

REPUBLICAN PARTY of AUSTRALIA

SUBMISSION to the AUSTRALIAN SENATE's INQUIRY into an AUSTRALIAN REPUBLIC

31 March, 2004

The Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Attention: Ms Louise Gell

Dear Ms Gell

This submission is being lodged on the closing date for submissions. And whereas it is a relatively short one it is nonetheless a considered one, given the knowledge this party has of the electoral marketplace's views on the issue.

As the leader of the micro-minority, federally-registered Republican Party of Australia, I have personally conducted some 468 community-oriented "Republican" street stalls the length and breadth of the country promoting discussion on the need for an Australian Republic and how we, as a nation, can work democratically towards that goal. We can fairly claim to be very knowledgeable on this important cultural issue.

This activity has been continuous over the past twelve and a half calendar years from October 1991 to the present day. Many past and present federal parliamentarians have actually come across me strutting my particular stuff on the streets of Australia.

I am utterly convinced that unless the second referendum on the Australian Republic is based upon an inclusive model for the Republic – where the Australian people are sovereign – then that second referendum will be doomed to fail as was the first referendum.

Terms of Reference Item (b)

The Republican Party of Australia's model for the Australian Republic is attached. I believe that it addresses the Senate Committee's Terms of Reference Section (b) in all three sub-sections i, ii & iii. If not explicitly, then implicitly.

The very first draft of this model was produced and disseminated in the first six months after 6 November, 1999. It has been fine-tuned four times since. It is the model the party is taking to the coming Federal Election unless, perchance, it is amended at the party's 18th Annual National Republican Convention in Cairns FNQ on 15 May next. It stacks up as both a Discussion Paper and a Starting Point.

I am unapologetic in my disparagement of the more prominent Australian Republicans who advance minimalism or a variant of the model which was the basis of the first Republican referendum. These advocates of "parliamentary appointment" of the Australian Head-of-State (or, as the case may be, Heads-of-State) are torpedos. Well-positioned people such as Bob Carr, Janet Holmes a Court, Malcolm Turnbull and Peter Costello come into this category.

Similarly, “blank cheque” Republicans such as Mark Latham are torpedos.

The opportunity for a so-called Indicative Plebiscite on the issue of an Australian Republic has vanished, unfortunately. This part of the process should have occurred in tandem with the 1996 Federal Election. With that opportunity having been lost/passed up by the incumbent Keating Labor Government of the day, the only way forward is the “No Risk” route (see below). By this contention I mean that we cannot risk a second referendum being put to the Australian electorate without there being a clear, “peoples’ ownership of the Australian Republic” model on offer.

Affirmatively, the only model for an Australian Republic which would gain a majority “YES” vote – in a majority of States – is one where the Australian people directly elect their ceremonial Head(s)-of-State; their Presidency. The stark reality and the harsh lesson of my not inconsiderable grass roots expertise in this matter is simply this: NO PEOPLES’ OWNERSHIP of the AUSTRALIAN REPUBLIC = NO REPUBLIC!

Terms of Reference Item (a)

The way we arrive at a clear “peoples’ ownership of the Australian Republic” is to stage a second Constitutional Convention. One where the elected/appointed delegates are all declared and committed “Direct Electionists”. There should at least be 157 of them, as with the first “Con Con”. And Old Parliament House would again be the perfect venue.

This formula, from my general understanding of the overall situation – and as a reflection of the repeated national opinion polls findings on the question – would not be too hard to achieve.

The task to be undertaken by the 2nd Con Con delegates is to devise the appropriate Direct Election model for the Australian Republic. The model which would underpin the eventual second Republican referendum.

I would be most pleased to attend the post-Easter hearings of the Committee, if invited. There and then I would be only too willing to expand upon the content of this submission.

I am, Yours patriotically,

PETER CONSANDINE
National Executive Director