




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOOHEY

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MOTION

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

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (12.20 pm): I rise to speak in support of the condolence motion moved by the Premier and to join in the messages of gratitude and thanks for the service given by Queen Elizabeth II to our nation and the Commonwealth. Many words were and will continue to be spoken during the period of mourning about the Queen's wisdom and lifelong dedication to service. While I am a republican and have deeply held views on how Australia was colonised, I do not believe it is a conflict to recognise the significant contribution that has been made by Queen Elizabeth II over more than seven decades. Many Australians, including me, will have known no other head of state to Australia. As children, our schools had photos of the Queen and we sang *God Save the Queen*. This was normal for us; we knew no different.

When I reflect on how the Queen influenced our lives as I was growing up, I think of my mother. My mother was a trailblazer for her times. She was a hardworking mother who faced the struggles that came with balancing a lot of responsibilities. The Queen was also a working mother, and I know that many of us admired her work ethic and her devotion to duty. These are qualities that I deeply admired in my own mother, so it is not difficult for me to admire those qualities in the Queen. I also acknowledge the value that the Queen provided to us as a nation. These positions are not exclusive of each other. I recognise that Queen Elizabeth II herself stated that she respected the self-determination of Australian peoples. It was during her reign that the Australia Act 1986 was passed, eliminating many of the remaining opportunities for UK interference in Australian government. Appeals from Australian courts to British courts were abolished. The relationship between Australia and Britain clearly matured and evolved throughout the Queen's reign.

While the Queen visited Australia on 16 occasions starting in 1954, I do not have any personal memories or stories to draw from; however, from the photos and stories I have seen published, Queen Elizabeth II was warmly welcomed during each of her visits. She is held in deep affection by the Australian public, an affection that, from all accounts, she reciprocated. The Queen is an integral link to our history and she will forever be connected to pivotal moments for us as a nation. Her influence will be felt for generations.

During her visit to Australia in 1954, the Queen visited 57 towns and cities during the 58 days she and Prince Philip spent in Australia. She traversed the country by plane, train, ship and car, from Cairns in the north, to Broken Hill in the west and Hobart in the south. On her visit in 1973 the Queen opened the Sydney Opera House, in 1988 she opened both new Parliament House in Canberra and the Darling Harbour complex in Sydney, in 2006 the Queen opened the Melbourne Commonwealth Games and there were many more official openings across Australia at which the Queen was the guest of honour. She made many visits to regional areas of Australia.

Many of us can identify with loss, and seeing the loss felt by the Queen when she, too, lost people close to her—especially her father, her mother, her sister and her life partner—made her more real and like us. We could both empathise and sympathise. There is a profoundness in the Queen’s own words that I can relate to when I reflect on the passing of my own family and friends. She said that grief is the price we pay for love. Along with my fellow Australians I, too, was saddened when I heard the news that the Queen had passed. As a nation, we reflect on her remarkable commitment to service, we collectively express our sorrow at the ending of an era and the close of the second Elizabethan age, and we wish King Charles III all the best.