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“Australia’s Constitutional Future: Opinion Polling”

Presented to
Australians for Constitutional Monarchy
October 8, 2011

Presented by
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If a Referendum were held today, the result would be the same as the 1999 Republic Referendum that we did have, **Australia would remain a constitutional monarchy – and by a clear margin.**

At the time of the 1999 Referendum, a majority of Australians (54%) did profess to support a Republic in preference to the Monarchy (38%); however divisions on what type of Republic meant a majority of Australians preferred to stay with a working system of Government rather than vote for an uncertain and ill-defined Republican model. Since the Referendum, Australians have grown increasingly supportive of the Monarchy.

The most recent polling done in May 2011 by the Morgan Poll shows support for the Monarchy is now 55% (up 17% since 1999) compared to support for a Republic at (34%, down 20%) the lowest support for a Republic since the bicentennial in 1988 (29%).

Total Respondents

	<u>Jun 1953*</u>	<u>Oct 1969*</u>	<u>Dec 1975</u>	<u>Apr 1977</u>	<u>Aug 1981</u>	<u>Jan 1983</u>	<u>Jan 1984</u>	<u>Jul 1988</u>	<u>Jul 1991</u>	<u>Mar 1992</u>	<u>Apr 1993</u>	<u>Dec 1993</u>	<u>Nov 1994</u>	<u>Jul 1995</u>	<u>Jun 1996</u>	<u>Sep 1997</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Monarchy	77	64	61	62	59	60	62	64	56	49	38	48	40	39	42	37
Republic	15	24	28	26	28	28	30	29	36	44	52	44	50	49	47	53
Undecided	8	12	11	12	13	12	8	7	8	7	10	8	10	12	11	10
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

*Electors 18+

Total Respondents

	Total Respondents								Aged 18+			
	<u>Dec 1997</u>	<u>Feb 1998</u>	<u>Nov 1999</u>	<u>Mar/Apr 2000</u>	<u>Feb 2005</u>	<u>May 2008</u>	<u>Nov 2010</u>	<u>May 3/4 2011</u>	<u>Total 18+</u>	<u>Electors</u>	<u>Non-electors</u>	<u>Aged 14-17</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Monarchy	38	37	38	39	40	42	48	55	55	55	54	55
Republic	51	52	54	49	51	45	42	34	34	35	28	31
Undecided	11	11	8	12	9	13	10	11	11	10	18	14
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

In the present day 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, news-grabbing, because it draws on issues of the Queen, England, our history, our roots, etc. - all good stirring stuff.

But **irrelevant**.

Nearly sixty years ago my father, Roy Morgan, first polled the Monarchy Republic issue (In 1953). Given the lessons of recent history, no doubt we will still be polling in another 60 years the issue with the same 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 an issue on which Australians will never reach agreement*”.

This is a point my father was proved 100% correct on at the time of the 1999 Republic Referendum.

My father also 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; (Which has only been carried out in Queensland – in 1922!)
- Minor parties (The Greens, Democrats, DLP) and Independents (One only need look at the current Government to see this) are the curse of Australian politics;
- The “pound” should be known as a “dollar”; and definitely not a “crown” or “royal”; (and certainly never part of a so-called ‘multi-national currency’ like the euro!)
- 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 that the people must elect the President. As we all know, one thing politicians hate doing is giving up any power they have to the people!

The problem with the type of Republic Australia should become was clearly put to me by Barry Jones (**A noted supporter of an Australian Republic**) in his letter to me in early 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 14% of Australians rate Federal Members of Parliament **highly** for ethics and honesty in the latest Roy Morgan Image of Professions survey conducted in March 2011).

In February 1998, during the Constitutional Convention on whether Australia should become a Republic, the Morgan Poll showed that if Australia became a Republic, 68% of Australians wanted the President of Australia elected by the people and only 25% by politicians. A very different result than Barry Jones’ guess of 15%!

This was also a result that meant the chances of an Australian Republic being supported at the following year’s 1999 Republic Referendum by the Australian people was already zero.

This fact was borne out by the clear defeat of the Republic. The Republic was voted down in every Australian State and the Northern Territory, **only the public servants in Canberra** supported the Republic.

Morgan Poll conducted February 4/5, 1998 during the Constitutional Convention on “Who Should Elect the Australian Head of State?”

Roy Morgan website: <http://www.roymorgan.com/news/polls/1998/3054>

A sample of 642 Morgan Poll respondents were presented with different options if Australia were to become a republic after the 1999 Republic Referendum 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 (68%) of Australians preferred that person to be elected by the people. This included 71% of ALP supporters and 57% of L-NP supporters.

Only 16% favored election by a two-thirds majority of both Houses of Parliament while just 9% favored a Head of State elected by a majority of both Houses of Federal Parliament, and just 2% favored 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 2% can’t say.

Head of State should be:	All People	Analysis by Federal Voting Intention			
	Feb 1998	ALP	L-NP	Other	No answer
	%	%	%	%	%
Elected by a majority of the Australian people	68	71	57	79	76
Elected by a ² / ₃ majority of both Houses of Federal Parliament	16	15	21	16	9
Elected by a majority of both Houses of Federal Parliament	9	8	14	2	4
Total favor election by both Houses of Federal Parliament	25	23	35	18	13
Appointed by the Federal Government of the day	2	3	2	-	3
Can’t say	<u>5</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>6</u>	-	<u>3</u>
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

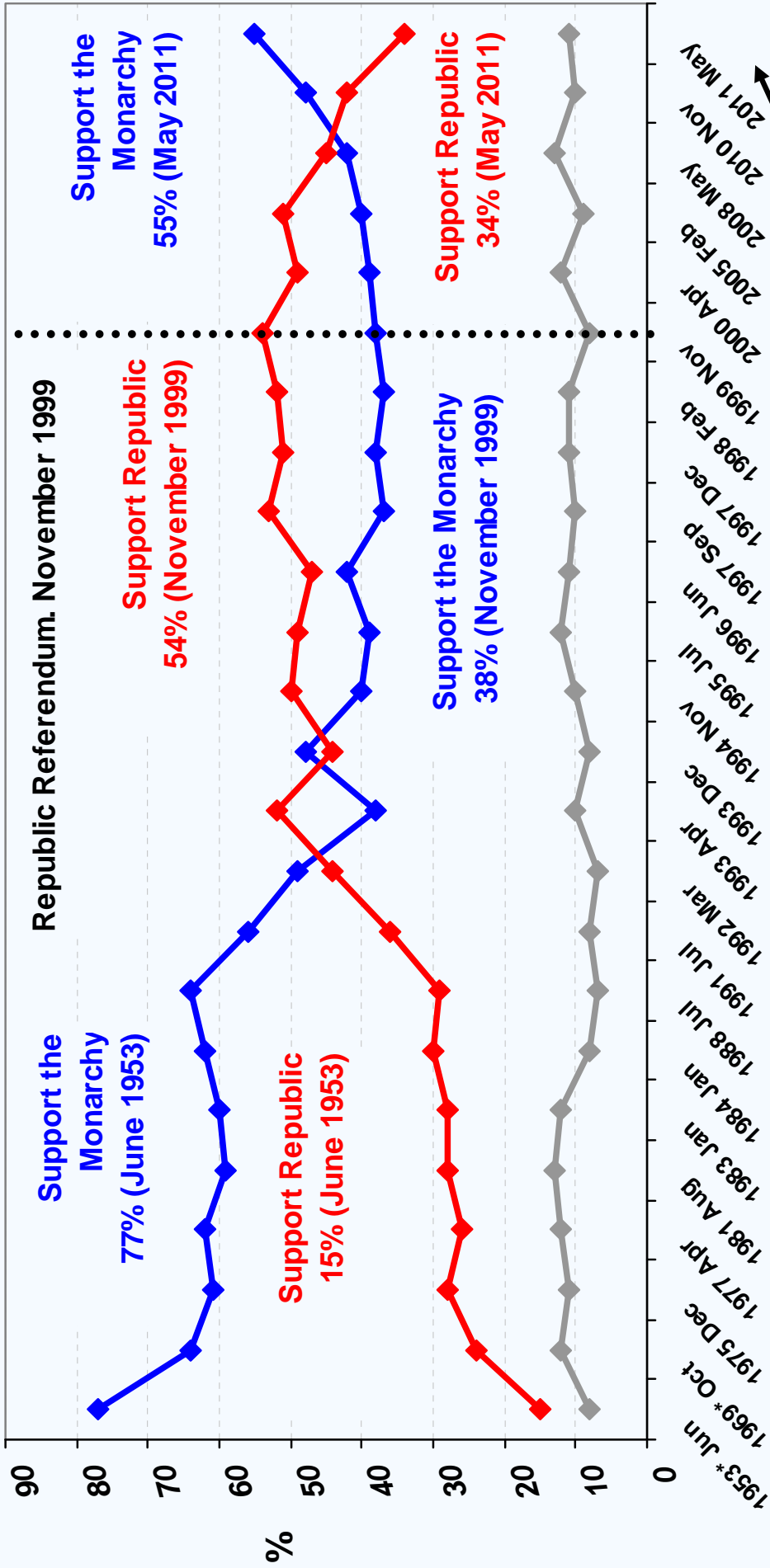
It was the results of this Morgan Poll that showed the Republican Movement that a Republic by 2001 was impossible - unless a bi-partisan program of electing the President by the people was agreed upon. Even then the process of changing the Constitution would require careful handling with no point scoring – clearly the Republicans could never agree on the only Republican model that could ever win widespread public support – and the Republic was easily defeated at the 1999 Republic Referendum.

As the results clearly show - Australians want to directly elect the Head of State, and without being given that option Australians will always reject a Republic Referendum.

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

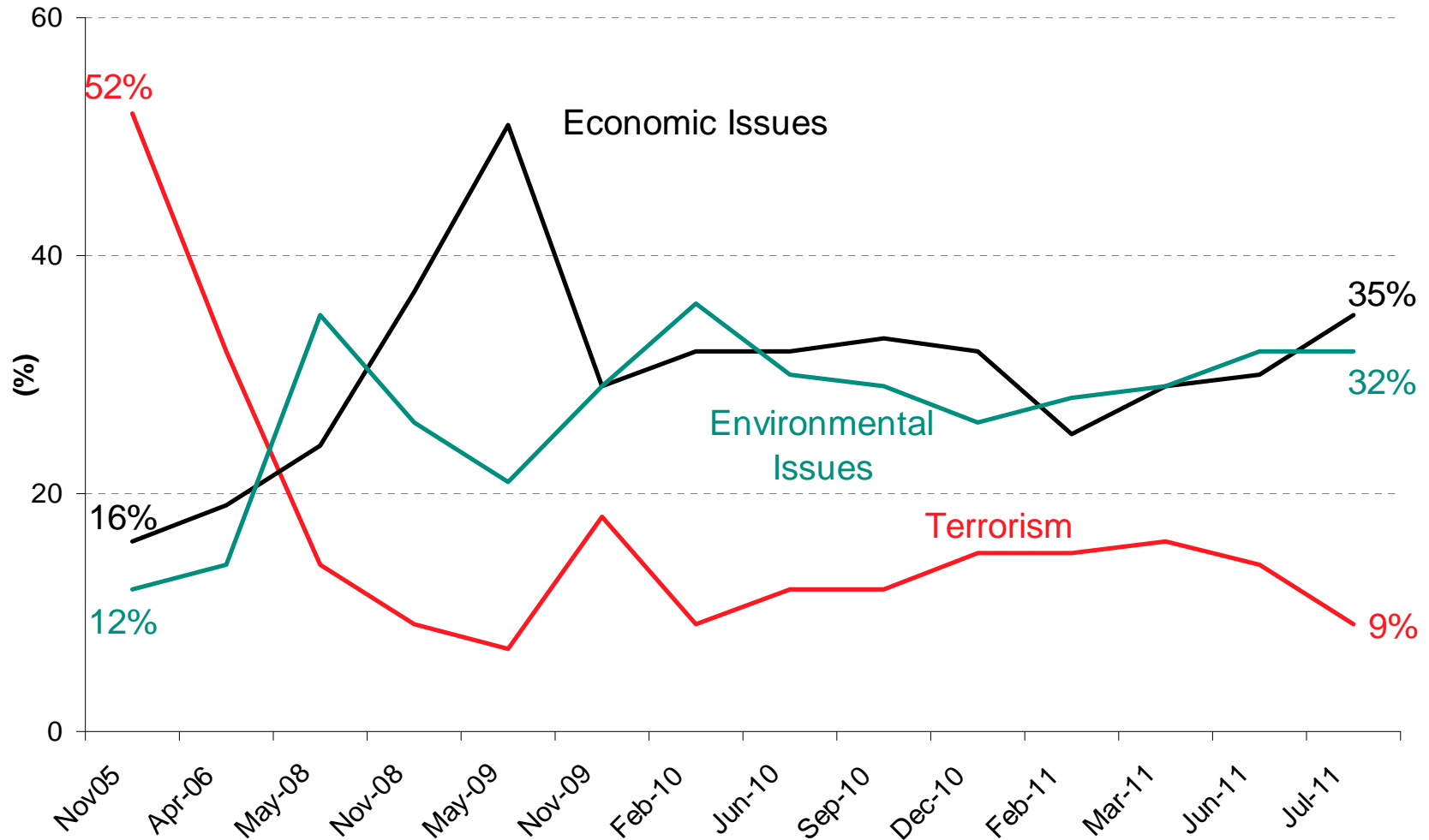
If the Republican Movement ever wants a Republic to be taken seriously they must change their agenda which seems impossible. Otherwise, there is a better chance that in 40 years Canberra will be closed rather than there being a President at Yarralumla.

Australian Attitudes to the Monarchy & Republic (1953 - 2011)



Royal Wedding of Prince William & Catherine Middleton - April 29, 2011

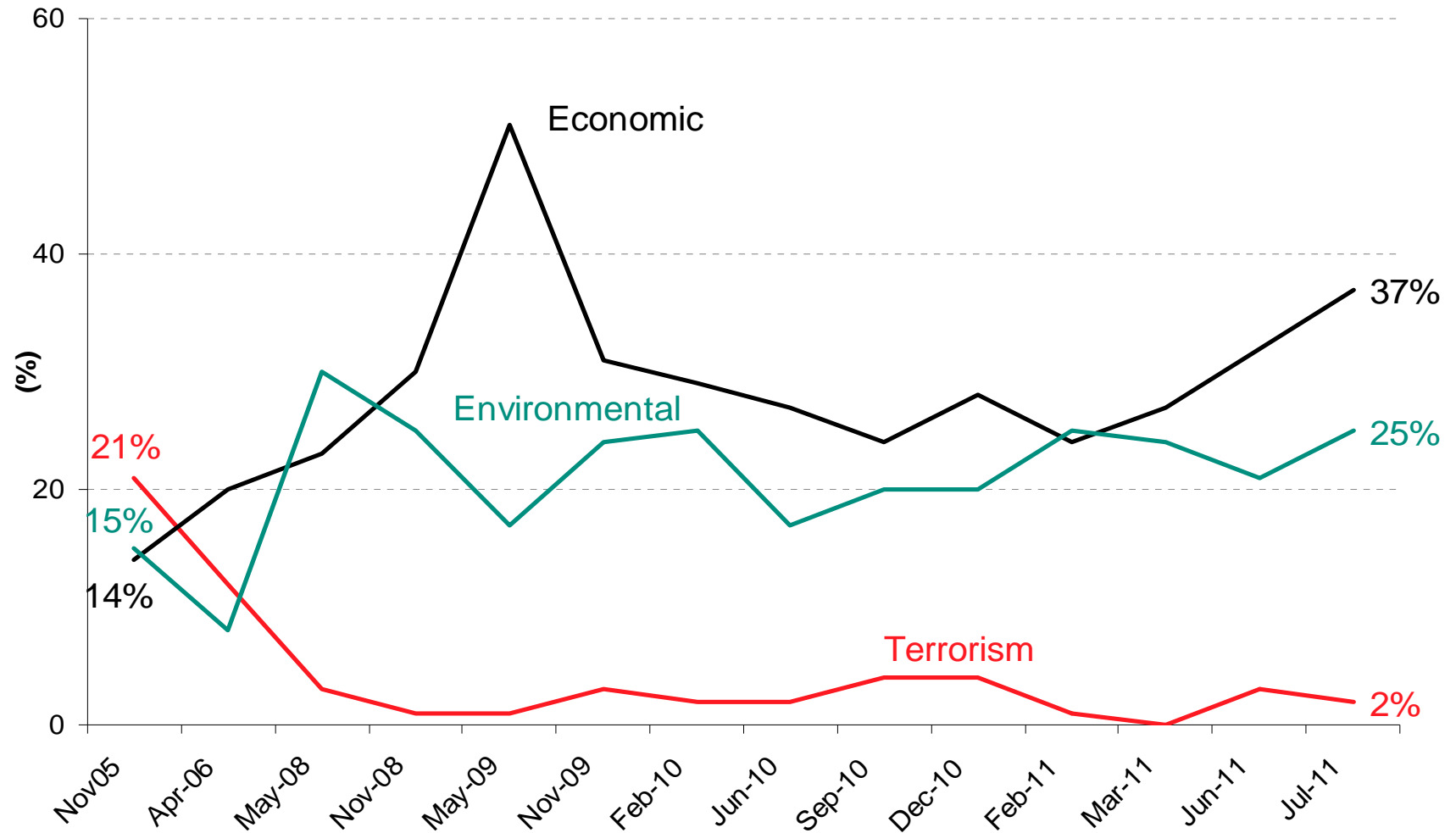
Issues Facing the World and Australia Most Important Issues Facing the World



Source: Roy Morgan Research

*Roy Morgan Nationwide telephone poll (n=1,262) July 13/14, 2011; Aust. Population 14+

Issues Facing the World and Australia Most Important Issues Facing Australia

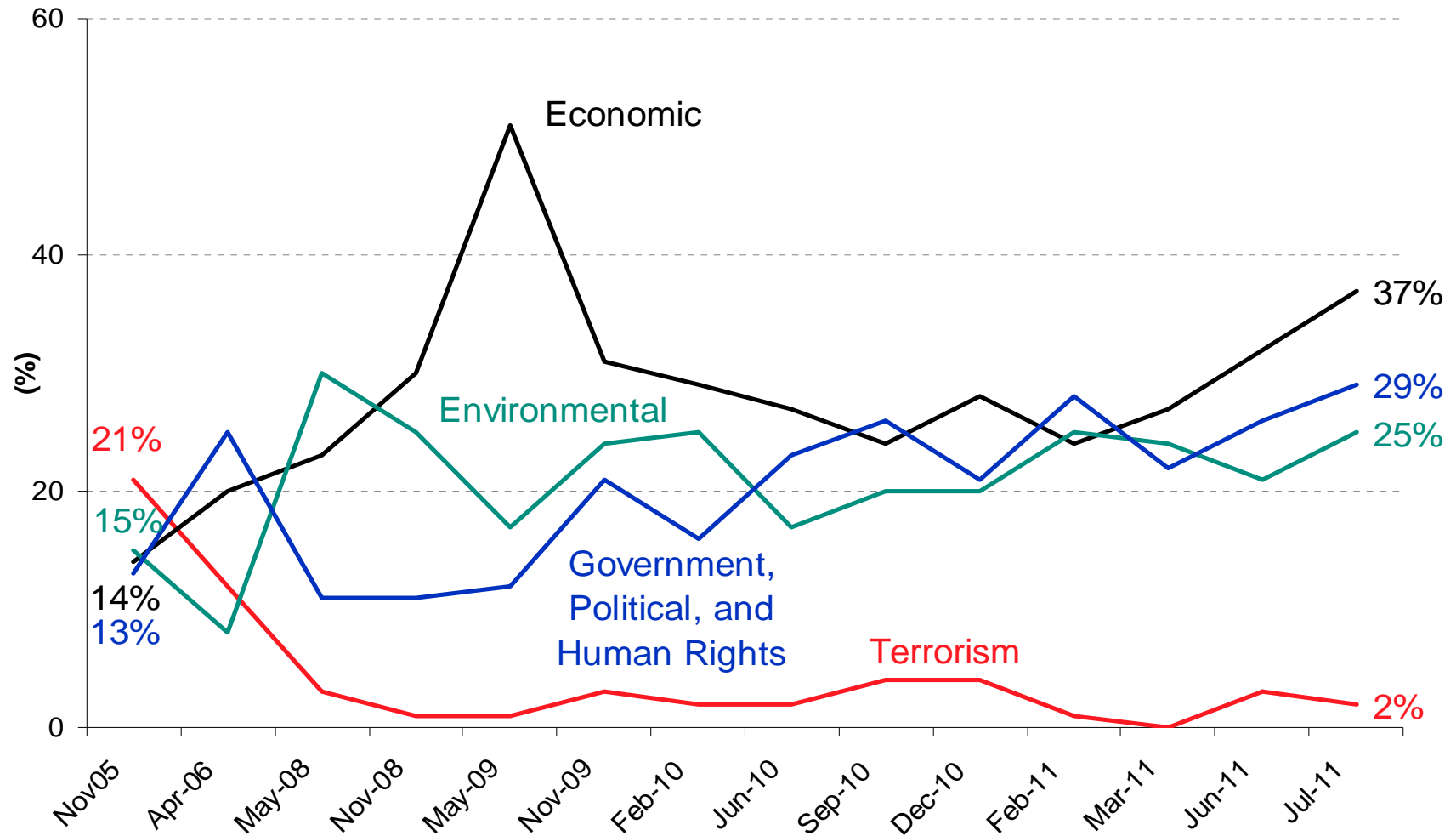


Source: Roy Morgan Research

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Issues Facing the World and Australia

Most Important Issues Facing Australia



Source: Roy Morgan Research

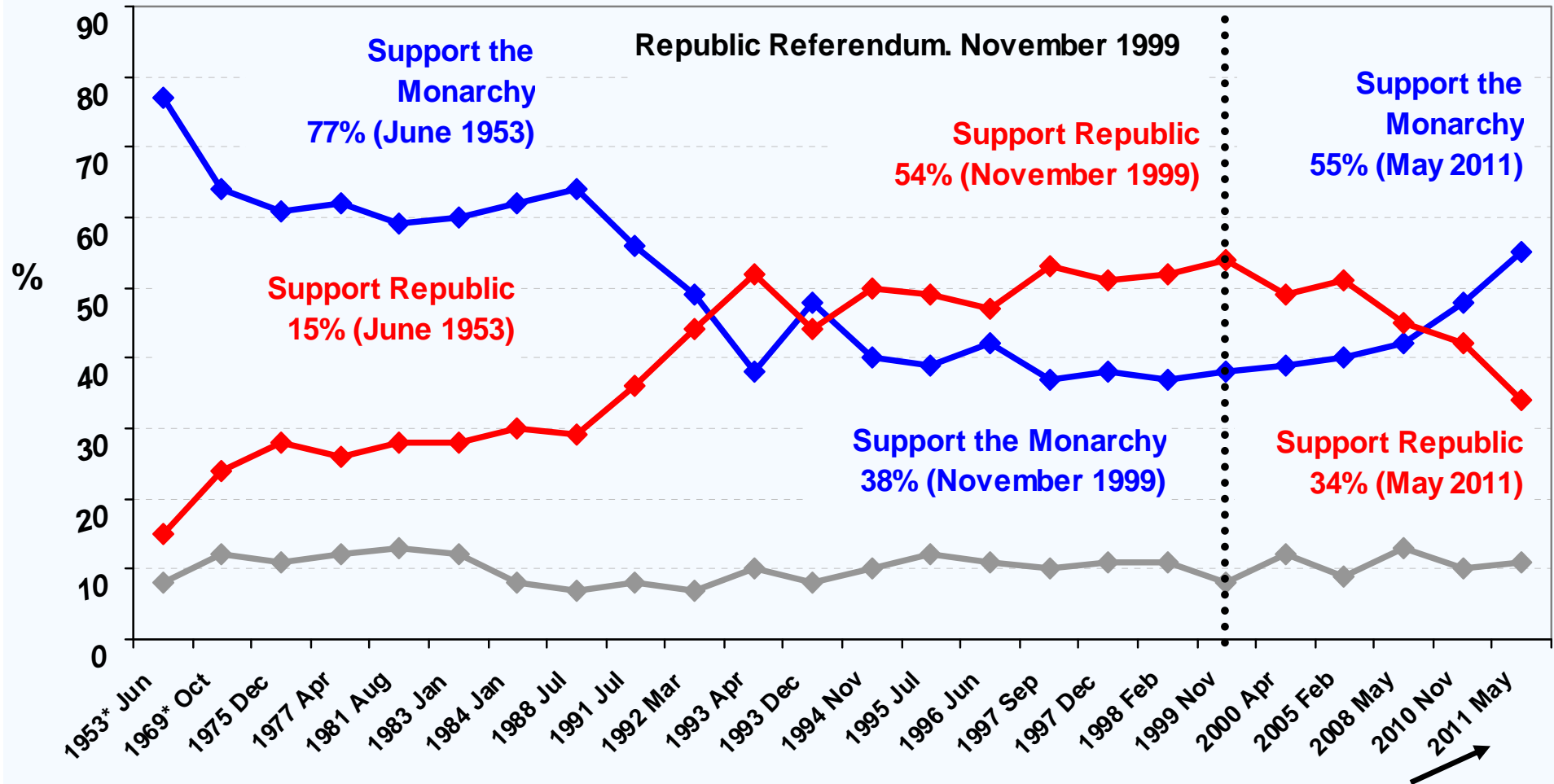
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Australian views on Monarchy v Republic

Morgan Polls conducted 1953 - 2011

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Australian Attitudes to the Monarchy & Republic (1953 - 2011)



Royal Wedding of Prince William & Catherine Middleton - April 29, 2011

Australian views on Monarchy v Republic Morgan Poll conducted on May 3/4, 2011

*“In your opinion, should Australia remain a **Monarchy** or become a **Republic** with an elected President?”*

- *MONARCHY: 55%*
- *REPUBLIC: 34%*
- *UNDECIDED: 11%*

Australian views on Monarchy v Republic Morgan Poll conducted on May 3/4, 2011

Respondents who answered 'Monarchy' or 'Undecided' in Question 1 were then asked: *"If Prince Charles were to be crowned King, in your opinion, should Australia remain a **Monarchy** or become a **Republic** with an elected President?"*

- *MONARCHY: 47%*
- *REPUBLIC: 45%*
- *UNDECIDED: 8%*

Australian views on Monarchy v Republic Morgan Poll conducted on May 3/4, 2011

Respondents were then asked: *“If Prince William were to be crowned King, in your opinion, should Australia remain a Monarchy or become a Republic with an elected President?”*

- *MONARCHY: 55%*
- *REPUBLIC: 35%*
- *UNDECIDED: 10%*