



Speech by

Hon. J. FOURAS

MEMBER FOR ASHGROVE

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REPUBLIC

Hon. J. FOURAS (Ashgrove—ALP) (10.17 a.m.): One of the arguments that has been put for a "No" vote in the 6 November referendum is, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." People pushing this line refuse to address the real question in the referendum, that is, do Australians want an Australian head of state? This referendum is being put because there are more republicans than monarchists in Australia. Therefore, the answer to this question is an emphatic yes. This is confirmed by the monarchists' bankrupt campaign of scares and distortions about the proposed republic model. They have given up defending the monarchy. They have dishonoured their Queen.

Australia is a Westminster monarchy. If we vote "Yes", we become a Westminster republic with an Australian head of state—a president. The president would have the same powers as the Governor-General now has, would continue to exercise these powers on the advice of the Prime Minister and would retain the reserve powers to check any illegal actions by the Executive.

The test of maturity for a nation is knowing when to move forward. To not do so at the Centenary of Federation defies commonsense. It is an important symbolism. Cutting our ties with the monarchy will invigorate the spirit of Australia.

The direct election supporters are chancing everything on the hope of a model containing direct election at a future date. Yesterday John Howard said that he would not support a referendum based on direct election of the president. By voting "Yes", direct election advocates will not have achieved all their ambitions but will have at least achieved a republic, which is more democratic than the system we have today.

I am outraged at the manoeuvrings of our Prime Minister to deny the wishes of the majority of Australians to become a republic. John Howard is backward looking. His spoiling tactics may win the day on 6 November, but a republic is inevitable.

The debate on the republic highlights that it is time for people to be more fully informed about our Constitution. Much more prominence should be given to civics education in our schools. Australia's future should rest on informed debate, not on distortions and scaremongering.

Australia's future rests with the republic. Australians no longer need to share the Queen of another country. We need to go forward. We should understand that we need this Australian nation to be ours.

Time expired.
