

Committee Secretary
Finance and Public Administration Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

5th February 2009

Re: Plebiscite for an Australian Republic Bill 2008

Dear Committee Secretary

I wish to express my opposition to the *Plebiscite for an Australian Republic Bill 2008* submitted by Senator Bob Brown. In 1999 Australian voters rejected a proposal to remove the Queen and the Governor-General from the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia. As there does not appear to have been a discernable and overwhelming increase in republican sentiment since then, Senator Brown's proposal seems ill timed. It will bring division to the community without providing anything other than a non-binding, hugely expensive, opinion poll.

I also question the premise that the "issue of Australia becoming a republic is an extremely important one for the Australian Parliament and public." No doubt the Parliament and Government thinks it is important, but that does not mean the Australian public feels the same way. Indeed the Australian public seems supremely indifferent to whether we are a republic or a monarchy. The Parliament pushing its own agenda like this, at this time, seems like nothing more than self-indulgent extravagance, and an abuse of the resources of the Australian Electoral Commission.

Senator Brown contends that the bill "provides for a simple yes or no question." But there is nothing simple about it. What type of republic is Senator Brown proposing? This is like asking if we want Australia to become a theocracy without telling voters what religion they can expect. Who can make an informed decision on such scant information? The Constitution is a rich text, and there is no easy way to amend it. Proposals for change coming from the Parliament should be fully informative, and based upon the text itself, not on sentiment.

The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia would be failing in its duty to the people of Australia if it were to embrace Senator Brown's manipulative and over-simplified proposal.

Yours sincerely

Neville Condron