

Sunday April 2nd 1995

EMBARGOED UNTIL MIDNIGHT SUNDAY APRIL 2ND 1995

STRONG SUPPORT FOR NORTHERN TERRITORY STATEHOOD THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA

The vast majority of Australians support the proposition that the Territory Government should have the same rights as other states and that it should become a state if the majority of Territorians are in favour. Most also believe the issue of statehood should be resolved **before** any constitutional change to make Australia a Republic.

These are the main findings of a NEWSPOLL survey conducted on behalf of the Northern Territory Government among a large sample of 1250 adults throughout Australia on the weekend of 24-26 March 1995.

Over eight in ten, 81 percent, support the proposition that the Territory Government should have the same rights as other states and that the Federal Government should relinquish the controls it presently has over the Territory Parliament. Fewer than one in ten, nine percent, believe the Federal Government should retain this power.

Support for the Territory having equal constitutional rights with the states is widespread and may be seen to transcend party lines with a large majority of supporters for both the Federal ALP and Coalition in favour.

Importantly, a large majority of Australians believe that Territorians should have the right to determine their future constitutional status. Over eight in ten, 86 percent, agree that the Northern Territory should become a state if the majority of Territorians are in favour, with 62 percent strongly agreeing.

The NEWSPOLL survey also found strong support for constitutional change to occur in the Northern Territory before there is any national constitutional change on the Republic agenda, with 57 percent favouring resolution of the Territory statehood question before resolution of the Republic issue. Two in ten believe the issue of statehood should be addressed at the same time as the Republic, fewer than one in ten, seven percent, say it should be after and 16 percent are uncommitted.

The belief that the Northern Territory should have the same constitutional rights as the states is also shown in the finding that 60 percent of Australians would favour the Territory having equal representation in the Senate. Thirty-five percent favour the Northern Territory gradually increasing the number of senators to twelve and 25 percent believe the increased senate representation should be granted upon statehood. Only two in ten, 20 percent, believe the number should not be increased from the two currently elected and a further 20 percent are uncommitted.

NEWSPOLL's General Manager David Briggs believes that the survey demonstrates acceptance by the community of the Northern Territory's right to self determination. "Australians appear to see the issue as one of fairness and equity" he said.

CURRENTLY, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CAN ONLY OVERRIDE THE LAWS OF THE STATES UNDER SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES BUT CAN OVERRIDE ALL LAWS IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY. IN YOUR OPINION SHOULD THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT KEEP THIS POWER OVER THE NORTHERN TERRITORY OR SHOULD THE TERRITORY PARLIAMENT HAVE THE SAME RIGHTS AS STATE PARLIAMENTS?

---FEDERAL VOTING INTENTION---

	TOTAL ADULTS %	ALP SUPPORTERS %	LIBERAL/ NATIONAL SUPPORTERS %
Territory Government to have same rights as other States	81	77	86
Federal Government to keep power	9	14	8
Uncommitted	10	9	6

THE QUESTION OF WHETHER AUSTRALIA BECOMES A REPUBLIC WILL BE DECIDED BY MAJORITY DECISION IN A NATIONAL REFERENDUM. DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE THAT THE NORTHERN TERRITORY SHOULD BECOME A STATE IF A MAJORITY OF TERRITORIANS ARE IN FAVOUR?

---FEDERAL VOTING INTENTION---

	TOTAL ADULTS %	ALP SUPPORTERS %	LIBERAL/ NATIONAL SUPPORTERS %
Strongly agree	62	64	63
Partly agree	24	20	28
Total agree	86	84	91
Partly disagree	3	3	2
Strongly disagree	3	6	2
Total disagree	6	9	4
Uncommitted	8	7	5

IF THE CONSTITUTION WAS TO BE CHANGED TO MAKE AUSTRALIA A REPUBLIC DO YOU BELIEVE THE QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT THE NORTHERN TERRITORY BECOMES A STATE SHOULD BE RESOLVED BEFORE, AT THE SAME TIME OR AFTER THE CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE TO MAKE AUSTRALIA A REPUBLIC?

-----FEDERAL VOTING INTENTION-----

	<u>TOTAL ADULTS</u> %	<u>ALP SUPPORTERS</u> %	<u>LIBERAL/ NATIONAL SUPPORTERS</u> %
Before	57	58	60
At the same time	20	19	19
After	7	9	8
Uncommitted	16	14	13

EACH STATE IN AUSTRALIA HAS TWELVE SENATORS. CURRENTLY THE NORTHERN TERRITORY, WITH SOME 170,000 PEOPLE, HAS TWO SENATORS. IN YOUR OPINION, IF THE TERRITORY BECOMES A STATE, HOW MANY SENATORS SHOULD IT HAVE - TWO SENATORS, TWELVE SENATORS AT STATEHOOD OR TWELVE SENATORS OVER A PERIOD OF TIME?

-----FEDERAL VOTING INTENTION-----

	<u>TOTAL ADULTS</u> %	<u>ALP SUPPORTERS</u> %	<u>LIBERAL/ NATIONAL SUPPORTERS</u> %
Twelve senators over time	35	38	36
Twelve senators at statehood	25	26	25
Two senators	20	20	22
Uncommitted	20	16	17

This survey was conducted on the telephone by trained interviewers among 1250 adults aged 18 years and over in all States of Australia and in both city and country areas. Telephono numbers and the person within the household were elected at random. The data has been weighted to reflect the population distribution. Copyright at all times remains with NEWSPOLL.