



ABSTRACT

Claudio Kullmann *The
Attitudes Towards the Monarchy in
Australia and New Zealand Compared*



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It is a well-known fact that Queen Elizabeth II is head of state not only of the United Kingdom, but also of fifteen other Commonwealth countries, including the former British settler colonies of Australia and New Zealand. Moreover, it seems to be common knowledge that from the early 1990s onwards there has been a strong sentiment towards a republic among the majority of the Australian people, whereas New Zealanders still prefer to remain a monarchy. Given the historic, political, geopolitical, economic, and cultural similarities of the two neighbouring countries, this difference appears to be quite astonishing. For the first time, this essay attempts to provide a consistent explanation for this phenomenon, which has not attracted any substantial scholar interest yet – despite the 1999 Australian republic referendum.

The central argument of the essay is that differences in the attitudes of the public can only in part be attributed to differences of the polities of the two monarchies or the just slightly varying political cultures. Rather, there are good reasons for the hypothesis that the republican shift in Australia was mainly brought about by an extensive and lasting public/media debate on the future of role the monarchy ‘down under’.

Based on an elaborate theoretical and methodological framework, consisting of David Easton’s model of the political system, the concept of political culture, and the agenda setting model, the essay outlines three points:

- (1) The polities of the two countries are in their monarchy-related aspects almost similar. Even though slight differences in the political systems exist, these alone cannot explain the divergent attitudes of the populations.
- (2) Due to the fact that Australia and New Zealand share their basic historic experiences and present challenges as well as their main social values and rationales, the political cultures do not show enough disparities to account for the Australian preference to a republic.
- (3) The analysis of the most-distributed newspaper of each country in the period between 1991 and 2005 proves the assumption that the only feature that divides both countries on the issue has been the intensiveness and the duration of the public/media debate on the monarchy.

The essay closes with a prediction of the future of the monarchy in both countries.