Esteeming the Governor-General of Australia

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Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people (Acts 23:5)



The Advertiser

Mr NOBODY

Poll reveals only 2 per cent can name Governor-General

From *The Advertiser* (23/12/2003)

The Governor-General serves the Australian civic system as a neutral and independent umpire whose work of quiet excellence seeks no controversy. Consequently the work is often overlooked by the mainstream media. So South Australia's newspaper *The Advertiser* in 2003 ran a front page news feature reporting a finding that only 2% of people could name Australia's Governor-General. But as the media often omits to publish Vice-Regal news, it is responsible for the non-recognition of leaders such as Major General Michael Jeffery (who in 2003 became Australia's 24th Governor-General).

However, lack of awareness proves the success of a ministry that seeks no controversy. So when Governors-General receive their Prime Ministers and representatively exercise a Sovereign's privilege - *the right to be consulted, the right to encourage, the right to warn* (as described by Walter Bagehot in *The English Constitution*, 1867, p111) - such discussions are private.

Further, neutral independence relies upon a convention that appointing or removing the Governor-General requires the Prime Minister to advise the Sovereign - who under the Constitution (s2) appoints the Governor-General to serve *at pleasure* (but normally for five years) or removes the Governor-General. The method is indirectly democratic as prime ministers usually hold the support of the House of Representatives. But involving no public lobbying, media trial, or election, it promotes non-controversial Vice-Regal tenure.

Appointed neutrally to serve impartially, Governors-General are esteemed when encouraging good members of society. This is warranted biblically as governors are called *to commend those who do right* (I Peter 2:14). Esteem develops public confidence in the Governor-General's routine actions, but would also provide respect should use of the reserve powers be required.

1. In 2019 who became Australia's 27th Governor-General?



a. Sir Peter Cosgrove



b. General David Hurley



c. Mrs Quentin Bryce

2. On the advice of the Prime Minister of Australia, and under s2 of the Constitution, who appoints the Governor-General?

a. The Sovereign b. The Executive Council c. The High Court

3. The Governor-General usually appoints who as Prime Minister?

a. The previous Leader of the Opposition
b. The member of the House of Representatives who holds its support
c. The Leader of the Government in the Senate

4. Where does the Governor-General live, and hold meetings of the Federal Executive Council established by s62 of the Constitution?



a. Yarralumla
b. Old Parliament House
c. The Lodge

5. By convention, who holds a dormant commission granted by the Sovereign under the Constitution (s4) to administer the Commonwealth in the absence or incapacity of the Governor-General?



a. The President of the Senate
b. The Chief Justice of the High Court
c. The longest serving State Governor

6. Who is the Commander-in-Chief of the naval and military forces, under s68 of the Constitution?



a. The Sovereign b. The Governor-General c. The Prime Minister

7. Under s2 of the Constitution, the Governor-General is appointed to serve for how long?

   a. Until aged seventy
   b. During the Sovereign's pleasure
   c. For life



The emblem of the Governor-General

8. Who, under s7 of the Constitution, shall certify to the Governor-General who will serve as State Senators?

   a. Each State Governor
   b. The Governor-General's Official Secretary
   c. The Federal Electoral Commissioner

9. The Constitution (s42) requires federal parliamentarians to make an oath (or affirmation) of allegiance to whom?

   a. The people b. The Governor-General c. The Sovereign

10. When Prime Minister Joseph Lyons died in 1939 his party had no deputy (therefore he had no obvious successor holding the support of the House of Representatives) so the Governor-General decided to appoint which minority party leader as Prime Minister?



a. Ben Chifley



b. Earle Page



c. John Curtin

- Score analysis -

- Less than two correct - *you are certainly not politically correct*
- Three to five correct - *your civic awareness is above average*
- Six to seven correct - *start tutoring Australian studies*
- Eight or more correct - *you are ready for vice-regal service*

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The Constitutional responsibilities of the Governor-General

The Governor-General exercises *the executive power of the Commonwealth* (s61) representing the Sovereign, but applying independent *discretion* (s58). This is shaped by the Coronation Oath obligations inherited by Governors-General (and all who pledge allegiance to the Sovereign) to apply *Law and Justice, in Mercy*. Enabling MPs to pledge such allegiance (s42) Governors-General appoint, swear in, or remove Ministers from among MPs (s62, s64).

Advised (under the Constitution) by the Federal Executive Council (s62) including the Ministers (s64), Governors-General may form Departments of State (s64), issue House of Representatives election writs (s32), appoint and remove Executive Government officers (s67), High Court and other federal Justices (s72), and Inter-State Commission members (s103). Usually two key Ministers meet as the Federal Executive Council in the Governor-General's residence (Yarralumla) and there they present bills passed by Parliament.

Advised (under a convention) by the Prime Minister, Governors-General may summon and prorogue Parliament and dissolve the Lower House (s5), commend money votes (s56), dissolve both Houses (and hold a joint sitting) to resolve a deadlock (s57), command the naval and military forces (s68) and present to voters referendum proposals to modify the Constitution (s128).

Interacting with the State Governors, the Governor-General gains their certification as to who shall serve as State Senators (s7) - after the Governors issue Senate election writs (s12) or following a casual vacancy (s15). In the Governor-General's absence or incapacity, the Sovereign (under s4) would appoint the longest serving Governor to administer the Commonwealth.

Applying reserve powers in extraordinary cases, Governors-General may set aside a convention that they will appoint as Prime Minister the Member of the House of Representatives who holds its support. So without such support Earle Page was appointed as Prime Minister in 1939, as was Malcolm Fraser following the 1975 removal of Gough Whitlam. Governors-General may also decline to act upon advice and (under s58) not assent to a bill of Parliament.

Recognising Christian beliefs, Governors-General uphold a Constitution that acknowledges Almighty God, and oversee a Parliament that starts each sitting day with Christian prayer. Fittingly, Governor-General Michael Jeffery concluded his first speech to the Parliament (in 2003) with words that rarely have been spoken by Australian civic authorities: "God bless Australia".

Answers 1(b), 2(a), 3(b), 4(a), 5(c), 6(b), 7(b), 8(a), 9(c), 10(b)