



The Prince of Wales kept up a busy schedule this week, hard on the heels of his appearance at the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow with wife Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall. Pictures: Getty and AFP

CHARLES IN CHARGE

As the Prince of Wales turns 73 tomorrow, royal watchers are preparing for him to change the office which comes another step closer, writes Kerry Parnell

None of us will live forever, the Queen said poignantly in her speech at the COP26 summit earlier this month. It came after ill-health forced the 95-year-old monarch to stay at home rather than travel to the event in Glasgow. And while it is unthinkable that the Queen's record-breaking reign will end, it is also an inevitability, which she acknowledged in her powerful address. "It is a source of great pride to me that the leading role my husband played in encouraging people to protect our fragile planet, lives on through the work of our eldest son Charles and his eldest son William. I could not be more proud of them," she said.

But Charles will have more than environmental campaigns to head soon, when the Prince of Wales finally takes the throne after his mother, something he has been preparing for his entire life.

It's a delayed coming-of-age but as Charles celebrates his 73rd birthday on Sunday he's the most prepared he has

ever been for the top job. But what can we expect from King Charles?

First, he might not even be Charles III. It isn't a given he will use his own name, although expected.

Custom dictates he is free to choose his royal title – in the past, rulers changed their names, including the Queen's father who went from Bertie (Albert) to King George VI. Prince Charles's full name is Charles Philip Arthur George, so he could even feasibly be King Arthur.

And what of his Camelot? It won't be an expansive court – Charles is vocal about his desire to slim down the monarchy, trim off "hangers-on" and only fund direct heirs.

It's not something that proved popular with Prince Harry and Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, who took umbrage at son Archie's lack of title and his grandfather's reluctance to fund them as part-time royals.

Harry and Meghan's exit has slightly scuppered Charles's plan, says CNN royal contributor Victoria Arbiter.

"He's going to have to rethink this idea a little bit," she says, as "it starts to

become a very small pool of people for a huge amount of work, so I think Charles is going to have to lean on Edward and Sophie for the foreseeable future."

Insiders say it was the Prince of Wales who insisted Prince Andrew step back from royal duties after his disastrous Newsnight interview about his friendship with convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

"Andrew's return as a working royal is unlikely," says Joe Little, managing editor of Majesty magazine.

With a reduced task force, the way the royals carry out engagements may also change, says Little.

"Virtual engagements by Zoom or similar may become a permanent and efficient feature of working royal life," he says.

Titles will change – Prince William will become the Prince of Wales and Duke of Cornwall and Camilla is expected to become Princess Consort – at the time of their 2005 wedding a palace statement said it is, "intended that the Duchess will be known as HRH The Princess Consort", although biographer Robert Jobson says she may still be Queen, as Charles "always intended her to become his queen consort," and "decided that before their wedding," he writes in *Charles At 70: Thoughts, Hopes And Dreams*.

In 2015, Charles confirmed he would keep the traditional title Defender of the Faith, while, "ensuring that other people's faiths can also be practised."

With a smaller monarchy, it's expected Charles will take a more collegiate approach to his reign than his mother did with him at a younger age. Charles and William have been

working closely together, providing a united front. Charles posted a picture on Instagram of him hugging William when he launched his Earthshot Prize last month, writing, "I am very proud of my son, William".

Environmental issues will continue to be a key part of Charles's reign.

He is expected to overhaul royal palaces, opening them to the public, including Buckingham Palace all year round, and reducing his living quarters to "a flat above the shop".

Other changes being considered include turning Balmoral into a museum to the Queen and moving William and Catherine to Windsor Castle.

Clearly, having strong views on the environment doesn't sit well with multiple vast homes and it was recently revealed Charles has dropped plans to build a Georgian-style mansion on his Harewood estate in Herefordshire.

He is aware the monarch is expected to remain impartial so some of his more outspoken views on topics such as architecture will be toned down.

"The idea somehow that I'm going to go on in exactly the same way, if I have to succeed, is complete nonsense," he previously told the BBC.

"I do realise that it is a separate exercise being sovereign."

As to his dominions – while the Queen dedicated her life to promoting the Commonwealth, it's thought when Charles takes the throne, many nations

will become republics, as citizens seize the opportunity for change.

Barbados is already removing the sovereign as head of state, saying, "The time has come to fully leave our colonial past behind," with Charles attending the ceremony on November 30.

Commentators believe it will have a domino effect within the remaining 15 nations which have the Queen as head of state, with Jamaica tipped to be next.

Will Australia be among them?

"When King Charles takes the throne, it will be a turning point for the monarchy, in Australia and abroad," says Sandy Biar, national director the Australian Republic Movement.

"We've seen a resurgence in support for a republic in Australia as the Queen's reign draws to an end. The most

recent Daily Telegraph poll found 62 per cent of Australians believe our head of state should be an Aussie."

Charles's reign will not be an overly-long one, meaning it's all the more important William works closely with his father throughout it.

"Charles is going to have a short amount of time so he's going to want to establish his own legacy," says Arbiter.

"But he's going to want to incorporate William because he recognises that the popularity lies on William's side."

What his legacy will be, we will find out.



The departure of Harry and Meghan has complicated Charles's plans.