

2013/20: Should the Governor-General, Quentin Bryce, comment publicly on social and political issues?

The issue at a glance

In her fourth and final Boyer Lecture, delivered in late November, 2013, Governor-General Quentin Bryce asked her audience "to imagine a nation" which embodied all the human qualities, including courage, resilience and compassion. She then presented her own "imagined" Australia, a country where "an ethic of care guides the way we lead".

Ms Bryce then added that she suggested an Australia "where people are free to love and marry whom they choose and where, perhaps, my friends, one day, one young girl or boy may even grow up to be our nation's first head of state"

These final lines indicated that the Governor-General supported the idea of legal marriage for same-sex couples, as well as of a future Australian republic.

Politicians, political commentators and others flooded the news media with their interpretations of that last sentence, along with their support or condemnation. Much of the criticism from politicians was on party lines, but not all of it. MPs from both major parties came out for and against both the republic and gay marriage issues.

Although the two issues are controversial, some commentators have voiced their opinion that they are not "political" as such. In other words, the Governor-General was not interfering in politics, but simply voicing her aspirations for her country as a public figure. Other commentators have objected to perceived meddling by a purely ceremonial figure in political issues.

In any event, the question of whether Ms Bryce should have commented on any social or political issues while in office has been hotly debated in the media.

Background

The current Governor-General, Quentin Bryce

Quentin Bryce is the 25th Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia and is the first woman to be appointed to the office. A lawyer by training and by profession, Ms Bryce was active in the field of human rights. She was also Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner for the five years to 1993 and, in 1997, was appointed principal of the Women's College at Sydney University. Her contribution to women's and children's human rights causes has been recognised in the awarding to her of the Companion of the Order of Australia. (See the Web Links and Documents section section for a link to her biography). Before being appointed Governor-General, she served as Governor of Queensland. Both of her vice-regal appointments have been by Labor governments.

Duties and powers of the Governor-General of Australia

The Governor-General of Australia is, in effect, appointed by the government of the day and not by the English monarch, whom the G-G represents in the Commonwealth of Australia. The Prime Minister nominates a person to be Governor-General and the monarch appoints that person to the office. In theory, the monarch can refuse a nomination and appoint someone of the monarch's own choice. This has never happened.

Most of the Governor-General's duties are ceremonial, including the opening of Parliament, in which the G-G, standing in for the Monarch, reads a speech outlining the aims and aspirations of the government. By tradition and convention, the G-G refers in the speech to "my government", although the speech is written and prepared by the government itself. The governor-General merely reads it.

Dignitaries from overseas, foreign heads of state and other overseas visitors, political and otherwise, are often greeted, or invited to meet, the Governor-General in his / her official capacity of the Queen of Australia's representative.

Unlike the Governors-General of other former British Empire countries which have become member nations of the British Commonwealth, the Australian G-G, under the Constitution, has powers of his / her own.

In 1975, the so-called "reserve powers" were identified and used to dismiss the Whitlam government from office. At the time, the Queen, writing through her private secretary, said that she had "no part in the decisions which the Governor-General must take in accordance with the Constitution".

The 1988 Constitutional Commission report concluded that "the Governor-General is in no sense a delegate of the Queen. The independence of the office is highlighted by changes which have been made in recent years to the Royal instruments relating to it." This report is widely held to have answered some of the questions raised by G-G Sir John Kerr's actions in 1975.

Internet information

Quentin Bryce's biography can be read in full in Wikipedia at:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quentin_Bryce

The Wikipedia entry on the functions and powers of the Australian Governor-General can be read at

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Governor-General_of_Australia#Constitutional_role_and_functions

The Governor-General's official website, containing much information on professional and personal achievements, is at:

<http://www.gg.gov.au/their-excellencies-honourable-quentin-bryce-ac-cvo-and-mr-michael-bryce-am-ae>

On November 25, 2013, The Australian's editorial attacked the Governor-General's Boyer lecture comment on what the leader writer saw as the promotion of an Australian republic. The editorial asserts that many Australians would have been offended and that the referral to a republic during the reign of the present Queen "who is highly esteemed" was not needed. The editorial, 'Why take the Queen's shilling?', can be read at:

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/opinion/editorials/why-take-the-queens-shilling/story-e6frg71x-1226767318740>

In a news item published on November 25, 2013, Quentin Bryce's comments were criticised by former Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, Australian Monarchist League Chairman Philip Benwell, as well as convenor of Australians for a Constitutional Monarchy, David Flint. All these comments were on the words alluding to a republic. The news item, 'Fraser queries Bryce's timing' can be read at:

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/fraser-queries-bryces-timing/story-fn59niix-1226767374510>

Writing in The Guardian of November 25, 2013, former adviser to the Howard government, industry lobbyist and freelance corporate adviser Paula Matthewson commented that Quentin Bryce's speaking out on gay marriage and the republic was in character and that her outspokenness had not been considered a bar to her appointment as the Queen's representative. The opinion piece, 'Quentin Bryce: a model of even-handedness', also cites the case of former Governor-General Sir William Deane, who also commented on issues such as native title for Aboriginal land.

Matthewson's opinion can be read at

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/nov/25/quentin-bryce-a-model-of-even-handedness>

On November 25, 2013, former Liberal Minister Amanda Vanstone wrote an opinion piece in The Age, criticising Governor-General Quentin Bryce's comments in her final Boyer lecture. The item, entitled, 'The "look-at-me" G-G' claims that while the writer is sympathetic to the G-G's views on both the gay marriage and the republic issues, what Ms Vanstone deems 'unacceptable is that she chose to express them while holding the highest public office in Australia. That role is meant to be completely non-partisan'. Ms Vanstone compares Bryce with the Queen herself, and points out that we could be '... forgiven for thinking that the Governor-General was a tad too focused on herself ...'. The article's general thrust seems to be critical of almost every aspect of Quentin Bryce's Governor-Generalship, even to the extent of comparing her unfavourably with previous G-Gs. The article can be read at:

<http://www.smh.com.au/comment/the-lookatme-gg-20131124-2y3so.html>

In The Australian of November 26, Jamie Walker wrote an opinion piece in which Quentin Bryce is criticised by many, including Monarchist David Flint, Liberal Senator Dean Smith, for including comments on controversial issues in a lecture delivered while she remained in office. The author of this opinion piece himself draws comparisons between Bryce and '... the last governor-general to have deliberately courted political controversy', Sir William Deane, who publicly voiced his opinion on the subject of Aboriginal land rights.

The author includes a comment from constitutional law expert George Williams, of the University of NSW, says Ms Bryce's references to marriage equality and the republic need to be kept in perspective. "There is no current debate in federal parliament, there is no bill on these issues," he says. "There is no fixed rules in any event for what the governor-general can't say. It's a judgment call." The article can be read at:

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/features/a-role-fit-for-a-queen/story-e6frg6z6-1226767322511>

In an editorial published in The Age on November 25, 2013, entitled 'Bryce's vision for our nation', the leader writer is supportive of Ms Bryce's Boyer lecture comments, saying she has "served this country well by pointing pointing to a freer, fairer, more mature Australia, where the head of state is one of us," while allowing that 'Some have chosen to criticise Ms Bryce for making the comments while in office.' Read this editorial at:

<http://www.theage.com.au/comment/the-age-editorial/australia-left-exposed-on-the-climate-front-20131124-2y43b.html>

On December 3, 2013, The Adelaide Advertiser published a comment by Dean Jaensch titled 'Governor-General Quentin Bryce misconstrues her role'. The opinion piece argues that Quentin Bryce has behaved in a way inappropriate for the position she currently holds.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/news/opinion/governor-general-quentin-bryce-misconstrues-her-role/story-fni6unxq-1226774531611>

On November 25, 2013, The New Matilda published a comment by Adam Brereton titled 'Quenytyn Bryce is no ally of the republic'. The piece argues that the Governor-General's remarks are unlikely to led to an Australian republic and may well not have been intended to achieve this end.

The full text of the comment can be found at <https://newmatilda.com/2013/11/25/quentin-bryce-no-ally-republic>

On November 25, 2013, The Hoopla published a comment by Monica Attard titled 'Has the GG overstepped the mark?' The comment is essential a defence of Quentin Bryce's remarks.

The full text of the opinion piece can be found at <http://thehoopla.com.au/whats-role-governor-general/>

On November 24, 2013, the moderator of Australian Climate Madness published an open letter to the Governor General, Quentin Bryce, in which he criticises the Governor-General's Boyer Lecturers.

The full text of the letter can be accessed at <http://australianclimatemadness.com/2013/11/24/letter-to-the-governor-general/>

On November 23, 2013, Yale Stephens posted a comment on his political commentary blog 'The Red and the Blue'. The comment is titled 'Gay rights, republic: pull your head in, Governor-General' and is a criticism of Quentin Bryce for having politicised the vice-regal role.

The full text can be accessed at <http://theredandtheblue.org/2013/11/23/gay-rights-republic-pull-your-head-in-governor-general/>

On November 23, 2013, Out in Perth published a report on the criticisms that West Australian Senator Dean Smith had made of Quentin Bryce's remarks.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.outinperth.com/governor-general-comments-slap-face-says-liberal-senator/>

On November 22, 2013, The Sydney Morning Herald published a news report titled 'Bryce's remarks more than appropriate: PM'. The report details the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott's, defence of Quentin Bryce's Boyer Lecture remarks.

The full text of the news report can be found at <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/bryces-remarks-more-than-appropriate-pm-20131122-2y1kx.html>

On November 23, 2013, radio commentator and blogger Michael Smith published an opinion entitled, "A personal indulgence, a lapse of self-discipline and an unforgivable breach of protocol". In it, he quotes MP David Elliott as saying, "If Quentin Bryce wants to debate policy and legislation she should run for Parliament, not use her Vice Regal position to pursue her own political agenda." The blog entry is at:

<http://www.michaelsmithnews.com/2013/11/an-personal-indulgence-a-lapse-of-self-discipline-and-an-unforgivable-breach-of-protocol.html>

On December 2, 2013, emeritus professor of political science John Warhurst wrote an opinion piece defending Ms Bryce's comments in the last Boyer lecture. Warhurst observes that most of the attention paid Bryce's comments were in regard to the republic, rather than to the controversy surrounding gay marriage. Warhurst urges that, due to several G-Gs being outspoken in the past on issues deemed "political", Australians should discuss whether we should know the views of our Governor-General on controversial topics, and that "We should be much clearer about how we now expect the position to evolve." The article, written for Eureka Street, is entitled, "G-G Bryce breaks bold not bland" and can be found at:

<http://eurekastreet.com.au/article.aspx?aeid=38568#.UqWBWCdE3FI>

Arguments in favour of the Governor-General commenting publicly on social and political issues

1. A number of other Governors-General have had political connections or made political comments while holding the office

In an opinion piece published on the ABC's opinion site, The Drum, on September 2, 2010, Elisabeth O'Shea noted, 'Pre-existing political sympathies have been features of many previous appointments to the role of Governor General... Consider, for example, when our Governor General was Sir Paul Hasluck... Hasluck was elected as a Liberal MP but resigned from the Menzies Government in 1969 to take up the role of Governor General. He held the spot until he resigned in 1974. Obviously, the Governor General had a political history and ideological sympathies, but this raised no concerns in his appointment.'

O'Shea went on to comment, 'Bill Hayden was elected as a Labour MP in 1961 and served as a Minister in the Whitlam Government. After the dismissal, Hayden became leader of the opposition before Hawke pipped him for that job in 1983. He went on to serve as Governor General between 1989 and 1996.'

In an opinion piece published in The Hoopla on November 25, 2013, Monica Attard observed, 'Former GG Sir William Deane was known and indeed admired for speaking out when he saw wrongs that political remedies could right. He saw the role as one that holds a mirror to the people - a way to make this country look at itself and judge whether it's on track to becoming a better place.'

Attard concluded, 'Quentin Bryce's view that Australia can embrace same sex marriage and still dream of becoming a republic is carrying forward Bill Dean's legacy.'

2. The Governor-General's comments were not party-political and did not conflict with her vice-regal role

The governor-general is generally regarded as needing to be above politics, in the sense that s/he should not indicate a bias toward any political party, nor become involved in party political issues.

Defenders of Bryce's remarks argue that though they did indicate an opinion on two controversial issues, neither issue is clearly aligned with any political party and both views were expressed in a way that really did little more than open each to further discussion.

Writing in The Guardian, Paula Matthewson compared Ms Bryce with a former

Governor-General, Sir William Deane, who also spoke publicly on social issues, such as Aboriginal native title.

Matthewson states that, like Sir William, Ms Bryce ``... diligently kept her [party] politics to herself ... ". Matthewson infers that gay marriage - and even an Australian republic - are not for discussion only by politicians, but issues for public debate and if not presented in a fashion that indicates a party affiliation, should be able to be raised by a Governor-General.

A similar view was expressed by Australia's current Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, who responded to Quentin Bryce's remarks by saying "It is more than appropriate for the Governor General, approaching the end of her term, to express a personal view on a number of subjects. That's what she was doing... and as you would expect with Quentin Bryce, she did it with grace and style."

The new convenor of the Tasmanian branch of the Australian Republican Movement, Angela Wilson, has also claimed that it was healthy to hold a national discussion on the issue of whether Australia should become a republic and that the Governor-General's comments were an important contribution to the debate.

Ms Wilson defended Quentin Bryce against allegations that her remarks were party-political, claiming that the issue transcended party politics.

Ms Wilson has commented, 'Notwithstanding comments by those who support Australia retaining its link to the British Crown, it is not a partisan debate. Support for a republic crosses party-political boundaries.'

3. The Governor-General's comments were appropriate and forward-looking

Defenders of Quentin Bryce's comments note that while they did not run contrary to the Governor-General's responsibilities, they did serve a transitional function, pointing to a future direction that Australia might profitably take regarding its head of state.

In an editorial in *The Age*, the leader writer stated, 'We believe [Quentin Bryce] has again served this country well by pointing to a freer, fairer, more mature Australia, where the head of state is one of us.'

Australian Republic Movement chairman, former West Australian Labor premier Geoff Gallop, has also backed the Governor-General's comments as appropriate, saying, 'We welcome a conversation with the Australian people to confirm who we have become, Australian to the bootstraps, in time for our next head of state to be one of us, an Australian.'

Both the *Age* editorial and Gallop's comments suggest that as Governor-General Quentin Bryce is uniquely well placed to promote the idea of the Australian Governor-General being more an Australian head of state than a representative of the British Monarch.

Supporters of Bryce's comments have suggested that the Governor-General has an important role to play in forwarding discussion generally and in particular in forwarding discussion around who should be Australia's head of state.

4. Quentin Bryce has previously been careful not to politicise the office of Governor-General

It has been argued that Quentin Bryce has shown a high level of awareness of the need to protect the political neutrality of her office and that she can therefore be trusted to discuss issues in an appropriate manner.

Quentin Bryce's daughter is married to Bill Shorten, a prominent Labor politician and now leader of the Australian Labor Party. Ms Bryce has been at pains to ensure that this connection cast no shadow of political bias across the position of Governor-General.

In October, 2013, Quentin Bryce offered her resignation to Prime Minister Tony Abbott in anticipation of her son-in-law Bill Shorten being elected Labor leader.

Mr Abbott declined to accept Ms Bryce's resignation, citing the length of the Governor-General's remaining term, and that the Coalition had a clear majority in the House of Representatives.

Mr Abbott further stated, 'The Governor-General is currently serving an extended term in office that she did not seek. Her agreement to stay on was a measure of her personal commitment to provide continuity at a time of political turbulence and she should be commended for her dedication to public service.'

Ms Bryce had displayed a similar sensitivity to the need for the office of Governor-General to be seen to be politically neutral three years earlier.

In 2010, after the election that delivered a hung parliament, Ms Bryce sought advice from the then solicitor-general Stephen Gageler, SC, about whether the marriage of her daughter to Mr Shorten created a conflict of interest. Mr Gageler found no legal conflict of interest and said Ms Bryce must be trusted to manage the perception of any conflict by prudently adhering to her constitutional responsibilities.

5. The Governor-General's comments enhance her position as a role model for young women

In her former vice-regal role as Governor of Queensland, Quentin Bryce actively promoted the causes of women in particular and social issues in general. Some commentators believe that these attitudes have carried over into her current appointment and that far from preventing her acting as a role model for other women, they have particularly qualified her to do so.

Writing in *The Guardian*, Paula Matthewson commented that, 'considering her work over the years and the causes she's supported, her views are no surprise.'

Matthewson has pointed out that Ms Bryce was outspoken on women's rights and social issues during her Queensland governorship, yet was still chosen for the post of Australian Governor-General. It has been suggested that this indicates that her outspokenness was not considered a bar to her appointment, or an impediment to her acting as a role model for young women.

Referring specifically to Quentin Bryce's Boyer Lectures, the leader of the Greens, Christine Milne, has stated, 'I think

Quentin Bryce is showing great leadership as Governor-General and she is such a good role model and for her to come out now and support the idea of Australia becoming a republic is very welcome.'

On December 5, 2013 (some weeks after Quentin Bryce's delivery of the final Boyer Lecture) the United States Ambassador to Australia, John Berry, further stated, '[Quentin Bryce] is a role model, not just for the women and girls following in her footsteps, but also for people who aspire to be public servants, educators, mentors and leaders.'

Arguments against the Governor-General commenting publicly on social and political issues

1. The Governor-General's comments 'politicised' her role as the representative of the Queen

The Governor-General is meant to occupy a role above politics. For many this means that s/he is meant to do more than merely refrain from expressing support for any political party. Those who stress the apolitical aspect of the role note that Governors-General should refrain from commenting on issues which are part of the current political debate. Critics have claimed that by expressing her support for gay marriage and an Australian as head of state (presumably as the president of an Australian republic) Bryce has politicised her office.

Yale Stephens on the political commentary blog 'The Red and the Blue' has stated, 'It is an utter disgrace that a serving Governor-General should opt to intervene in issues that have nothing whatsoever to do with her role, let alone divisive matters that politicise what is and should always be a strictly impartial role at the apex of Australian governance.'

West Australian Liberal Senator, Dean Smith, has similarly remarked, 'Last night's departure into current political events will come as a slap in the face to many, many Australians and a significant breach of trust because she [Quentin Bryce] would know better than most that in that central office it is so integral to stay above the day to day political fray...

She has stepped across the line in inviting a commentary around two very, very sensitive issues.'

Another critical view was expressed on the Australian Climate Madness site on November 24, 2013, where an open letter to the Governor-General was published by the site's moderator. In part it reads, 'I am astonished and disappointed, but not surprised, at your highly inappropriate comments on deeply political matters, both on the question of an Australian republic and the issue of same-sex marriage...

Such statements are not unexpected, given your previous history of engaging in political debate, for example with regard to your encouraging of costly and ineffective action on climate change, including at a renewable energy conference in January 2009, where you said: "We must act swiftly, act smartly, and act together..." The only course of action open to you is to resign with immediate effect. If you wish to engage in political matters, you should seek election to Parliament.'

2. Quentin Bryce's comments indicate that she is being hypocritical in occupying the office of Governor-General

It has been claimed that Quentin Bryce has put herself in a false and hypocritical position by advocating for a republic at the same time as she is acting as the representative of the Monarch. Quentin Bryce was appointed by the Queen, and swore an oath of allegiance 'to well and truly serve Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second'. Critics have questioned how Bryce can, in good faith, perform a role that her recent remarks indicate she believes should be superseded.

David Flint, of Australians for Constitutional Monarchy, was quoted as saying, 'She swears allegiance to the Queen ... and yet she is talking about a republic'. In an interview with a reporter from The Australian, Flint said the comments were 'injudicious, inappropriate and unnecessary'.

Australian Monarchist League chairman Philip Ben described Bryce's comments on the republic as 'hypocritical', saying, 'If a person is a republican and does not believe in our system of constitutional monarchy then they should not accept the position of representative of the Queen'.

An editorial published in The Australian on November 25, 2013, has further stated, 'It is difficult to understand why a woman whose vision for the future includes a young girl or boy growing up "to be our nation's first head of state" has spent the past decade as the Queen's representative in Australia and before that in Queensland.' The implication of this comment is that the Governor-General has been inconsistent, if not hypocritical, in occupying a position to which she is opposed.

Critics have asked why Bryce would perform all the symbolic roles associated with being the Monarch's proxy if she is opposed to the Monarchy in Australia.

3. Quentin Bryce should not have undermined a role which she has been paid to perform

It has been suggested that Quentin Bryce has behaved unethically in accepting a paid position as Governor-General and then suggesting the role should be superseded.

In an editorial published in The Australian on November 25, 2013, it was stated, 'Australians are entitled to ask why Ms Bryce was happy to accept the lucrative salary, allowances, travel opportunities, stately mansions and staff attached to such prestigious positions when it now appears she did not wholeheartedly support the offices she has occupied.'

A similar point was made by Yale Stephens on the political commentary blog 'The Red and the Blue'. Stephens has stated, 'It is not indelicate to point out that since her appointment as Governor of Queensland in 2003 and subsequently as Governor-General in 2008, Bryce has been content to pocket millions of taxpayer-funded salary dollars as the representative of the Crown.'

Critics have referred to Ms Bryce as 'taking the Queen's shilling', with the implication that if one takes payment for performing a role, this carries the obligation to not undermine that role.

4. The Governor-General's comments should have been made after she had left office

It has been claimed that the requirement that the Governor-General refrain from political comment does not mean that a holder of this office can never express such views. Rather, it means that s/he cannot express such views while performing the role of Governor-General.

Critics have claimed that it was inappropriate for Quentin Bryce to make potentially divisive comments, especially those promoting republicanism, while she still occupied the role of Governor-General. In fact, it could be argued that it was inappropriate to give the Boyer lectures at all while she occupied this position. Former Liberal Party minister, Amanda Vanstone, said in an opinion article published in *The Age*, that, while people like herself, 'who are republicans and sympathetic to gay marriage' might agree with Ms Bryce's views, 'she should have waited until she left the office before expressing them'.

Ms Vanstone has stated, 'If she wanted to express contentious political views in her Boyer Lectures, one wonders why she did not agree to do them only after her term as Governor-General expired.'

John Warhurst, an Emeritus Professor of political science at the Australian National University, agrees that the inclusion of the comments in a Boyer Lecture was 'always a potentially risky venture' and that there was no precedent for her actions. No previous governor-general has given the Boyer Lectures while in still in office. Sir Zelman Cowen delivered the lectures in 1969; however, this was years before he served a Governor-General.

Professor Warhurst further added that Ms Bryce had had the choice of delivering the lectures after she left office, but had declined to do so, apparently well aware of the impact her words would make and choosing to use the Governor-General's office to increase that impact.

5. The Governor-General's comments have damaged her image as a role model for Australian women

It has been claimed that Ms Bryce's comments were particularly inappropriate because they have impaired her performance as Australia's first female Governor-General.

Critics have suggested that Quentin Bryce's supposed misstep is particularly important because she is the first woman to have occupied the position of Governor-General and her performance will be used as a benchmark against which the capacity of women to perform such roles will be judged.

In an editorial, 'Why take the Queen's shilling?', the Australian newspaper leader writer questioned whether Quentin Bryce could be taken seriously as a feminist role model, as she had "failed to grasp an important tenet of her office". The leader writer was apparently suggesting Bryce had sullied her historic place as Australia's first female Governor-General by making political and social comments. It has been claimed that this might make subsequent governments doubtful about the ability of women to fulfil such positions. It has also been suggested that Bryce has not presented to other women a model of appropriate behaviour in this office.

The Australian editorial concludes, 'Feminists will cringe, but like our first female prime minister, our first female Governor-General fell short of the mark.'

Further implications

There is little doubt that the Governor-General knew her remarks at the very end of her final Boyer lecture would stir controversy. She had the opportunity to postpone her lectures until after she had left office, but she went ahead anyway and, perhaps wisely, made her controversial comments at the very end. At the time of writing this outline, there has been no further comment from her office.

A previous Governor-General, Sir William Deane, another Labor government appointment, was also outspoken in office about causes close to his heart. In Sir William's case, it was Aboriginal land rights. Quentin Bryce's remarks alluding to gay marriage and an Australian republic were nowhere near as blunt as some of Sir William's utterances on land rights, but they were met with the same hostility - and with the same accusations of "political" interference.

It might be said that the hostile reactions came from a range of "the usual suspects", as much of the anti-G-G comment came from monarchists, or anti-republicans in general. The G-G's gay marriage comment, although mentioned by many outraged anti-republic spokespersons, seemed to be mentioned as a secondary issue.

And it was the allusion to a republic in the words "our nation's first head of state" that was cited as the reason for accusations that the Governor-General was meddling in politics.

If, as many believe, Australia is destined to be a republic, with a President who is very much a ceremonial-only head of state appointed by the government, or parliament, of the day, it may now be an opportune time to debate the issue of political and social comment by the Governor-General. In a few years, it may be necessary to provide an inaugural head of state of an Australian republic with guidelines at least, on what he or she can publicly comment on.

Newspaper items used in the compilation of this issue outline

The Australian: November 25, 2013, page 11, editorial (with cartoon), 'Why take the Queen's shilling?'

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/opinion/editorials/why-take-the-queens-shilling/story-e6frg71x-1226767318740>

The Australian: November 25, 2013, page 4, news item by Nicola Berkovic, 'Fraser queries Bryce's "timing"'

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/fraser-queries-bryces-timing/story-fn59niix-1226767374510>

The Australian: November 25, 2013, page 9, background / analysis (photos) by Jamie Walker, 'A role fit for a queen'

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/features/a-role-fit-for-a-queen/story-e6frg6z6-1226767322511>

The Age: November 25, 2013, page 20, comment by Amanda Vanstone, 'The "look-at-me" G-G'.

<http://www.smh.com.au/comment/the-lookatme-gg-20131124-2y3so.html>

The Age: November 25, 2013, page 18, editorial, 'Bryce's vision for our nation'. (online version: scroll down to the second editorial)

<http://www.theage.com.au/comment/the-age-editorial/australia-left-exposed-on-the-climate-front-20131124-2y43b.html>

The Australian: November 23, 2013, page 3, news item by Sarah Elks, 'Monarchists not happy as Quentin backs republic, gay marriage'.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/monarchists-not-happy-as-quentin-bryce-backs-republic-gay-marriage/story-fn59niix-1226766438669>

The Age: November 23, 2013, page 1, news item (ref to Australian republicanism, gay couples and Governor-General Quentin Bryce) by Tony Wright, 'G-G backs republic and gay marriages'.

<http://m.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/queens-rep-backs-republic-and-gay-marriage-20131122-2y1x0.html>