A Republican History of Australia

By

Geoff Gallop

Manning Clark Lecture,

Canberra, 3 March 2014

When a student at St John's College Oxford in the early 1970s I was asked by Sir Richard Southern, President of the College and author of **The Making of the Middle Ages** (1953), why there was such hostility towards Manning Clark from many of his colleagues in the history profession. Southern admired Clark's intellectual depth and was puzzled why others didn't see it that way. I felt very inadequate in the face of this question and it still bothers me today. It's possible, of course, to answer by referring to aspects of Clark's personality, his radical politics and the type of language he used when describing people and events. 'Groveldom' and 'sycophancy' immediately come to mind as does 'straightener' and 'heart dimmer'. All of this takes you part of the way but is still short of a proper explanation.

Clark challenged us to become part of it all, to empty ourselves into our inquiries with heart and soul as well as mind and intellect. He wasn't just a warrior of the left but also a worrier of the existential variety. His heroes had flaws and often his villains had redeeming features, he wasn't frightened of tackling the challenges thrown out to humankind by Jesus and his Parable of the Good Samaritan, and he saw contradiction when others saw consensus. For example when addressing an American audience in 1988 he said of himself: "I wonder whether I belong. I am not alone in such thoughts. I am ready and so are others, to understand the Aboriginal view that no human being can ever no heart's ease in a foreign land".[i] For Clark life – and indeed history - wasn't just about what we said and what we did but also about our doubts and uncertainties on the one hand and our hopes and dreams on the other. For his protagonists this was an unwarranted intrusion into the search for facts about winners and losers. For them the Bible was for the theologians, Dostoevsky for the philosophers, Freud for the psychiatrists and Dickens for the literary critics. History was for the historians and intruders like Clark weren't welcome.

There was another theme in Clark's arsenal that really bothered his critics – his vision of an Australia divided between those who took up the call of freedom and those who wallowed in all things British. For Clark the call of freedom was a call to take Australian history - its creations and failures and its heroes and villains - seriously. In this endeavour Britain (or Europe more generally as he often put it) was part backdrop and part script but not the whole story. Aboriginal Australia, geographic location and the local environment had to be in the mix as well. Like his contemporary Donald Horne he came to republicanism in search of an Australian identity that recognised a diversity of influences, was receptive to criticism and more open to the wider world and its future. Deep in the soul

of too many of their fellow Australians they saw an internalised colonialism that acted as a barrier to ethical judgement and creative endeavour. Such personality analysis was seen by many academics and politicians as an insult too many.

However, not surprisingly Clark and Horne became patron saints for the baby boomer led rebellion of the 1960s. This was a rebellion that challenged both left and right – and the crowned republic they had created for the nation. It was as expressive as it was instrumental, a "great refusal" as Herbert Marcuse put it so well in his **One-Dimensional Man** (1964). Clark's guns were aimed at his friends on the left and their embrace of nationalism whilst Horne's were aimed at the right and its social and economic conservatism. Both bristled at what they saw as the conformism of our politics and society. Radical currents had existed before but none with the significance of those that came to rock our political establishment in and after the 1960s and which are still knocking on the door today with plenty of unfinished business, for example same sex marriage.

However, both Clark and Horne were intellectuals who occupied the "theory" rather than the "practice" part of politics. Gough Whitlam was the politician who embraced radical reform and set the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party on a collision course firstly with the old left and then with the right, his dismissal in 1975 being the first strike in what was to become the culture wars. He had been successful in cutting off the tail if not the head of the old left but not in slaying the right and their particular version of Australian nationalism. Indeed what has been happening since the 1960s can only be described as heavily contested economic, social, political and environmental reform. What on the surface often looked like "the logic of post-industrial capitalism" working its way out was in fact just one part of a more complicated dialectic that involved the emotions attached to class and nation as well the rationality implicit in particular values. It's been an era of initiative and resistance not one or the other, a war over what it means to be Australian.

What I'm interested in tonight is how all of this is related to, and what it means for, the Australian republic. I am - and always have been to the best of my memory - a republican. I've changed my mind on a range of issues and moved from liberal to socialist to social democrat but always with an Australian republic as part of the package[ii]. It always seemed the right thing to believe as an expression of our democratic values and independence as a people. Indeed it demonstrates freedom in a substantial way, unlike the half-hearted way in which we do it in our crowned republic of today. I believe in it and I

want it to happen. However, this begs the question: What is this republicanism about which we speak? Is it just a constitutional change that removes the British Monarch from the Constitution or is it more? To answer this we need to dig deep in our national political culture.

Republicanism – is it an ideology, a movement or a method?

In our history I can identify three references to republicanism[iii] – as a specific ideology for the nation, as a political movement to break the constitutional link to the British Crown, and as a set of initiatives to which we attach the label deliberative democracy. When considered as ideology republicanism has taken many forms, crowned and otherwise. It's been heavily nationalist and racist and it's been liberal and multicultural. It's sometimes conservative, sometimes moderate and sometimes radical. When you look at republicanism as a political movement to cut our ties to the Crown it's only been in the 1990s that victory seemed possible. The Australian Republican Movement (ARM) took shape and republican Prime Minister Paul Keating won in 1993. They formed an alliance to advance the cause and although constitutional monarchist John Howard came to power in 1996 he recognised that the momentum so created couldn't be ignored. A Constitutional Convention to consider these matters went ahead and a proposal largely developed by the ARM was the ultimate winner from its deliberations. However, despite strong support for the idea of change to a republic the specific proposal developed at the Convention was defeated in 1999, 55% to 45%. In recent times deliberative democracy has been added to the list. It's a way of imagining politics that proposes new pathways from the individual to the common good and has been seen either as the basis for a new political system or as a valuable addition to our current system of representative democracy.

Republicanism as an ideology came to Australia with the British Crown and has always played a significant role in our history. By this I mean the set of ideas about power and its use and abuse which had been so influential in 17th and 18th century British politics, at home and in the colonies. It's often called civic republicanism and has some similarities with, but is not the same as, democratic liberalism and its rights-based social contract. Indeed its sources can be found deep in our classical and renaissance cultures, with Aristotle, Cicero and Machiavelli all mentioned in despatches.[iv] It starts with two competing values - within each of us and across society. They are "civic virtue" on the one hand, and "corruption" on the other. Citizens can be virtuous but are also corruptible - as can those who are empowered to govern us. Civic virtue means being

focussed on the common good, the security of the nation, and the interests of the many and not just the “one” or the “few”. Socialisation to each of those ends is seen as essential if republican liberty is to be maintained and that means eternal vigilance, political participation and indeed personal courage when tyranny raises its ugly head and threatens the republic.

Corruption is the opposite of all those things - government on behalf of self, party or faction; and personal weakness in the face of temptation and challenge. To counter this republicans say balance is needed in both the polity and the society. This means a constitution that is a mix between the one (monarchy), the few (aristocracy) and the many (democracy). The enemy is absolutism in whatever form it takes- monarchism, aristocratic dictatorship or rule by the mob. So too did society need appropriate balance between those with more and those with less wealth in order that those with less had sufficient autonomy to be able to participate and challenge. It was believed that tyranny could be generated within the economy as well as in the polity, and often the two went together. It was in the interest of any oligarchy, said British radical John Thelwall back in the 1790s, “to have but two classes, the very high and the very low, that those they may oppress may be kept at too great a distance – and in too much ignorance to be enabled to seek redress”.[v] Over one hundred years before this James Harrington had written: “And if the whole people be landlords, or hold the lands so divided among them that no one man or number of men within the compass of the few or aristocracy overbalance them, the empire (without the interposition of force) is a commonwealth”.[vi]

Australia’s crowned republic

I would argue that a particular version of this take on politics emerged in the colonies, played a most important role in the framing of the constitution and persisted as an important element in the national consensus right up to and beyond the 1960s. In the Australian version three ideas stand out -

- national self-determination,
- a balanced constitution, and
- a socialised market.

The first is all about Australia’s autonomy and the right of the people to govern their own affairs, the second about ensuring that government has checks and balances sufficient to prevent arbitrary rule, and the third about bringing harmony to

society by way of give and take between the major classes - capital and labour. None of the ideas so developed led to any but a small minority to argue that our links to the British Crown should be cut. In fact the very opposite was the case - the Crown being seen to be an important link in the chain that was an Australian republic.

The politics of all of this started within the colonies and amongst the settlers themselves and the fact that it assumed the occupation of Aboriginal Australia was not seen as ethically significant but by a few. It wasn't long before a republican discourse was established, firstly about the tyranny of the Governors and the Colonial Office and, secondly, about the local oligarchy made up of wealthy land owners and merchants. The first involved the case for self-government to which all free-born Englishmen had a right and step by step it was achieved in each of the colonies and then for the newly established Commonwealth of Australia. However, it wasn't fully achieved until well into the 20th century, the passing of the Australia Act in 1986 being a key moment along with others such as the victory over who has the right to appoint the Governor General[vii] Such independence was part and parcel of what it meant to be a free born Englishman (and eventually Englishwoman as well). It required strength of purpose to achieve it but in Australia's case revolution wasn't needed, unlike the United States of America. This peaceful transition was seen as authentically British, a further example of the inherent "balance" between order and progress achieved by the Glorious Revolution of 1688.

Not surprisingly, then, when it came to establishing a constitution and a political economy for the new nation, republican ideas about "mix" and "balance" were to play a key role. The colonies had been establishing representative and responsible governments throughout the 19th century and the onward march of "the people" signified by all of this was seen as a good thing so long as it didn't become "a tyranny of the majority". So it was that efforts by some to establish an Australian version of a landed aristocracy – a "Bunyip aristocracy" as Daniel Deniehy[viii] called it - didn't survive the test of politics but the ideas of bicameralism, federalism and the separation of powers did. Indeed the founding fathers of the Constitution were rightfully proud of what they achieved - parliamentary government from Britain, bicameralism, federalism and judicial review from America and the referendum from Switzerland. This was a unique mix of elements that was seen as necessary to avoid the tyrannies of oligarchy on the one hand and mob rule on the other.

When it came to a political economy to back up the Constitution similar arguments were put to work. It became law that “labour” had arrived as an industrial and political force and a social contract between the major classes was negotiated in order to counter the emergence of an alienated and revolutionary working-class. This great Australian Settlement involved the exclusion of all but whites, the establishment of an orderly process for managing industrial conflict and the institutionalisation of a fair wage for the working man. “State encouragement of a class of independent farmers”, as Bruce McFarlane put it, was also part of the package “to preserve the social system”.[ix] These measures unified the nation, not completely but enough such that the class and political conflicts occurring elsewhere didn’t have the same potency in Australia.

It was a case of republican balance not only in systems but also in politics. Labor was strong and it advocated for more government intervention and more equality as opposed to the Liberals who made the case for less of each. For Labor tyranny was represented by too much money power and for the Liberals by too much union power. What was at dispute here wasn’t the Great Australian Settlement but the terms and conditions of its application. Indeed both sides saw themselves as loyal servants of an essentially British nation and when Labor showed signs of deviating from this path during World War One, it couldn’t hold itself together. Nor could Stanley Bruce from the other side of politics maintain power when he pushed his industrial relations reform agenda too far into de-regulation territory.

In this crowned republic whites were whites, men were men, women were women, workers were workers, and employers were employers, each with their respective roles and responsibilities, not only within Australia but also within the Empire. It was a new and different nation and well described by W.C.Wentworth as “a new Britannia in another world”[x]. Even John Curtin who had stood up to Churchill during World War Two retained, as David Black has put it, “a deep commitment to the British connection”.[xi] For example in May 1944 Curtin said at the end of the first Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Conference since the outbreak of war that homage should be paid to “the King and to that association over which he rules as marking the greatest confraternity of governmental relations the world has yet witnessed”.[xii]

Throughout this long period in which the Australian crowned republic was dominant there were voices for separation but they were few. John Dunmore Lang said freedom from Britain needed more than political reform under the Crown, republicanism

being seen as an example of growing up to maturity. The only protection Australia needs, said Henry Lawson, is “from the landlordism, the title worship, the class distinctions and privileges, the oppression of the poor, the monarchy, and all the dust-covered customs that England has humped out of the middle ages where she properly belongs”. In a letter to **Labor Call** in 1920 R.A.Crouch wrote: “The abolition of privilege and equal opportunities cannot be realised with our hereditary kingship. No accident of birth should create rank, status or position”[xiii]. On the right too there were some ultra-nationalists, most notably Percy Stephenson, who saw the Crown and, strange as it may seem, the oppression of Aboriginal Australia that was the result of British colonialism, as standing in the way of their national socialist utopia.[xiv] By gutting nationalism of its British content these separatist republicans fell afoul of deeply held beliefs and emotions of the many; and the socialists amongst them frightened the middle class with their collectivism.

The 1960s and its liberal republican rebellion

It wasn’t until the 1960s that an alternative radical agenda began to have influence. This rebellion wasn’t over the balance of power within a crowned republic, but over the nature of the republic itself. At first it looked as though it was political activity in the name of Karl Marx but as time moved on it became clear that John Stuart Mill was really the inspiration. In the thinking of the time individual liberty replaced class solidarity, human rights replaced socially determined rights and multicultural Australia replaced the new Britannia. Backing up these shifts was a re-interpretation of Australian history and what had been seen before as necessary conflicts and power plays in the interests of material progress, national order and national defence came to be seen as unjustifiable impositions on the rights of others, here and overseas, be they women, Aboriginals, other non-whites, homosexuals, young people or bohemians.

What was going on here was revolution - the attempt to establish the Commonwealth on new and essentially left liberal principles. That meant less deference to the big powers, be it Britain or the USA and a new Constitution that would be stripped of racism and monarchism. Rather than a limited social contract of the sort we saw created in the 1890s and early 20th century a new one was proposed for both the polity and the economy. In the polity that meant a more participatory and open democracy as well as a Bill of Rights to constrain executive power in the interests of the marginal and vulnerable and in political economy innovation and equal opportunity replaced protection and organised unity between capital and labour as the key to progress. By spreading the

discussion of equality from the economy to society it was also possible to re-define Australia as a cosmopolitan and multicultural rather than a white and British nation.

In some senses the rebellion looked nationalist, for example in its taking of Australian history and culture as important areas for inquiry or in its support for local initiatives in the arts and culture generally. There was a strong sense that what was happening – and what had happened – in Australia needed to be taken more seriously as another case study in the evolution of human society in a colonial and post-colonial setting. What was revealed by such inquiry, however, wasn't a perfect but rather a flawed republic. Rather than encourage such critical reflection Australian nationalism had suppressed it in the interests of a desired social cohesion. Both Manning Clark and Donald Horne saw a form of tyranny in all of this, a tyranny of collective opinion that was blinding Australians to certain realities, for example the evil of racism, and constraining their understanding of what was possible, for example in relation to the Constitution. Australian leaders, they said, weren't bold enough, nor free thinking enough to break the back of this complacency. In fact the much lauded crowned republic had lost its vigour and punch as a truly republican entity. The social climate, said Horne in his 1964 classic **The Lucky Country,** was "largely inimical to originality and the desire for excellence (except in sport)". We may have looked and felt like a republic but deep down the spirit and independence that personifies republicanism wasn't there. Indeed Horne spoke of a nation "nervous of its final responsibilities" and in need of "some new sense of identity"[xv].

As a symbol of deference to all things British and an example of hereditary power the Crown was thrown into the limelight and looked out of place in a world increasingly defined by global challenges, equal opportunity and multiculturalism. For the second time in our history a real contradiction had opened up between the ideas of a generation and the system under which they lived and space was created within civil society for the development of a movement for a "real" Australian republic with its own Head of State. However, the creation of space and the occupation of that space with an effective movement for change are two different things. Nor did the rebellion come without a reaction from what we might call "Old Australia". The very idea that "rights" could replace "class" and "innovation" replace "protection" looked like, and to a degree was, antithetical to collectivism and union power. This antagonised the left. On the right the ideas of "equality" and "choice" replacing "tradition" and "social position" looked like and were antithetical to existing notions of race, gender and legitimate self-expression.

Given the powerful forces behind such objections one wonders how the proposed revolution was to gain any legs in civil society. It was, however, taken up by reformers in both the Labor and Liberal Parties and in the case of Labor Gough Whitlam made many of them - but not the abolition of our monarchy - central to his successful bid for the leadership of the party and nation. The Promised Land seemed close, then, of course, the very government elected to carry out reform was dismissed in 1975 by the Queen's representative in Australia Sir John Kerr.

1975 and all that

Kerr took us to the monarchy by using the doctrine of reserve powers to legitimise his actions in dismissing a government with a majority in the House of Representatives. It is true; of course, that none of this would have happened if the Constitution had made it clear that the Senate had no blocking powers in respect of supply. That this hadn't happened has led some to conclude that the whole episode was but a power play from which the Coalition emerged the winners and within which Sir John Kerr was nothing more than a neutral umpire. This completely misses the point, firstly, about the background to the crisis, namely the actions of New South Wales and Queensland in not replacing Labor Senators (crucially important when it came to "the numbers" in the Senate) and, secondly, that John Kerr acted precipitously and without any warning to the Prime Minister about the way he was thinking. For the Labor half of our society it was a full frontal attack on their government (which wasn't due to go to the polls for eighteen months) and their leader (who was in the process of sorting out his government's problems) and it led many to ask - what sort of a system was it that could allow Premiers and a Governor-General to act in this way?[xvi] Wasn't a certain form of tyranny involved in this? Radicals such as Manning Clark and Donald Horne certainly thought so and only the embedded constitutionalism of Whitlam and ACTU head Bob Hawke saved the nation form serious conflict.

By these two events - the ascendency of a radical reformist Labor Leader and the dismissal of his government by the Queen's representative, the whole question of the Australian Constitution - and its contemporary relevance - was thrust onto centre-stage. A modern republican movement with teeth was born and a flood of ideas and proposals followed on how we might sever ties with the monarchy. There were minimalists who wanted little to change beyond the removal of the British Monarch, moderates who

wanted wider constitutional reform and radicals who wanted the nation to start again, as had been recommended by the rebels in the 1960s.

The achievements of this movement – created in the 1960s and energised following the dismissal - were significant. Many were cultural rather than political - a new national anthem, a new oath of allegiance for migrants who wished to become citizens and various symbolic changes in the way we describe ourselves and our institutions (SC replacing QC for example). In the 1990s it did look as though the separatist cause would win too but for a range of reasons it couldn't muster a majority at the 1999 Referendum. Firstly, the model taken to the people wasn't the result of genuine democratic engagement but rather the result of a Convention created by the Howard Government in which only half were elected - and by a non-compulsory ballot, hardly a sign of the importance with which the issue should have been treated. Secondly, the whole issue came to the forefront at a time when sections of the electorate, in particular the working class and those living outside the cities, were expressing concern at the rate of reform, particularly economic reform. This fed into the argument of the constitutional monarchists that the politics of the day were best defined in populist terms, the people versus the elites. "What's in it for the workers" asked some from the old school of populist politics and the monarchists were only too happy to reply "nothing but more power will go to the politicians and their middle-class mates". It was crude but effective. All of this may not have proved decisive if minimalist, moderate and radical republicans had united. However, this wasn't to be and a not insignificant group of "real" republicans who favoured direct election advocated a "no" vote.

What this tells us is that the republican debate has never just been about that, but is linked to other issues such as nationalism and national security on the one hand and class and power on the other. To illustrate this think of the two republics I have described tonight , one crowned and nationalist and the other liberal and multicultural. The first was deeply linked to national aspirations and backed up by significant influence for labour in the nation's political economy. It took account of our fears as a British people in Asia as well as our hopes as a new nation needing capital and markets. It called us to battle against any who threatened British liberty at home or abroad, whether it was the Kaiser, Hitler, Stalin or Tojo. It had emotional as well as intellectual carry and could be as ugly as it was inspirational.

The republic proposed in the 1990s wasn't crowned and was linked to our aspirations as a truly free and independent nation not afraid of challenge and diversity, particularly as it related to our location on the globe. It didn't speak to us as members of a race or a class but rather as citizens of a truly global nation. It was to be a republic of liberal and egalitarian rather than nationalist and collectivist values. This was its strength for an idealistic generation and a multicultural nation but also its weakness in the real world of Machiavellian politics.

An Australian republic – is it possible?

This raises the question – is it possible to go beyond the crowned republic in Australian politics? It may be possible to imagine it and define how it might operate but is it possible to achieve it? Some say it is a battle that can't be won in anything but "theory" because republican unity is impossible and there is too little that is offensive about the role played by the British Monarch in Australian political life. Indeed it is argued that all of the issues raised by radicals in the 1960s and in the aftermath of 1975 – except one of course - could be dealt with by continuing constitutional and political reform within Australia's crowned republic, indigenous recognition being a contemporary example. Forget this other and unachievable republic, they say, and get on with the job of politics, equality versus tradition, left versus right, conservation versus development, and globalism versus nationalism.[xvii]

The problem with this take on the issue is that a not insignificant number of Australians – me included - continue to believe we could and should do better when it comes to our Head of State. We know about the barriers and the political difficulties but remain true believers nevertheless. We say politics is not just instrumental but also expressive. We say our Constitution should clearly express what it is we believe about ourselves as a community - positions being open to all and filled on the basis of merit and achievement is one of those beliefs. As the Governor-General Quentin Bryce[xviii] put it so well when reflecting on possible futures in her Boyer Lecture address: "And where perhaps, my friends, one day, one young girl or boy may even grow up to be our nation's first head of state" or as the Australian Republican Movement puts it in their pledge: "We propose, as a great national project involving all our citizens, that Australia becomes an independent republic with one amongst us chosen as Head of State". [xix] We believe too that the unity we currently achieve in and around the Queen can be bettered – and significantly – if one amongst us was Head of State and working with powers and

responsibilities we had carefully drafted as a community. Once it was done we would be wondering why it hadn't been done sooner, just as we did when locals replaced British aristocrats as our Vice Roys and Advance Australia Fair became our national anthem.

I see fear and doubt rather than hope and affirmation in the hearts and minds of those who support the status quo. Whether principled or pragmatic in their approach monarchists can't imagine the Australian people exercising their sovereignty to create something better than that which we have. Noting this, however, takes us to the nub of the question facing the republican movement. Do republicans trust the people or do they want to manufacture a republic by relying solely on the political class to deliver it from on high? I'm not saying here that the model taken to the referendum has to involve my own preferred model of direct election if it is to be acceptable but rather than it has to be the result of genuine democratic engagement. We need to know whether the minimalists, moderates or direct electionists are right when they claim to be speaking on behalf of "the people". What then do we mean by "genuine democratic engagement"?

The third republic – deliberative democracy

This takes me to the third republic of Australian history which goes beyond both the crowned republic and the liberal republic. Its focus is not so much on the Constitution but rather on how to give real meaning to our sovereignty as a people. To fill in the details here I'm obliged to return to two of the ideas we associate with republicanism, namely political participation and the common good or what today we call the public interest. It is possible, of course, to participate in politics solely on the basis of self, party or factional interest and we have a system that facilitates this. However, to achieve – or at least get close to achieving – that elusive goal we call the public interest much more is required. That "more" might be the give and take we associate with politics and which we have seen institutionalised as checks and balances in the Constitution.

Our original republicans thought that would be enough and indeed it was in a society that was underpinned by patriotism, racial exclusion and tariff protection. However, for the liberal republicans committed to cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism and competition even more was needed, namely political leadership to frame and shape the give and take of politics so it takes us to a greater good that embraces values as well as interests, the future as well as the present, minorities as well as the majority and the environment as well as the economy.

The give and take of politics tends to lock us into the “now” and its vested interests and leaders (or “teachers” as Manning Clark liked to call them) were needed to break the deadlocks so created. History would seem to tell us that in this relationship the give and take of politics tends to win out over leadership – think of 1975 and 1999, both case studies in the triumph of tragedy over hope not just for the labour and republican movements but also for their leaders, Gough Whitlam in the first case and Malcolm Turnbull in the second. Leaders need more than vision, they need authority and they need numbers. This is where the third republic – or deliberative democracy - enters the picture. It’s with us now, particularly at the local and sometimes at the state level of politics where we see citizens’ juries, citizens’ assemblies, deliberative polls, consensus conferences and the like being added onto the existing architecture of representative democracy. Sometimes big and complex issues are dealt with and sometimes less complex local issues. These initiatives inject an authority into democratic decision-making that is all too often missing when traditional methods are used.

The two ideas that lie at the heart of deliberative democracy – deliberation and representativeness - may prove to be the key to the success or otherwise of moves to break the constitutional link to the British Crown. Deliberation is defined by John Dryzek as “a particular kind of communication that ideally induces reflection about preferences, beliefs, and values in a non-coercive fashion, and that connects particular interests to more general principles”. It is said to be “different from adversarial debate” with the aim being “not to win, but to understand” and “it allows that people are open to change their minds”.[xx] Properly facilitated it encourages people to focus on the question “what is the right and best thing to do” rather than “what is best for me and the interests I represent”. In other words it seeks the common ground in respective of any issue, be it complex or straightforward.

Representativeness is defined not as we do in respect of our democratic system, that is to say by making a contrast between representative democracy and direct democracy, but as the random selection of decision makers. Janet Hartz-Karp defines it this way: “As in Athenian times, there is opportunity for ordinary citizens, representative of the population, to come together to deliberate on issues important to society”. However, unlike ancient Athens all may be included whatever their gender or social status. The other difference from earlier forms used in Athens or the Florentine republic during the Early Renaissance is the use of the representative sample, developed for opinion polling purposes in the twentieth century. Randomly selected participation creates “mini-publics”

that replicates the population at large. It is, says Hartz-Karp, “the best way to ensure that ‘ordinary citizens’ are fairly represented in the deliberations”.[xxi] In other words it’s not decision-making by an elite elected or self-selected to do the job but by a representative sample of the relevant community, be it national, regional or local.

It’s all very republican – the people are involved rather than those who claim to speak on their behalf and they are involved as citizens seeking the common good rather than as interests seeking protection or promotion. In Australia in 2009 a Citizens’ Parliament of 150 citizens, one from each electorate selected at random from the electoral roll, met in Canberra to consider improvements to our political system. By all accounts this event, which was sponsored by the not-for-profit New Democracy Foundation, produced high quality deliberation, a shifting of views as it progressed and specific recommendations at the end.[xxii] I wasn’t surprised this Parliament went well as my own government in Western Australia had been an active in this space, having initiated six Consensus Forums, three Citizens’ Juries, a Deliberative Survey, three Multi-Criteria Analysis Conferences, two Enquiry by Design Dialogues and a range of more traditional forms of consultation, for example the Drug and Water Summits.[xxiii] The stand out, however, was our Dialogue with the City where 1,100 participants (including one third that were randomly selected) deliberated on the future of metropolitan Perth. Their recommendations were fully accepted by the Cabinet as had been agreed before we went down this path[xxiv]. Similar things are happening in Ireland at the moment where a government appointed chair, 66 randomly selected citizens and 33 legislators from across the political spectrum have been meeting to recommend on a range of specified matters. In this case the government isn’t obliged to implement the recommendations, just ensure they are debated properly in the Legislature [xxv] Amongst other things they have recommended amendments of the Constitution to replace the offence of “blasphemy” with a new general provision to include incitement to religious hatred, to include an explicit provision on gender equality and to allow for same-sex marriage. In British Columbia in Canada in 2005 a Citizen Assembly selected by lot met over twelve months to examine the Province’s electoral system. Their recommendation for change to a Single-Transferable Vote system was supported by 57.7% in a referendum that followed but this was just short of the 60% required under their constitution.[xxvi]

How then can these developments in democratic practice help the case for an Australian republic? Let’s start with the question of authority. Constitutional monarchists argue that there is insufficient support for a republic to justify time and money being

devoted to its pursuit as an objective for the nation. It follows, they say, that any such effort will inevitably be by and for “the elite” only, a doomed exercise. To counter this, the Australian Republican Movement and the ALP propose a plebiscite or general vote of the people as a first step in the process. Only if that vote produces a majority in support of change to an Australian Head of State will the process of determining a model be initiated. Two questions follow: Is the plebiscite the best method for determining the will of the people? If a majority supports the republic how best do we determine a model to take to referendum?

Deliberative techniques could in fact be utilised in both scenarios - as a way of eliciting majority opinion and as a way of developing a model. Indeed randomly selecting an assembly to consider whether or not we should change our constitution would have its attractions over a general vote of the electorate, namely the avoidance of those ugly features that can accompany a campaign of this sort – excessive spin, fear-mongering and “attack politics” generally. Republicans say they have no fear about a general vote; nor should they have fears about a vote which emerges from the deliberations of a randomly selected assembly. However, given that the ultimate test would be in the constitutionally required referendum, a plebiscite may still be a good place to begin as it would replicate the rough and tumble of political campaigning that comes with any campaign leading to a vote.

When it comes to working out what sort of alternative model to take to the required referendum republican politicians would be wise to ignore any preconceptions or prejudices they might have about the means and ends of change and look to a form of deliberative democracy to assist them in their endeavours. A cross-party parliamentary inquiry, a Royal Commission or even an elected convention like that of 1998 will most likely struggle to create the level of support and authority required to expose and isolate the snipers from the fundamentalist left or monarchist right whose guerrilla war tactics were so successful in 1999. It’s all about trust and authority; the trust that comes from knowing it is a random sample of the people – a mini-public - and the authority that comes not from just numbers or expertise but from careful deliberation by a mini-public.

It’s just not possible to break the back of the crowned republic we have by relying solely on conventional party politics and parliamentary leadership to that end; as important as they are. In a sense it’s what Manning Clark sought for the nation he loved; some sort of fusion between “that Christ figure” representing the classless society and “the

best teaching of the enlightenment" the result of reasoned argument. Coming together in a space free of class, hierarchy and provincialism the people would ask – as Clark asked of himself – "Who am I and what do I believe?" [xxvii] It's a republican means for a republican end that we need, anything less won't measure up, and this leaves us with the question: Will republicans in the Parliament have the foresight and courage to ensure ownership of the process is firmly and unambiguously in the hands of the people of Australia? It's that trust issue again, never to be forgotten and never to be under-estimated as a pre-condition for change in a democratic society.

[i] Quoted in Mark McKenna (2003), 'I Wonder Whether I Belong' Manning Clark and the Politics of Australian History 1970 – 2000, **Australian Historical Studies**, 34:122, p.382.
[ii] See Geoff Gallop, "The road to Labor", **WA Today**, 21 September 2011.
[iii] For an alternative approach see Mark McKenna (1995-96), **The Traditions of Australian Republicanism** (Australian Parliamentary Library Research Paper 31)
[iv] See J.G.A. Pocock (editor), **Three British Revolutions: 1641, 1688 and 1776** (Princeton, 1980) and Benjamin Thomas Jones (2009), " Colonial Republicanism; re-examining the impact of civic republican ideology in pre-Constitution New South Wales, **Journal of Australian Colonial History,** vo. 11, pp. 129-146.
[v] **The Tribune, a periodical publication consisting chiefly of the political lectures of J.Thelwall**, (3 vols, 1795-6), II, p. 234.
[vi] James Harrington (1656), "The Commonwealth of Oceana" in J.G.A.Pocock (editor)**, The Political Works of James Harrington,** (Cambridge University Press, 1977), p.164.
[vii] See Tony Blackshield and George Williams (editors), **Australian Constitutional Law and Theory**, 5th edition (The Federation Press, 2010), pp.110-151.
[viii] Quoted in Mark McKenna and Wayne Hudson (editors), **Australian Republicanism: A Reader** (Melbourne University Press, 2003), p.50.
[ix] Bruce McFarlane (1970), "From Penal Colony To Republic?" in V.G.Venturini (editor), **Australia: A Survey**, (Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden), p.261.
[x] William Charles Wentworth (1823), **Australasia- a Poem written for The Chancellor's Medal at the Cambridge Commencement**. See http://www.lib.mq.edu.au/digital/lema/1823/australasia2.html. See also Humphrey McQueeen (1970), **A New Britannia: An Argument Concerning the Social origins of Australian Radicalism** (Penguin).
[xi] David Black (editor), **In His Own Words: John Curtin's Speeches and Writings** (Paradigm Books, 1995), p. 237.
[xii] Quoted in In His Own Words, p.242.
[xiii] See **Australian Republicanism: A Reader**, pp.45-46 (Lang), p.93 (Lawson) and p.149 (Crouch).
[xiv] Louis Nowra, "Writers eager to march with our tinpot fascists", **The Australian,** 21 July 2012.
[xv] **The Lucky Country**, 5th edition (Penguin, 2005), p. 233 and p.106.

[xvi] See Gough Whitlam, **The Truth Matter of the Matter** (Penguin Books, 1979)
[xvii] See Michael Kirby (2000), "The Australian Republican Referendum 1999 – Ten Lessons", **Lecture at Faculty of Law**, University of Birmingham, UK..
[xviii] See http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-11-23/republicans-welcome-governor-gerneral-support-for-a-republic
[xix] See http://www.ouridentity.org.au/
[xx] John Dryzek (2009), "The Australian Citizens' Parliament: A World First", **Papers on Parliament**, no 51, p.39.
[xxi] Janet Hartz-Karp, (2007),"How and Why Deliberative Democracy Enables Co-Intelligence and Brings Wisdom to Governance", **Journal of Public Deliberation**, vol. 3, Issue 1, Article 6, p.3and p.4.
[xxii] See newdemocracy.com.au/achievements/item/137-the-australian-citizens-parliament-2009
[xxiii] See Hon Alannah MacTiernan (2004), "Harmonizing Divergent Voices: Sharing The Challenge Of Decision Making", **IPAA (NSW) State Conference, Keynote Address,** Darling Harbour, Sydney and Geoff Gallop (2013), "What is newDemocrcay?", **Lecture at the Hawke Centre**, University of South Australia, Adelaide.
[xxiv] **S**ee Janet Hartz-Karp (2005**),** "A Case Study in Deliberative Democracy: Dialogue with the City", **Journal of Public Deliberation**, vol. 1, Issue 1, Article 6.
[xxv] See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutional_Convention _(Ireland)
[xxvi] Yves Sintomer (2010), "Random Selection, Republican Self-Government, and Deliberative Democracy", **Constellations**, vol. 17, no 3, p.472 and p.480.
[xxvii] See "Manning Clark and the Politics of Australian History", p. 368 and p. 375