

To the Senate,

The Plebiscite For An Australian Republic Bill 2008 is supported by a second reading speech that evinces clearly that there is no doubt in the proposer that the majority of Australians wish a republic. The proposer is caught between two conflicting positions. To justify the plebiscite he seeks to show that Australians want a republic but, on the other hand, if that is the case, why have the plebiscite?

It is obvious that the proposer has a secondary purpose in seeking to put this issue to the public by way of a plebiscite. That secondary purpose must be a political one: of seeking to find a way of avoiding the only relevant point. Is Australia to change its constitution so that the head of state is appointed in a different and specified way?

At present, despite the incorrect constitutional statement in the speech, the Governor-General, an Australian, is the head of state. The High Court of Australia held this in 1905 and respected and authoritative legal opinion since supports that conclusion independently of the constitutional; authority if the High Court The proposer wants another way of appointing an Australian head of state.

As the referendum revealed, the critical and difficult issue is not what Australians want. It is whether they are prepared to accept a changed constitution. This point runs through the second reading speech as a central theme, although it is presented there as though it is an irritating distraction. The irritating distraction is presenting the question raised by the plebiscite as though it could provide the answer to the question that must be asked in any referendum.

If the proposer considers that the referendum question was too hard, he should draft the question in whatever easier way that he considers appropriate and see whether the answer to that question could possibly enable a relevant change to the constitution. If he consider it would, and he still wished to play the plebiscite game, than that question should be the question that he includes in this exercise in refusing to accept the result of the referendum. The present question, without any indication of what sort of republic should be put in place, is a worthless, expensive and distracting "funny game".

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