

# **Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II Accession to the Throne**

## **Address by the Honourable Kim Beazley AC**

### **Governor of Western Australia at St George's Cathedral, Perth**

**6 February 2022**

I would firstly like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet – the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation – and pay my respects to their elders past and present.

Can I also thank this Cathedral for giving me the opportunity as the Queen's representative to speak on this auspicious day. It was very kind of you to think of that. It's an important duty for me to perform as Governor.

Can I acknowledge too the presence here of Mr Chris Dawson APM, Commissioner of Police; The Most Reverend Kay Goldsworthy AO, Archbishop of Perth; The Very Reverend Chris Chataway, Dean of St George's Cathedral; The Very Reverend Dr John Shepherd AM, Dean Emeritus of St George's Cathedral and Fr Sean Fernandez, Dean of St Mary's Cathedral; Fr Richard Rutkauskas, also of St Mary's Cathedral, the Right Kate Wilmott, Assistant Bishop of Perth. And I notice that I am sitting next to Sir William and Lady Diane Heseltine here, and I want to acknowledge them. As I was reading through before this address, they had a list of the ten most influential people in their consideration on the life and thinking and approach to the world of the Queen, and he was one of the ten.

On this date, the sixth of February, seventy years ago, on the other side of the Indian Ocean, a 25 year old young woman and her dashing new man were enjoying a wonderful holiday in Kenya, far from the demands of his service in the navy.

They spent the morning viewing the local wildlife before returning to their accommodation whereupon she received the devastating news that her father, who had suffered recent ill health, had passed away at the relatively young age of 56.

That day changed her life. It would impact deeply on her country. Her reign has been a centrepiece of the evolving Commonwealth. She presided over the change from Empire to British Commonwealth, to Commonwealth.

The following year on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 1953, on a rainy London morning, the same young lady was feeling understandably nervous, preparing for the most important day of her life.

Clutching a bouquet of white flowers, and wearing gown of cream and gold, she was doted on by her seven maids of honour for the big day.

That young woman, known as Lilibet by her mother and younger sister, was about to walk down the aisle.

The aisle in question was Westminster Abbey, and rather than getting married, which she had already done, she was making a far more daunting commitment. It was the day of her coronation.

Five years before, the young princess Elizabeth, on the occasion of her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, using the relatively new technology of a film and voice recording, can be heard (as we just have) pledging her love and loyalty, not to the Prince she would be betrothed to later that year, but to a vast empire of millions around the world.

In that speech she said, as you have heard:

*“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.”*

The family became the Commonwealth. We are a member. With careful tending, the organisation has moved away from an Imperial structure to a democratic one with a strong developmental ethos.

It has been a benefit for us, and for the other 54 member countries of the Commonwealth, that her promise of life-long service has been fulfilled, and that life has been meaningful and eventful.

Queen Elizabeth the Second's reign has been a beacon of stability during 70 years of profound and seismic change in our world, and in her own country.

In that time, the world has witnessed many wars including major conflicts in Malaya and Vietnam, the Cold War and bitter civil wars in Central America, Africa and Asia.

There have also been remarkable advances too in technology and science and medicine. Humans have mapped our ocean depths, climbed mountains, explored outer space and unlocked medical marvels.

Through these historic events, the Royal Family, headed by Her Majesty, has led by example through their steadfast commitment to duty and service. But also to causes not necessarily popular. Investment in science and technology. Devotion to British and global environmental issues.

The Queen has experienced the joy of leading a growing family, with four children, eight grandchildren and twelve great-grandchildren so far.

She has worked alongside 14 Prime Ministers of England and 15 of Australia, been patron and supporter of hundreds of charities and organisations, and officiated at Commonwealth Games around the world, including five held in Australia (not necessarily at every one of those, because in Perth it was her consort, the Prince in 1962).

Through it all, she has maintained her dignity and grace as a constant in our lives, and she has maintained her fierce loyalty to Australia.

That promise she made in 1947 was shortly after the end of the Second World War. During that conflict she left palaces, horses and corgis behind, rolled up khaki sleeves and served alongside other young English men and women without fuss. The promises she made back then she has kept.

It has been a difficult year for her following the loss of Prince Philip, whom she described as 'her strength and stay all these years.' He was, as he swore to her at her coronation, her "liege man of life and limb."

As Prince Albert had been for her great-great-grandmother, Queen Victoria, Philip was no mere figurehead. During their 70 years of marriage, he was her willing first mate at the helm of the monarchy, actively involved in important matters of State, her closest advisor and confidante.

One of my favourite photographs of Her Majesty that was taken on the day of her coronation. She is walking along the aisle in the Abbey, balancing the orb and sceptre with a large and very heavy bejewelled crown on her head. As she passes her husband he reminds her not to drop them. She smiles and in the distance you can see the Prince with a cheeky grin.



**Queen Elizabeth at her Coronation, grinned at by Prince Philip**

We can only imagine her loss at his passing. We remember his service, his loyalty, his humour and his active involvement with his children which, like his views on the environment and conservation, were progressive, different and ahead of their time.

Queen Elizabeth's evolution in her life mirrors that of our nation – we have grown together in confidence, expanding our horizons, building connections and expertise. We have also been matured by pain and strife in our societies. The knowledge too of shifting power balances in our region.

The weight of that responsibility, much like the St Edward's crown she wore at her coronation, would have at times felt very heavy indeed. She takes seriously her right to advise. She sees the British Prime Minister every week. The State papers she handles put her more deeply in the governing process than her representative Governors. I've spoken to one British Prime Minister about those consultations, and two Australian Prime Ministers. It is a fulsome conversation that takes place, and all of them come away deeply impressed by her knowledge, which they acknowledge, exceeds theirs in the way that the State operate, and they take very seriously the things that she says to them. And that process of seeing the Prime Minister each week – I don't see the Premier every week. It is a reflection of the way in which she feels ingrained... a British Cabinet minister who lost his ministry when Gordon Brown's government fell got this surprising note from the Queen asking him to come for a cup of tea. He didn't know why she would do that, but he turned up, and as he started to talk he realised she thought he was one of **her** ministers, and she wanted to thank him, as one of her ministers, for giving his efforts, his endeavours to the task that she swore him in to. We don't think that way

in this country, and I am not at all sure that the British ministers think that way.

Following the abdication of her uncle David and the death of her father, the young Queen Elizabeth set herself as the steady hand on the rudder, settling in for a long reign. So far, and she shows no sign of stopping, she is already the longest serving monarch of the UK at 25,568 days and counting.

Far from a distant and distracted monarch, she visited Australia 16 times, and has visited us here in WA in 1954, 1963, 1974, 1977 (for her silver jubilee), 1981, 1988, 1992 and 2011. She is the first reigning monarch to visit Australia and of course WA.

Her love for Australia has been a mutual romance. Her popularity here remains as steadfast as ever. Gough Whitlam made her Queen of Australia, adding that to her titles in October 1973. He said constitutionally she is part of the Parliament of Australia, so she should have among her royal titles, "Queen of Australia". That's very Gough that he was totally mindful of precise procedure.

In her last visit to Australia, her tour culminated with chairing the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting here in Perth, where she was farewelled by a crowd of 100,000 people.

At that meeting, her reflections about Perth and Western Australia that were made at Karrgatup (also known as King's Park) were as follows:

“This City is known for its opportunity and potential; and, this country is known for its warmth, openness and generosity.”

Just over a decade later, her sentiments ring true. Perth remains an optimistic and vibrant City, and our State brims with potential to drive the industries we will need for our prosperity and our future security.

One thing about her. She is a deeply religious woman. She was apparently much affected by her shrouded anointing during her coronation by the Archbishop of Canterbury. She sees her obligations extending beyond simply Earthly commitments. Her late husband, despite being a secular youth and in early middle age, developed a distinctly spiritual stream in his thinking.

As Her Majesty’s representative to WA, it is my great privilege to congratulate her as we mark her Platinum Jubilee. In her honour at Government House a new garden will be dedicated as an enduring legacy to her reign. Her presence and her memory, like that garden, will be sweet, vibrant and evergreen.