

Roy Morgan Research

The Roy Morgan Research Centre Pty. Limited
A.C.N. 004 433 265
Quality System Certified to AS/NZS ISO 9001 : 94 Cert. No.6669

“The Monarchy, The Media and The Polls”

Presented to
Australians for Constitutional Monarchy
October 22, 1993

Presented by
Mr Gary C. Morgan
Executive Chairman
The Roy Morgan Research Centre Pty. Ltd.

If a referendum were held today, Australia would remain a monarchy, despite the last published Morgan Poll in Time which showed the republic ahead. The following table shows the trend since 1953:

	All People											
	Jun '53 %	Dec '75 %	Oct '76 %	Apr '77 %	Apr '79 %	Aug '81 %	Jan '83 %	Jan '84 %	Jul '88 %	Jul '91 %	Mar '92 %	Apr '93 %
Monarchy	77	61	60	62	62	59	60	62	64	56	49	38
Republic	15	28	25	26	26	28	28	30	29	36	44	52
Undecided	<u>8</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>10</u>
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

The Monarchy Republic debate is **provocative** but **irrelevant**. Note it is the **debate** I refer to, not the real issue of whether the Governor-General of Australia should be able to force an election by sacking the Government.

Provocative, stirring, newsgrabbing, because it draws on issues of the Queen, England, our history, our roots, etc. - all good stirring stuff.

But **irrelevant**.

Forty years ago my father, Roy Morgan, polled the Monarchy Republic issue. No doubt in another 40 years we will still be polling the issue with his question:

*“In your opinion, should Australia remain a **monarchy** - or become a **republic** with an elected President?”*

On numerous occasions before my father died in 1985 I asked him why he added the words “with an elected President”. His reply was always the same: “because for a republic you must have an elected President and it is the issue on which Australians will never reach agreement”.

My father had strong views on any number of issues. I remember well as a young boy being told by him that:

- All Upper Houses (State and Federal) should be abolished;
- Minor parties (DLP) are the curse of Australian politics;
- The “pound” should be known as a “dollar”; and definitely not a “crown” or “royal”;
- In Australia British titles were outdated and should be replaced by Australian honors;
- Hereditary titles perpetuated mediocrity;
- And it was ridiculous for the British titled to be given positions of authority in Australian business due to their inherited title (rather than any business acumen);
- Inherited wealth should be eliminated over 3 generations through death duties; and
- Australia should be a republic based on a Federal system, i.e. maintaining (or even increasing) the power of the States.

I now agree with my father that Australia will never be a republic until politicians agree the people elect the President.

The problem was clearly put to me by Barry Jones in his letter to me in March 1992, when he stated:

“I have been meaning to write to you for some time now to suggest changing the wording in future Morgan Polls on whether Australia should become a republic.

*I don't have the precise wording of your question in front of me but it can be inferred from press reports. For example, **TIME** (April 6, 1992) says: ‘Republicanism is surging towards majority support in Australia, the Morgan Poll has found, with 44% of people favouring a republic **headed by an elected President**’ (my emphasis).*

I think your question is inappropriate.

I know of no republican advocates, certainly not spokesmen for the Australian Republican Movement, who advocate a republic with an elected President.”

He then went on to say:

“The form of the question has probably led to a serious understatement of republican sentiment in the past. (It would have been even lower if you had offered the choice of a ‘republic headed by a child molester’!)

*I detect no enthusiasm for an **elected** President because such an office would be incompatible with the existing Parliamentary system, with a Prime Minister and Cabinet answerable to the Lower House. An elected President would be an alternative focus of political power and continual tension between a directly elected President and an indirectly elected Prime Minister would be intolerable.”*

What then are the alternatives? Barry Jones suggested:

- (1) *“An Australian Republic in which the Governor-General is replaced by a non-controversial appointed President, but remaining with the Commonwealth;*
- (2) *A Republic with direct election of a President, as in the U.S. or France, replacing the existing system of Prime Minister and Cabinet;*
- (3) *A Republic with direct election of a President in which a President and Prime Minister share power; or*
- (4) *The status quo with an appointed Governor-General representing the Queen and the existing system of Prime Minister and Cabinet, within the Commonwealth.”*

Barry Jones’ guess support for each was as follows:

(1) 45% (2) 10% (3) 5% (4) 30% and undecided 10%

He then went on to say:

“The Republican Movement argues that in an Australian republic the President would be chosen by the Parliament. If there was a joint sitting for the present elections requiring a qualified majority, say 75%, this would present a partisan figure being chosen (unless, like Bill Hayden, he undertook to act in a non-partisan way). It would be far more likely that figures like former Governors-General Cowen and Stephen would get up.

The prospect of ‘an elected President’ is simply not on the political agenda.

It is a ‘ghost that walks’ only in Morgan Polls. Nobody else is suggesting it.”

In my reply I stated:

“We repeated my father’s (ghost) 1953 question to see the trend. Many would argue that a joint sitting of Parliament requiring 75% majority would create an ‘Italian style’ (not U.S. or French) Parliament with some interesting alliances.

With your suggestion (1) I assume the ‘Governor-General’ would be appointed as now by the Prime Minister. I’m not sure how a person gets a ‘non-controversial’ classification - I’ve been trying for the last few years but never seem to get the gong!

If a 75% majority were required to elect the President, what would be required for his removal?”

Unfortunately the Republican Movement are unresponsive to the issue that the people of Australia do not trust nor want politicians to obtain more power (only 11% of Australians rate Federal Members of Parliament **highly** for ethics and honesty).

In April 1993 the Morgan Poll published in the April 26 TIME showed that if Australia became a Republic, 71% of Australians wanted the President of Australia elected by the people and only 21% by politicians. A very different result than Barry Jones’ guess of 15%!

**Morgan Poll conducted April 3/4, 1993 on
Who Should Elect the Head of State**

A sample of 1,231 Morgan Poll respondents were presented with different options if Australia were to become a republic by 2001 with a Head of State like the Governor-General, and asked which one option they would prefer.

Those surveyed answered:

If Australia were to become a republic with a Head of State like the Governor-General, a large majority (71%) of Australians would prefer that person to be elected by the people.

Only 13% favor a Head of State elected by a majority of both Houses of Federal Parliament, fewer (8%) favor election by a two-thirds majority of both Houses and just 4% favor the option of a Head of State appointed by the Government of the day (at present it is the Prime Minister's prerogative to nominate the Governor-General for approval by the Queen), while 4% can't say.

Head of State should be:	All People April 1993 %	Analysis by Federal Voting Intention				Prefer by 2001		
		ALP %	L-NP %	Other %	No answer %	Mon- archy %	Re- public %	Can't say %
Elected by a majority of the Australian people	71	70	72	78	63	77	70	62
Elected by a majority of both Houses of Federal Parliament	13	13	14	12	6	11	16	3
Elected by a ² / ₃ majority of both Houses of Federal Parliament	8	8	7	6	3	6	8	7
	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Total favor election by both Houses of Federal Parliament	21	21	21	18	9	17	24	10
Appointed by the Federal Government of the day	4	6	3	2	2	3	5	3
Can't say	4	3	4	2	26	3	1	25
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

It was the above Morgan Poll that told the Republican Movement that a Republic by 2001 was impossible - unless a bi-partisan program of electing the President by the people was agreed upon. Even then the process of changing the Constitution would require careful handling with no point scoring - unfortunately it seems impossible for the present Government, in crisis mode over the economy, to take this direction.

With a referendum, the monarchy would easily win - Australians want to directly elect the Head of State.

It is for this reason that the present Republic Monarchy debate is provocative but irrelevant - and of no more real significance than when my father polled it in 1953.

The Republican Movement must change their agenda which today seems impossible. Otherwise, there is a better chance that in 40 years Canberra will be closed rather than a President at Yarralumla.