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Larrikindred Spirit

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The Duke of Edinburgh, who last week sadly passed away at the age of 99, is only now finally getting the widespread respect for a lifetime of service to Queen and country from the media and political class which have collectively, until now, regarded Prince Philip as a gaffe-prone colonial relic.

Few can claim to have contributed so much to public life, beginning with the Prince's wartime service in the Royal Navy where he was commended for his actions during the Battle of Cape Matapan in Greece during 1941.

This was followed by decades of loyal support as consort to the Queen, embodying the values of stability that the monarchy delivers. Added to this was the dedication to Her Majesty's realms, including through his patronage of dozen of organisations in Australia—not to mention the legacy of some 775,000 Australians who have received the Duke of Edinburgh's Award since its establishment in 1959

In a media statement Prime Minister Scott Morrison noted the Duke of Edinburgh 'embodied a generation that we will never see again'.

It could be said that this is a reality that has sadly not escaped the royal family itself, with Harry (in his case it is surely safe to disregard the princely honorifics at this point...) and his spouse slandering the royal family in their self-indulgent media circus while his grandfather's life was drawing to a close. It should be hoped that Harry's excision from the royal family is permanent.

But more broadly what the Prime Minister said is true—although it didn't need to be this way. Western society made the decision to reject the attitudes and values of people like Prince Philip because they were not in keeping with the intemperate libertinism of the post-war era. Instead, the Duke of Edinburgh was for a long time dismissed as ill-spoken and out of date.

I suppose it is refreshing to see the media finally treat Prince Philip with the respect he earned but it would not be unreasonable to ask why this respect could not have been given when His Royal Highness was alive to hear it.

ABC journalist Annabel Crabb even went as far—on the night of the Duke of Edinburgh's death—to revise the history of the outrage generated in 2015 following then Prime Minister Tony Abbott's decision to award Prince Philip the nation's highest honour, a Knight of the Order of Australia, just as was awarded to Prince Charles in 1981.



Now Crabb says the outrage was not at all directed towards the fact that Prince Philip had received a knighthood, but was related to the wider context of Mr Abbott's decision.

No one could seriously believe this. There is no shortage of articles published at the time describing the particular decision to give an award to Prince Philip as making Tony Abbott a laughing stock. One member of Abbott's cabinet at the time, under the cowardly shield of anonymity, described the decision as 'total craziness'.

The fabricated furore was weaponised by Malcolm Turnbull and his allies in the media to undermine Abbott's premiership, leading eventually to his loss of the Liberal party leadership in September of the same year.

Turnbull and the other republican former prime ministers were quick to offer their deep condolences and attempt to display genuine respect for Prince Philip, but none were prepared to do so while he was alive when such respect was earned and deserved. Nor have they ever been prepared to say a word in defence of Prince Philip when he was a target of undeserved ridicule from the media. Among all major political party leaders for the past several decades, only Tony Abbott can claim to have had and demonstrated genuine respect for the Duke of Edinburgh during his life.

The Duke of Edinburgh personified through his faithful companionship and support to the Queen one of the great virtues of the monarchical system itself—that of stability. And it is the constitutional stability that Australia has enjoyed that has, for the better part of the last century, allowed for social and political freedoms to become an integral part of the Australian way of life.

It is interesting that only after our politics began to be dominated by politicians who rejected the role and powers of the Crown, and assumed its power for themselves, have the foundations for our freedoms and traditions been undermined. A fair go and free speech are currently out of vogue, while speech codes, diversity training, and the constitutional division of Australians along racial lines is the new order.

What Australia desperately needs now is people of the calibre of the Duke of Edinburgh. As Gerard Baker wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* on Monday, 'When we are obligated to toe an increasingly stultifying conventional line, the Queen's consort was the human antidote to the virus of verbal oppression that has us in a death grip... he was acutely conscious of his role as an iconoclast cheerfully smashing the revered verities of progressive modernity'.

In this way the Duke of Edinburgh embodied a kind of Australian-ness that is now under threat. When the media labelled Prince Philip as 'gaffe-prone' this was a reflection on the many Australians who simply believe in saying what was on their minds.

In reality, the Duke of Edinburgh committed no gaffes, which as traditionally understood refer to unintentional remarks causing embarrassment. Prince Philip always spoke with intention and always in affable good humour. This is how the vast majority of people interpreted the Prince's



comments, including the recipients of the remarks themselves.

Prince Philip was only deemed gaffe-prone by the class of people who have set the boundaries on the manner and words in which we speak. In their attempts at mockery, Australians came to identify even further with the Prince. In their attempts to embarrass, the media only embarrassed themselves.

Rest in peace Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, whose lifelong service to country and devotion to the Queen should be an inspiration to us all, not least of all to the media and governing elites who could learn much from his example.

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