

Time to change how we discuss an Australian republic?

By Geoff Bayly

6 July 2013

In a speech made to Sydney Toastmasters on Wednesday 19th June 2013 [Geoff Bayly](#) passionately outlined why republicans may need to change their tack.



Are we discussing the issue of an Australian republic correctly?

"A republic ... in which the highest public representative is not a monarch who merely inherits the position but a citizen chosen by a democratic process on merit, thereby embodying (the) nation's egalitarian spirit. It places the sovereignty of the people at the apex of our constitutional arrangements as it should be. We republicans believe this is a form of

government that best exemplifies core Australian values, like democracy and a fair go for all. ... Such a constitutional change would match the distinguishing characteristics of Australians. ... Moving to a republic would be part of a natural evolutionary track that Australia has been on for more than a hundred years as we consolidate our independent national identity."

~ Distinguished academic, former ARM chair and tireless campaigner for a republic, [John Warhurst AO](#), from the book [Project Republic](#).

Madam Chairperson, Fellow Toastmasters and guests.

I am not talking about the band One Republic, or the Republic in Star Wars — I am talking about a republic that is much more important than these.

I had an invigorating debate with some members of the [Republic of Australia](#) Facebook page over the weekend about the Australian republican movement. It started off with me firstly coming from a position of supporting the status quo and remaining under the sovereignty of England and the Queen.

You see, I was coming from a position of ignorance and in some way pride.

Let me explain this:

Over the past few years I have been completing my family tree and I discovered a

lot of interesting things about my family, and in particular the surname Bayly.

Essentially, my family is engrained in the British Monarchy and the political landscape of Britain.

Check through websites like thepeerage.com and other genealogy sites and the history is colourful. Many of my relatives were on the [Privy Council](#) and became very close to the royal family. One of my distant grandmothers is even reportedly to have been one of [King Henry the 8th](#)'s mistresses and her sister (my aunt) was one of Henry's wives that lost her head.

So you can see by this lineage that I had a proud connection to the British Monarchy.



The Privy Council was removed as our highest court of appeal by the Australia Act in 1986. (Image courtesy thenassauguardian.com)

In early colonisation of Australia many of my family were British elite settlers, one was a major player in the [rum rebellion](#), another was a famous explorer [Henry Lawson](#) and another is even a Catholic Saint [Mary MacKillop](#).

My family in Australia was one of the families that treated indigenous people wrongly as Former Prime Minister Paul Keating has said "It was we who did the dispossessing. We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the

diseases. The alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion. It was our ignorance and our prejudice. And our failure to imagine these things being done to us."

During the debate on Facebook, I suggested to the people behind this page that their movement was not providing anything different to persuade the Australian people as to any real benefit of changing to a republic; it was all because we hate the British, we hate the Monarchy, it is irrelevant etc.

I suggested to them that they needed to provide a more appealing sales pitch and for me they needed to answer some questions as to the benefit to our country and our social make up.

I asked them to answer three questions:

1. What would becoming a republic do to put Australia in a better position politically?
2. How would becoming a republic help us economically?
3. How would becoming a republic help us socially?

There answers did not excite me, so I answered the questions for them and in the end convinced myself to change my view on the matter.

What would becoming a republic do to put Australia in a better position politically?

Australia has positioned itself strongly in the global political landscape. We are a respected independent nation of Great Britain and we are also a strong and important part of the Commonwealth. This position would not change. In fact I believe that becoming a republic would put us in a stronger position as a nation, as we will be free to choose for example, what fights we fight, we will be free to determine as a nation our own future and free from the political ties of another nation.

We already are free from Britain in regards to our law making, and the ability for matters to be taken beyond our borders for resolution at the Privy Council have been replaced by the High Court of Australia.

Also having our own head of state will provide us with a better voice internationally as they are representing Australia not Great Britain and their agendas.



Australia Day would take on a new meaning in the wake of Australia becoming a republic. (Image courtesy timeanddate.com)

How would becoming a republic help Australia economically?

Becoming a republic will strengthen our position in the global economic arena. Since Paul Keating took our dollar and floated it we have been growing from strength to strength. We have proven ourselves through both sides of politics that we can manage finances (some better than others) through some tough global issues and we do that as an independent nation to the Commonwealth.

I believe that remaining as part of the Commonwealth holds us back a little because Britain certainly is not as financially savvy as Australia at this point in time and they certainly are not in the same financial position.

I believe that if Australia became a republic,

our credibility in the global financial world will be enhanced and will grow - people will want to invest more in the country and we will be able to invest more in what we believe will be best for our country.

I also believe that this will help with employment and opportunities for small to large business to grow.

How would becoming a republic help Australia socially?

Socially our identity has two parts.

We have the Indigenous side and the colonization side. I believe that if Australia did become a republic, these two social identities could maybe one day become one. We may finally have true unity.

I for one would love to see the day that we have a united Australia.

We celebrate Australia Day; this is the day to celebrate our nation and I can see how becoming a republic can make this day much more important and significant to us as a nation.

Australia is made up of so many different cultures, we are no longer a dominant Anglo-Saxon culture; we have Middle Eastern, Indian, South African, Asian, South American and European and many more.

These are the cultures that have made Australia what it is in 2013 and it all began with convicts who were the outcasts of society, sent here as a penal colony and built the foundations of our great nation.

So in conclusion, my aim was not to convince you to one side or the other it was to put forward a different argument and a different viewpoint that I believe many Australians want to see and hear.

Thankyou.

The Australia for Republic Facebook page

can be found by [clicking here](#).

For more information about the Australian Republican Movement visit ouridentity.org.au.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Australia License](#)