

MEDIA STATEMENT

REPUBLICAN GROUPS CALL FOR ACTION

A meeting of republican groups in Sydney 17-18 May called on the Government to make an early announcement of the process leading to a decision by the people on Australia becoming a republic.

The meeting welcomed the overwhelming support for an Australian republic at the 2020 Summit, and the wider signs of change in community thinking on the issue of Australia having one of its own citizens as Head of State. Republican groups consider that the time is right for the Government to set out the steps and broad timeline to put the choices about a republic before the people.

The meeting developed a framework of key principles to underpin the move to a republic:

1. The Australian people must control and own the process – including the decision on the model for selecting the Head of State that ultimately goes to a referendum.
2. Community consultation and education are essential parts of the decision-making process. A representative Constitutional Convention or Commission should be put in place to guide the latter stages of developing and drafting proposals.
3. The process should commence now, and run on Australia's own timetable, in a way that facilitates full debate and does not impose or rush decisions.
4. The emphasis should be on enhancing Australia's democratic structures, especially through the Constitution. Becoming a republic is not just a matter of replacing the reigning British Monarch as Australia's Head of State.
5. The move to a republic should be pursued in its own right and not be combined with unrelated reforms to the Constitution.
6. One or more non-binding Plebiscites should be held to begin the formal stage of making decisions about the republic, leading to a final referendum.

All the groups are confident that, as a nation, we can take the necessary steps to achieve a republic and further enhance Australia's democracy.

Background: The gathering of republican groups in Sydney over the weekend of 17-18 May was the fourth since 2005. It was convened by Jim Bain of the Democracy

First Group, and included representatives of the Australian Republican Movement, the Copernican Republicans, the Foundation for Constitutional Renewal, Patriots for the Australian Republic, Real Republic, Republic Now!, the Republican Party of Australia, and Women for an Australian Republic, as well as a number of committed individual advocates. Participants have found these gatherings valuable in sharing their common commitment to an Australian republic and in addressing key issues related to the republican debate. The groups have agreed to meet again in Melbourne in early 2009, with the next gathering to be convened by Women for an Australian Republic.

Sydney, 20 May 2008