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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Federation Chamber**

**STATEMENTS ON INDULGENCE**

**Queen Elizabeth II**

**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 10 September 2015**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

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**Speaker** Irons, Steve, MP

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**Mr IRONS** (Swan) (11:15): I too rise to say a few words on this occasion of Her Majesty the Queen surpassing Queen Victoria and becoming the longest-reigning monarch of the UK, and obviously of Australia as well. It was interesting to hear the contribution of the previous speaker, the member for Wakefield. I am sure he knows that his electorate voted very strongly against becoming a republic, so I am sure he will continue to represent the views of his electorate in this place whenever the subject of a republic comes up. It was good to see him holding up a newspaper as well; he has done some research. And, obviously, he said some kind words about the Queen.

The Queen's reign has now reached 63 years, seven months and two days. Most of us in this House have known no other monarch in our lives, although there are a couple of exceptions—I will not mention their names! What I can say though is that there is no member in this place that could come close to matching the 63 years of public service that the Queen has clocked up. The Queen famously once said:

There is a motto which has been borne by many of my ancestors, a noble motto, 'I serve'. I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service ...

That she meant these words has never been in any doubt. In fact only yesterday, on the day she overtook Queen Victoria, while acknowledging the milestone she also said that she considered it 'the same as any other day, a working day'. As we heard from the member for Throsby earlier, I also have memories of singing *God save the Queen* every Monday morning in the schoolyard around the flagpole. I also remember her visiting Victoria while I was still a child. I have very fond memories of that. Both of my foster parents were strong monarchists. Although they originally came from South Africa, they were enthralled by the monarchy, what it stood for and how it reigned over not only the UK and Australia but also the many other Commonwealth nations around the world.

In WA the Queen enjoys extremely high levels of public support. There was only one electorate in the whole of Western Australia that supported the vote on the republic back in the late nineties, and that was, would you believe, the most conservative of our seats in Western Australia—the seat of Curtin! Yesterday's newspaper, the commemorative edition of the *West Australian*, was entitled 'Glorious reign' and included eight pages celebrating the Queen's reign, which is indicative of the extremely high levels of public support for the Queen in Western Australia. As we know, there is a major infrastructure project happening down on the river, near the CBD, which will be named Elizabeth Quay, obviously after Queen Elizabeth. I know the state's Premier was very proud in making that one of his captain's picks, but I am sure it will be a good tribute to the Queen.

There were some great photos and images in the paper yesterday from across the Queen's reign, including her visit to Clontarf academy in my electorate on 27 October 2011. Clontarf, as many members would be aware, is based in Waterford and is a highly successful sporting academy for Indigenous students. As the member for Swan, I was fortunate enough to attend this event and see at close range the magic touch the Queen has with the people of Australia. The purpose of the Queen's visit to Clontarf was to officially open a new boarding house at the school. While the ceremony was performed extremely well, it was what came after the ceremony that was indicative of and epitomised everything that is good about the Queen. Instead of leaving immediately after the ceremony, the Queen spent a generous amount of time with the students at the school watching football and basketball games, sitting in on a reading and visiting a home economics class where the students were making kangaroo stew. Whether she actually tasted the kangaroo stew or not, I am not sure. I am sure that they will never forget meeting the Queen, just as the many thousands of people she has met around the world will never forget.

I also had the opportunity to be near the Queen when she was at the garden party that was held in Perth in recognition of her visit in 2011. It was great to see so many school children there. The Queen went out of her way to spend time with them. She spent more time with them than with the adults at the garden party! On a personal note, I wrote to both the Premier and the Prime Minister's office at the time to ask whether, I could be part of the welcoming party for the Queen when she landed at Perth Airport, which is in my electorate. Unfortunately I got a negative from both the Premier's office and the Prime Minister's office. But some wag leaked the letter to the

newspapers and I now have a great cartoon from *The West Australian* newspaper that shows me being escorted away from Buckingham Palace, which I now hang proudly in my office. As I said, those kids will never forget meeting the Queen, as I am sure we have seen with her other visits around the world.

I have also spoken about the 1999 republic referendum. In my electorate of Swan we voted no. The margin, coincidentally, was the same as my current 2PP margin. I am hoping that my constituents still represents those views, and I will continue to represent their views on this matter as well.

Part of the success of the Queen's reign has been the constancy she has shown and also how she has moved with the times. She seems as at home today in a sea of iPhones as she did on the back of the jeep at Forest Oval in York in 1954. Of course, the Duke has always been by her side. Congratulations to Queen Elizabeth II on her reign. I am sure she will have many more days and many more records to break. Well done to Queen Elizabeth for her service to her country and to the Commonwealth.