




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BONNEY

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MOTION

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

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (2.29 pm): It is a great privilege to speak on this motion to honour the life of Queen Elizabeth II and extend my condolences on behalf of the people I represent. The institution of the Crown looms large over our state. It is in a literal sense what defines us as Queenslanders because, of course, our state is named after a queen. That queen was Queen Elizabeth's great-great-grandmother, Queen Victoria, who suggested the name—in her own honour, of course. Although her late Majesty never visited my beautiful part of the Gold Coast, she was an enduring constant in the lives of so many Queenslanders and was greatly respected by so many people in my electorate.

For millions of younger Australians with British heritage like myself she seemed like some very public and widely shared version of your own grandmother. Queen Elizabeth II's service will be unsurpassed. No other British monarch will match it. She will surely be remembered as one of the most successful monarchs in history because of the way in which she performed her role. When you think about it, in many ways the monarchy goes against all logic and reason. In what other aspect of our lives would we accept a hereditary position being passed on automatically like this—other than, of course, the father-son and now the father-daughter rule in the AFL—but Queen Elizabeth II made it work. She was such a powerful anchor for so many governments around the world always being there as a known quantity. She was a source of stability in a turbulent world.

Never before in history has the world seen changes like we have in the seven decades of her reign and the century in which she lived. When she first acceded to the throne the United Kingdom was an Empire. She became head of state for 32 countries. The Queen did not stand in the way of decolonisation: she in fact helped facilitate the transition of this Empire to a diverse multicultural United Kingdom and broader Commonwealth. When a desire or question arose in one of those nations about whether an hereditary monarchy on the other side of the world should be their head of state the Queen did not advocate to remain and accepted the will of the people in those areas. By the end of her reign she was head of state for fewer than half the number of nations she was at the start, but it still covered a staggering one-seventh of the world's land area and over 150 million people.

The first prime minister she dealt with was Winston Churchill and the last Liz Truss. What a contrast between those two! What an extraordinarily historical living link the Queen provided between these two very different eras: a man born in the mid to late 1800s and a woman born in the late 1900s. I think it is worth reflecting that even in her final days she was still performing her duty by swearing in the new prime minister. In those last photographs of her at Balmoral she looked frail. She was clearly unwell, but she was still smiling as she swore in yet another prime minister.

She is also probably the first person in history to have her entire life recorded in some form: from when she was a child through to her radio broadcasts and taking on these immense responsibilities as a young woman as the television age was just beginning all the way through to this modern era of social

media. The Queen approached her role with dignity and respect, and that service is something we can all acknowledge and appreciate. That is true even for so many people like myself who passionately believe that Australia should become a republic. Despite my views on how our system of government should best reflect our modern nation, I very much respect how she served and the length of her exemplary service. Vale, Queen Elizabeth II.

I will conclude by congratulating His Majesty. As the shadow environment minister I want to acknowledge King Charles III's decades of environmental advocacy. From writing to the prime minister as a young man about dwindling salmon numbers in Scottish rivers to appearing at last year's COP26 climate summit in Glasgow, our natural world is clearly something he is passionate about. In particular, he has used his public position to call for greater action on climate change and prevent the loss of biodiversity. I wish him well in his new role.