




Speech By
Hon. Dr Steven Miles

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

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MOTION

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

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics Infrastructure) (9.52 am): I rise to speak in support of the motion of condolence for Queen Elizabeth II. On 8 September the second Elizabethan age came to a close. For seven decades Queen Elizabeth II reigned as monarch of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth. For 70 years she served her country and the Commonwealth, including Queensland, becoming a model of duty and service. I think that those of us who seek to serve our own communities can especially admire how extraordinary her service was. Former Australian prime minister Paul Keating reflected on the Queen's legacy. He said—

In the 20th century, the self become privatised, while the public realm, the realm of the public good, was broadly neglected.

Queen Elizabeth understood this and instinctively attached herself to the public good against what she recognised as a tidal wave of private interest and private reward. And she did this for a lifetime. Never deviating.

Her service began well before her coronation when she trained as a mechanic and truck driver during the Second World War against her parents' wishes. During the closing years of the war she served alongside soldiers from across the Commonwealth, serving her country in the fight against fascism. When Germany surrounded in 1945 she snuck out of the palace and joined the people in the streets. She spent the night mingling with her countryfolk in celebration, and she later spoke of the tide of happiness and relief that swept them down Whitehall.

Broadcasting from South Africa after the war she made a solemn promise. She said—

I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service ...

When she acceded to the throne in 1952 she kept that promise, putting duty above all else—duty to her people, duty to her nation and duty to the Commonwealth.

She was often with us here in Queensland to celebrate our successes and mourn with us during our hardest times. In 1988 the Queen officially opened Expo 88, an event that defined us for decades to come and turned Brisbane into a proper capital city in the eyes of the world—one capable of hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games. In 2011 she met with flood victims, reassuring Queenslanders during one of our most heart-wrenching natural disasters.

For the first time in most of our lives we find ourselves without that presence. We join the Commonwealth and the world to mourn her loss and remember her legacy. The world has changed in just about every conceivable way during her reign. The last vestiges of Empire were done away with as the Commonwealth embraced self-determination, but she remained a constant. Perhaps the only constant of the last 70 years has been her reign. During her 70 years as Queen she was sovereign of

a total of 32 independent countries, but at the time of her death that number was just 15. She did not begrudge countries their independence. In fact, members of the Royal Family were permitted to attend Independence Day ceremonies in those countries.

She showed that service need not always be solemn and that it is okay to have some fun too. In 1998 the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia visited the Queen at Balmoral Castle for lunch, and she offered the Prince a tour of the vast and rugged estate. To his surprise, it was not the Queen's driver who took the driver's seat of the Land Rover but the Queen herself. Women were not permitted to drive in Saudi Arabia at that time. When the Prince was asked about the incident he said, 'I suspect that Her Majesty steers the ship of state more steadily than she drives a Land Rover.' When walking at Balmoral with her protection officer, Richard Griffin, two American hikers asked her if she had ever met the Queen. She said, 'Well, Dick here meets her regularly.' The starstruck tourists asked the Queen to take a photo for them with Mr Griffin, which she did.

It is not a controversial thing to say that for many Australians monarchy is divisive. It should be okay to acknowledge the harm done in the name of colonisation while also recognising the positive contribution of the Queen. Whatever you think of the institution, for me the Queen as an individual was an example of duty and service above oneself. Months before her passing on her Platinum Jubilee she renewed her commitment to the Commonwealth. She said—

... it gives me pleasure to renew to you the pledge I gave in 1947 that my life will always be devoted to your service ...

We also today congratulate King Charles III on his accession to the throne. I have seen firsthand the new King's warm affection for Queensland and Queenslanders. In 2018, as health minister I hosted the then Prince on a tour of the Queensland Children's Hospital. The children and families loved their time with him. Some of the children made lamingtons by hand which they presented to both of us. The Prince looked at the lamington politely. I looked at him and said, 'I think we have to eat it.' He said firmly, 'I will not.' That is how I became the only person—I think in the world—to have told the King to eat a lamington. We look forward to welcoming King Charles III on his first visit to Queensland as King. We thank Queen Elizabeth II for a lifetime of service and congratulate King Charles III on his accession to the throne.