

Statement on The Republic Referendum
P J Keating
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I have been asked by a number of media organisations for comment on yesterday's Referendum.

The result of the Republic referendum denies the country its movement to maturity and tells ourselves we are not up to managing our own affairs.

It tells the world we don't trust ourselves and that we are ambivalent about who we are.

It tells the Queen that the institution of the monarchy is irretrievably broken and that in future she will not be a unifying symbol in Australian life.

Thanks to John Howard's wilful and manipulative management of the issue and the innate reactionary nature of his political philosophy, the pressure will grow to give Australia an elected presidency in the future, a position which would enjoy the full reserve powers of an English monarch.

Such a development would change forever the political primacy of the parliament, Prime Minister and Cabinet in our political system.

This result has been delivered by a campaign of lies, an alliance of convenience with naïve or self-serving republicans and the active support of John Howard, who manipulated the referendum to ensure its defeat.

But the victory will signal the inevitable collapse of his cause.

The result will be an ongoing crisis of confidence in our constitutional arrangements.

The Statement last night by the Queen herself is very revealing. More for what she said, than the unprecedented step of saying it. She explicitly acknowledged the debate on the Republic has been about what that change should be, implying it has not been about whether a majority of people wish to retain her services.

The Queen went on to make clear that on the advice of the Prime Minister John Howard "I shall continue faithfully to serve under the Constitution as Queen of Australia".

The Queen is telling us she knows the writing is on the wall but she will stay on, on the Prime Minister's advice. Pity the Prime Minister could not read the writing too, or better, point the way.

My own views on the Republic are unchanged and utterly unshaken.

Our Head of State has to be one of us.