

January 26th 2009.

The Secretary,
Finance & Public Administration Committee,
Parliament House,
Canberra, ACT 2600.



Plebiscite for an Australian Republic Bill 2008

In response to the invitation to make a submission on this bill, I wish to put the following to the Committee for their consideration.

I believe, after living in this country for my whole life for 88 years, through war (in which I lost half my friends) and a long period of good government that to consider major changes to our wonderful constitution is unwarranted, is unnecessary and the attempts to change it have in the past proved to be a complete waste of time and money.

If you will pardon me saying so, I consider your present exercise falls in the latter category and the people we elected to govern us should be spending their time on the real issues confronting us at this time.

Under our present constitutional system during the last 108 years we have on many occasions change our rulers to reflect the wishes of the people. It has come about amicably, with notable courtesy and with all contestants still alive. What other country can make that claim? Why waste time and money trying to change it?

If the proponents of a "republic" really believe in the merits of their proposals let them follow the route laid down in the constitution to make a change. That is a referendum with the case for and against spelt out put to the vote of the whole electorate.

A plebiscite has no legal foundation and is really only a glorified Public Opinion Poll with the details of the changes to come later. To vote in favour of "a republic" in such a poll would be akin to signing a blank cheque--the act of an idiot.

One can only suspect the aim of the proponents of a plebiscite is to carry a vote in favour of 'a republic' (with very few details) and then subsequently present a referendum with two options on the form of the republic with the present Constitution left out claiming "the people had already rejected the old Monarchy system" Neat but possible!

The present constitution has stood the test of time. On two occasions involving a breakdown of the power of a Prime Minister or State Premier and his ministers to govern, the Governor General or Governor has been able to hand the decision to the people to decide. It was done with minimum upheaval and it proved the present system worked in a crisis. Why waste time and money trying to change it?

Most of the arguments in favour of change will not stand up to examination.

A few examples:-

"We must have an Australian Head of State" The last one was born in Wiluna on the WA Goldfields.

"We must throw off the apron strings tying us to Britain" The British Crown and Colonial Office ceased to have any authority over the Australian Commonwealth about 55 years ago and the same has applied to the States for about twenty years.

Respectfully yours,

Richard F. Overheu.