

## Republic – Submission to Senate Hearing

Hobart, Thursday 20 May 2004

- We must avoid the previous mistake, where the people were given a 'take it or leave it' option. We must take the Australian people along in our deliberations – otherwise there will be a total loss of confidence in the process.
- I have purposely used the term *deliberation*, rather than *debate*. *Deliberation* seeks to tease out the options and find common ground, whereas *debate* polarises an issue and divides parties into two or more camps. In debates there are few participants, with the majority sitting on the sidelines reacting to points made by the debaters.
- Forget the 'big ticket' constitutional conventions, where relatively few 'leaders' do the talking and make the decisions. We need many nationwide study circles, where communities can come together to discuss the options.
- It is premature to decide upon the specific model, the ARM has published its Six Models paper and these should be used as the basis for national *deliberation*.
- The Leader of the Opposition recently made a similar suggestion. However, he overlooked the obvious mechanism for conducting these study circles. There are many adult education agencies in Australia, both formal and informal. These range from the state government funded agencies (usually TAFE connected), through WEA and to such localised groups as the CWA.
- I submit that *Adult Learning Australia* and the *ARM* be funded to develop a study guide for use by community groups around Australia. This guide would also need to include information on how to organise an effective study circle. There should also be training for study circle facilitators.
- This should help to develop a cadre of informed people in most communities who can then go out and lead informal deliberations in the workplace, pubs or around the dinner table. Perhaps we should allow a year or two for this process to work through the community.
- Following this national deliberation the time should be ripe for a referendum which offers citizens the full range of options. They can vote for these using the preferential voting system.
- The result should be the selection of an appropriate model for a republic, supported by the majority of Australians.



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