

**ADDRESS BY KEVIN SKIPWORTH CVO
ECUMENICAL CHURCH SERVICE 19 JUNE 2016**

Her Majesty The Queen's unwavering commitment to the Commonwealth is well documented. On the occasion of her 21st birthday on the 21st of April in 1947 Princess Elizabeth was with her parents and younger sister on a tour of South Africa. In a speech broadcast on the radio from Cape Town, the Princess dedicated her life to the service of the Commonwealth in making the following declaration:-

"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.

Less than 5 years later - in February 1952 - just a few days after the King's death - in Her Accession speech to the Privy Council - The Queen renewed Her pledge of 'service' and resolved to emulate her father's 'shining example of service and devotion.

The Queen made 4 commitments at Her Coronation in 1953 - to God, to the service of others, to responsibility, and to showing respect for her people. Her Majesty made a radio broadcast that evening in which she again pledged herself to the service of Her people.

In her Golden Jubilee address to both Houses of the British Parliament in Westminster Hall - the Queen again pledged to continue to serve in the years to come. The Queen has such a strong sense of duty and I do know

from those close to Her that the word “abdication” is not in Her vocabulary.

In Her Majesty’s Diamond Jubilee address to both Houses of Parliament in March 2012 at the Palace of Westminster - The Queen said She and Prince Philip:-

“Hope to celebrate the professional and voluntary service given by millions of people across the country who are working for the public good. They are a source of vital support to the welfare and well being of others, often unseen or overlooked” said Her Majesty.

Those words spoken by The Queen about service to others are most applicable to those representatives here in St George’s Cathedral this evening whose service to others in the community has been recognised by an Award in the Order of Australia and who have renewed their dedication to the Order of Australia in our presence.

We have been privileged to have the magnificent St Hilda’s School choir sing for us this evening, with superb brass accompaniment - they too have volunteered to forfeit part of their weekend to be part of this special service - congratulations and thank you!

When Queen Elizabeth attained the age of 90 on 21 April this year - over two thirds of her life had been devoted to service and duty as our Monarch. To put that in perspective, our state of WA was only proclaimed in 1890 - 126 years ago - and so Her Majesty has reigned over us as Sovereign for over half of WA’s existence as an ‘independent governing entity’ - Quite an astonishing fact to reflect on in isolation!!

The unbelievable longevity of The Queen's reign as our Monarch is nothing short of amazing. I trust the following will help put that in perspective when you consider She has continued in that role throughout the terms of:

- **11 Presidents of the US (Truman - Obama)**
- **13 British Prime Ministers (Churchill - Cameron)**
- **15 Australian Prime Ministers (Menzies - Turnbull)**
- **13 WA Premiers (McLarty - Barnett)**
- **15 Australian Governor Generals (Sir William McKell - General Cosgrove)**
- **12 WA Governors (Sir Charles Gairdner - the Hon Kerry Sanderson).**
- **7 Archbishops of Canterbury (Fisher - Welby)**
- **7 Roman Catholic Popes (Pius XII - Francis)**

My purpose in naming those Leaders who have served their respective countries, states and churches during the last 64 years is, as I said, to put The Queen's years and longevity as our Sovereign in perspective. Bear in mind that the leaders I have named usually serve terms of around 5 years or less - a mere One 13th of the term already served by Her Majesty!!

I hope you find just a small sample of some statistics I researched showing the demands on Her Majesty's schedule of interest:

- **The Queen is Patron of over 600 charities and organisations - over 400 of which she has held since 1952.**
- **She has held some 640 Investiture Ceremonies**

- **In an average year, The Queen receives approximately 60,000 pieces of correspondence. (For her Diamond Jubilee in 2012, The Queen received over 120,000 cards, letters and gifts.)**
- **She has undertaken almost 300 official visits to some 120 different countries**
- **Visited Australia 16 times and WA 7 times**
- **Made an historic visit to the Republic of Ireland in May 2011 - the first by a British Monarch since Irish independence 100 years earlier. King George V had visited in 1911**
- **Has laid Her wreath at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday every year of Her reign with six exceptions - when she was pregnant or overseas. Because of the significance of the 100th anniversary of Anzac Day last year, The Queen honoured the Anzac tradition and joined Commonwealth Diplomats, including the State Agents General in laying Her wreath - followed by a special service at Westminster Abbey.**
- **Princess Elizabeth was 13 years of age when she met Phillip - then 18 - and Phillip was her only boyfriend!! The Queen and Duke have been married for over 68 years. Interestingly, this was the first and only time in British history that the heir presumptive to the throne had been married at the time.**

It is difficult to comprehend the number of speeches she has valiantly listened to in the past 64 years - the handshakes she has politely endured - the smiles she has been obliged to respond with! Such an unstinting commitment to duty and service which may never be equalled.

The Queen's strong Christian faith, virtues and beliefs and the way She has led her life in Christ are examples to the world.

Her Majesty has used her Christmas message to emphasise and reinforce Her beliefs. To quote from just two of many such messages:

***From The Queen's Christmas Day speech, 2004 She said:**

For me, as a Christian, one of the most important of these teachings is contained in the parable of the Good Samaritan, when Jesus answers the question, 'Who is my neighbour?' It is a timeless story of a victim of a mugging who was ignored by his own countrymen but helped by a foreigner, and a despised foreigner at that. The implication drawn by Jesus is clear. Everyone is our neighbour, no matter what race, creed or colour. The need to look after a fellow human being is far more important than any cultural or religious differences.

***In The Queen's address to the nation and Commonwealth on Christmas Day 2012 - her Diamond Jubilee year - She said:**

God sent his only Son 'to serve, not to be served'. He restored love and service to the centre of our lives in the person of Jesus Christ.

It is most appropriate that the Second Lesson chosen for today from Matthew's Gospel concluded with the same message used by The Queen in Her Diamond Jubilee year.

Many in the congregation today, particularly those Order of Australia recipients and many others deserving of recognition - make enormous contributions to the community by sacrificing many days or hours each week - Our Queen too has made a commitment of service and duty to her people - for a lifetime!

In a long reign of many legacies, perhaps the Queen's greatest legacy is the example of service, duty, loyalty, and patriotism she has set for generations past, the generations present, and for the generations yet to come.

We all are familiar with seeing Her Majesty in the more formal, dignified and ceremonial role but to conclude my address on a lighter note I will relate just one incident from behind the scenes in Government House during her visit in 2000 which demonstrates the unseen side of our Sovereign's nature and Her sense of humour - and how her close personal staff see her day in and day out.

Her Majesty made a passing comment to her Senior Dresser when they arrived at Government House on the 2000 visit - that she hopes to see a "Kookaburra" from her balcony overlooking the gardens.

On the final morning of that Royal Visit, The Queen excitedly called out to the dresser from her bedroom to come in '*quickly and quietly*' as "*there is one of those 'Kookaburras' on the balcony rail.*"

The Queen was worried any movement by her or her dresser would disturb the bird and was about to fetch her small binoculars when the dresser insisted She come over to the window for a closer look.

Unbeknown to The Queen, the Kookaburra wasn't going anywhere as the dresser had bought a stuffed bird on a shopping visit to Fremantle the previous day and pinned it on the balcony rail for The Queen to see when the curtains were drawn next morning.

Incidentally, despite such ongoing antics, the dresser is still in that role and again accompanied the Royal party to Perth on the 2011 CHOGM visit, 11 years later.

Finally, a very brief story told to me by The Queen's Personal Protection Officer as an example of The Queen's sharp sense of humour. Her Majesty was taking her morning walk from Balmoral in Scotland and they met up with an American couple who didn't recognise The Queen. They asked if she lived in the area and she said, "*Yes - I have a house nearby*". They then asked if she had ever met the Queen and as quick as a flash she answered "*No - but he has*", pointing to the security officer!