



Women truly can do anything, be anything

Kate Ellis



AND what this day says to Australian women and Australian girls is that you can do anything, you can be anything, and it makes my heart sing to see women in so many diverse roles across our country."

These were the words of our next Governor-General last weekend. I think thousands of hearts across the country were singing when Quentin Bryce uttered these words in front of the television cameras last Sunday.

How wonderful to see such a distinguished woman who grew up in the bush break a 107-year streak of male Governors-General to become the first female appointment. We've had a female Head of State for over 50 years but it's very difficult for any Aussie girl to really identify with Queen Elizabeth II.

The British Monarchy looks very odd when compared to a modern Australia built on equality of opportunity. Until we finally become a republic our current Head of State comes from a constitutional system where brothers are preferred over sisters, religious faith is prescribed rather than chosen and appointment is based on bloodline rather than qualifications.

Australians want reward based on merit, not family connections and privilege. Arguing for a republic is certainly not about any disrespect for the Queen - it's about identifying the fundamental ways our constitution clashes with what we stand for and saying we should realign the two.

The none-too-subtle irony in Quentin Bryce's appointment is that although it's about time we had a woman as Governor-General, this Queen's representative may turn out to be the last.

Born in rural Queensland, Ms Bryce will bring both a traditional and modern perspective to the role. She's a mother and a grandmother who has a strong commitment to rural and regional Australia, to the rights of women and to Indigenous Australia. She will inspire young girls, old girls



DISTINGUISHED: Quentin Bryce will inspire not only women, but all Australians

and indeed all Australians to think big. Her encouragement of young girls to have confidence in their future and to dream that they can be anything is truly heart-warming.

Ms Bryce was appointed in July 2003 as the 24th Governor of Queensland. She has been an inspiring Governor and has served the people of Queensland with great distinction. She has enjoyed a rich and dynamic career as a lawyer, academic and senior public official.

Her former roles include Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner, inaugural Director of the Queensland Women's Information Service and founding chair and Chief Executive Officer of the National Childcare Accreditation Council.

As Sports Minister I'm also very keen to speak to our new Governor-General about encouraging more women to participate in sport. It is little known that Quentin Bryce was awarded an Australian Sports Medal for services to women's cricket.

The decision to appoint her says a lot about the remarkable person that Ms Bryce clearly is. But it also highlights the stark difference and change

brought by Kevin Rudd. At the opening of the Australia 2020 Summit yesterday the PM said he wanted to open the doors and windows of Government and let in some fresh air and ideas.

This Government's willingness to toss out some of the stuffy old conservative thinking of the former Government and embrace a modern Australia has prompted enthusiasm across the country. I can feel a fresh breeze blowing through the national parliament and across the country. Already WorkChoices has been dumped, the Kyoto protocol ratified, an official apology to the Stolen Generations has been made and now we have the first female Governor-General.

Some observers have said these actions are nothing more than symbolism. That's an insult to the hundreds of thousands of people in Australia who voted for change. Who voted for a new direction for our nation.

The winter may be approaching but Australians aren't going cold on embracing new ideas. In fact I think the country's just warming up.

Kate Ellis is the federal MP (Labor) for Adelaide and Minister for Youth and Sport