

Plebiscite for an Australian Republic Bill

Submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration.

I wish to make the following brief submission in support of the bill's proposal to require a plebiscite at the next federal election on whether Australia should be a republic:

I have always been inspired by the noble ideals behind the creation of the American and French Republics and have always regarded non-elected hereditary monarchies as totally undemocratic and alien to those ideals.

I believe that the concept of hereditary monarchies is also alien to the very nature of Australian-ness and the fact that we still persist with having a foreign monarch as our head of state is a complete anachronism.

In my former position as Chief Medical Officer for Australia I represented the country at many international forums such as the World Health Assembly and led Australian delegations to many countries. I was always embarrassed by the foreign affairs protocol that demanded my counterparts from other countries toast the British Queen as our head of state.

Two recent anecdotes are worth reciting in this regard:

1. An international colleague of mine asked me recently how long it had been since we ceased being a British colony. She could not believe that 108 years later we still did not have an Australian as our Head of State and asked "Aren't you all ashamed of that?"
2. One of the enduring interviews with a member of the crowd watching the inauguration of President Obama was with an overjoyed grandmother who was going to tell her grandchildren that anyone in the USA can aspire to becoming President. No grandmother in Australia can do that! Our Head of State is reserved (so far in perpetuity) for a foreigner - an English person who is a member of the Windsor family.

These highlight to me the ridiculous situation Australia is in at the moment with regard to our constitutional arrangements.

I strongly support a question being put to the people at the next election asking something like "After 109 years of nationhood do you support Australia becoming a Republic with an Australian Head of State?"

{Assuming a win for the Yes vote our wisest heads can then turn their attention to what might be the most appropriate model for Australia. I support a low-key approach with a search committee - with representatives from all states and territories - coming up with three or four names.

One page CVs of these would then be published in the newspapers. No campaigning or expenditure of funds for advertising would be allowed.

The names would be put to the people to vote on either by postal vote or online at a time separate from federal elections.}

Dr Tony Adams AM