian elite and establishment

3 do the proposals tend to reinforce the coercive hierarchical strains in the political system ?

1 the proposed bill does not give the Australian people the right to choose their own President, the officer will be elected by politicians. The case and the process for direct election has been inadequately debated and investigated. The process appears to have been hijacked by the elite. Contributions by this elite against direct elections obviously support their own group. Arguments for stability must be set against those for democratic and good government. Stable government does not necessarily lead to just or good government.

Clause 62 of the Constitution bill could be seen as undemocratic, why should the Senate not participate in this process?

Clause 63 why should State Governors be involved, many Australians find this office anachronistic, irrelevant and costly.

Clause 60 ...2...must not be a member of a political party..., does this mean they must renounce their membership if nominated ?

Nomination Committee Bill

the role and the domination of this process by the PM raises questions also about the democratic rights of the Australian people. The process could be used politically or for the Establishment, for example the appointment of community members . Why should the PM appoint the convenor ?Community members should be in the majority.

2 ... the non democratic operation of party political politicians, establishment figures and interest groups. The operation of these forces can make any, so called democratic process a meaningless, expensive travesty which can allow taxpayer funded, purely ritualistic institutions to be foisted on citizens. These bodies do get out of touch with large sections of the Australian people as can be seen in the rise of the One Nation Party and the election of candidates who do not belong to the main political parties. The bills should reflect these considerations.

3 the coercive control element is coming through strongly in these proposals, it suggests... Australian people must be controlled, you cannot trust them..., our compulsory voting system is a good example of this mentality .It would be a sign of our maturity as a political system if the PM and those in power could allow for more

democracy in our system. It would be a sign of democracy if parliamentarians had free votes on these and other matters. Despite the Convention and the other publicity there is still a lack of knowledge and understanding of the proposals. The impression is that the simple route has been taken, not the democratic route. Answers to the problems of direct election have not been examined seriously, those in power do not want to disturb their entrenched positions. The proposals have been pushed through too quickly and there is a massive job of education to be done before the vote. This is compounded by a basic lack of knowledge in the community about democratic principles and the Constitution as it is now. Commonwealth offices do not help, as seen in the attitude of the Commonwealth Electoral Office which appears to see its function as a narrow bureaucratic distribution of information about elections, with nothing about education and helping Australian citizens to become more aware of their democracy and rights.

It would be sad, and a tragedy for Australia if the launch of the republic saw many Australians feeling they had been betrayed and their liberties restricted. As it is, the debate has shown the abiding interest of those in power, with institutions, processes and status. There has been pathetically little debate about Australia itself, its values, its culture, its spirit, its people and its future.

I hope the Committee can rectify some of the problems.

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