

Contribution to the Senator Brown plebiscite matter

I realise that my following submission is a light-hearted paper. But I send it to highlight the almost total absence of understanding as to what a plebiscite is in the community.

In my opinion, the Government, supported by Senator Brown, should spend taxpayers' funds on Civics Education to the 82% of us who have little or no understanding of our **present** system rather than encouraging a vote on destroying a system which has served us well, if not faultlessly, for its entire life. Senator Brown's proposal has no supporting reasoning whatever.

Yours,

S. O'Leary

BERT AND BERYL ON PLEBISCITES

Bert	A plebiscite? – wots that Beryl?.
Beryl	They tell me it's only half as bad as two plebiscites!
Bert	Very funny – but what is it?
Beryl	I'm told it's a cross between a pleb (a worker) and a socialite – others tell me it's like a placebo referendum – a sort of Claytons referendum. No one seems to know what it is.
Bert	OK luv, but who wants one?
Beryl	Kevin Rudd and the ARM – RWMs – not only want ONE but TWO plebiscites!
Bert	But what are they – and why two luv? And wot's an RWM?
Beryl	No one seems to know what they are. RWM means Republicans Without a Model.
Bert	OK but what's the deal? Why have one anyway and why have two?'
Beryl	Well, they reckon they want to change to a republic of some sort.
Bert	Do they – which one? I have heard there's over 140 different models in the world and RWMs have 6 of their own. Surely they can tell us which is better than wot we've got?
Beryl	Dunno. I think they must want to keep it secret. Hey! Maybe they have not got one.
Bert	OK, so they want a republic – but how come 2 plebiscites help that?
Beryl	They tell me. You must just vote YES or NO – if you want to (not compulsory.)
Bert	But if we don't know what a plebiscite actually is – what's the point?
Beryl	Dunno darl I really don't.

Bert	Is there some Act of Parliament or something which says how a plebiscite works?
Beryl	Well, they tell me even the Electoral Commission has no authority to hold one and therefore no one knows what it costs, or how it works.
Bert	WHAT! So: We don't know what it is. We don't know what we're voting for. There's no authority to hold one. And we don't know what it costs. (Some say one or two billion.) Are those RWMs crazy?
Beryl	One or two billion is the cost of two plebiscites PLUS a referendum to change the Australian Constitution AND change the 6 State Constitutions also. Didn't you know only a referendum can change our Constitution?
Bert	But can't a couple of plebiscites change our constitution and save money?
Beryl	Nah! No way! A lawyer friend of mine said plebiscites can't change our Constitution or anything else. They are only popularity polls - we've gotta have a referendum as per our Constitution. I just told you that!
Bert	You're kidding! So now: (a) we not only don't know what plebiscites are (b) we not only don't know what we're voting for (c) there's no authority to hold 'em and now you tell me (d) they are not compulsory and they can't change anything anyhow!! So why on earth do the RWMs want to spend one or two billion of our dough on THAT? To that I say "no way Faye!"
Beryl	Me too darl. 'n by the way, it's Beryl not Faye! If they want to force us to spend our dough in big licks like that I'd rather they spend it on Education, Health and all those important things - and maybe more spondoolies for me next baby.
Bert	Yeah darl I agree.
Beryl	They reckon even the RWMs who know all about this stuff are against it.
Bert	Spot on! My boss showed me a report last week in one of those rags the toffs read - I've got the cutting here - I've kept it. Listen to these RWMs Tim Fisher <i>"a plebiscite would have no power to change anything and would be absolutely no guarantee of a successful republican end process."</i> Amanda Vanstone <i>"A plebiscite is an abrogation of responsibility."</i> Prof. Greg Craven <i>"It is futile to think that a plebiscite will solve the problem."</i> They reckon even RWM Malcolm Turnbull is totally against it. ARM Executive Will Fowles <i>"A plebiscite will make the ARM feel better about itself."</i>
Beryl	Well - so what - I sure won't feel better about myself until I know why we're asked to vote blind (no model again) and what will it cost and why it can't change anything anyhow!
Bert	The late Richard McGarvie: <i>"A plebiscite would be of little advantage unless voters had before them the actual models proposed."</i> Newman Martin: <i>"republicans have not been critical enough about the possible risks involved in holding a plebiscite."</i> Prof. Williams: <i>"A plebiscite is a glorified opinion poll; it does not have any</i>

	<p><i>constitutional significance whatsoever.</i></p> <p>That Liberal Senator Payne is a top gun ARM executive and IT supports plebiscites – so she must too. If so she’s a Liberal supporting ALP policy – WOT IS HAPPENING HERE!?!? The ALP had a poll in 2004 of 1000 young voters on what WAS important. Number 1 was Education 25%, Number 13 (the last on the list) was a republic – 1%. Nuff said. Reckon this republic business is right off the radar screen. Let’s go start another baby and collect \$3000. When I said “No way Faye” (whoops sorry!) I didn’t know the top RWMs were knocking it.</p>
Beryl	If you call me Faye again I’ll say yes to everything ‘cept you know what!
Bert	Sorry luv, but I mean if even these top RWM people are against it – why on earth does Mr Rudd go on like this? I mean – they’re experts.
Beryl	<p>Beats me Pete (there!!) I mean for goodness sake we’ve got the best country in the world – why all this rubbish and cost to change it to no one knows what.</p> <p>Tell you what, here’s a bit of sense from another top RWM – one of those Government experts, Prof. Cheryl Saunders. The office tea lady gave it to me and she reckons Prof. Saunders said: <i>“If you want to change our system:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. First explain the current arrangements</i> <i>2. Then explain the proposed alternative</i> <i>3. Then deal with the queries that arise – before the vote takes place.”</i> <p>Now THERE’S some fair dinkum ridgy didge common sense. At least some RWMs are gooduns.</p>
Bert	Do we go with Saunders, Darl?
Beryl	All the way, Ray – sorry, I mean Bert.
Bert	Hey, before we go here’s a beauty our little Willy brought home from school – his mate’s Dad is a Pollie. Listen to this: <i>“No one should consider changing something they don’t fully understand.”</i> He said it came from the Editor of the Parliamentary Magazine or something – one of the government blurbs.
Beryl	Spot on Bert! So are we together now? We just will not vote for RWM Rudd or any Lib or anyone else who supports plebiscites, republics and offers no dough for my next baby. Hey! Let’s become swinging voters.
Bert	Yeah! Lets.
Beryl	I’ve thought of a use for the plebiscite things: get the RWMs to fund their own plebiscite to see which model is supported by most of ‘em.
Bert	Good one! Hey, we’re supposed to go to the footy – let’s go!

AFTER THE GAME

Bert	Bloody boring game, love. But I suddenly had a few thoughts on this plebiscite business.
Beryl	Oh, for Pete’s sake, Bert – I thought we’d done that to death!

Bert	Not quite. I thought to myself: say the whole bloody country votes YES they want to change to “a republic” and then were given a heap of different models to choose from, how the hell do you and I and our mates at the factory (I know we don’t want to) select one we might go for? I mean we know how to get to Bondi for a dip and to our local for a cooling ale after, but I’d rather try to design a new bloody Harbour Bridge!
Beryl	Cut it out – you been smoking something funny?
Bert	Nah, but I mean those RWMs have got real brainy toffs supporting them. Yer know, Sir (or is it Sire) Brennan and a guy called Anthony Mason – both Chief Judges of that High Court on the creek at Canberra. Why can’t THEY select one – for Ch—Pete’s sake they’re retired and we’re still bloody paying them!
Beryl	Fair enuff, Bert, and I’ve just thought: “What if – two things: (1) they can’t get agreement on a model and (2) what if the model they somehow choose (Gord knows how) ends up “Floored and unworkable” as the referendum model was?
Bert	On ya, Beryl, now you got me going. How about this? “What if a big mob voted YES to change and then found the model selected was a rotter and voted no to it?
Beryl	Oh my God! What a waste of dough. I’m sick of this. Call it a day. It’s Sunday and it’s time we had a bit of fun together.
Bert	Fair dinkum? OK let’s go! If it’s a girl, should we call her ‘Plebbie?’
Beryl	Why not, and finally the butcher’s just put a good question for RWMs: “ <i>name a republic that has a better working Constitution than Australia’s</i> ”
Bert	Hey, what a bewdy! C’mon, enuf of this rubbish, let’s go!
