




Speech By
David Crisafulli

MEMBER FOR BROADWATER

Record of Proceedings, 11 October 2022

MOTION

Death of Queen Elizabeth II and Accession of King Charles III, Address of Condolence and Congratulations

 **Mr CRISAFULLI** (Broadwater—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.40 am): It is with a sense of pride but with a heavy heart that I offer the support of the opposition to the motion that has been moved by the Premier. The motion is the fifth that has been moved since the establishment of the colony of Queensland in 1859 and the constitution of this parliament in 1860 to recognise the passing of the monarch and the accession of a new monarch.

While sometimes a motion of condolence and a separate motion of congratulation has been moved—most recently in 1952—this House has expressed its sentiments on the passing of the monarch on four previous occasions—1901, 1910, 1936 and 1952. None of us in the House today remember any other monarch but Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. Very few Queenslanders remember the reigns of Her Majesty's father, uncle or grandfather.

Indeed, Her Majesty's 70-year reign has covered the periods in office of 12 Queensland governors—from Sir John Lavarack to Dr Jeannette Young—and the administrations of 13 premiers—from Vince Gair to the current Premier, the member for Inala. This is a record that none of us can reasonably expect to see surpassed. It speaks volumes for the role the Crown plays in our society—a symbol of continuity, a bulwark against impetuous and untested change and a common rallying point in times of crisis.

In a time of reflection we should note that the Crown is one maintained not by sword or might but by humility, service and love. Her Majesty's success in maintaining the monarchy throughout her reign is even more remarkable when it is remembered that, at the time of her birth, no-one could have foreseen that she would have ever been crowned Queen.

Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor was born on 21 April 1926, the first child of Albert, Duke of York, second son of George V, and the Duchess of York, the former Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon. The death of George VI in 1936 brought her uncle to the throne as Edward VIII—in a reign that was to end before the year was out. The Duke of York succeeded his brother as George VI and Princess Elizabeth's future was forever changed.

It was on her 21st birthday that Princess Elizabeth set out the guiding principles which remained with her throughout her entire reign. In a speech from South Africa in 1947 she said—

I declare before you all that my whole life whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong.

No pledge could have been more sincerely given nor more earnestly kept. The hallmark of Her Majesty's 70-year reign is service—service to her nation, service to her people and service to the Commonwealth. Her Majesty herself recognised the importance of her pledge and reiterated its influence on the occasion of her Silver Jubilee in 1977. She stated—

When I was 21, I pledged my life to the service of our people and I asked for God's help to make good that vow. Although that vow was made in my salad days, when I was green in judgment, I do not regret, or detract, one word of it.

It was this characteristic that was captured so eloquently by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, in his sermon for Her Majesty's State Funeral held at Westminster Abbey on 19 September when he said—

People of loving service are rare in any walk of life. Leaders of loving service are still rarer. But in all cases those who serve will be loved and remembered when those who cling to power and privileges are long forgotten.

Her Majesty reigned through a period of incredible change—the transformation of the British Empire to the Commonwealth, the coming of the space age highlighted by the 1969 moon landing, the Cold War and its culmination in the fall of the Berlin Wall, the changes to Britain's relationship with Europe, the growth of science and technology and the age of the internet. It is these changing events that marked the new Elizabethan age.

Yet, despite being the head of an institution that extended back in history 1,000 years, Her Majesty embraced the changes that contemporary society demanded. Indeed, her coronation in 1953 was the first to be televised. A constant throughout all this was her addresses to the nation, both in times of celebration and in times of crisis, and her annual Christmas speeches to the entire Commonwealth where she would reflect upon the events of the year.

In so doing Her Majesty adopted and extended the practice first undertaken by her grandfather, George V. In an era long before the internet was contemplated and television itself was unfamiliar to the vast majority of the Commonwealth's and world's population, the use of radio broadcasts was used to relay Her Majesty's perspective to millions of people who would otherwise have little connection to their sovereign.

It was the Queen who first developed a close and lasting relationship with Australia. When the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh returned to London upon the death of the King in 1952, they were on the first stages of a visit which was intended to include Australia. Two years later Queen Elizabeth became the first reigning monarch to visit Australia. From her first visit in 1954—reputed to have been witnessed by over 70 per cent of the population—the Queen has been to Australia on 16 occasions. On eight of these occasions she visited Queensland—the last time being in 2011, partly in recognition of those Queenslanders who suffered through the natural disasters of 2010 and 2011.

Queensland has always extended a warm welcome to Her Majesty and has always looked forward to royal visits and appreciated the genuine interest Her Majesty held in the lives and activities of the many thousands of Queenslanders with whom she came into contact. While Brisbane was often the focus of these visits, Her Majesty travelled the length and breadth of the state during her 70-year reign. In so doing Her Majesty brought to the people of Queensland that to which they are entitled—a connection to their monarch and a sense that their monarch possessed an understanding and appreciation of their circumstances.

To the Queen this was the essence of contemporary monarchy—regal fiat was no longer sufficient to win the respect and support of the population. The monarchy had to reflect—to the maximum extent possible—a modern understanding of its responsibilities and the expectations of the people of the Commonwealth. This was not something done in the twinkling of an eye, but it was achieved over time through consistent and persistent hard work and effort.

In Her Majesty's case this was done through the championing of various environmental causes, particularly in later years through the assistance of Sir David Attenborough, her connections to the various military units throughout the Commonwealth, her reflection of the hurt and concern that often accompanied world events, such as her response to the COVID-19 challenge, and her ability to empathise with and comfort those in difficult circumstances.

The fact that the Queen herself faced challenges throughout her life, including the trials and tribulations of the Second World War, the early death of her father and the reaction to the death of the Princess of Wales helped provide the grounding needed to act as a symbol of unity and perseverance in the face of nationwide upheavals. I can think of no more accurate description of the role Her Majesty played than that provided by a BBC commentator on the day of the State Funeral when he said—

She visited the places that needed to be visited and thanked the people that needed to be thanked.

As unpretentious as that might sound it captures the essence of Her Majesty's commitment to her role, it embraces all aspects of the notion of service and commitment and reflects Her Majesty's continuing adherence to the pledge she gave in 1947. It is speculated that Her Majesty's response to her uncle's abdication motivated her throughout her 70 years on the throne. This obligation was not one to be cast aside on a whim but embraced and pursued, because that is what she pledged to do. There are few in contemporary society who would accept such a challenge and then meet it head on until nearly 100 years had passed. For this we should all be thankful.

While some may have misgivings about the notion of monarchy, few would question Her Majesty's commitment—both to her role as Head of State in Australia and as Head of the Commonwealth. Her support for many charities, her unswerving devotion to her people—wherever they lived—and her willingness to undertake the burdens that that position often thrust upon her makes Her Majesty an exemplar to us all.

If we could all harness her dedication and commitment we would help create a more generous, understanding and tolerant society. It should be remembered that Her Majesty was one of the most accomplished leaders of the 20th and 21st centuries. She knew the great men and women who made history and she was able to influence the events that moulded our world. It should be recalled that her first British prime minister, Winston Churchill, was born in the middle of the Victorian age nearly 150 years ago. Importantly, she saw the value of genuine leadership and the impact it could have on the wellbeing of the entire population. In an address to the United Nations General Assembly in July 2010 she set out her views on the power of leadership. She said—

I know of no single formula for success, but over the years I have observed that some attributes of leadership are universal and are often about finding ways of encouraging people to combine their efforts, their talents, their insights, their enthusiasm and their inspiration to work together.

This was her great strength. Unable to wield formal power like the elected leaders of the world's 200 nations, she wielded the power of influence to achieve universal goals free from the demands of partisan politics. For this we should all be thankful. Her experience, her understanding of world events and their historical context and her familiarity with those world leaders made her contribution over 70 years of invaluable importance.

Throughout her reign Her Majesty adhered to the declaration she made to her Accession Council in 1952 when she said—

My heart is too full to say more to you to-day than that I shall always work, as my father did throughout his reign, to uphold constitutional government and to advance the happiness and prosperity of my peoples, spread as they are all the world over. I know that in my resolve to follow his shining example of service and devotion I shall be inspired by the loyalty and affection of those whose Queen I have been called to be, and by the counsel of their elected Parliaments. I pray that God will help me to discharge worthily this heavy task that has been laid upon me so early in my life.

For this steadfastness and commitment we are grateful.

The second part of this motion extending congratulations to His Majesty King Charles III looks forward to the future with optimism. Just as Her Majesty reigned for over 70 years, no monarch has received such extensive training as His Majesty for the responsibilities that now rest on his shoulders. He possesses an affinity with Australia arising from the many times he has visited this country, and the breadth and depth of this engagement here provides a sound basis for the strengthening of this relationship. We look forward with optimism to these special bonds being strengthened over the coming years, and we are confident that His Majesty will come to enjoy the same special relationship that characterised Her Majesty's involvement with Australia and its people. The second Elizabethan age has ended. We are confident that the reign of King Charles will build upon the process seen under Her Majesty. We look forward to the day when Queenslanders can welcome King Charles to our state to renew the strong bonds that already exist.