

# **DISSENTING REPORT BY SENATOR NIGEL SCULLION**

1.1 The issue of whether Australia should become a republic was comprehensively considered and discussed in the context of the 1998 Constitutional Convention and 1999 referendum. The Australian people rejected the republic proposal put to them at the 1999 referendum. Nothing has changed since that time. No new issues of significance have arisen to suggest that the republic question should be put back on the national agenda in the immediate future. I therefore believe that it is unnecessary and inappropriate to revisit the issue of whether Australia should become a republic at this time.

1.2 I support the Committee's comments on the importance of improving education and awareness of Australia's Constitution and our government processes. I am concerned, however, about the aspects of the Committee's recommendations that link the proposed constitutional educational program to a process for moving towards an Australian republic. I strongly believe that a civics and constitutional education program is needed regardless of the republic issue.

1.3 I recognise that the Committee received evidence of a lack of understanding in the Australian community of the Constitution and system of government. Recent programs and initiatives in schools have improved awareness of our government processes and Constitution among younger Australians. These sorts of educational programs could be extended to the broader Australian population to help all Australians gain a stronger understanding of Australian democracy.

1.4 I believe that an education program should be funded and implemented by government to help all Australians improve their understanding of our democratic processes and system of government. This education program should recognise the diversity of the Australian population and be inclusive of all Australians.

## **Recommendation 1**

**1.5 That an ongoing education program be funded and implemented by the Commonwealth Government to improve the knowledge and understanding of all Australians about our Constitution and system of government. This education program should recognise the diversity of the Australian population, and be inclusive of all Australians.**

**Senator Nigel Scullion**

**Country Liberal Party**

