

# *Women for an Australian Republic*

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Mr Jon Stanhope MLA  
Chief Minister  
ACT Legislative Assembly  
GPO Box 158  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Chief Minister

Women for an Australian Republic notes in today's Canberra Times, two actions being taken by the ACT Government for the Centenary of Canberra celebrations in 2013. They are a) seeking the views of 'young people' about how they would like to celebrate the event and b) a competition to name the "centenary native plant".

However, we also note that it is your stated intention to invite the Queen to attend the Canberra centenary. We assume that this is because she is the head of state?

If so, this strikes us as somewhat odd to invite the foreign monarch at the apex of our system of government to attend the centenary celebrations of Canberra when the ACT is avowedly republican, as are you. In fact, it appears to be almost inappropriate for an event clearly directed towards the very essence of the federation in a physical sense ie creating a planned new capital as the expression of Australian democracy and modernism to the outside world. Surely, we are at the stage when we can do the Canberra centenary ourselves without needing to invite a foreign monarch to legitimise it.

For the Canberra centenary, it seems to us quite enough - not to mention economical - to invite the head of state's representative, who is after all a local, to attend unless of course you wish to again draw attention to the fact that our head of state is not Australian and we remain inappropriately a constitutional monarchy? Perhaps it is designed to bring about a renewed wave of republican sentiment as occurred when Prince Charles presided over the national bicentennial celebrations in Sydney in 1988?

We are, of course, well aware of the presence of the British royal family at other national events held in Canberra over the years such as for the opening of provisional Parliament House in 1927 and during other royal tours. We feel, however, that things are now vastly different in expressing our Australianness and our greatly lessened reliance on the presence of the British monarch, albeit our head of state, to impart the necessary gravitas to our own events in the 21st century. The controversy over the Queen's opening of the Melbourne Commonwealth Games in 2006 (under slightly different conditions ie her role then was as head of the Commonwealth but that technical detail got rather lost in the hue and cry) is a case in point.

Whatever the reasons, we would appreciate knowing what is the intention behind the invitation and whether it has been issued to the Queen, and if it has been, what her

response has been. We would be particularly interested to know whether the Queen's attendance was sought by the ACT Government or is a requirement that has been imposed by the Federal Government for the centenary celebrations.

We look forward to hearing from you on this subject.

Incidentally, we have suggested to the Federal Government that a very good way to mark the centenary of Canberra would be to hold the republic referendum in 2013. We also made this suggestion to the 2020 Summit.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Brasch  
National Convenor  
[women.republic@webone.com.au](mailto:women.republic@webone.com.au)

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