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# Is Constitutional Freedom Enough? The Battle for the Heart and Soul of a Nation

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Vice-Chancellor, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen my thanks to Curtin University for giving a recovering - but certainly not fully recovered - political addict like me the opportunity to reflect on our nation and its future. It's a real privilege to do it on an occasion that honours the contribution John Curtin made to the country in earlier times - as activist, journalist, Member of Parliament, Labor Party leader and then Prime Minister. It was a life in which the big picture was never lost, despite the day-to-day personal and political challenges he faced. Unlike too many politicians today he understood that a strong economy and a secure nation needed a good and fair society. Such a society is, as we might say, a necessary if not sufficient condition for national growth and security. Tackling what this means today when it comes to public policy is one way to carry forward the Curtin legacy. Tonight, however, I'm going to follow another, but not unrelated path.

The topic I've chosen isn't on the top of - or indeed in - the list of issues our nation's leaders has before them today. It's summarised by a question: Is it enough that we be legally free, that the Constitution is ours and ours to change or does freedom carry a deeper meaning that requires us to do more? It's a bit like that discussion in political philosophy between "freedom from" and "freedom to". In Australia's case such a discussion feeds off our history, initially as coloniser and colony and then as nation-state and global citizen. It's a discussion sometimes live and sometimes dormant but never completely absent. Firstly, there's the issue of the nation's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and their recognition. That is on the agenda today and hopefully heading towards legislation and a referendum. The outcome here will tell us a lot about Australia today, how we understand our history and what we expect from our society and its institutions when it comes to the question of race. Secondly, there's the question of our democracy and whether the Constitution drafted in the 1890s adequately describes our system and how we expect it to work. The last time reforms under this heading were attempted was in 1988 when four referendum questions dealing with parliamentary terms, fair elections, local government and rights and freedoms were rejected. Thirdly, there is the question of our ongoing links to the British Crown and whether or not they should be cut and a new republican institution created. Does true freedom require a republic as the next step in the journey, political and cultural, that has seen Australia move from six colonies to a self-governed and sovereign nation or is it the case that we can't imagine let alone create anything better than that which the Queen delivers to us today?

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I will outline the development of my own views on this issue, from patriotism to radicalism, and then move to attempt to distil the essence of the debate by looking into what it is that divides the true believers on both sides of the fence. I will argue that this division is best explained in terms of culture and that the real-world politics of the matter are much more complicated. Finally I will outline what I see to be the consequences of these complications for supporters of an Australian republic. I will argue that without some form of democratic deliberation (what I call a republican means for a republican end) the realization of a republic may be prove to be a bridge too far.

#### ON COMING TO THE REPUBLIC

Importantly there is a direct and personal connection tonight between my chosen topic and John Curtin. To explain this I need to take you back to my home town of Geraldton in the 1950s and 60s. It was there in my high school years that I took on board support for an Australian republic with one of our own as head-of-state. I remember it well - and the school essay I wrote outlining my views. On many other matters related to politics and society I've changed my views but not on this one - it's embedded in my political DNA!

At this time Britain still loomed large in our culture and consciousness. We sang "God save the Queen", celebrated "Empire Day" and a good number of our vice-regal representatives were British knights. It was a powerful trifecta of influence - the Queen, the Empire and British ideas of hierarchy. However, it wasn't all sweet sailing for proponents of this "New Britannia" and there were plenty of tensions below the surface.

Firstly, there was the matter of the Second World War, the fall of Singapore and the clashes between Curtin and Churchill over strategy and troop deployments. Both my parents - and most of their friends and relatives - had served in the Australian Defence Force and whatever their politics, left or right, Curtin was their hero. It was simple - he stood tall in defence of Australian interests. Time and time again I heard this said - and that Britain couldn't be trusted when our national interests were at stake. Britain was Britain and Australia was Australia with its own boundaries to protect, geographic, social and economic.

Secondly, there was a recognition that Britain was turning to Europe, if only hesitatingly at first, as a matter of global strategy. We'd seen how complacency on the question of Asian politics had caught us on the back foot in the 1940s and there was a strong view we weren't going to let that happen again. For security and economic reasons our eyes were turning to north and south-east Asia and being a white Anglo-Saxon enclave celebrating empire and its institutions rather than questioning their morality and utility was increasingly seen as a liability. We needed a post-colonial philosophy and language for what was becoming a post-colonial world.

None of these developments necessarily imply a republican conclusion. Nor was it the case that Curtin was a republican. However, they are the sorts of issues that provide food for thought for a young and active mind and in my case they took me to the Australian republic. It was a mixture of Australia-first, hostility to British notions of class and hierarchy and recognition of the implications for Australia of a changing world.

For my generation ideas like this were but the first step and the belief in an Australian republic as one part of a wider reform of Australian society and politics came later; in my case when a university student in the 1970s. This was an important and revolutionary time in Australian politics. Existing assumptions related to race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, economic

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growth and the environment, class and hierarchy and national defence and security were all put to the test of critical reasoning and found wanting. At the time it looked as if a new generation of socialists was coming into being, as they'd done in and around the creation of the Commonwealth of Australia. In fact the political tribe that emerged to play a significant role in late twentieth century politics was decidedly left-liberal with John Stuart Mill rather than Karl Marx as the major influence. It became a politics based on human rights rather than the laws of history and class struggle. Just think of the list of items on the reform program of the 1980s and 1990s:

- indigenous rights replacing terra nullius;
- entrepreneurialism and the market replacing protectionism; multiculturalism replacing white Anglo-Saxon Australia;
- social equality replacing social tradition;
- the triple bottom-line replacing the Gross Domestic Product; and
- An Australian republic incorporating human-rights replacing the constitutional monarchy.

Connected with this radical agenda were alternative views of Australian history and the emergence of the Commonwealth. It challenged not just the historians of the right who gloried in the triumph of British values but also those of the left who saw a working-class on the march but who ignored race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality and the environment in their thought and practice. It was believed that the key turning points in our history - the coming of the British in 1788 and the creation of the Commonwealth in 1901 carried contradictions - both moral and political - that needed to be overcome in the interest of national renewal; and that meant a re-working of the social contract between the people and those who governed them. It was expected - and hoped - that a truly liberal, egalitarian and democratic republic would be the result.

What we see in my own case study are the two elements of twentieth-century republicanism in Australia - a desire to be free and independent from British power and influence on the one hand (what we might call Australian patriotism) and a commitment to a truly liberal and democratic constitution on the other (what we might call Australian radicalism). There is, of course, no logical inconsistency between patriotism and radicalism but in the real world of Australian republicanism there was - and still are - real differences at play on just how far change should go; some saying a so-called "crowned republic" is enough, others that minimal or moderate change with an Australian as head-of-state would fit the bill, and others again that anything short of radical overhaul is inadequate.

#### THE LONG ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE

To this theme I will return later in my talk but now would like to take you to some important facts - the Queen is still with us and the original Constitution is still largely intact. We've taken 44 proposals to referendum but only eight (or 18 per cent) have been successful. At the same time, however, there has been enormous change, a lot of it the result of campaigns initiated by and carried into the community and our parliaments by the baby boomer radicals. Tonight my focus is on the theme of national freedom and independence and how they have developed. In this context it's important to remember that the 1901 Constitution created a self-governing colony with the British Parliament retaining full legislative power over us. For Australian patriots this was an unacceptable situation and a long march commenced that culminated in the passage of the Australia Act in 1986.

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A number of issues were at stake. Who had the authority to advise the Monarch on matters Australian, including the appointment of the vice-regal representatives? Who had the final say over the interpretation of the Constitution? Who had ultimate authority over the words of the Australian Constitution? Discussion and debate over these matters was complicated and involved not just Buckingham Palace, the British and Australian Governments but also the Australian States and the High Court. Much could be said about these debates but tonight I'm only interested in the outcome and what it means. Linked to these constitutional questions are those related to our political culture such as the national anthem, the flag, our oaths of allegiance and the terminology we use generally in our legal system?

The long title of the Australia Act 1986 says it all: "An Act to bring constitutional arrangements affecting the Commonwealth and the States into conformity with the status of the Commonwealth of Australia as a sovereign, independent and federal nation". No longer is it possible for Britain to legislate with effect in Australia or for their governments to be involved in our government. Nor is it possible for there to be appeals to the Privy Council. It's not as if all of these things happened as if "out of the blue" as there had been earlier developments both constitutional, for example the Statute of Westminster of 1931 adopted by Australia in 1942, and political, for example over the appointment of Sir Isaac Isaacs as the first Australian-born Governor-General. However, it was the Australia Act that produced what we can safely say was a substantial settlement of the basic constitutional questions related to national sovereignty. What this means is that the Constitution governs all, including the Queen (who is the Queen of Australia) and can only be interpreted by Australian courts and changed by the Australian people voting in a referendum.

Our flag came soon after federation following a competition but it wasn't until the 1970s that Advance Australia Fair (after a competition and nationwide poll) replaced God Save the Queen and a locally controlled and managed Australian Honours System was created. In the 1990s a new and democratised citizenship pledge ("I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people, whose democratic beliefs I share, whose rights and liberties I respect, and whose laws I will uphold and obey") was adopted. Oaths of allegiance for our major office-holders remain controversial with God in for Tony Abbott and Kevin Rudd but out for Julia Gillard and the Queen in for Tony Abbott but out for Julia Gillard and Kevin Rudd. In fact for Tony Abbott it was a case of committing to serve both "the people of Australia" and "Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Australia".

Lawyers in the room know too that debate over the use of SC (Senior Counsel) as opposed to QC (Queen's Counsel) still continues following a Queensland decision to reinstate QC in 2013.

#### GOING IT ALONE - FOR AND AGAINST

All of this activity in support of - and to some extent against - going it alone in cultural expression and terminology reminds us that the British Monarch is still at the peak of our system, signing off on who are to be the Governors and Governors-General, even if doing so on the advice of the Premiers and Prime Ministers. In fact Sections 58 and 59 of our Constitution give the Queen a degree of legislative power that reflects colonial beliefs from the late nineteenth century; a check just to make sure British interests can be protected if necessary. Under 59 she can annul an Australian law within twelve months of its enactment - even if signed off by the Governor-General. Under 58 the Governor-General can withhold assent to a bill passed by the two houses

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and send it to the Queen for her consideration. I'm sure we'd say such powers are relics and would never be used, however, they are there and, as Malcolm Turnbull pointed out in his Edmund Barton Lecture they are "no doubt perfectly enforceable".

This being said my argument tonight is based on the limited role the Queen is actually playing today rather than what a literal reading of the Constitution may produce. My question is - just what is at stake for those who support and those who oppose this continuing link with the Crown? To answer this question I will start by seeking to enter the minds of the true believers in each camp, in other words into the minds of those for whom this issue is a point of high principle. To do this I'm calling on my own experience as a member and now chair of the Australian Republican Movement (ARM) and on what I perceive to be the core values of those who actively support our constitutional monarchy through organisations like Australians for a Constitutional Monarchy (ACM). It's important to be as objective as possible about this - and I'll do my best.

In the world view of the monarchists the Queen is more than a non-contentious link in the constitutional chain that sees Governors and Governors-General appointed; rather she is an essential part of our political system. Firstly, she provides a living link between Australia, the history of Britain and the politics of the parliamentary government. By being there she directs us on a journey of political education involving the emergence and development of the Common Law, the Parliament and democratic accountability. It may not be perfect but it is seen as the best that history has produced.

Second, she is a source of education and inspiration for our vice-regal representatives. The current Queen in particular is seen as an excellent example of how they should serve the public, support our diverse and multicultural society and manage the powers given under the Constitution, including the reserve powers. The royal family is seen as particularly well educated in the task of representing the nation at large and well worth emulating.

Thirdly, we see advocacy related to the idea of a mixed constitution, with the Queen there as a stabilising and balancing force in an otherwise unruly society. Take the hereditary monarch and her (or his) reserve powers out of the picture, so the argument goes, and we will be left with politicians and their power plays; with uncertainty replacing stability at the heart of politics. The fact that this role is given under our Constitution to the vice-regal representatives isn't seen to detract from the case being made.

In the republican camp the core arguments relate to national self-respect, equal opportunity and democratic philosophy. The starting point is simple - it is wrong for Australia to have a citizen (and resident) of another nation as our head-of-state, no matter how limited the role may be. A republic is seen as a matter of self-respect and collective pride; the logical next step for a process that took us to the Australia Act in 1986 and can be seen at work in the changes to the way we describe and express ourselves as a people, not insignificant factors in any nation's make-up.

Secondly, and in response to the fact that the Queen is the Queen of Australia and pledged to act as such rather than as a representative of the British people and their government, is the rejection of the hereditary principle. It is seen as offensive to the twin principles of merit and equal opportunity that apply - or ought to apply - for our public service and multicultural society in general. The argument here is simple - the institutions creating our head-of-state should be a reflection of what we believe as a people and promoted as such. Indeed true political education requires no less.

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Thirdly, and necessarily, is the argument that it is not beyond the wit and wisdom of the nation to replace our monarch with an institution and set of rules that can provide a stable framework and certainty for those involved in the day-to-day battles of politics. Indeed the point is made that the founders of the nation did expect future generations to reflect on the continuing relevance of the Constitution they had created and had confidence that change could be managed well. If not, why the provision for referenda? Nor do republicans dispute the importance of understanding British history as an important part of a good political education or that the Queen is an exemplar of professionalism and public service. However, these remain ideas and examples from another place, another time and another system. We didn't accept all of them when designing our own institutions in the 1890s and nor should we artificially constrain our vision today on issues like the appointment and role of a head-of-state. Indeed the whole point of the social contract approach we associate with the English Enlightenment is that it facilitates continual renewal of system and law.

At the very basis of the disagreement between the two sides of true believers is a different perception of "going it alone" and whether it is worth the effort. The monarchists say no good can come of it and we have a system that should be celebrated rather than changed. It's one thing, they say, to have freed ourselves from the British Government but quite another to seek to end ties to the Crown. Republicans say we can and should do better as a proud and independent people, whatever the merits of the current Queen and Constitution. They say what we've inherited is less important than what we can create as a free people.

#### THE REAL WORLD OF POLITICS

Such a debate over the relevance of the Crown is part of our political culture creating both challenges and opportunities for those who prosecute a case for change. Firstly there is the question of community attitudes about change itself. We resist "going it alone" in our defence and foreign policies for fear that our security will be threatened. We resist "going it alone" in our environmental positioning and policies for fear that our economy will be threatened. More generally we could say ideas do play a role in our politics but coupled with a healthy pragmatism: Has the idea been translated into an acceptable policy? Are those who have carriage of the idea to be trusted when it comes to its implementation? It's possible to believe in something "in theory" but balk at efforts to put it into "practice".

In other respects, however, we do "go it alone" - and with conviction - the lengthy process leading up to and including the Australia Act being a "behind-the-scenes" example. Neither is it the case that patriotism and its twin brother nationalism are missing elements in Australian politics; whether our reference points are the past and or the present and whether or not the patriots in question are on the left or right of politics. For example a crowned republic so called backed up by White Australia, a regulated labour market and a protected economy was a powerful pole of attraction within the developing labour movement. Whilst supporters of an Australian republic may like to think patriotism is theirs by right the circumstances of our history and the nature of the debates over what is in our national interest make it all that much more complicated. Finding a clear path through the jungle of class, party and ideology has always proved difficult for those keen on a break from the Crown.

What this tells us is that the debate on this question of "going it alone, yes or no" is just one of many debates we have about our society and political system and it can't neatly draw together

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under its wing other interests and other tribes. You can favour Labor but be a monarchist, just as you can be a Liberal and a republican. You can be Green but happy to call upon Prince Charles to support your cause. You can support the Monarchy but still believe reform is necessary, Michael Kirby being an example. You can support the Australian republic but only if the changes are minimal, the late Richard McGarvie being an example. Indeed during the 1990s the republican camp was divided on its politics between conservatives, moderates and radicals and these differences may have revealed themselves over the detail of a republic but were also a reflection of deep differences in politics and philosophy.

On the monarchist side you can support or oppose knights and dames as part of our system of national honours, you can support or oppose the traditional oaths of allegiance that require statements of loyalty to "the Queen and her successors" and you can support or oppose few or many royal visits to Australia. Just think of the different ways David Flint and Michael Kirby from the community - or John Howard and Tony Abbott from within politics - handled all of those issues. In a sense it's as if there is an egalitarian - and might we say "republican" - wedge within the monarchist camp itself- just as there is a sceptical - and might we say "monarchist" - wedge within the republican camp more generally considered.

For these reasons it's best to describe the war between the true believers as a culture war over the question of whether or not we stick with the Crown. In this war it's a little easier for the monarchists because they have a clearly defined policy bottom-line whereas the republicans are united only by attitude and aspiration, but not specifics over the means and ends to be chosen. What this means is that it's quite possible for the republicans to win a culture war without winning the political battle that must follow if change is to be legislated. This is precisely what happened in the 1990s when there was strong evidence for a majority in favour of an Australian republic but not for the specific proposal that went to referendum in 1999.

The Australian republic too is in real competition for political space. Interesting and involving people in a campaign to create a new national institution comes up against not only the yet to be completed campaigns associated with the radical reform agenda from the 1960s and 70s, for example indigenous recognition and a Bill or Charter of Rights but also campaigns from the more conservative monarchists to toughen up, or at least defend more vigorously the "monarchical element" in our Constitution. Note as well the view that developed in the 1990s - characterized by John Howard's "relaxed and comfortable" reference - that there had been too much change in Australia and we needed to pause and digest it all. Such an attitude works against change of any sort, whether economic, social or constitutional. All of this reminds us that debate over the question of whether we should go it alone doesn't occur in a vacuum, but rather in the context of competing views on a wide range of social, economic, political and environmental questions.

#### IS THE REPUBLIC A LOST CAUSE?

This raises awkward questions for those wishing to amend the Constitution and have an Australian as our head-of-state - will it be possible to get the issue back onto the parliamentary agenda again? Is an Australian republic a goal too difficult - just too complicated to digest and resolve? Last time around the project would never have gathered as much momentum as it did without the leadership of Paul Keating. He was a true believer who understood that things don't just happen they have to be made to happen and just as Gough Whitlam inspired the idealists of the 1960s to join or support Labor Keating inspired republicans to join or support the ARM.

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Without Keating the republic would have remained what it had always been - a good idea but no more than that. John Howard, who came to power in 1996, let it run its course but under terms and conditions that limited its chances for success. No conspiracy there just politics as one should expect it to be so! Rather than reconsider strategy in the light of this change of national leadership the ARM took a calculated risk and ploughed ahead, only to fail at the last hurdle in 1999.

These events remind us that there is nothing inevitable about the Australian republic. Yes, it is true that "history" would appear to be on our side - the move to nationhood, one of our own as Governor-General, an end to appeals to the Privy Council and the Australia Act all indicate a continuing move to true and meaningful independence. It's a powerful argument for change but when it comes to a republican constitution it's that's much harder. It's not just that a referendum will be required but also that it represents a "last stand" for the monarchists. As we saw they will fight hard - and even harder if necessary - to defend their beliefs. They aren't just "living in the past" as we republicans like to say, they are powerful advocates and relentless campaigners for their cause. All they have to do is get a majority overall or a majority in a majority of states to vote "no" in a referendum. Short of that, all they need to do is convince politicians to steer clear of the issue, either in the short run ("out of respect the least we should do it wait for the Queen to abdicate or die") or in the medium and long terms ("there are many more important issues for Australians than changing a system that works with a minimum of fuss").

To my mind a significant hindrance to the republican cause is this belief that it will be "inevitable". It leads to complacency about the efforts that will be required to achieve the republic. It leads republicans to think that it won't be a matter of "politics" and that "the people" will see "reason" in the face of "opinion". It also leads republicans to think that whatever model is put forward - and however it is developed - will be acceptable to the general public whose decision it will be. Rather, the truth is that the voters will need to be convinced that both process and model meet the tough standards they set when considering major changes of this sort. Indeed we need to remind ourselves that there are good republics, not so good republics and bad republics.

This all being said at the heart of the republican vision is a powerful idea - Australia in control of all of its institutions and with one of its own citizens as head-of-state. The idea that we should stop now that the Queen is the Queen of Australia leaves an empty taste in the mouths of many Australian like me. What's the point of being in charge if we so radically reduce our options for the future? Isn't it demeaning to think that when the Queen moves on the current system doesn't give us a role in choosing her replacement? Do we really believe we couldn't design a better system? I believe this is a culture war republicans can win but it needs a strategy to back it up and one that will involve the people at every step of the way. It's now become clear, for example, that the monarchists have added the insights of celebrity politics to their armoury. They have marketed and personalised the royal family in a very clever and contemporary way. We have the Queen ("solid and dependable"), Prince Charles ("eccentric but interesting") and Prince William ("and Kate and baby George"); in other words the matriarch, the slightly wayward son and the dashing grandson. Why wouldn't we wish to be a part of all that? It's fun and it's something we can share with all others who have the Queen as their head-of- state.

So it shall be I suspect - Australian republic or not - just as it is with Hollywood, and indeed, our own politics today. However, there are risks in this for the royal family as we saw in the Charles and Diana debacle and we also know that when monarchists here push their luck too far there is



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push back from the general public. We've seen this with the negative response to Tony Abbott's move to restore knights and dames to our system of honours and also to his decision to swear allegiance to "Her Majesty" and not just to "the Australian people". I think it's fair to say that Australians want their monarchists to be pragmatic and nationalist - like John Howard in fact. However, we need also to note the significant support Quentin Bryce received when she said that "perhaps, one day, one young (Australian) girl or boy may even grow up to be our nation's first head of state". With these remarks she touched upon some of the deepest instincts we have about independence, equality and opportunity. She was thinking aloud - and in a republican way. Why shouldn't an Australian citizen be our head of state? Why shouldn't any of us, whatever our religion or background, be entitled to be considered for such a position?

#### A REPUBLICAN MEANS FOR A REPUBLICAN END

This takes us to the republicans, particularly those in the political class. Time and time again they are sent a clear message - it's the people who "own" the Constitution and whose views need to prevail if change is to be successful. These voters don't like it when the issue is treated as a political football and they don't like it when their wishes are not taken seriously and ignored. They will be suspicious of any "fix" agreed at the top and of any Parliamentary Committee or Constitution Convention set up as the last one was and which looked like a mini-Parliament with all of its factions and posturing. They want republicans all - be they are radicals, moderates or minimalists to take a breath and realise it is the people and not they who need to be convinced on what would be best.

Those wanting to make it happen will need to ensure the people are in charge every step of the way. As I argued at some length in my Manning Clark Lecture ("A Republican History of Australia") delivered in Canberra earlier this year we need a republican means for a republican end. When the time arrives for developing a model for the future deliberative democracy will be required; random selection to achieve representativeness and proper facilitation to ensure deliberation. Recent examples here and overseas confirm the practicality and effectiveness of this approach. In Australia in 2009 a Citizens' Parliament of 150 citizens, one from each electorate selected at random from the electoral roll, met in Canberra to consider improvements to our political system. By all accounts this event, which was sponsored by the not-for-profit New Democracy Foundation, produced high quality deliberation, a shifting of views as it progressed and specific recommendations at the end. I wasn't surprised this Parliament went well as my own government in Western Australia had been an active in this space, the stand out example being our Dialogue with the City where 1,100 participants (including one third that were randomly selected) deliberated on the future of metropolitan Perth. Similar things have happened in Ireland where a government appointed chair, 66 randomly selected citizens and 33 legislators from across the political spectrum have been meeting to recommend on a range of specified matters. In this case the government isn't obliged to implement the recommendations, just ensure they are debated properly in the Legislature. Amongst other things they have recommended amendments of the Constitution to replace the offence of "blasphemy" with a new general provision to include incitement to religious hatred, to include an explicit provision on gender equality and to allow for same-sex marriage. In British Columbia in Canada in 2005 a Citizen Assembly selected by lot met over twelve months to examine the Province's electoral system. Their recommendation for change to a Single-Transferable Vote system was supported by 57.7% in a referendum that followed but this was just short of the 60% required under their constitution.

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I'm confident a democratic deliberation along these lines and focussed on the selection and powers of an Australian head-of-state is capable of doing two things, firstly, breaking the back of community resistance to top down initiatives defined and controlled by the political class and, secondly, producing an effective working model for an Australian republic. The fact remains, however, that putting the republic on the agenda and initiating a process like this is currently seen as a bridge too far. Some are opposed on principle, some worry about opening up the debate and many just don't care. It's become a symbol for much that is Australian politics today - limited and limiting, distrustful and destructive, adversarial and alienating. This takes us into that "don't care" province about which much has been said in recent times. However, "not caring" and "not wanting to care" are two different things. Ask the people to care about the position of head-of-state in our Constitution by formally involving them and they will - they want more engagement not less. It is leadership to this end - what we quite properly call republican leadership - that is needed for the cause of the Australian republic to advance.

It's old and elitist thinking about politics that many monarchists rely on but which republicans must avoid if the Australian republic is to be a possibility. But let me conclude on another note - isn't it strange that we spend so much time debating the question of what is an appropriate national day - Australia Day, Federation Day, Anzac Day, etc. - when such a day actually awaits us, and is ours to make? That will be the day the nation exercises the freedom it possess to create another freedom; the freedom to choose who amongst us shall be head-of-state and what powers and responsibilities they should have. It will liberate us in ways yet unknown - going it alone is like that - but such that after