

**A SPEECH BY THE HONOURABLE PETER UNDERWOOD AC,
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA MADE AT A CIVIC RECEPTION IN
LAUNCESTON AS PART OF THE CELEBRATIONS OF THE DIAMOND
JUBILEE OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II,
7TH FEBRUARY 2012.**

During the night of 5th - 6th February sixty years ago King George VI, emaciated by cancer, died in his sleep, and at noon on Friday 8th February 1952 Sir Ronald Cross, then the Governor of Tasmania proclaimed the accession of Her Most Gracious Majesty QUEEN ELIZABETH THE SECOND. According to his advice sent to the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations Sir Ronald made his proclamation, and I quote, "at Hobart ...with fitting solemnity and ceremony in the presence of State Ministers, Judges of the Supreme Court, Members of both Houses of Parliament and a large public concourse." The proclamation commenced with these words:

"WHEREAS it has pleased Almighty God to call to His Mercy our late Sovereign Lord King George the Sixth of Blessed and Glorious memory, by whose Decease the Crown is solely and rightfully come to the High and Mighty Princess Elizabeth Alexandra Mary."

In elaborate language the proclamation then recited the identities of those who were present at the reading of the proclamation and went on to assert that those persons:

"do now hereby with one voice and consent of tongue and heart, publish and proclaim that the High and Mighty

Princess ELIZABETH ALEXANDER MARY is now, by the death of Our late Sovereign of happy memory become QUEEN ELIZABETH THE SECOND"¹

Similar proclamations were made by the Privy Councillors in London, by the Governor General in Canberra and by the Governors of the other States of Australia and in all the other Realms of the Commonwealth.

At the time of her accession to the throne Queen Elizabeth was on tour in Africa. She hastened home, donned her grieving black and went straight to Buckingham Palace to sign the accession papers. There she declared:

" ...

*My heart is too full for me to say more to you today than that I shall always work as my father did throughout his reign to uphold constitutional Government and to advance the happiness and prosperity of my peoples spread as they are all the world over. I know that in my resolve to follow his shining example of service and devotion I shall be inspired by the loyalty and affection of those whose Queen I have been called to be and by the counsel of their elected Parliaments."*²

And so began the remarkable reign of Queen Elizabeth II, the 60th anniversary of which we now celebrate. She was then only 25

¹ Tasmanian Government Gazette Vol CXCVIII, Friday February 8, 1952.

² Supra.

years of age. She had been married for not more than 5 years and was the mother of a 4-year old boy, Charles, and a 2-year-old girl, Anne. By her father's death she ascended the throne of the United Kingdom and its realms and without apparent demur she embraced a life of duty and obligation. Today she remains the Queen of the United Kingdom and is now the constitutional Monarch of 16 sovereign states, known as the Commonwealth Realms, one of which is Australia, as well as the titular head of 54 countries that go to make up the Commonwealth of Nations. Now in her 86th year she still maintains a busy schedule of her own. She handles roughly 430 engagements each year and supports more than 600 charitable organizations and programs. She has, and I quote "inherited a rich traditional legacy, has earned unsurpassed personal respect by a solid strength of character, uncommon emotional composure and statesmanlike responsiveness to change."³

With respect to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II no one would doubt that she is a remarkable woman, a great moral leader and role model for us all. The State of Tasmania came into existence with the federation of the colonies 111 years ago and Queen Elizabeth II has been our Head of State and the Queen of Australia for 60 of those 111 years. That is a long time and whether you think that it is time that Australia became a Republic or not you have to admire this woman who all her life has adhered to the pledge that she made at the time of her father's death and to the pledge that she made when she was just

³ <http://asiwajubolatinubu.com/archives/news/2001/04/25/20010425N01.html>

21 years of age when she said, "I declare before you all that my whole life, be it long or short, shall be devoted to your service and the service of that great Imperial family to which we all belong."

According to a commentator writing in the New York Times on 10th January this year, "Britain has been remarkably lucky in its ruling queens. Only a handful of women have held the throne in their own right over the British monarchy's long history, stretching back twelve centuries, but what queens they were: the remarkable Elizabeth I, who saw off the Armada in 1588 and set the country on its unique path to greatness; Victoria, on whose empire the sun never set; and now Elizabeth II, who has seen that empire transformed into a Commonwealth and her country remade into a more modern kind of world power, in finance and the arts, democracy and diplomacy and diversity".⁴

Those who celebrate the Queen's Jubilee have much to celebrate. Tasmania is one of Her Majesty's Realms and consequently we have inherited a long, firmly established and stable form of government called a constitutional monarchy which, as Her Majesty declared at the time of her accession, obliges her and her representatives in the Realms to receive and act upon the advice of those who have been democratically elected to the parliament except in the most unusual circumstances. So it is for Her Majesty's representatives in each State and in Canberra. This system of government has proved to be robust even in times of political

⁴ New York Times January 10th 2012 <http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/12/20/elizabeth-ii-outlives-victoria-today/>

disputation as, sometimes happens for example when an election fails to deliver a clear majority to one party. Even in extremely tense times such as those that surrounded the dismissal of Prime Minister Whitlam by Governor-General in 1975 the decision of the Queen's Representative did not lead to violence and conflict in the streets as it so often does in so many of the countries that do not enjoy the same stability of government as do the Queen's Realms.

Her Majesty is not only the Queen of our country and the head of each of the Australian States but she is also the human face of the system of government that we enjoy. I believe that by her conduct, steadfastness, moral rectitude, honesty, tolerance and adherence to tested principle for sixty long years, she has become the personification of a system of good government that gives us peace and security. That is a cause to celebrate her Diamond Jubilee. On a personal level her adherence to those same values makes her a role model for us all and that too is a cause to celebrate her Diamond Jubilee. Respect and admiration for her Majesty and the system of government that she conducts and believes in is widespread in this country, even amongst those who argue that it is time we became a republic.

So on the occasion of the 60th Anniversary of Her Majesty's accession to the throne of the United Kingdom and her Realms let us express our gratitude to her for sixty years of exemplary leadership, for 60 years of service dedicated to the well-being of her subjects and for the maintenance of a peaceful and democratic system of

government. Let us wish her good health, happiness and an even longer reign.

A toast to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on the occasion of her
Diamond Jubilee

