




Speech By
Jessica Pugh

MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY

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MOTION

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

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (11.30 am): I rise to speak to the condolence motion for Queen Elizabeth II. We have heard almost every previous contribution reflect that Queen Elizabeth was tireless in her work output, working until just a few days publicly before her passing.

She was just a young woman, fairly newly married, when she came to be Queen and, as the first modern female in the role of monarch, she could not help but impact on how we saw women's roles in society. She has inspired, both directly and indirectly, women across the globe, and one of those is one of my wonderful local volunteers Kate Blomer, who I think, not unlike the Queen, performs public service with a quiet dignity. Kate is a very fond monarchist and she has provided her reflections to me and I want to begin with those. She says—

I feel very honoured to have been asked to provide my thoughts and feelings on the passing of Queen Elizabeth II. She was a truly remarkable woman who witnessed amazing historical events and changes in the world. It is incredible to think about the many world leaders she met and interacted with during her 70 years as our monarch.

Kate's father was born and raised in Scotland before becoming a journalist. He witnessed and reported on many major political changes to the African continent during the early years of her reign before Kate's family settled in Australia. As a result, Kate grew up in a household where the Royal Family were revered and respected. To Kate she was more than the Queen of England. Kate reflected, 'She was our Queen and my Queen as well.' As Kate's youngest son said to her when she was writing her reflections—and she said he is not really a royalist—she was a Queen of the people. Kate continues—

Her devotion to serving her people was unwavering. This included meeting with the last of many English Prime Ministers she saw come and go in her lifetime, in her final days. She retained her sense of duty to the end.

On waking up to the news of the Queen's passing, those last photos released of her at Balmoral filled Kate with sadness and a genuine feeling of loss. Kate finishes—

She reigned with such grace and dignity. May she truly rest in peace beside her beloved family members. I think she will be greatly missed by many, myself included.

As Kate said, the Queen was a remarkable woman. She certainly never declared herself a feminist. However, as I said, in a public-facing role, especially one as important as a monarch, she could not help but set an example for women whether or not that was ever her intention. Indeed, one person she inspired was a young Margaret Thatcher, who took great heart as a young woman that having a female monarch—a Queen—would lead to the removal of barriers for women in all walks of life. I quote from an article that Margaret wrote many years before she became prime minister. She said—

If as many earnestly pray, the accession of Elizabeth II can help to remove the last shreds of prejudice against women aspiring to the highest places, then a new era for women will indeed be at hand. Margaret Thatcher, who was then a young candidate

attempting to break into politics, wrote in a column shortly after Elizabeth became queen in February 1952. "That there is a place for women at the top of the tree has been proved beyond question."

"To sum up," Thatcher concluded, "I should like to see the woman with a career holding down her responsibility with easy assurance during the Elizabethan era."

Later in her time as Queen, Elizabeth began to be more expansive in her comments about women's rights and gender equity. Perhaps the closest the Queen ever came to a public statement about women's rights or gender equality was at a 2011 British Commonwealth summit here in Australia, where the theme was 'Women as agents of change'. The Queen said, 'It reminds us of the potential in our societies that is yet to be fully unlocked, and encourages us to find ways to allow girls and women to play their full part.'

While it would be incorrect to necessarily label Queen Elizabeth II a feminist, it can never be doubted that simply by being in her role as a female monarch she played a key role in normalising women in the workplace and in public-facing roles right throughout the world. For that, I will always be grateful. Vale, Queen Elizabeth II.