

**Theme:** Australia - Quo Vadis?

**Text:** "Generally Speaking" by Paul Sheehan (extract)

**Source:** Sydney Morning Herald, June 28 2003 ([www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/06/27/1056683907117.html](http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/06/27/1056683907117.html))

Anyone who thinks Major-General Philip Michael (Mike) Jeffery, AC, MC, was appointed by the Prime Minister because he would salute the flag, offer dignified platitudes, and otherwise serve out an uneventful term is in for a surprise.

In a speech last December, he envisaged an Australia "that was not an automatic supporter of US foreign policy. We [should] become far more robust in expressing our views and be seen as an independent, non-threatening middle power." [...]

This is a man who, having turned 62, reached the rank of general, commanded the 15,000 soldiers of the First Division, and served for seven years as governor of Western Australia, could have concentrated on his passion for golf. Instead, he worried that Australian political thinking had become too short-term and decided to do something about it.

"Our long-term survival as a nation depends on how useful we are to our region and how useful we are perceived to be. The country badly needs an independent, high-quality, clearing house for ideas, an analytical institute that can look at the big issue in their totality."

So he set up what is now called Future Directions International, based in Perth, and helped raise the \$250,000 a year the institute needed. Before getting the job of Governor-General, Jeffery spoke about opportunities for the next appointee to go out and represent Australia in places where the country's interests needed bolstering. He nominated India, Papua New Guinea - a source of concern to him - and the most remote communities of Australia. [...]

This is a man who wants ethics and civics brought back as compulsory school courses, and who sees parallels between military service and the religious life, through the military's commitment to service over material comfort, to a life of separateness from the general community, and a willingness to make sacrifices in upholding a moral code.

The parallel is striking, given the resurgence in reverence for the Anzac tradition, and the renewed respect the armed forces command, in contrast to the harshness and cynicism which engulfed the first clergyman to be appointed governor-general, a man caught in the undertow of deep problems afflicting the major churches.

The Jeffery family certainly lived poor. "We had three children under two when I went to Vietnam. On one public service salary, we weren't able to afford a home."

Now John Howard has set another precedent, and appointed the first military man as governor-general (though several have already served successfully as state governors), reflecting his determination to choose people who have given their lives to service rather than nominate another judge or politician.

Jeffery is the son of a gold prospector and stockman who grew up on the outskirts of Perth and attended Kent Street High School. His wife of 36 years, Marlina, grew up in Manly and attended Narrabeen Girls High School. She met her future husband when she was an air hostess for Ansett-ANA. 484

**Annotations:** 1 AC – (medal) Companion of the Order of Australia; MC – (medal) Military Cross 12 clearing house - a central office for receiving and distributing information 19 civics - branch of political science that deals with the rights and duties of citizens 20 through .... to – from .... to 23 resurgence in reverence to .... Anzac tradition – increased public interest in ceremonies commemorating Australian and New Zealand soldiers killed in action 25 undertow – German: Sog, gefährliche Strömung 29 precedent – Germ. Präzedenzfall 34 Ansett-ANA – Austr. airline

**Assignments:**

1. Use the double meaning (play on words) of the headline: "Generally Speaking" as a starting point to sum up the new G-G's qualities. [Comprehension]
2. The old G-G is still present in this news report. How do these references reflect the need to find a new G-G? [Analysis/Interpretation of text]
3. Do you think John Howard has made a good choice for Australia? Give reasons. [Comment]