

THE
AUSTRALIAN
MONARCHIST LEAGUE INC

AUSTRALIANS PROTECTING THE CONSTITUTION
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The Standing Committee on Finance
& Public Administration
The Senate,
Parliament House,
Canberra Act 2600



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SUBMISSION RE "PLEBISCITE FOR AN AUSTRALIAN REPUBLIC ACT 2008"

A plebiscite has been used by a Federal Government on only three previous occasions: two on the question of conscription and one on the national song. The process has never been used as a preliminary to a federal referendum for the following, very good, reasons:

Amending the Constitution is a very serious act and should in no way be taken lightly. A simple, general, question in the form of a plebiscite could never, in any way, convey the potential implications of a proposed change which is why the Constitution sets out, in Section 128, a process by designed referendum for the amending of the Constitution.

The Australian Constitution is the article which unites the six States into the federation of the Commonwealth of Australia. It is for this reason that it can only be amended by a vote of the people counted dually as a nation-wide vote and a vote in each of the States, whereas plebiscites have only hitherto been counted on a nation-wide basis. A plebiscite question therefore gives undue weight to voters in the cities of the major States and disregards our federal constitutional arrangements.

If a plebiscite question were to attain a simple majority but a resultant referendum defeated, due either to an initial lack of understanding of the consequences of the proposed change to the Constitution, or because a majority of State votes may be in the negative - the Constitution would remain 'as is', but with a perceived vote of no confidence which could well detract from its continuing effectiveness. Not only would the position of the Monarch and the Governor-General be made untenable, the integrity of the federation could be called into question and the Government itself could well find it difficult to continue.

The Constitution underwrites the very governance of this nation and it is a very dangerous pathway for a Government to subvert the prescribed process for constitutional change.

The Australian Monarchist League recommends that a plebiscite on a republic not be held and if the Government is intent on revisiting the issue, we earnestly counsel that it abides by the referendum process set out in Section 128 of the Australian Constitution.

Yours sincerely,

Philip Benwell MBE
National Chairman
Australian Monarchist League

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