

**Australian Republican Movement
Real Republic Ltd
Women for an Australian Republic
Republicans vote too**



Thursday, August 5th, 2010

media release

Despite 59 per cent or more of Australians expressing support for an Australian republic in the last major survey done on the subject* neither of the major political parties have been willing to take up the issue during this campaign.

“The leaders of the major parties are uninterested in the republic as an issue for the election because their advisers cannot convince themselves how they can turn the issue to party political advantage,” said the Chair of the Australian Republican Movement, Major General Michael Keating.

“However, the issue is very important to a great many Australian voters and is not a party political issue” he said.

“Without a republic, Australia is unable to project an unambiguous sense of itself to the world and no Australian can aspire to the highest office in the land.”

“All those elected on 21 August will, in fact, be elected by voters who want a republic and they should be interested in the issues that the people are interested in.”

In the lead up to the 2010 election, the Australian Republican Movement is sending a brief survey to all candidates and sitting members to record their attitude towards an Australian republic.

Together with two other republican groups, Real Republic and Women for an Australian Republic, the ARM is also releasing a Policy Statement on the Republic for the 2010 Election calling on all the major parties and all candidates to lift their game.

“We believe that all the major parties must have a policy on an Australian republic, and a plan to implement a process that will lead to the people being able to vote on the issue again in a referendum,” said Major General Keating.

“2015 will be the 100th anniversary of Gallipoli. It will be most disappointing for Australians if we have not cut the umbilical cord to Britain by then.”

***Research by independent research body UMR, October 2009**

CONTACTS:

Comment: Mike Keating, ARM, chair@republic.org.au, 0412 337 137

Comment: David Muir, Real Republic, David.Muir@hwlebsworth.com.au, 0419 303 532

Comment: Sarah Brasch, Women for an Australian Republic, sarahbee@webone.com.au, 0419 243 468

Media Liaison: David Donovan, media@republic.org.au, 0403 237 880

**Australian Republican Movement
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Time to Start the Ball Rolling
on the Republic**



Federal Election Statement: August 2010

The Australian Republican Movement, Real Republic Ltd and Women for an Australian Republic call on:

The **Labor Party** to announce a firm timetable for plebiscites and a referendum on the Republic, as stated in current ALP policy, if it wins a second term in government.

The **Liberal Party** to formulate a policy on the Republic as part of its platform. Voters deserve to know where the Liberal Party stands on this matter.

The **National Party** to abandon its policy supporting the retention of formal constitutional links with the Queen of Australia.

The **Greens** to expand their policy supporting a Republic with an Australian Head of State to explain the steps that should be taken to achieve the change and to set out a timetable.

The **Democrats** to refresh their 2001 policy and incorporate an updated sequence of steps to bring about a Republic.

All candidates standing for election to have a position on the Republic. Each one should be able to explain if and why they support an Australian Republic and to set out the number of plebiscites and referendums they would adopt to make the change and which year they should take place.

The Australian Republican Movement, Real Republic Ltd and Women for an Australian Republic call on all political parties and candidates to support:

One or more plebiscites by 2012

A referendum on the Republic in 2013.

The timing of the final referendum on the Republic is a matter for the Australian people to decide.

It should not be delayed until the abdication or death of the Queen of Australia because neither has any direct connection with Australia becoming a Republic. It does not make sense to link discussions about improving our country's government with events over which we have no control.

To say that these events are connected is a blatant delaying tactic by politicians. The more we delay, the more we put off starting the process to become a republic, which will take several years. We also side-step the debate about direct election of the head of state.

statement

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Background briefing paper: Party Policies



6 November 2009 was the tenth anniversary of the first referendum on the Republic.

Current Party Policies

Australian Labor Party

- Labor believes that modernising Australia's Constitution also entails a transition to an Australian Republic, with an Australian head of state, who can fully represent our traditions, values and aspirations as a nation.
- Labor is committed to consulting with the Australian people, other political parties, the states and the territories as to the form that the Republic should take. Labor will promote community debate about the advantages and disadvantages of the various republican models.
- Labor will conduct plebiscites to establish support for an Australian head of state and the preference for different forms of a Republic. When a preference has emerged, Labor will initiate an appropriate referendum under section 128 of the Constitution.

(National Platform and Constitution 2009: Chapter 11: New Ways of Governing for a Stronger Democracy, paragraphs 19-21 at www.alp.org.au)

Australian Greens

- Australia should become a republic with an Australian head of state.

(Constitutional Reform and Democracy Policy at <http://greens.org.au/policies/human-rights-democracy/constitutional-reform-and-democracy>)

Australian Democrats

An Australian Republic would include (abridged):

- (a) The Constitution amended to reflect our status as an independent democratic nation in which the people are sovereign
- (b) A fully elected constitutional convention to develop republic models after a plebiscite has been held to determine if Australia wishes to become a republic
- (c) The separation of powers and the rule of law strengthened by creating an Australian Head of State with limited codified powers that adequately describe his or her relationship with the executive, legislature, judiciary and the people
- (d) The Government not having the power to arbitrarily dismiss the Head of State. Natural justice requires that this only be done on certain specified grounds in accordance with a procedure which involves both Houses of Parliament.

(Official Policy 1 July 2001 at <http://www.democrats.org.au/policies> partially restated in the Constitutional Reform Action Plan for the 2007 election.)

- Senator Natasha Stott Despoja (SA) released the Democrats' specific policy about the republic for the 2007 election on 5 November 2007. It proposed that the first stage non-binding vote be held at the same time as a referendum on constitutional recognition of our Indigenous peoples, supported by both the current Government and Opposition, and timed for around mid 2009. There would be a non-binding vote based on this question: "Do you want Australia to become a Republic?"

party policies

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Background briefing paper: Recent Activity



Activity on the Republic during the Rudd/Gillard Government 2007-10

In the lead-up to the 2007 election, Kevin Rudd, then Leader of the Opposition, said that the Republic was not a first-term priority for his Labor Government. As Prime Minister, he frequently repeated this position including on a visit to the UK in April 2008 during which he met with the Queen of Australia.

In late **April 2008**, the recommendation for a Republic received a standing ovation from the 1000 delegates at the **2020 Summit**. The Government subsequently took no action. In the Government's final report on the Summit (April 2009), the word "republic" was replaced by "constitutional reform".

In June 2008, also while on a visit to London, **Foreign Minister Stephen Smith** said, "Most Australians do not want to create a republic while Queen Elizabeth is still on the throne" and repeated Kevin Rudd's stance that it was not a high priority for the Government. No evidence for the Foreign Minister's contention has ever been produced.

In November 2008, Senator Bob Brown introduced legislation into the Senate to hold a plebiscite (a non-binding vote) at the same time as the next federal election asking "Do you support Australia becoming a republic?".

Senator Brown's bill was referred to a parliamentary committee for examination including a day of public hearings. The **Senate Committee reported on 15 June 2009**. It made no recommendations about the bill commenting only on the need for public education and consultation on constitutional reform. The bill was not reconsidered in the Senate before Parliament was dissolved for the election.

Polling conducted for the republican movement in late 2009 found that 60 percent of those polled were in favour of a Republic. Significantly, 55 percent of women polled agreed, a big increase over support recorded in the late 1990s around the time of the referendum and since.

In January 2010, Attorney-General, Robert McClelland foreshadowed a referendum on four matters, one of which was the republic, if Labor won the election. This was quickly quashed by then Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard.

At the **National Press Club in Canberra on 15 July 2010, Julia Gillard** as Prime Minister was asked about her position on the Republic. She said "Where the republic debate went wrong was that it became too much about what people like me think and not enough about what the community thinks" adding "This has to be about community consensus and I don't believe that we are there yet" and "I don't think we should put a republic referendum until we are able to say with some confidence that we are there." She also commented, "I don't sense the same degree of activism or engagement with this issue that there has been at some times in the past" and concluded by saying, "So, we would need to see that community activism come forward in order to create the kind of environment where a republic referendum would be able to be successfully concluded."

In her *Women's Weekly* interview in the August edition, the Prime Minister says: "I'm a republican. It's a continuing debate. I think the debate has cooled. I get a sense that the next time the nation will really think its way through all of this is when Queen Elizabeth passes on."

In summary, a poor record for the Labor Government 2007-2010.

Opposition Leader Tony Abbott supports retention of the British monarch at the apex of our government as did Brendan Nelson before him. Malcolm Turnbull, a republican of note, consistently repeated while Opposition Leader that no action should be taken on the republic until the death of the Queen of Australia.

recent activity