

WOMEN for an **Australian Republic**

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Dear Editor

The Prime Minister wants to shut down the Republic debate as an issue for the election so that it doesn't become a distraction from her point of view. That is understandable.

However, she revealed at the National Press Club on 15 July that she is uninformed about the present state of the Republic campaign. No one wants a referendum right now.

There is a difference between holding a referendum and staging some non-binding indicative polls over the next few years ahead of the final vote.

What republican activists want is for the people to have their say. First, do they want to sever ties with the British monarchy?

Second, ask the people about how they want to elect their head of state. Republic supporters overwhelmingly favour direct election now. Let's move on and get the job finished.

The Republic is not about what republican activists and politicians think but what the people want. After all, there are around a million new voters on the electoral rolls since the 1999 Referendum.

The "Republic" has already become shorthand for "the future of the country" as the people look for a way to improve our bogged-down democracy. Both the major parties have sat on their hands about the Republic over the last three years.

Holding one or more non-binding votes before a referendum to change the Constitution is ALP policy. If the Liberals are serious about winning government, they need to quickly get themselves a policy and timetable on the Republic too.

Only the Greens have done something about it. Senator Bob Brown's bill to hold a non-binding vote along with the 2010 federal election asking voters if they were in favour of a Republic was swatted aside by a Senate Inquiry last year and disappeared without trace. More's the pity.

SARAH BRASCH
Women for an Australian Republic
Canberra ACT