

# The case for voting ‘NO’

*A PROPOSED LAW: To alter the Constitution to establish the Commonwealth of Australia as a republic with the Queen and Governor-General being replaced by a President appointed by a two-thirds majority of the members of the Commonwealth Parliament.*

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## Vote ‘NO’ to the politicians’ republic

This referendum is not just about whether Australia should become a republic. It is about the type of republic.

And the republic model being proposed is seriously flawed - it is untried, unworkable, undemocratic and elitist. The politicians will appoint the President, not the people. It removes the checks and balances from the current system.

Different people will be voting ‘NO’ for many different reasons:

### **Don’t know? - Vote ‘NO’**

Those who don’t know - should vote ‘NO’ - because that is the only safe way to go.

### **No say! - No way! - Vote ‘NO’**

Those who want to elect their President - should vote ‘NO’ - because under the proposed model, they will have no say in who their President will be.

### **A puppet for President! - Vote ‘NO’**

Those who want an appointed President - should vote ‘NO’ - because the proposed model is fatally flawed. The President will be a Prime Minister’s puppet, subject to instant dismissal.

### **Keep the status quo! - Vote ‘NO’**

Those who value the certainty and stability of our current Constitution - should vote ‘NO’ - because any alternative has to be as good as or better than the current system. This proposal fails that fundamental test.

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## Ten reasons why you should vote ‘NO’

### Reason 1:

**A Prime Minister can dismiss the President, instantly, for no reason at all.**

It will be easier for a Prime Minister to sack the President than his or her driver. The President would be a Prime Minister’s puppet. The President as the umpire in our Constitution should be free from being sacked at the whim of a Prime Minister. An umpire needs to be independent.

It’s not fair that the President can be sacked for no reason at all. The normal checks and balances of the Senate are missing in the dismissal model.

No other republican model in the world allows for the instant dismissal of a President.

It is not true that a Prime Minister can dismiss the Head of State under the current Constitution. No Prime Minister has ever dismissed a Head of State. There is no provision for instant dismissal in the current Constitution.

Don’t allow our tried and proven Constitution to be replaced by an experiment.

## No Prime Ministerial puppet for President - Vote ‘NO’ to this republic

“The proposed model is totally unacceptable because it distrusts the people; denies their basic democratic right to vote on who represents them as President; increases the power of the politicians over the people; provides extraordinary powers for the Prime Minister to dismiss a President who fails to do his bidding; it’s a shoddy, undemocratic proposal that should be rejected.”

Bill Hayden, former Labor Leader and former Governor-General

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## Reason 2:

**The people won’t choose the President:  
the political deal-makers will.**

Only politicians will be allowed to pick the President. The Australian people will never get the chance to vote for the President.

**No say! - No way! - Vote ‘NO’ to this republic**

“To suggest that the appointment of a president by a two-thirds majority of the parliament in some way makes them non-political is a nonsense. They would only get the endorsement by virtue of a political deal. A president elected in this way is a president selected by politicians after a deal between the major political parties. It is this sort of arrogance which is making so many people in Australia determined to have their own say on who the president should be.”

Peter Beattie, Labor Premier of Queensland

“The ARM wants to foist on us nothing but a phoney republic. The big end of town wants to ride rough-shod over the people. Unless the people elect the President, what’s the point? How can you have a republic when the people don’t vote? That’s why this republican will be voting no.”

Phil Cleary, former independent member for the federal seat of Wills and Constitutional Convention delegate.

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## Reason 3:

**“If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.”**

Australia is a stable, prosperous nation.

Our current Constitution was drafted by Australians for Australians and voted for by Australians. It has worked well for 100 years - during war, depression and political crisis - and it continues to serve us well.

Our Constitution has been at the heart of our nation since Federation, holding the system of government together to create a unified, peaceful country.

Our status as a free, independent and sovereign nation is unquestioned.

Our constitutional Head of State, the Governor-General, is an Australian citizen and has been since 1965.

If we are to change this system, any alternative has to be as good as or better than the current system. This proposal fails that fundamental test.

Do we really want a republic that gives no power to the people in the appointment or dismissal of the President? Do we really want a republic that gives power solely to politicians?

**Keep the status quo - Vote ‘NO’ to this republic**

**“To vote ‘NO’ is to say ‘YES’ to continuing constitutional and political stability.”**

**Emeritus Professor Dame Leonie Kramer, Chancellor of the University of Sydney**

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## Reason 4: Major changes with unknown results.

In one hundred years, there have only ever been 13 separate amendments to our Constitution. The proposed model will require 69 changes in one hit!

Each of these 69 changes are untried and untested.

No one can predict how these many changes will affect our whole system of Government, Parliament, the courts or the country.

**When in doubt, throw it out.  
Vote ‘NO’ to this republic**

“The result would be a disaster for Australia.”

Sir Harry Gibbs, former Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia

## Reason 5: Constitutional change should unite, not divide us.

Constitutional change should unite us.

Instead, this republic proposal is dividing us as a nation. Not only is there a dispute between those supporting our Constitution and those pushing for a republic. There are even bitter divisions between republicans themselves.

How can this proposal unite Australia when it failed to get majority support at the 1998 Constitutional Convention and it is dividing republicans?

**Vote ‘NO’ to this divisive republic**

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## Reason 6:

### **Australia is already an independent nation.**

The proposed model adds nothing to Australia’s independence.

Everyone knows Australia is a proud, strong, independent nation. Australians are world renowned for their ingenuity and capacity and efforts in war, sport and humanitarian assistance.

All legal links with Britain were cut in 1986 with the passage of the Australia Act through both Australian and British Parliaments.

In June this year, our status as a sovereign, independent nation was re-affirmed by the High Court.

Australia is a legally and internationally recognised independent nation.

**We are already independent.  
Vote ‘NO’ to this republic**

“Many people have come to Australia because of the political stability that our current system of government guarantees. Why take a leap into the dark to change something that is working well?”

Wellington Lee, Deputy Lord Mayor of Melbourne and Foundation President of the Australian Chinese Chamber of Commerce

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## **Reason 7:**

**There will be no benefits under this republic - only problems.**

This republic offers no benefits to Australians.

It won't create jobs. It won't improve trade.

It won't improve the economy or our lives.

However it will cost us our stability, our certainty and our security.

**No gain, only pain - Vote ‘NO’ to this republic**

## **Reason 8:**

**A Prime Minister can keep the President in office indefinitely.**

The President can remain in office indefinitely if the Parliament cannot agree on a replacement, or if a Prime Minister refuses to nominate a replacement President.

A job for life for a President who does what they are told.

**No Prime Ministerial puppet for President.  
Vote ‘NO’ to this republic**

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## Reason 9:

### The nominations committee won’t give you a say.

Even though a committee will be set up under this model to put nominations for the President to a Prime Minister, a Prime Minister can completely ignore the committee’s nominations.

Half the committee will be politicians and the other half will be appointed by politicians.

The committee is an expensive window dressing exercise. It is designed to make the public think they can have input. Nominations will be received in secret. And remember, a Prime Minister has the absolute right to completely ignore the nomination committee’s recommendation and nominate his or her own personal choice.

So much for public input!

**No secret deals - Vote ‘NO’ to this republic**

## Reason 10:

### Politician One Day - President the Next.

The proposed model allows a politician to resign from Parliament and his or her party one day and become President the very next day. Appointed by politicians, of course.

**Vote ‘NO’ to the politicians’ republic**

“The real question is: who will wear the crown of sovereignty if it is to be taken from the monarch’s head? The ARM says that the crown of sovereignty should descend upon the Prime Minister’s head in parliament, thus increasing his absolute powers. We argue that the crown of sovereignty should descend upon the head of every Australian citizen; every Australian citizen a sovereign.”

The late Professor Patrick O’Brien, former professor of political science, University of WA

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## Conclusion

Australia deserves better than an inadequate and undemocratic republic.

The proposed republic gives more power to the politicians, at the expense of the people. We should not hand over any more power to politicians hammering out deals in secret behind closed doors.

To vote ‘NO’ to the republic on offer is to keep a secure and workable system answerable to the people.

If the Australian people were to vote for a republic, it should be one of which we can be truly proud. Australians should reject the republic proposed in November. We must signal to the politicians that unless any proposed republic is an improvement on the current system, we will stick with the current system. We must protect our existing rights, safeguards and constitutional strengths.

If we give the politicians the power to appoint the President, do you think they are ever going to give it up?

Any change should only be for the better - reject this third-rate republic.

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