



AUSTRALIAN REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT

The New ARM – Our Approach

Professor John Warhurst
Chair, Australian Republican Movement

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is a wonderful moment for me. As a republican for the past 30 years I've now been given a very special opportunity. I represent a large number of republicans as the national chair of the Australian Republican Movement.

ARM STRUCTURE

The "New ARM" that I represent is more than at any time in its history now a fully democratic and grass roots organisation. We have grown from a ginger group to a people's movement. Since 2000, for the past four years, we have been operating under a new constitution and set of rules that gives the ARM the following national and democratic structure.

At the national level the 17 member national committee is made up of 8 members and one youth member directly elected every two years by the whole of the ARM membership and another eight members who are the elected conveners of their state and territory ARM branches.

Within the NC the present three person executive that currently has been asked to lead the movement is the two deputy chairs, Jason Li and Anne Henderson, and myself as chair.

These eight state and territory conveners head up state and territory councils that are also fully elected (in alternate years) by all the ARM members in those states and territories.

These conveners are: Helen Millicer (Victoria), Jason Falinski (NSW), Ian Fraser (NT), John Warhurst (ACT), Rod Kendall (Queensland), David Michael (WA), David Morris (Tasmania) and Geoff Britton (SA).

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In the larger states ARM also has some smaller local Forums in localities in metropolitan and regional areas. So we operate at three levels in the community.

ARM POLICY

The ARM is a broad church of republicans who are united around one simple message: Australia wants and needs an Australian Head of State. This is the single message that we are dedicated to explaining and communicating to the whole Australian community in whatever way we can.

ARM offers itself as an umbrella organisation for all republicans whatever their different views and hues. We realise that unity among republicans is absolutely essential if our dream of an Australian Head of State for Australia is to come true. We are absolutely realistic and determined about this.

We are not committed to any particular republican model. Rather we believe that it is for the Australian community to decide what model it chooses to vote on at the second republican referendum when that time comes. Five years have now passed since November 1999. We are a patient movement.

What we are determined to do is to participate to the best of our ability in helping the discussion in the Australian community that will be the environment in which this choice is made. The decision will come from the community.

ARM AMBASSADORS PROGRAM

The 2004 Honorary Ambassador Program is a culmination of what the ARM has become over the past four years: a grass roots community organisation. The ARM today is personified by these honorary republican ambassadors. We are proud to present them to you this morning. We, a national organisation of ordinary Australians, have chosen ambassadors to represent to their fellow citizens an idea, the idea of an Australian Head of State. They show to the nation what we are.

Our ambassadors are a diverse group of Australians. They are mostly not well known to the wider Australian community, though some are indeed well known. But they are all well known in their own smaller communities. They are a cross section of Australians. They are a cross section of republicans. They are city people and country people. They are women and men. They are relatively old and quite young. They come from each of Australia's eight states and territories. They include a car salesman from Cairns, a shop owner from Hobart, a mother of two from Sydney, a radio presenter from Perth, a financial planner and businessman from Adelaide.

They share the ARM's commitment to an Australian Head of State. That is the one great unifying idea among republicans.

They have been willing, in the spirit of that great Australian tradition, to "have a go". They are declaring to their fellow citizens that they believe strongly enough in the idea of an Australian Head of State to want to play a special part in the great community discussion about this issue. They are giving their time and commitment for that idea.

We are proud and excited that these 50 Australians have accepted our invitation to become republican ambassadors. We know too that they are proud to have been invited to take up our offer. We are excited too to know that there are hundreds more groups of 50 around Australia who every day are acting informally as republican ambassadors within their own small and sometimes relatively big communities: families, workplaces, associations and towns, for instance. We salute them too.

You have a full list in front of you of ARM's honorary republican ambassadors for 2004. I won't mention them all but the list includes:

- Sandra Slappendel, owner and operator of a caravan park in Kempsey
- Gai O'Shannassy, proprietor of the "Fairie Shoppe" in Hobart
- Ben Browne, farmer and ex-shearer from rural South Australia
- Ross Mooney, maintenance officer at the Australian Institute of Sport here in Canberra
- Dr Anne Castles, psychology lecturer from Melbourne
- Bronwyn Herbertson, lawyer and single mother from Toowoomba
- Justin Coghlan, Qantas airline steward based in Adelaide
- Bill Bunbury, writer and radio presenter from Perth

And there are many more everyday Australians among their number. Joining them are some Australians whose names may be better known to you. Together they will represent the idea of an Australian Head of State to their fellow Australians.

- Liz Ellis is captain of the Australian netball team.
- Sarina Russo is a Brisbane businesswoman
- Rove McManus is an award winning media host
- Nick Earls is a prize winning author
- Daryl Manzie is a former Country Liberal member of the Northern Territory Assembly
- Ron Barassi is a businessman and AFL legend as a player and coach
- Peter Combe is a singer and songwriter from Adelaide

It is now my pleasure to invite some of our ambassadors who are in Canberra today for this launch to speak to you about their own commitment to an Australian Head of State for Australia.