

**To the Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600.**

**Concerning the Private Member's Bill 'Plebiscite for an Australian Republic Act 2008'.**

**This is a submission from:**

**Mr NIGEL JACKSON**

**1<sup>st</sup> February 2009**

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I request the Committee to recommend against the holding of this or any other plebiscite on the question of whether Australia should or should not remain a constitutional monarchy, on the question of whether Australia should become a republic, or on the question of whether Australia should have its own head of state.

My reasons for this request follow and I respectfully ask the Committee to study them carefully and take them into account in any report it subsequently makes on any of these issues.

**One** The constitutional question of whether Australia should remain a constitutional monarchy, as at present, or become a republic, is one which divides Australian citizens very deeply. This was shown clearly by the 1999 Constitutional Referendum. Thus, any attempt to move towards constitutional change in this context should be

made very cautiously and delicately, in order to avoid exacerbating the ill feelings which can so easily enter into such a political situation and lead to civil discord.

This means that any proposed move for change supported by the Australian Parliament should respect the dignity of both sides of this great constitutional debate. Any such move should be carried out in such a way that, no matter what the end result, both groups of citizens will say that the process was fairly and equitably carried out.

To underline the gravity of what I am saying, I point to a number of significant cases in which nations changed from a monarchy to a republic and what ensued. France became a republic in 1793 and executed its King. It then experienced 'the Terror' and remains to this day an unhappily divided nation, which is one reason it succumbed to German invasions in the world wars. China became a republic in 1911 and still suffers, after sixty years, under a brutal communist regime. Russia murdered the Czar and became a republic before languishing under a brutal communist dictatorship for seventy years. Germany lost its monarchy in 1918 and soon experienced the tyranny of Nazism. These examples should be enough to make the point.

Constitutional changes do not always limit themselves to paper. Blood can be spilt and mutual ill will last for generations. We should avoid any possibility of this happening in Australia.

The current proposal to hold a plebiscite does not meet the requirements I have expounded above. Monarchists throughout Australia regard it as a dishonest way of trying to con Australians into accepting a republican constitution before they have had time to examine the proposed model in detail. It is no surprise that, to date, no question on the

Constitution in the form of a plebiscite has ever before been put to the people. This is because amending the Constitution is a complex matter which cannot be explained in a simple popularist question. Monarchists feel very strongly that any brief question in this proposed plebiscite will be unfairly loaded in favour of the republicans and that it will also seriously mislead Australians generally. It will be rather like inviting the nation to buy a pig in a poke. This is particularly so because of the manifest divisions between those republicans who favour a direct election of a republican president and those who prefer a selection of the president through the Parliament in one mode or another.

**Two** If the Parliament comes to believe that there are grounds for again consulting the Australian people on whether we should stay a monarchy or become a republic, the correct and the only correct way to proceed is by means of a second referendum. For obvious practical reasons, such a referendum should only be held if there is clearly a very strong demand by a majority of Australians for such change, and if a suitable republican constitution has been proposed, with all relevant and necessary detail, such as seems likely to win the support of a clear majority of the people.

**Three** I do not believe that there is any such strong demand from the Australian people at the present time. It is only small but influential groups and individuals who are driving the current campaign. Nor do I believe that any such satisfactory model of a republican constitution has yet been put forward and clearly favoured by such a majority. What I do believe has happened is that those zealous to transform Australia into a republic despair of winning a second

referendum by straightforward and honourable means along the lines I have set out above. I believe that very many monarchists feel the same. To proceed with this proposed plebiscite would appear clearly to convey scorn for, and lack of just consideration for, Australian monarchists.

It might be argued that there is overwhelming support for a republic on both sides of the house in the Parliament and in most if not all the state parliaments. It might be added that the major media almost all support republican change and that they are joined by the majority of the nation's intelligentsia. While such may be so, there is no guarantee that these various persons, individually or collectively, represent the majority of ordinary Australians. Moreover, the evident republican bias of the media, both in 1999 and at present, is a very strong reason why the Senate should not recommend the current proposal for a plebiscite but should insist on an approach that is fairer to monarchists as well as objectively equitable. (See my first point above.)

**Four** Given the above considerations, and having in mind both the great cost of a plebiscite and the current economic collapse affecting so many Australians, the Senate should not choose to see taxpayers' money spent in this way.

**Five** In my view the republican campaign in Australia, although many of its spokespeople are sincere, may have been essentially driven by motivations of an international nature connected with the will to consolidate the European Union (by weakening and eventually eliminating the House of Windsor and the British throne) and eventually bind the world in a 'New World Order' or world government of a

tyrannous nature. It is peculiar that people can demand that Australians 'think again' so soon after the firm but not eternally decisive result of the 1999 referendum. It is notable that nations in Europe which voted against the Treaty of Lisbon or earlier instruments requiring massive loss of national sovereignty have been forced to 'think again' and experience second referendums shortly afterwards. Ireland is at present undergoing that humiliating treatment. It is not hard to see connections between what has been happening in Europe and what has been happening in Australia. If the Senate wishes to honour the wisdom and foresight, as well as the humanity and love of justice and freedom, of the Fathers of our Constitution, in my view it will not only reject the current proposal for a plebiscite but conduct an enquiry into this complex scenario of international politics.

**Six** There is reason to believe that, even with the Constitutional Convention and the subsequent 1999 Referendum Campaign, the then Australian Government did not take sufficient care to ensure that the Australian people were fully informed of the complete range of arguments in favour of retention of a monarchy. The official explanatory pamphlet about the Convention, before voting took place, was unsatisfactory. So was the then Government's action in taking two self-appointed bodies, the Australian Republican Movement and Australians for Constitutional Monarchy, as representatives respectively of republicans and monarchists. So was the adding of republicans to the Committee entrusted with preparing the NO case, which caused an important group of monarchists, the Australian Monarchist League, not to be represented on that Committee. So was the Government's ignoring of the

voice of another major defender of monarchy, the Australian League of Rights.

Bearing that in mind, I do not have confidence that at this moment in our history monarchists will be treated justly in the preparations for this plebiscite, which is another aspect of my major Point One above.

**Seven** It is sometimes argued that in the 1999 Referendum direct election republicans voted NO, so that it was not a real victory for monarchists; but I am unaware of any proof of this at all. Likewise, so-called popular opinion polls do not at all prove that the majority of Australians want a republic, just as they did not in 1999, to the painful surprise of the leaders of the then republican campaign. Thus, again, I am unconvinced that sufficient numbers of Australians really want this plebiscite to be held.

For all these reasons I urge the Committee to recommend against this proposed plebiscite for a republic. If the Committee wishes, I am willing to appear before it to elaborate on any of my arguments.

NIGEL JACKSON