

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION**

Tuesday, 9 June 2015

(Extract from book 8)

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FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

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¹ Resigned 2 February 2015

² Elected 14 March 2015

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

ALP — Labor Party; Greens — The Greens;
Ind — Independent; LP — Liberal Party; Nats — The Nationals.

Legislative Assembly committees

Privileges Committee — Ms Allan, Ms D’Ambrosio, Mr Morris, Mr Mulder, Ms Neville, Ms Ryan, Ms Sandell, Mr Scott and Mr Wells.

Standing Orders Committee— The Speaker, Ms Allan, Ms Asher, Mr Brooks, Mr Clark, Mr Hibbins, Mr Hodgett, Ms Kairouz, Mr Nardella, Ms Ryan and Ms Sheed.

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Accountability and Oversight Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Angus, Mr Gidley, Mr Staikos and Ms Thomson.
(*Council*): Ms Bath, Mr Purcell and Ms Symes.

Dispute Resolution Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Allan, Mr Clark, Mr Merlino, Mr M. O’Brien, Mr Pakula, Ms Richardson and Mr Walsh. (*Council*): Mr Bourman, Mr Dalidakis, Ms Dunn, Mr Jennings and Ms Wooldridge.

Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Crisp, Mrs Fyffe, Mr Perera and Ms Ryall.
(*Council*): Mr Elasmr, Mr Melhem and Mr Purcell.

Electoral Matters Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Asher, Ms Blandthorn, Mr Dixon, Mr Northe and Ms Spence.
(*Council*): Mr Dalidakis and Ms Patten.

Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Halfpenny, Mr McCurdy, Mr Richardson, Mr Tilley and Ms Ward. (*Council*): Mr Ramsay and Mr Young.

Family and Community Development Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Couzens, Mr Edbrooke, Ms Edwards, Ms Kealy, Ms McLeish and Ms Sheed. (*Council*): Mr Finn.

House Committee — (*Assembly*): The Speaker (*ex officio*), Mr J. Bull, Mr Crisp, Mrs Fyffe, Mr Staikos, Ms Suleyman and Mr Thompson. (*Council*): The President (*ex officio*), Mr Eideh, Ms Hartland, Ms Lovell, Mr Mulino and Mr Young.

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Hibbins, Mr D. O’Brien, Mr Richardson, Ms Thomson, and Mr Wells. (*Council*): Mr Ramsay and Ms Symes.

Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Dixon, Mr Howard, Ms Suleyman, Mr Thompson and Mr Tilley. (*Council*): Mr Eideh and Ms Patten.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Dimopoulos, Mr Morris, Mr D. O’Brien, Mr Pearson, Mr T. Smith and Ms Ward. (*Council*): Dr Carling-Jenkins, Ms Pennicuik and Ms Shing.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr J. Bull, Ms Blandthorn, Mr Dimopoulos, Ms Kealy, Ms Kilkenny and Mr Pesutto. (*Council*): Mr Dalla-Riva.

CONTENTS

TUESDAY, 9 JUNE 2015

CONDOLENCES

Hon. Joan Elizabeth Kirner, AC.....1773, 1776

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS..... 1776

Tuesday, 9 June 2015

The SPEAKER (Hon. Telmo Languiller) took the chair at 12.04 p.m. and read the prayer.

CONDOLENCES

Hon. Joan Elizabeth Kirner, AC

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I move:

That this house expresses its sincere sorrow at the death of the Honourable Joan Elizabeth Kirner, AC, and places on the record its acknowledgement of the valuable services rendered by her to the Parliament and the people of Victoria as member of the Legislative Council for the electoral province of Melbourne West from 1982 to 1988, member of the Legislative Assembly for the electoral district of Williamstown from 1988 to 1994, Deputy Premier from 1989 to 1990, Premier from 1990 to 1992, Minister for Women's Affairs from 1990 to 1992, Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands from 1985 to 1988, Minister for Education from 1988 to 1990 and Minister for Ethnic Affairs from 1990 to 1991.

Joan Elizabeth Kirner said:

I am enough of a history teacher to know that you do not determine what you are remembered for ...

With these words she ended her career in this place. When she announced her resignation from parliamentary life she was standing in the great hall at her old high school in Parkville. It was there, Joan said, in that very room in the 1950s, where she first realised that a working-class girl could get a good education and attend university, and just one day earlier it was in that room that the Labor Party had met to debate and proudly endorse the country's first affirmative action targets for women entering Parliament. This was the room where her dreams began, and this was the change that her influence brought.

Perhaps people cannot determine what they are remembered for. They certainly cannot choose their time or their place — and Joan never did. But people can choose to see, to feel and to act. They can choose to speak up, they can choose to serve. They can choose to fight things hard and to make things right. Our actions determine how we are remembered. That is why we remember Joan Kirner as a mother who fought for students, a woman who fought for change and a leader who fought for fairness every single day of her life.

It was not the type of fight to which politics was typically accustomed. Hers was a ferocity of consensus, of calm and considered intelligence. She was the one who listened and who learnt as much as she taught, a leader who knew that change takes time — takes years, not months — who devoted decades of meticulous

service to ideas and movements that would ultimately change a state, change a system and change the lives of a generation of Victorians.

She never sought public life; it sought her, one morning in the 1960s inside a Croydon kindergarten classroom. Appalled at the sight of one teacher looking after more than 50 children, she lobbied the then Department of Education until it relented. Several years later she was elected president of the peak body for Victorian parents and later president of Australian school councils. Gough Whitlam always cited as his greatest achievement the establishment of the Australian Schools Commission. Joan was appointed to that too. She travelled the nation, inspecting crumbling classrooms and securing funds for their repair.

She joined the Labor Party and within three years entered the Parliament. As Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, she worked with the Victorian Farmers Federation to found the first Landcare groups. Today there are 4000 of them across Australia and more overseas.

As Minister for Education she tasked herself with accomplishing one of the most comprehensive and complicated reforms of the modern era. Her vision was for a fair, modern and uniform way to measure the worth and the work of every Victorian student. Her task was to replace a disjointed and discriminating regime of school assessments, and her challenge was to manage an educational establishment that was profoundly resistant to change. It took years.

But last Tuesday I was able to congratulate the highest achievers in one of the world's most highly regarded qualifications — some 279 students from both public and private schools — and I was proud and humbled when they all joined me to thank and applaud the late Joan Kirner for implementing the Victorian certificate of education. It took years, but it was just one of the things Joan did as minister and Premier to make our education system strong and fair, and to build a system that reflected the virtues and the values of every Victorian.

We cannot forget either what she described as her most satisfying moment in a long life of public service: 'Getting kids with disabilities into normal schools'. Education is the common thread that joined together the pieces of her life, and without it you cannot even begin to tell the story of the working-class girl who, with a formal education, found her liberation.

The circumstances of Joan Kirner becoming the Premier of this state are well known, and they were not

envied. To her great frustration she was hostage to her time, and it was a difficult one, but she showed us how to lead with dignity. Of her achievements in office, one is not spoken about nearly often enough, and I quote from the *Herald Sun*:

Kirner is justly proud of the efforts of her government in its campaign against family violence.

She believes there is a need for police, magistrates and judges to receive special training to treat family violence as one of the most serious crimes.

This was in 1992.

Of course one element of her premiership received the most attention. Shaun Carney wrote:

Few of us ever actually see real changes in public life ... When Joan Kirner became Victoria's Premier ... you could see the change, feel it, almost taste it — instantly.

Joan will always be celebrated as our first female Premier. I think a lot of us remember precisely where we were when it happened. Victorians were proud. But I think a lot of us remember precisely the type of prejudice it unearthed in some quarters. We should not repeat it, but we should always recall it. To leave it out of her story is to lessen the significance of her struggle. In Joan's own words:

I met a Greek woman who said, 'I know you will have a tough time, but if you suffer, my daughter will not have to suffer'.

No-one is born a politician, but Joan Kirner was born a leader. She was born strong and stoic, and should we each have had an ounce of her endurance and her resolve, we all would have achieved more.

Joan's parliamentary career ended in May 1994, but her dedication to our movement did not waver. Indeed I think everyone saw a lot more of her every year that passed. She was the party's great companion on its path of renewal and reform. She taught us that the labour movement has no business seeking the mandate of a modern state if we promote only half of its population. Today Victoria is home to the most diverse cabinet in the country and more women MPs than ever before.

Joan did more, much more, than mentor and inspire many of the women in this place. She helped to raise them. She nurtured their political lives. She involved herself — rightly, powerfully and methodically — in the mechanics of this party to give women a fair say and a fair go. Many became MPs, many became ministers and one became Prime Minister. We cannot forget the many more in business, law, the arts, education and of course the public service. We cannot count the number of paths that Joan Kirner lit for

generations of Victorian women. But we can be sure of one thing: she was our first female Premier and because of her work she will not be the last.

In close consultation with her family, we should and will find a meaningful way to formally and permanently recognise her contribution to our state and its people. On behalf of the Victorian government and the Victorian Labor Party, I send my condolences to Ron, their three children and their grandchildren. Condolences also to Joan's friends and former colleagues and to her many, many fans, young and old, including the three-year-olds and four-year-olds at Robina Scott Kindergarten in Joan's beloved Williamstown. Hanging on its fence last Friday was a hand-painted banner which said, 'Joan, thank you for your passion and dedication to our education'. It was a lovely gesture from some thoughtful teachers for Joan at a kinder, and kinder is where it all began.

We are going to miss our great friend. We are going to miss this proud and dignified woman who, even in the grip of pain and illness, smiled so often and meant it. Joan loved to give. We are going to miss this person who gave so much of herself and so much of her time to all of us. Joan, you taught us all a lesson about dignity and you showed us where to find the better parts of ourselves. Joan, we love you, we thank you, and we will miss you.

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — I rise on behalf of the Liberal and Nationals coalition to pay my respects to Joan Elizabeth Kirner: wife, parent, grandparent, activist, mentor, politician and Premier.

There is no doubt that Joan Kirner is Victoria's most successful female politician. Not before or since has our state had the leadership reins held by a woman, and she will not be the last. Although throughout her life Mrs Kirner offered so much more than that often referred to phrase 'our first female Premier', from the perspective of most Victorians, that is the achievement that history will no doubt remember and, with due credit, will recognise her by.

Joan Hood was born on 20 June 1938 to her music teacher mother, Beryl, and fitter and turner father, Keith, in Essendon. She was educated first at Aberfeldie State School, then at Penleigh Presbyterian Ladies College and finally at the selective entry University High School. At her funeral it was fascinating to hear the drive Mrs Kirner's mother, Beryl, had to take her only child across town to meet the principal of University High in order to have her daughter enrolled there and have her talents recognised.

No doubt that drive of her mother's was a personality trait that the then young Joan absorbed and learnt from.

Joan Kirner was enrolled at the University of Melbourne at just 16, from which she graduated with a bachelor of arts and a diploma of education. She began and finished her teaching career in Ballarat, starting at Ballarat Girls' Technical School in 1958. It was around this time she met Ron Kirner, whom she eventually wed. There is no doubt that Ron was a great rock in Joan Kirner's life. Like so many partners of politicians, he was a driving force and worked as a team with Joan for the career that eventually came.

Joan and Ron had three children: Michael, Kate and David. They had four grandchildren: Ned, Sam, Xanthe and Joachim. It is too often too easy to forget that politicians are real people with real families. There is no doubt that Joan's family loved and admired their mother and grandmother for the work she did and for her dedication to the causes that drove her throughout her life.

It appears clear that through parenting Joan found politics. She became active in school and parent lobby groups, which culminated in her becoming president of the Victorian Federation of State Schools Parents Club in 1971, the parent representative of the Whitlam government's Australian Schools Commission in 1973 and president of the Australian Council of State School Organisations in 1975.

After becoming active in Labor politics she was preselected and then elected to Parliament, first to the upper house in 1982, as a member for Melbourne West Province, where her political progression was swift. She became the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands in the Cain government in 1985, and through her association with the Victorian Farmers Federation, Landcare was formed. That organisation has now grown to 4000 groups across the country. From my time at the Victorian Farmers Federation I can attest to this house the respect that Victorian farming groups have for the establishment of Landcare and Joan Kirner's involvement in it. Joan recognised that farming communities could be our greatest conservationists, and they have longstanding respect for her drive to see Landcare grow.

In 1988 Joan Kirner did what many upper house MPs who aspire to greater office do: she transferred to this chamber. She was elected comfortably as the member for Williamstown, and in this place she took on the ministry of education and then, in 1989, became Deputy Premier. As we all know, events in politics can move quickly, and in August 1990, not more than two

years after entering this chamber, Joan Elizabeth Kirner became Premier of Victoria.

In looking at her political career from this side of the house it will be hard to reflect on Mrs Kirner in the way that many opposite do. Most of us never knew her personally, we did not benefit from her activism and obviously we share different local colours. Many of us on this side of the house have different memories of the period of government from 1982 to 1992, and while we would never doubt that the intentions were positive, our state faced its greatest challenges as a result of many of the political failings of that time. But it is well recognised that Mrs Kirner was a mentor, and clearly one of the best going around, for Labor politics. Many Labor politicians sit in this place as the beneficiaries of the work and the structures she was instrumental in driving. On this side of the house we recognise the strong impact that EMILY's List has had in bringing Labor women to this and other parliaments. It has grown to become an influential organisation in the Labor movement, and Joan Kirner was one of the driving forces behind it. For the work Joan Kirner did and because she was such a strong mentor and symbol of strength for women, she deserves to be well recognised and very highly acknowledged.

As we know, politics is polarising. The Cain-Kirner era also propelled a number of people on this side of the house into politics, myself included. I am the first leader of the Victorian Liberal Party partly framed by the Cain-Kirner era, because I was one of the students who took part in the first year of the initial Victorian certificate of education trials in the state secondary school system.

I had just a few personal interactions with Mrs Kirner, and there is one I would like to tell this house about. I believe, politics aside and partisanship excluded, it tells a story of the kind of person so many knew Joan Kirner as. On being elected to the Legislative Council in 2006 as a member for Northern Metropolitan Region, I headed to my first Australia Day ceremony. It was at the Northcote town hall. I am sure that it is fair to say to this chamber that being a Liberal MP in Northcote at an official event at the town hall does not usually mean people rush to you wanting your time. There were two long rows of seats in the room. There was an aisle in the middle, and on one side of the front row sat all the Labor MPs, some newly minted ones like me. There were all the Labor councillors as well. Joan Kirner was the guest speaker for the day.

On the other side sat a very lonely Liberal upper house MP. After my speech and the other speeches had concluded, the first person in the room to come over

and introduce herself — as if she needed an introduction — was Joan Kirner. She gave feedback and was constructive and polite, and as she left she said to me, ‘Just because you are the only one, don’t let that be a reason not to come back’.

As I said at the start of my speech, most of us on my side never knew Joan Kirner personally. We did not benefit from her activism and obviously shared different political colours. But there is always a time for decency and grace, and there is always a time in politics to be genuine. I saw that in Joan Kirner that Australia Day. Every time I saw her after that she would have a brief chat. It is a story I have told to many on my side over the years, and not surprisingly others have similar stories about Joan Kirner.

In paying my respects to her family, to her many, many friends and to the many more who clearly admired, loved and respected her, I say that if we could all learn one thing from Joan Kirner, it would be to adopt the dignity and integrity by which she clearly lived and which she displayed in her actions, for that I believe would be an even greater legacy than the trailblazing one of being our first female Premier. Rest in peace, Joan Kirner.

Debate interrupted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER — Order! Before calling on the Deputy Premier I wish to acknowledge in the gallery a former Speaker of this house, Judy Maddigan; Ron Wells, a former MLA for Dromana and MLC for Eumemmerring; and a former member for Mordialloc, Janice Munt.

CONDOLENCES

Hon. Joan Elizabeth Kirner, AC

Debate resumed.

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — It is with a tremendous sense of honour that I rise to speak on today’s condolence motion. The Honourable Joan Elizabeth Kirner took her place in this house as a Premier, a Deputy Premier and a minister, but her contribution to our state goes well beyond her time here. Hers was a lifetime of exceptional public service.

There will be many speakers in this debate today because Joan was much loved and respected for many things, among them her immense role in supporting women in the Labor Party and into Parliaments across the nation through her leadership and mentorship with

EMILY’s List, her support for Indigenous communities and her achievements as Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands. But in my contribution I would like to focus on Joan’s passion from the very beginning: education.

As the Premier mentioned in his beautiful contribution, there was a lovely picture circulating on social media on the day of Joan’s state funeral. It was a handwritten sign on a kindergarten. That picture sums up Joan as eloquently as anything I can say today: ‘Joan, thank you for your passion and dedication to our education’. At Joan’s state funeral on Friday, we were privileged to hear many recollections and personal memories from family, friends and colleagues, all of whom recalled Joan’s fierce commitment to challenging and breaking down inequality and unfairness. We were also privileged to share in farewelling Joan with her devoted family, and it is with great respect and compassion today that I speak of and remember a devoted wife, mother and grandmother.

As a young woman, Joan’s first choice was education. After graduating from the University of Melbourne in 1958, she started her teaching career at Ballarat Girls Technical College. However, Joan’s teaching career was short lived after discriminatory policies at the time forced her to resign from teaching when she married her husband, Ron. Rejecting the notion that her ability as a teacher was reduced by her role as a wife and mother, Joan commenced a long public career to fight for fairness, particularly in education. Joan became president of her local school’s mothers club and eventually became president of the Victorian Federation of State Schools Parents Clubs in 1971. This organisation, now known as Parents Victoria, played and continues to play a pivotal role in representing parents and children, building relationships and advocating to all levels of government about the educational rights and needs of children and families across Victoria.

Even after entering politics, Joan maintained her connection with Parents Victoria. I am honoured today to share the recollections of Parents Victoria’s current executive officer, Gail McHardy — who herself has known Joan since Gail was a baby — as a testament to the powerfully positive influence Joan has had on so many. Gail says:

Joan introduced me to the children disability sector at the age of 17. I was asked to look after some children while their parents were debating at a meeting in another room, chaired by Joan, about mainstream student inclusion.

I believe my role as an advocate later in life was due to overhearing those debates at that meeting, although I had no

idea I would follow in Joan Kimer's footsteps and become the president of Parents Victoria.

I will continue to advocate for the rights of students and families in the education system and most importantly for the power of partnership between parents and schools. Vale, Joan Kimer. She has touched us all but dear to me in particular as that other mother I could call my own.

We heard Hutch Hussein say beautifully last Friday how Joan was her other mother. How many people did Joan touch in this deeply special way?

In 1988 Joan was appointed as Minister for Education. As we all know, she used that position to improve and reform the education system that she had earlier worked in as a teacher. Joan implemented one of the biggest reforms of the era: the introduction of the Victorian certificate of education (VCE). Before the VCE, Victorian children undertook different tests, leading to varying degrees of fairness in educational opportunity. The VCE standardised the curriculum and made every school fairer. It opened up opportunities for thousands of kids who otherwise may never have finished school or gone on to further study. Today the VCE is recognised as a world-class secondary education certificate and helps cement Victoria's reputation in education. The introduction of the VCE encountered a great deal of opposition at the time. I am told that Joan's legendary zeal was at full strength as she fought for something she not only believed in personally but knew was beneficial for all Victorians.

As well as the significant introduction of the VCE, Joan herself recognised her proudest achievements as the disadvantaged schools program, introducing the opportunity for parents and children with disabilities to choose whether they went to a regular school or to a special school and introducing gender equity in schools and the education department. These are but a few examples of how Joan made practical and lasting improvements to people's lives through education.

In 1990 Joan became the Premier of Victoria, the first woman to serve in this role. Joan had to make some tough decisions as Premier, yet throughout it all she was unwavering in her commitment to make Victoria a fairer place where people had more opportunities and felt empowered to be active in public life. She went about being Premier with decency, grace and amazing strength of character, epitomising leadership and inspiration to those she met and worked with.

Personally, I have fond memories of Joan, too numerous to share today. As a student interested in politics I remember thinking how tough and brave Joan was during her time as Premier. I am sure that I am not the only one in this place who has been guided by her

example during adversity. I remember co-hosting a special Labor dinner, alongside the Minister for Health, to celebrate Labor's four former premiers. On the stage were John Cain, Joan Kimer, Steve Bracks, John Brumby and the then opposition leader. We heard wisdom and wit from all of them, and I remember thinking, 'We will never see that again'.

A really proud moment came last year at Labor's campaign launch. Our Premier, then opposition leader, had spent the vast bulk of his speech outlining Labor's education policy. As the crowd was leaving the hall, I cannot tell you how happy and relieved I was, as shadow Minister for Education, when our policy received Joan's seal of approval. Everyone on this side of the house who has had that portfolio responsibility in the last three decades will know what I am talking about.

But my favourite memory of Joan is from years earlier, when I first came into this place. I cannot recall exactly what the function was, but I distinctly remember the conversation. I sent a polite hello to Joan, not expecting anything more in return because I did not know her well at that time. I did not expect Joan to take an interest in the likes of me, but she did. She looked me in the eye — and when Joan wanted your attention, you paid attention; and I distinctly remember this — and she said, 'James, never forget where you have come from'. I have never forgotten that advice, and I have always tried to live by it. 'Never forget where you have come from'; do not forget your roots; and remember why you are here. That is what Joan was telling me, and that is what Joan tells all of us in the Labor Party.

This is how Joan lived her life. It is what Joan would expect from those of us who hold the political baton now. Joan's impact, her legacy, is this reminder of why we are here. We are here for the parent who is desperately protecting the interests and rights of their child. We are here for the child whose potential should never be allowed to be stymied by poverty or disability. We are here for our Indigenous community and to ensure that the uniqueness of our local Aboriginal cultures is reflected in our places of learning. We are here for the professions of teachers, principals and support staff so they are equipped to build upon our vibrant and diverse education system and ensure the success of students and Victoria's prosperity in the years ahead. That is Joan's legacy.

I offer my sincere condolences and those of the Department of Education and Training to Joan's husband, Ron, Joan's family and her friends. We have lost a tireless campaigner for fairness and equality, and

we pay our respects and give thanks to Joan and her family for all that she has taught us.

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) — I also join the condolence motion for Joan Kirner. A lot has been said about her career, and a lot more will be said before this condolence motion has concluded, but the thing I find intriguing in Joan's biography is that her occupation is listed as 'parent activist'. I think it says a lot about the person that it was not necessarily the highest office she held in the land that she included in her biography but rather what she felt she really was. At Joan's state funeral I listened in particular to Jenny Beacham's contribution. When we stand up to speak on condolence motions, we quite often look at people's lives and read out their history based on our current view of history and the paradigm we live in now, but when you go back to when Joan started her career and moved up through politics in Victoria, it was a very different place, and she faced a lot of challenges.

My take from the contributions of many at the state funeral was that Joan Kirner achieved a lot of things by empowering others. It was not just about her, it was about how she empowered others through a team effort, whether it was that first round of meetings at the kindergarten, her role in schooling in the Williamstown community or moving on into politics. It was about how she empowered other people to be part of the contribution and then how they gave her the strength and power to do more things than she would have been able to do in her own right. No matter what side of politics you sit on in Victoria, we would all say that Joan Kirner made a real difference through her contribution.

I want to spend some time speaking about her period as the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands between 1985 and 1988. It was good to go back and read her valedictory speech when she was leaving Parliament. She talked about when she was first given the portfolio and the challenges around land degradation and salinity at the time. She said:

... we were calling out a few experts to help farmers, who were not experts according to the experts, to manage that issue. The farmers wondered what the hell had struck them when I became minister and wondered what they were going to do with this socialist left feminist.

I was farming then, and I do remember that time, but what is also interesting is that she went on to say:

We worked out that the way to do it was on a catchment basis with farmers as the experts, to give them the expertise to assist them to plan, change and own that change. We changed the rules and the bureaucracy, and we changed the minds of the people on the ground.

I think that says a lot about her style again and the fact that it was about being inclusive and people understanding why the change was needed and what the outcomes would be. Any of us who have the opportunity to serve as a minister in that portfolio need to bear in mind that quite often the bureaucracy needs to be reminded of that change and the fact that it is actually the people on the ground who can make the greatest difference if they are given the advice and the expertise to do that and not lectured to by those who may want to tell them how to do things into the future. That whole-of-catchment process that Joan started as minister is still in place, and I think it is very important that we keep it, particularly the issue of the interdependence between the upstream and the downstream. People are very quick to blame someone else for their woes, but there is that interdependence.

Some of the other reading I did referred to the fact that at the time quite a few farmer groups were lobbying Joan as minister, saying, 'If we can just build a drain and put our salinity water in the Murray River and send it further down, that will solve our problem'. It actually creates a greater problem for those further downstream, so that whole-of-catchment approach remains valid now. That is not to say that before Joan's time as minister things were not done to improve farming methods and soil conservation. The Soil Conservation Authority did a lot of good work before that time, but I think it was that process of inclusiveness that changed the way things were done and had a new way of looking at things. Instead of blaming people for previous decisions it was a matter of saying, 'This is what we have at this time; we need to do something about it into the future'.

It was also interesting to read a case study of Landcare by Joan Kirner. In it she said:

I also knew, from my parent club days and visits to country areas, that it is the farming women and men who were the real stewards of the land, and if we didn't involve them in decisions about improving the land, nothing would work.

That again points to the issue of inclusiveness. At that time Victoria had just come through the 1983 drought, which some members will remember. Some might also remember seeing the photo of a huge dust storm that enveloped Melbourne at that time. I do not think a lot of people in Melbourne realised there was a drought until that dust storm hit. Thanks to the work begun by Joan and Heather Mitchell for Landcare, during the more recent drought — which was longer in duration than the 1983 drought — effectively there were no dust storms because people were farming in a very different way. That is a credit to the process used at the time and also to the farmers.

In starting Landcare, Joan used her skills to create partnerships. Joan and Heather Mitchell, who was the president of the Victorian Farmers Federation at that time, co-chaired the development of Landcare in Victoria. The first Landcare group was developed on Terry Simpson's property at Winjallok. For those people who do not know where Winjallok is, it is just south-west of St Arnaud, which is now in the seat of Ripon. At that time, it was not about planting trees; it was about controlling rabbits and deep-rooted perennials on a denuded hill in that area. The concept of planting trees was something that came later.

However, success has many parents. The work that Joan and Heather Mitchell started with Landcare in Victoria was then adopted from a national perspective by Rick Farley, then CEO of the National Farmers Federation, and Philip Toyne, then CEO of the Australian Conservation Foundation. If you read the history of Landcare, you might believe that it was Rick and Philip who were the ones who developed Landcare on a national scale, and they probably did from a national perspective, but I do not think enough credit has been accorded outside Victoria to Joan and Heather Mitchell for the work they did.

Obviously as things grow to be successful, other people adopt them. Bob Hawke, the then Prime Minister — someone who was always good at backing a winner — made sure we had a decade of Landcare, putting something like \$350 million into it. What started as Joan's idea of taking her community activism to the Landcare movement went on to be adopted by the then Prime Minister and receive substantial funding from the federal government. Next year we will celebrate the 30th anniversary of Landcare. As others have said — and no doubt others will go on to say as we continue this condolence motion — Landcare continues to go from strength to strength. But it is always important to remember where it started, particularly the concept that built it, and not lose sight of that as we move into the future.

Another thing Joan did as a minister at that time was to start the Rural Women's Network, which gave advice both to her as minister and to government. It included women in the decision-making of government. That network is still going. That has been a great concept through the ages. Those members who attend the Rural Women's Awards every year might know that they grew out of the Rural Women's Network. This network has empowered a lot of women to get involved not necessarily just in mainstream politics but also in community and agricultural decision-making in this state.

To Joan's husband, Ron, her children, her grandchildren and her many friends — as was identified by the many people who were at the Williamstown town hall, the school and in the annex for Joan's state funeral — I offer my condolences on behalf of the coalition. I finish by saying: Joan Kirner's life made an absolute contribution to Victoria. Vale, Joan Kirner.

Mr NOONAN (Minister for Police) — It is with a heavy heart that I join this condolence motion in honour of my friend Joan Kirner.

In 2007 when I was in a three-way contest to become Labor's candidate to replace Steve Bracks in the seat of Williamstown, I took a call from the great Joan Kirner. Up until that point I had never spoken to Joan, so my first thought was, 'Oh' — I probably cannot use this word in Parliament, so I will not, but it sounds like 'sit'! — 'It's Joan Kirner. Stay calm'. Up until that point Joan to me was as close as you could get to royalty, a person whose legend had grown by the year. So the phone call went something like this: 'Hello, Wade, it's Joan Kirner here'. After an awkward second of silence I tried to confidently respond with, 'Hello, Joan, how are you?', like we were long lost friends. Joan's response was, 'I am ringing to let you know that I'm voting for Rondah and not you'. It was followed by, 'You'd expect me to vote for a woman'. Again, after an awkward pause from me, my response was, 'Yes, I thought you might vote for Rondah', as I suddenly felt overwhelmed and deflated at the same time.

But it was Joan's next question that has stayed with me, for Joan asked me what my views were about respecting a woman's right to make choices about their own health, and the forthcoming debate in the Parliament to reform the state's abortion laws. When I responded positively to Joan's question, I think it is fair to say that our relationship was cemented. It was in that moment, and through that conversation, that I realised how critical it would be for men to speak up and take a stand on issues of equality and fairness for women. I have never forgotten that lesson. Joan was a great teacher.

Joan was also a woman of firsts. She was the first — and so far only — woman to become Premier of this state. Many Victorians have praised her compassion and strength. They have praised her intelligence and the hard work she did to make a fairer Victoria. She deserves all these accolades and more. But to us, the people of Williamstown and the west, she was also our favourite daughter. She was the first woman to represent us in the seat of Williamstown for six years

between 1988 and 1994. This came after her time representing Melbourne West Province in the upper house between 1982 and 1988. Joan chased hard after the things that mattered, whether she was in the parents group or in the Premier's office. She used her public life for a purpose, to make a change for the better. She knew the power of a good education, and devoted much of her life to social justice and gender inequality.

Joan inherited a perfect political storm when she became Premier in 1990. But she pushed on, and in doing so she revealed herself to be a leader prepared to take on the toughest of jobs. She never once had an armchair ride. She leaves us a clear political legacy — the nine highly capable women in the Andrews Labor government cabinet. She inspired people to follow her, and then to follow their own dreams. But her legacy continues in her former seat of Williamstown as well. After her bruising time as Premier was over and for the short time she was opposition leader, she led a community campaign to save the Williamstown railway line. She used her considerable influence to rally the locals. She took the fight straight back here to Spring Street where she prevailed. Put simply, the line would not be here if it was not for Joan Kirner.

Joan was also instrumental in the establishment of Scienceworks and Victoria University, two wonderful learning institutions in Melbourne's west. After she left Spring Street politics — because she never left politics altogether — she worked tirelessly to save the Yarraville Community Centre on Francis Street. She used her exceptional talent for persuasion to win substantial funds from local, state and federal governments to help keep this magnificent building in public hands, and importantly in public use. In more recent times I was able to work closely with Joan and Shelley Penn to prepare a planning submission opposing the overdevelopment of an old industrial site in the south Williamstown area, which the Leader of the Opposition would be familiar with. As Joan put it, Williamstown deserved a development that enhanced our community, and she was right.

Beyond politics, Joan was warm and engaging. She understood people and knew how to draw the best out of them. Joan always greeted people by name, listened to their stories and was generous with her time. She never had to work a room or network, because people simply lined up to speak to her.

My strongest memories of Joan are like polaroids in my head: a series of moments captured over the years. At events I attended with Joan countless women approached her, often with their daughters in tow, to tell her about the enormous influence she had had on their

lives. She was always gracious and humble. That kind of legacy beats a statue any day.

Joan had a lighter side too. She had a cheeky sense of humour. I recall that during last year's state election my campaign team erected one of my head-shot signs on a garden stake in Joan and Ron's front yard. The sign was hammered into the ground gun-barrel straight. A number of days later whilst passing Joan and Ron's place I noticed that the sign had been heavily tilted to the left. I thought that was odd. When a visiting journalist suggested to Joan that she may have given the sign a nudge to the left, she smiled and said, 'I think the wind did it'. After the election Joan did finally confess to her crime, at which point I reminded her that I was the new Minister for Corrections. Again she smiled.

Our friendship had come a long way since that first phone call. Joan was a tremendous supporter and an inspiration to me. I am extremely fortunate to have known Joan Kirner and will miss her dearly. I too offer my deep condolences to Joan's husband, Ron — a great supporter — to their children, Michael, Kate and David, and to the rest of the Kirner family. May she rest in peace.

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) — I am honoured to make a few short remarks on behalf of the Victorian Greens to thank Joan Kirner for her work within the political arena and outside of it and to send our condolences to her family, friends and colleagues.

I only had the pleasure of meeting Joan Kirner once, which was at Evan Walker's funeral earlier this year. I got up the courage to introduce myself to her and she quickly replied, 'I know who you are'. It was perhaps one of the biggest compliments I received in my first six months in Parliament that Joan Kirner — so respected as she was — would know who I was. But hopefully it is not too surprising. I would like to think that her support for women in Parliament extended across party lines and that she would have been pleased to see women — especially pro-choice women — in the Greens and in other parties as well as in her own party elected to Parliament.

Of course, even though I only met her once, I know her work and legacy extremely well. As a woman in politics, it has had a positive influence on me personally. There are a few things in particular I and the Greens would like to thank Joan Kirner for. Thanks, Joan, for standing up for public education. Thank you for being a strong community activist and for making a lasting contribution to our society even after you left politics, which shows that we all have a responsibility to stand up when we see an injustice, no matter whether

we are in a position of power or not. I would like to thank you for your stoicism, wit and humour under tough circumstances in politics, especially when you were often treated badly by others. It inspires those of us to continue on when we too face tough circumstances. Thanks for being a feminist and for calling out sexism where you saw it. Thanks for fighting for abortion law reform and for your tireless advocacy for a woman's right to choose what happens to her own body.

And of course we would like to thank Joan for the legacy she left as the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Land. We thank her for the Errinundra and Coopracambra national parks in East Gippsland, for expanding the Snowy River and Little Desert national parks and for fighting for the Alpine National Park, where I spent so much of my childhood, and for introducing the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988, which was groundbreaking for its time. While it has not always been well resourced and enforced, the legislation has been an important tool in the environmentalists' armoury in the battle to save Victoria's natural heritage. And of course we thank her for introducing Landcare; its successes endure today across not just Victoria but the whole country. What an incredible legacy to leave. I hope this new government and future governments take inspiration from Joan's environmental work in their work over the next few years and give thanks for the best ever rendition of Joan Jett's *I Love Rock'n'Roll* and her ability to laugh at herself.

The Victorian public and I did not agree with everything Joan did during her time in Parliament. Some have criticised her for the introduction of poker machines into Victoria, but I notice that she later regretted that decision and called for tighter controls on pokies. It takes courage to admit failure. Let us hope current and future governments can heed her word and learn from her mistakes.

Since Joan Kirner's death, many people have come out of the woodwork to share their stories about how she touched them personally. My mum told me about an incident when Joan Kirner came to visit for an event in Mildura. She worked the room before her speech, and when she did get up to speak she was able to remember the names and stories of almost every single person in that room. Her community engagement and commitment to participation were remarkable, and that is what so many people remember about Joan: a warm, engaging, fiercely intelligent and bold woman who truly valued and remembered those with whom she came into contact, no matter where they were from or who they were.

I am personally indebted to Joan for paving the way for future female leaders and showing our state a new way of doing politics. I end with my favourite quote from Joan Kirner, which has been doing the rounds on social media. It resonates deeply with me and my reasons for going into politics. Joan said:

There is no such thing as being non-political. Just by making a decision to stay out of politics you are making the decision to allow others to shape politics and exert power over you. And if you are alienated from the current political system, then just by staying out of it you do nothing to change it, you simply entrench it.

Thanks for attempting to change it, Joan, and for supporting and inspiring those of us who have also made the decision to go into politics. My sincere condolences to Joan's family, friends and colleagues.

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) — A couple of weeks ago I received an email from Joan, and it said, 'Please give me a call re health'. I thought, 'Bloody hell — what have I done now? What is she going to push me about now?'. But of course it was the awful news that Joan's cancer had returned. While we were most hopeful that she would be with us for a much longer period of time, when news of her death hit us there was a very strong collective reaction of grief, both public and private. I was reminded of the poem by W. H. Auden:

Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone ...

I know people would be most familiar with that poem through the film *Four Weddings and a Funeral* rather than any grand study of literature, but I think what it represents is a sense of confronting the reality of what life without Joan is going to be. She has been not just an indelible part of the history of people in the Labor Party, particularly women in the Labor Party, but also the Princess of the West for all those community organisations that she empowered and those individuals to whom she lent a sense of dignity.

Joan genuinely saw each and every single person she engaged with as her equal, so news of her death was a very confronting, compelling and sad occurrence for us all. It has been truly delightful to hear all the wonderful stories over the past week about both her public life and her private life, how phenomenal she was and what a force of nature she was, whether that was as a student, a mum, a partner or a grandparent — and certainly as an activist.

I am always delighted to remember in particular that, when fighting for the rights of children to a decent education, she stood before a crowded room and said, 'Look, baking cakes ain't going to cut it anymore. We

need to organise, and we need to stand up for the rights of our children'. Is it any wonder that she arrived in politics?

As you would know, Speaker, every time when there is a new cabinet a photo is taken. In the cabinet photo from 1982, when Joan Kirner was elected as a member of the Legislative Council for Melbourne West, there is but one woman and 17 men. That woman was obviously the late, great Pauline Toner, a former member for Greensborough in the Legislative Assembly and Minister for Community Welfare Services. Three decades later I was delighted to be a member of a rookie cabinet in which there were nine women. It has only taken three decades, but I think in part Joan Kirner ought to be recognised and take responsibility for the growing number of women not just in the Labor Party but right across parliaments. She took that fight very seriously, and she took it on long after her exit from politics.

The end of her parliamentary political life was not an easy one — I know many people adored Joan Kirner, though not all of them voted for her — but she used her post-parliamentary life to invest in a legacy of fairness, to enable the representation of women and as a great advocate for education. As the affirmative action debate took place in the Labor Party, I used to say to Joan, 'Look at what you have gone and started'. It was not an easy debate to begin with, but within the party she empowered many women and gave a sense of responsibility to many men to change structures and change cultures to try to improve the representation of women, always annoying the *apparatchik du jour*, whoever was running the votes for the party room conference of the day. She also continued her advocacy around reproductive rights for women.

One of the really important things Joan did in her post-parliamentary life was as the ambassador for Victorian communities, when she spent enormous amounts of time working with the communities of Broadmeadows, Laverton, Corio, Mildura, Shepparton and many more. She sat down and worked with those communities and really harassed and harangued the government about how to empower communities to talk about the sorts of investments they needed, particularly to target issues of economic and social disadvantage. Joan never did that with an ounce of being patronising; she was incredibly insistent that community-led responses to local community problems were absolutely essential.

Joan became more than a mentor to many of us. She was a wonderful, treasured friend who was often in *loco parentis*. The great lessons she taught me ranged

from how to deal with morning sickness to controlled crying and a whole range of parenting advice. She gave advice as to how you survive this very challenging life. It is one thing to try to get women into politics, but it is another to enable them to survive it while combining things like their parenting responsibilities with their public duties.

Joan's fantastic picture in Queen's Hall is a wonderful, warm reminder of her. I used to give Joan a lot of curry about that painting. She is a woman with a fantastic sense of humour. I always used to say it must have taken a lot of energy to hold that come-hither pose. Whenever she would ring in to see how things were going, I would fabricate stories that I saw groups of young men swooning at her photo as she leaned forward, looking very salaciously towards them. She liked the irreverent and the cheeky, but she would always use a couple of choice words in response to all of those things. That glorious painting hangs there and serves as a wonderful reminder of her warmth, of our need to continue on our quest for diversity in leadership in this state and of the fact that she was the most incredibly accessible, down-to-earth person. She did not have one ticket on herself, despite the fact that she deserved hundreds of them.

Joan used to hold court in her back room at Ron's and her place, where we would talk about the political gossip of the day or the problems of the world with some plunger coffee. She was a person who did not subscribe to the contemporary metrics of contemporary politics. She was never influenced by, nor did she ever encourage, a Pavlovian sense of approval of politicians who put narcissism ahead of principles and values. They were always the things that guided every decision she made and every interaction she had. It is through the power of her example that her legacy will continue.

Many of us will continue to grapple with the private grief that we feel, but I have been delighted and buoyed by the community's respectful embrace of the history of Joan's life and the history of her contribution. All of that was on fantastic display at the state funeral for her last week. I was particularly delighted with the stories of Paul Briggs and Joan's request of the Yorta Yorta women that they put a spell on the Carlton Football Club. I only wish they would take that spell off the Western Bulldogs Football Club! That great day and the way in which the community responded showed the great love for and the esteem in which Joan is held. We are left to grapple with how we can continue her legacy without her.

In conclusion I pay my deepest respects to the glorious Ron Kirner, the man who only knew about the Joan Jett

appearance on the D-Generation television show when Joan sat him down the night it was to be aired. It was a great surprise for him — yet another one. His generosity, and the generosity of their children, in sharing Joan was incredible, and we owe the Kirner and the Hood families as great a debt as we owe Joan. I pass on my condolences to them, and I wish them the opportunity to have time for their private grief after having so publicly shared Joan for such a long period of time.

I hope that we can all seek solace and joy as we walk through Queen's Hall and look at that glorious painting of Joan with her cheeky, come-hither look.

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) — I rise to join with other speakers to contribute to the condolence motion for the Honourable Joan Elizabeth Kirner, AC. I knew Joan and met her a number of times, but it would be fair to say that I did not know her as well as many others here today. I, together with the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of The Nationals and Mary Wooldridge, attended the funeral service for Joan last Friday at the Williamstown town hall.

Funerals nowadays are a wonderful celebration of a person's life, and hearing the tributes from the six speakers one got to know and learn a lot about Joan Kirner's life and about Joan Kirner the person. While the political views of those on either side of the house — or indeed of those in the back pocket — differ, I will leave it to history to record Joan's political life. However, there is no doubt about Joan Kirner's contribution to her local community, to society, to justice, to a fair go and to the many people, schools and groups she touched on her journey.

On page 3 of the funeral service booklet there is a long list of the community groups, organisations and causes Joan had been a part of. I think there were 46 in total over her many years. Two that I was aware of and that stood out to me were that Joan was the president of the Croydon North Kindergarten from 1963 to 1966 and of the Croydon North State School Parent Club from 1969 to 1972. What was not listed was that Joan was also actively involved in the Bayswater North community renewal program, which was a program running at that time in my electorate of Kilsyth for the communities of Glen Park and Canterbury Gardens. It was a terrific program that commenced under my predecessor, Dympna Beard, and it continued when I won the seat. It was a great example of a program that ran over successive governments for the benefit of my local communities.

Joan attended some of the Bayswater North community renewal program meetings, and I have to say as a newly elected member of this place in the second most marginal seat in the state by a couple of hundred votes, you get a bit edgy and a bit toey when you rock up to a community meeting and you see a former Premier of the state actively working your seat and saying, 'He can stay away!'. I thought, 'Shit! They're targeting the' — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr HODGETT — 'Scheissenhausen! They're targeting the seat of Kilsyth'. But I soon learnt that Joan was continuing her active involvement in a worthwhile community renewal project. I did not point out to her that the member for Ferntree Gully was in the most marginal seat, with 28 votes, and that she could perhaps head down there, but I think he would have had a heartie — a heart attack — if she had rocked up to community meetings.

When I look at the community renewal program that I was familiar with and its goals and objectives, so much of it reflects what Joan Kirner was about — community participation, new jobs, learning opportunities, increased volunteering, better community facilities and more involvement in cultural, recreational and sporting activities. The steering committee of that group had 18 people, with local residents making up 50 per cent of the members. Joan Kirner was a key person who kept a watchful eye on that program in her role as Victoria's first communities ambassador, which role the Victorian government appointed her to in 2001.

One of my favourite quotes is a quote by Bessie Anderson Stanley — often incorrectly attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson — which I think sums up much of Joan Kirner's life. It reads:

To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and to endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to leave the world a little better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition . . . to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived — this is the meaning of success.

Joan Kirner spent over 40 years advocating for and building stronger and more inclusive communities, and that sums up a lot about the person. As the Leader of the Opposition said, we can all learn a lot from that.

I congratulate Bishop Philip Huggins of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne on a wonderful service celebrating the life of the Honourable Joan Elizabeth

Kirner, AC. To Ron and family, my deepest sympathy and condolences on the loss of Joan.

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — When I first stood in this place to give my inaugural speech I wore an EMILY's List brooch on my lapel, and I had this to say:

... I am the first woman to represent Bendigo in Parliament, and I thank the women of EMILY's List for their support in helping me achieve that. I wear the symbol because I am committed to equality for women. EMILY's List is not just an idea, it is a program for action; and it has at its helm and in its ranks committed people who have shown they get results.

Last Friday we farewelled EMILY's List's most committed and beloved leader in Joan Kirner. Today we have heard so much about her incredible achievements, and my remarks will take a leaf out of Jenny Beacham's book in her tribute to Joan at her funeral service last Friday by talking of my personal memories of Joan. Her life and remarkable achievements have been deservedly well documented, and I hope they continue to be so forevermore. But like for many people here today the people who filled the Williamstown town hall and many in our community — the fans of Joan Kirner, as the Premier referred to them — Joan reached out and made a personal connection.

I joined EMILY's List in January 1998, and I well remember the moment. I was working as a volunteer at the Australian Labor Party national conference in Hobart — and some might say that I should have had more of a life — —

Ms Hennessy interjected.

Ms ALLAN — As was the member for Altona. I came across the EMILY's List stand. I had long been passionate about women's equality and women's choice and participation in progressive politics, and there, wrapped up in one organisation, was all that I believed in. I joined on the spot.

Over the next couple of years I attended many EMILY's List functions and gatherings, and it was through these that I met Joan. But of course being Joan she already knew where I came from. My father's family was heavily involved in the Labor movement in Bendigo, and Joan remembered over the years particularly meeting my grandmother, who was a member of the Bendigo Labor Ladies Association, a group of women who understood that an army never marched to success on an empty stomach. I was taken aback and more than a little starstruck. Here was a former Premier, the state's first female Premier, who

knew something about me, and when I met her again on later occasions she remembered me and my story.

It was this warmth and personal connection that was on offer each and every time I saw Joan which helped to give me the confidence to continue to join with like-minded women and men and to keep making the trek down the highway from Bendigo to events where I did not know many people but knew that when I got there I would be on the receiving end of Joan's warm welcome and support.

This support extended to my first campaign. Yes, the financial assistance from EMILY's List was valuable. It meant I could produce the most basic of pamphlets that could be letterboxed by wonderful volunteers across the electorate. It was the professional support, the media training, the campaign planning, the workshops, the fundraising tips and, critically, the personal support that was invaluable. Over the years Joan's support never wavered. Joan would ring in just to check in. How she knew to call at the precise time when you needed to get something off your chest, to seek some advice, was evidence of Joan's magic at work. And I know — we have heard this already today — I was not alone; Joan had this remarkable gift of delving deep down into her reservoir of compassion and reaching out to so many of us. Yet she was never rushed; it was never contrived. It was driven by her values and her understanding that when women support women, women win.

My professional life has been the beneficiary of Joan's support; it is my family that has been truly blessed by her friendship. During challenging personal times the phone would ring and it would be Joan — the magic at work again — checking in, sharing advice, lending an ear. We know how Joan loved children — it was her driving passion — and she shared my joy when I became pregnant with my daughter Peggy. Peggy is so fortunate to be the owner of a beautifully crocheted blanket made by a friend of Joan's, who organised this gift for my daughter following her birth. Joan was a regular visitor to me and then Peggy during our hospital stays and then at home while I was on maternity leave. I am deeply gladdened that Peggy got the chance to meet Joan, the state's first female Premier.

We also shared men in our lives. I have been fortunate that both of my permanent drivers during the time I have been a minister, firstly Grant Williams — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms ALLAN — You did not know where I was going! And now my driver is Ken Wilson, who also worked with Joan, having driven her for many years.

Their families became her families, and driving Joan was an absolute pleasure.

On behalf of the Bendigo East community that I represent, I wish to thank Joan for her support of us in central Victoria. Our schools and student results are the better for her passion for education, particularly at Bendigo Senior Secondary College, a school she helped build up with the then local member for what was the Bendigo electorate, David Kennedy. Our environment in central Victoria is all the better for her passion for the land and as a result of the enduring partnerships she built between farmers and environmental activists through Landcare. On behalf of my family and my community in the Bendigo East electorate, I pass on our deep condolences to Ron, Kate, Michael and David — who is a friend and colleague of my husband, Yorick — and to their family. Thank you for sharing Joan with us. Like you, we miss her already.

Dr NAPTHINE (South-West Coast) — I rise to acknowledge and pay tribute to Joan Kirner and to thank her and her family for Joan's lifetime of service to our community. I believe the member for Box Hill and I are the only ones in this house who had the honour and privilege of being in the house from 1988 to 1994 alongside Joan Kirner in her time as the member for Williamstown. Joan was born and raised in Essendon and was a committed and avid Bombers fan all her life. It was one of her great joys in life, which she shared with the member for Brighton. The member for Brighton often talks of the great friendship she shared with Joan Kirner through their love of the Bombers.

Joan Kirner was an arts graduate of Melbourne University and a teacher. After she became a parent and a mother her concern for education was enhanced and focused even more, and she became very active in school and parent organisations. She was president of the Victorian Federation of State School Parents Clubs and then executive officer of that organisation. It is in that role that she got to know my late mother very well.

My late mother had a position at the Winchelsea Higher Elementary School as its community liaison officer; it was quite a unique position from early on that would probably now be equivalent to the position of student welfare officer. She was employed by the school to work with families in the school and particularly with at-risk young people at the school who were living in that area of Winchelsea who were at risk. Joan Kirner was one of the people she worked with.

When I was elected to Parliament in 1988 Joan Kirner sought me out and introduced herself. She talked fondly

of her work with my mother and her great relationship with my mother, but she told me that she would have thought that my mother, being a caring and concerned person, would have raised somebody who was on the other side of politics. Well, she did — that was my younger brother and probably a few of my other brothers and sisters.

Joan was a person who always introduced herself, always made herself known and was always positive and supportive of people on both sides of politics. She entered this place in the upper house in 1982, became Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands in 1985 and was in that role from 1985 to 1988. That was a significant role, as the Leader of The Nationals has said. At the time it involved bringing together disparate agencies and departments that had different focuses. She brought them all together to understand that you need to have a comprehensive, holistic approach to dealing with some of the challenges in our agriculture, some of the challenges in our environment and some of the challenges in working with communities in rural areas. Joan did that extremely well.

Probably the epitome of that, which other people have spoken about, was her role in the development of Landcare with Heather Mitchell, the leader of the Victorian Farmers Federation at the time. Heather Mitchell and Joan Kirner are recognised as the founders of the Landcare movement, which is a movement based on community activism, community involvement and the understanding that people who are farmers and people who are involved in the land are the best people to deliver outcomes in dealing with environmental issues and long-term sustainability, getting the balance right and making sure we understand that the long-term sustainability of our environment produces long-term sustainability for our clean, green agricultural production. The Landcare movement has been a great success across Victoria, across Australia and increasingly across the world — and it is a great legacy of Joan Kirner. If the Premier is looking for a way to recognise Joan Kirner, something to do with Landcare or the Rural Women's Network would be an ideal opportunity to recognise her contribution.

As other people have said, Joan had a great sense of humour. She told stories about herself. She used to tell a great story — I have to be careful how I say this — about a time when she went to Tallangatta as a young minister to meet with 250 irate farmers who were concerned about wild dogs in their community. Joan Kirner was from the Socialist Left, Melbourne based and female. She was concerned about the baiting and trapping of wild dogs, and she was looking for new and alternative methods. She spoke at this meeting about

research done by the Keith Turnbull Research Institute, which was looking at ways to suppress the sexual appetite of wild dogs so there would be less breeding and fewer wild dogs in the future. She expounded at length about this new scientific frontline research, at which point some grizzled farmer at the back of the hall stood up and said, 'I dunno where you're from, Miss, but up here they're killing and eating my lambs, they're not effing them'. Joan used to tell that story with great passion and did it extraordinarily well on many occasions.

In 1988 Joan came into this house as the member for Williamstown and became the Minister for Education, and that is where Joan thrived. It was her passion — her life goal — to be involved in education, and people have spoken about her commitment to education. Quite surprisingly she quickly became the Deputy Premier when Bob Fordham stepped aside, and she subsequently became the Premier of Victoria in August 1990. We know that at that time Victoria was facing many challenges. She inherited a range of problems, including the enormous state debt and problems involving the Victorian Economic Development Corporation, Tricontinental, Pyramid Building Society and the State Bank of Victoria. But Joan Kirner was very strong and stoic and was not afraid of making difficult decisions.

Some of those decisions, as the member for Melbourne said, she may have later regretted. She made the decision to introduce electronic gaming machines into Victoria, she made the decision to introduce legislation to establish a casino in Melbourne and she made the very difficult decision within the Labor Party to undertake the privatisation of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria. Those were difficult, tough decisions, and I give great credit to Joan Kirner, who pushed those decisions through as a Socialist Left member of the labour movement. They were decisions forced by the times. While Joan was only a short-term Premier, she made an enormous difference during that time, and I want to place on the record my appreciation of her work.

Joan retired from politics in 1994, but she never retired from her community activism. She was probably as active, if not more active, following her retirement. She was active in education and in promoting women in Victoria and in the community. People have spoken about EMILY's List in terms of involving women in politics. Joan was very ecumenical. She promoted women on all sides of politics and in the broader community. Her great passion was community involvement and activism. She taught us all about listening to and working with your community and

bringing people together to achieve outcomes that are positive for the community.

Joan was recognised with a Centenary Medal in 2001, and she was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in 1980 and a Companion of the Order of Australia in 2012. That is only a small example of what came back to Joan because of what she gave to this state and this country. Joan Kirner is a person whom we will always remember as the first female Premier of Victoria, but we should also remember her because of the way she led communities, involved communities and put forward what she believed was in the best interests of communities. She certainly made a difference through her life across a whole lot of areas.

I pass on my condolences to Joan's husband, Ron, her children and her grandchildren. I conclude by saying that Joan Kirner was an icon in terms of her monumental contribution to Victoria and to Australia. She will be sadly missed.

Mr WYNNE (Minister for Planning) — I rise to make a contribution to celebrate the life of Joan Kirner. I had the honour of working with Joan as a ministerial adviser and as Lord Mayor of Melbourne. At her memorial service last Friday, in a jam-packed Williamstown town hall, we heard moving eulogies and personal reflections from those who were closest to Joan. Each contribution gave us an insight into the rich life of this remarkable Victorian.

One enduring theme shone through for me. Joan simply would not stand by and let injustice and inequality remain unaddressed, whether that be through her lifelong commitment to educational reform, her representation of women in public life through EMILY's List, her advocacy for Aboriginal communities — particularly Paul Briggs and the community of Rumbalara — her support for government intervention through programs such as neighbourhood renewal or of course her commitment to the fundamental reform of women's right to choose and control their health. Joan had the ability to engender lifelong loyalty. People were drawn to her, and she took a genuine interest in them and supported so many in their professional development and indeed their personal lives. The moving personal reflection of Hutch Hussein spoke to this.

Joan served as Premier from 1990 to 1992, which overlapped with my time at Melbourne town hall. We worked closely together on a number of projects, including the Melbourne bid to host the 1996 Olympic Games. I will always remember those last frantic weeks and days leading up to the decision in Tokyo. One of

the tasks assigned to Joan and myself was to try to find the Romanian delegate. This was a crucial vote that Melbourne needed if it was going to win this bid. We enlisted the support of my wife, who was a linguist. Unfortunately, however, our capacity to communicate with this delegate was somewhat curtailed because my wife's Romanian was fairly sketchy at best. But we persevered. We went up and down in lifts chasing this fellow, and we finally found him. A long time later we learnt that he was fluent in not only his native tongue but also English. He insisted, however, that he would speak to us only in Romanian. Not surprisingly, we did not get his vote.

Targeted lobbying of delegates reached a crescendo as we sat in the hall awaiting the final decision. I held hands with Joan and we were barely able to breathe, such was the tension. As we now know, in spite of our superior bid, the winner was Atlanta. This crushing blow was quickly dismissed by Joan when she announced the next day that we would have another go for 2000. Of course history will record Sydney's success in that endeavour, but that success came off the back of Melbourne's groundbreaking work. We were robbed!

Joan assumed the office of Premier during a period of unprecedented decline in the Victorian economy. She fought hard to encourage investment and provide confidence and continuity of leadership. She stood up to unprecedented hectoring and commentary from sections of the media and remained steadfast in her resolve to lead the state through the economic firestorm. At the town hall we worked cooperatively on a range of projects, including housing in the CBD and the pedestrianisation of Swanston Street. I proposed that pedestrianisation to Joan, and she funded it. I remember going to her office to pitch the idea armed with plans that rolled out 20 metres along the floor. On hands and knees she examined every aspect of the design and then stood up and said, 'I've got to fund this'. It was a project that revitalised the CBD of Melbourne.

The last time I saw Joan I was in the company of former minister Kay Setches and Paul Briggs. Although obviously unwell, she advocated to a range of then shadow ministers for continued support of the work of Rumbalara, one of many projects to which she remained committed.

To achieve as Joan did throughout her life one must be surrounded by like-minded and committed colleagues. At the memorial service for Joan we heard from Jenny Beacham, former state Labor member Candy Broad and former minister Caroline Hogg — all great

contributors to public life. As all of us in this chamber know, however, it is those who support you at home and who give you the freedom and social licence to pursue public life to whom we must remain indebted. We owe them all a great debt. In this regard I want to acknowledge Ron Kirner, a most gentle man, and of course Joan's children and grandchildren.

Fairness was at the cornerstone of Joan Kirner's work — fairness in educational opportunity, a fairer outcome for Aboriginal Victorians, a fairer distribution of resources to low-income Victorians, fairness in access to legal family planning services and equal representation of women in public life. That is fair. Joan Kirner leaves an extraordinary and lasting legacy. Vale, Joan Kirner.

Ms RYAN (Euroa) — I rise to pay tribute to the life of Victoria's first and to date only female Premier, the Honourable Joan Elizabeth Kirner. I do so particularly on behalf of the people of the Euroa electorate and women in The Nationals. I never met Joan Kirner, but I wish I had. When I asked those who knew her how they would describe her, the words they used included 'generous', 'compassionate', 'a trailblazer', 'courageous' and 'resilient'.

As we have heard, Joan was born on 20 June 1938 in Essendon. Her father was a fitter and turner and her mother a music teacher. She was educated at Penleigh Presbyterian Ladies College and graduated from the University of Melbourne in 1958 with a bachelor of arts and a diploma of education. She worked as a teacher for a number of years and later became a parent activist, with the aim of improving state education, particularly for disadvantaged schools.

There is a wonderful story, which has already been told today, about the day she went to enrol her first child in kinder in Croydon. After discovering that 54 students were to be in a class with one teacher, she told the principal, 'Not my child'. But instead of enrolling her child in another kindergarten, she decided to change the system. In 1998, six years after entering the Victorian Parliament, she got her chance when she became the Minister for Education. She introduced the Victorian certificate of education and reduced class sizes, which led to improvements in school retention rates.

Another significant achievement, particularly for rural communities, which is widely acknowledged today, was her creation of Landcare as the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands. In 1985 Joan brought together five separate departments with apparently overlapping roles but with very different institutional cultures. It was her nous and political skill that got this

new department to collaborate. Since its establishment, Landcare has been formed throughout Australia and can now be found in more than 20 countries around the world. This week the *Granite News*, a community newsletter published in the Strathbogie tablelands, carried this reflection:

Many of us can clearly remember the day Joan as Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands came to Whiteheads Creek to launch the Landcare group at the home of Alan and Maxine Coulson. We were the second formed in the country if not the world. Joan had only just met us all, but she noted that Landcare brought together the traditional farmers and new residents and 'greenies' in common cause to restore the land. She was well respected by all of us, and is still remembered fondly to this day.

Today Landcare remains as vital as it ever was, not just to the integrated management of farmland and environmental assets but also as a vehicle to bring rural communities together, particularly in times of hardship, and that was a role I noticed Landcare played through the drought.

When Joan Kirner became Premier I was just four years old. For my generation the memories of that time are informed by what our parents have told us or by what we have read, and it has been lovely today to hear the many reflections on such a warm, funny and community-minded person. Certainly many in rural Victoria did not support some of the decisions that she made as Premier, but it is worth noting that the circumstances in which she took over as leader of this state and the Labor Party were anything but easy. Unemployment was rising, and state debt had skyrocketed to \$25 billion. You cannot help but admire how tough she was to take that job on and to do it in the face of great sexism and prejudice.

Joan Kirner's role in opening the doors of politics to women is perhaps one of her greatest legacies. As the *Age* put it last week:

While Joan Kirner may not have solved Victoria's economic crisis, nor saved the ALP from defeat in 1992, her legacy to the ALP and Victorians has been significant. She demanded that both the party and the Parliament become more accepting of and open to women; she was defiant in the face of sexist media and political commentary, and outed many a politician for inappropriate and gendered language.

There are many examples in both business and politics of women who climbed the ladder to success only to turn around and pull that ladder up. Joan Kirner was not that person. She knew Victoria would be a better and stronger place if other women were encouraged to take on leadership roles. That work continued long after she left politics, and undoubtedly her example and her mentoring have shaped the Victorian Parliament as we

see it today. In acknowledging an extraordinary life, one that remains as a first for Victoria, we should surely reflect on the need to do more to achieve equal representation in this state.

When Joan was made a Companion of the Order of Australia three years ago she said of her elevation to Premier:

... it was a great honour, and the best thing is when women come up to me — three generations of them now — and say they know it was tough but at least I showed their daughters they, too, could be Premier.

Twenty-three long years have passed since Joan Kirner left the office of Premier, yet she stands alone as our only female Premier. She has smoothed the way for the women who will one day, hopefully in the not-too-distant future, follow her. It falls to us to do away with what barriers and prejudices remain.

I offer my very sincere condolences and those of my electorate to Joan's husband, Ron, her three children, her grandchildren and her many friends. Rest in peace.

Ms RICHARDSON (Minister for Women) — I too rise to recognise the extraordinary achievements of Joan Kirner. Joan Kirner was a trailblazer, an icon for Australian women inspired by her journey from outspoken mother, to national education campaigner, to Premier of Victoria. But she was much more than just a symbol of women's leadership; she was a hands-on mentor and teacher who actively nurtured the next generation of progressive women leaders in the labour, community and business sectors, while also creating institutional ways for women to support women long after she retired from Parliament and from public life.

As an individual, her achievements are too many to list here. We have heard — and I am sure we will hear from others in the house today — about her impact in education and on the environment. Even her darkest political hour, the 1992 election loss, was in part a success for Joan, as she is credited — along with Jenny Beacham, Labor's then state secretary — with holding Labor to 27 seats despite consistent polling that put us at just 14. Needless to say, winning in 1999 would not have been possible for Labor without Joan's determination to fight all the way to the end.

As Minister for Women it is fitting that I reflect on Joan's achievements for women in this house, for she held this portfolio during the 1990–92 period. It is no accident that she was part of a reforming government that introduced a raft of legislation and policy change to benefit the lives of the women of Victoria. The introduction of the Equal Opportunity Act 1984, the

women's employment strategy and the establishment of the Office of Preschool and Child Care were designed to ensure that women were treated equally in the workplace and could participate productively in our state's economy. A statewide women's health policy and the introduction of the Crimes (Family Violence) Act 1987 enabled the safety and wellbeing of women to become matters of public policy, not just private concern.

When Joan took over as Premier she introduced other important legislation for women, including the promotion of equal opportunity in public authorities and the establishment of TAFE colleges and adult, community and further education in neighbourhood houses. Access to affordable education close to home allows women to balance study and family responsibilities and open up future employment opportunities. As Premier she also invested in other services that were important to women. By the end of 1992 every region in the state had a women's health service. Those services today provide vital links for women to information about reproductive and sexual health and the impact of women's cancers. Joan also believed in creating women's spaces. As Premier she invested in the redevelopment of the Queen Victoria Hospital, transforming it into a women's centre for the whole of Victoria to enjoy.

Joan also set an ambitious agenda to tackle violence in the community, especially violence against women and children. During her two too-short years as Premier she — with the support of good friend and colleague and former Minister for Community Services, Kay Setches — introduced legislation that would reform the law of consent to help women who had already been traumatised by rape and sexual assault through the often retraumatising experience of our justice system.

She established the Public Safety and Anti-Crime Council, which for the first time connected members of Victoria Police with domestic violence campaigners in a search for solutions. She was indeed one of the first members of this Parliament to speak out about family violence. Joan understood that the key determinant of violence against women was, and is, gender inequality and sex discrimination. Not everyone understands this link, but she most certainly did. It is one of the reasons she believed so passionately in gender equality and the importance of respecting and empowering women.

When Joan gave her inaugural speech as a member for Melbourne West Province in the Legislative Council she said:

It gives me great pleasure both to be part of the increase in the number of Labor Party members in this house ... and to be one of the three new women members ...

She said that brought:

... the male-female balance to something like 1 in 8, which is a very small step towards reasonable representation, which should be 50-50.

Joan devoted her retirement from parliamentary life to the achievement of 50 per cent representation of women in parliaments across the country. She understood that lifting the participation of women in public life would require a combination of structural and cultural change and would need the introduction of a gender quota on preselections in political parties, as well as a network of women supporting women with mentoring, training and financial investment in election campaigns.

In 1994, two years after her retirement, the first affirmative action (AA) target, a gender quota of 35 per cent, was introduced in the ALP. Back then in this house there were only nine women members. After almost a century of suffrage, the percentage of women in the house sat at a miserly 10 per cent, barely scraping past single digits. In our Labor caucus there were just three women. Slowly the ALP's AA target began to have an impact, but a quota alone did not lift women's participation.

In 1996 Joan, Carmen Lawrence, a young Julia Gillard and several other women set about establishing EMILY's List Australia, an organisation aimed at providing financial, political and personal support for progressive women. In Dr Jocelyne Scutt's book, *Living Generously — Women Mentoring Women*, Joan observed:

I would not have survived two years as Victorian Premier without the support of women colleagues or women friends.

EMILY's List Australia was Joan's way of forging friendships across generations and across factions. She created an organisation that would develop deep, lasting and mutually beneficial relationships between women. Premiers and chief ministers, ministers and of course a prime minister have come from within this network, as well as the first Indigenous woman MP and senator. The success of EMILY's List Australia has been extraordinary, in large part due to Joan Kirner's advocacy. As the inaugural national convenor of the network she spent eight years voluntarily building the organisation, never drawing a wage and never taking a backward step.

Today you need only look around to see her impact. Women now make up 44 per cent of the Andrews Labor government's caucus. It is a huge leap from the 10 per cent of 25 years ago. Labor's commitment to affirmative action has seen women's representation in parliaments in Australia leap from 16 per cent in 1994 to 35 per cent nationally. Of course this is still far from the 50-50 that Joan believed was appropriate representation, and it is fitting that at this year's national conference the ALP will debate further changes to the AA rule, and that will be known as Joan's law.

Joan knew it would require more than leadership within her own party to achieve gender parity in Parliament, which is why she always lent a bipartisan hand to women in the Liberal Party and the then National Party. Some of us on this side of the house would be delighted if the members opposite never understood how important gender equity is to the electoral success of political parties. But Joan, the builder of consensus and collaborative leadership, spoke frequently of the need for the coalition to reform. She would be pleased, as I am, that gender targets and the importance of women's networking organisations have now been mentioned as being imperative to the future of the Victorian Liberal Party's engagement with women.

Joan was not committed to equal representation for its own sake. She believed democracy was better when it was representative of the community, and particularly women. She believed a critical mass of women would change Parliament and, in turn, the focus of policy and public debate. Our campaigns to promote gender equality and tackle family violence have at their very foundations the remarkable Joan Kirner.

Joan Kirner will be missed by many people, particularly those in the community organisations she served. I express thanks to her on behalf of thousands of women, friends and colleagues but especially those women in organisations for which Joan was ambassador and patron, including EMILY's List Australia, Parents Victoria, the Women's Circus, Positive Women, the Rural Women's Network, the Victorian Refugee and Immigrant Women's Coalition, the Royal District Nursing Service and Domestic Violence Victoria.

On a personal note, my family, and my mother in particular, owe Joan a debt of thanks and appreciation. It was Joan my mother turned to when she campaigned and ultimately won protection from logging for Melbourne's water catchment areas. It was Joan's Labor government that delivered that protection, and at each step of the way my mother and I worked alongside Joan. Her efforts with and support of our campaign

inspired me to join the Labor Party, the only party that walks the talk on saving our environment.

Joan was first and foremost a family person. Her political advocacy came from her love of her children and the desire to make their world a better place. To Ron and Joan's children — Michael, David and Kate — and her grandchildren, I offer my sincerest condolences. Thank you for sharing her with us.

Mr DIXON (Nepean) — I wish to make a few comments about Joan Kirner's political life, especially with regard to education and her work in Rosebud West in my electorate. I also wish to make some personal reflections. Joan's passion was education. It was quite obvious that her motivation for entering political life was around education issues, and we shared that passion and motivation. We disagreed on a number of aspects about education, but her work on the Victorian certificate of education (VCE) has stood the test of time. The VCE has always been the superior senior school certificate in Australia. It has adapted and changed as the decades have rolled by, but it has always had bipartisan support and it has always offered flexibility. Just last week it was announced that for the first time a Victorian school will offer the VCE on the Northern Hemisphere timetable. Once again the VCE has been adjusted, but it remains a very solid basis on which to build a senior school certificate. It is the envy of many education systems around the world, and indeed here in Victoria it is a lasting legacy of Joan's work.

As has been mentioned today, Joan was a great advocate of a program for students with disabilities. It allows parents of students with disabilities flexibility and choice as to the best educational setting for their children. By and large that program is unchanged, and it has been supported in a bipartisan way over the decades. I did not realise before today the extent of Joan's work in establishing Scienceworks, and the member for Williamstown talked about this. The work done in adapting the building and putting it to a great educational use is testament to her vision for the western suburbs. Scienceworks is part and parcel of educational life in Victoria, especially for primary schools. In fact today my wife is taking her year 3 class to Scienceworks.

I note Joan's understanding of the role of parents in education at many levels and not just at the fundraising level; she lifted it to more than that. She recognised the importance of parents as the first and most important educators of their children, but she also recognised the importance of the relationship between parents and schools in focusing on the education of individual

children. It is not the job of the school or of parents alone; it is a partnership, and in that regard Joan was certainly a forward thinker.

A number of members talked about Joan's work post-politics in community renewal. One of those communities, which is one of the poorest in Victoria, is in Rosebud West in my electorate. I ran into Joan a few times down there because I chaired one of the committees, the Rosebud West community renewal initiative. Joan was held in high esteem by the members of that community, and they wanted me to take this opportunity to thank her for what she did in a community that had a lot going against it. She recognised, and the program recognised, that the community had a lot going for it. The whole attitude of that community, and the attitude of the broader community towards that community, has changed. Joan was instrumental in that change with her presence at committee meetings and events. Today it has been incredible to hear that there were many such communities right around the state that benefited from community renewal projects and Joan's presence, stewardship and mentoring. The work of the Rosebud West community, including the Seawinds Community Hub, and the attitude of the community are a great legacy Joan leaves behind in the electorate of Nepean.

On a personal note, I was elected to this place in 1996, once Joan had already left. I had been here only a couple of years when I passed her in Strangers Corridor and she said, 'Hello, Martin. How are you?'. As I said, I had never met her, but she knew who I was and went out of her way to say hello and ask how I was. Whenever our paths crossed she was always a very friendly, affable sort of person. Based just on that fleeting moment, it was a pleasure to know her.

On the day that Joan died, there were a number of news reports on television, and unbeknownst to me there was some file footage of Joan and I standing shoulder to shoulder on the steps of Parliament at a political rally. I was a little concerned about this, and I thought, 'No, this is wrong'. But a number of my friends had pointed this out to me, so I chased down the footage. Indeed we were standing shoulder to shoulder on the same side on the front steps of Parliament back in the early days of the Point Nepean handover, when the federal government was looking at options for disposing of Point Nepean. Joan and I were well and truly on the same side, saying that Point Nepean should remain in public hands and should be opened up for use by the public. My fears regarding the footage were allayed. It was great to fight alongside Joan in such an important community movement within my electorate.

Joan Kirner was a great woman. Victoria has been very blessed in many ways to have had her. I extend my condolences to her colleagues here, her past colleagues, her family and her friends. May she rest in peace.

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) — It is a great honour to rise in this house to pay tribute to Joan Kirner. Joan set the standard for what a good politician should be — someone motivated to use their position to improve the lives of every member of the community, someone motivated by the need to change something. Like other members of this house, I will always be fascinated by the story of how Joan entered political life. That meeting in Croydon all those years ago at the kindergarten where Joan was told that her son would be in a class with 55 other students launched what would become a transformative political career. Her advocacy in education — and I firmly believe that we all benefited from her advocacy — leaves us a list a mile long, from the Australian Schools Commission and the Australian Council of State School Organisations to her local school council and ultimately her role as Minister for Education.

I first met Joan when I was five years old. She was Premier at the time and had visited my school to open its new library. When I mentioned this to her many years later, she remembered every minor detail of the event, despite it probably being one of many school buildings she officially opened. She had a remarkable memory. As Premier she opened the childcare centre at the Godfrey Street Community House. She had a real love for community houses. She believed in the power of local communities to transform lives. We have around 400 neighbourhood houses in Victoria, and I would say that Joan probably visited nearly all of them.

The then member for Bentleigh, Ann Barker, campaigned for the Godfrey Street centre, which was funded on the condition that the works were completed by apprentices from the local TAFE campus. Joan considered this to be a great way of employing out-of-work apprentices during a time of economic downturn while also providing much-needed community infrastructure. Joan conducted the official opening of the centre, and many years later I uncovered an old local paper article about it, which I showed her. Once again Joan remembered every minor detail about that event when she was Premier.

Joan was a strong advocate for women in politics, and the fact that there are nine female members of the cabinet and around 47 per cent of the parliamentary Labor caucus are female is due to her work. I remember the time a few years ago when I told Joan that I was thinking of standing for preselection in Bentleigh. After

15 or 20 minutes of discussing it with Joan, she said, ‘Well, I’ll support you, Nick, unless there’s a good left woman running’. I was left a bit stunned, but I should not have been surprised because she was a fierce advocate for women in politics, and rightly so.

I last saw Joan in March. We held an International Women’s Day function in my electorate, and Joan was our special guest. Despite her being very unwell, she agreed to be our special guest, along with Kay Setches and Janice Munt. The event was I believe one of Joan’s final public appearances. It was attended by many female schoolteachers, and it was quite fitting to have Joan as the special guest. After that event a small group of us caught up for dinner, and at one point, after regaling us with stories of her time in politics, Joan turned to her friend Kay Setches and said, ‘They’re our people. They’re our people’. She never forgot the people she fought for over all those years.

One of my favourite Joan Kirner quotes is one that has not been read out today. It says:

What was fascinating was the tendency for the *Herald Sun* to try to turn me into simply a suburban housewife which of course devalued suburban housewives because I was never a good housewife.

Many of us are wearing polka dots today because Joan was able to turn around the sexism and the prejudice. Indeed she owned the polka dots. Today we wear them as a badge of honour and now in memory of a great woman, a great leader.

There is one other thing I need to say, and it does have to be said. Last week the *Herald Sun* published a beautifully written editorial — so beautifully written that the final line in the editorial is:

The very genuine lady was a class act.

It is interesting that we find nice words to say about somebody after they have passed away. However, the question always is: what did we say about that person while they were still living? Joan was a remarkable person. She took on the leadership of this state under the most difficult of circumstances. She acted with integrity, she acted with decency, she made some tough decisions, but she steadied the ship. History will remember her kindly. She is a hero in the Labor Party, in the labour movement. Joan, we love you, but most of all, we thank you.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) — I rise to make a short contribution to the condolence motion for the Honourable Joan Kirner, AC. Like the member for Williamstown, I also took a phone call from Joan, and it had a similar awkward start: ‘Hello, Louise, it’s Joan

Kirner’. I also created a pause, where I failed totally in working out what to call her, and stammered out, ‘Um, hello’, and I stood up, phone in hand. Her call called for more respect than sitting in my kitchen. My call came on 16 November 2004. That morning I had had an opinion piece published in the *Age* advocating for cross-party support for abortion law reform. I argued:

The broad pro-choice movement needs to embrace pro-choice Liberals ...

... to divide the pro-choice majority is exactly what the anti-choice activists want. We must not let that happen.

Ms Kirner rang to encourage me and to support my argument. I remain forever grateful for that call. Ms Kirner’s work in women’s reproductive health is important, decades long and ultimately successful.

I represent a country seat, with many Landcare groups. Ms Kirner’s interest in and ongoing support for Landcare lasted well beyond her parliamentary career. I am a member of the Victorian Farmers Federation and a Landcare group. Some years after the kitchen phone call I sat in a hall at Willaura, where my farm is, where Ms Kirner met country women involved in local Landcare. Over the years she must have sat in thousands of similar meetings, and in this case she well knew that that part of the world voted 70 per cent Liberal. Yet she drove a long way to be with us and was genuinely interested in us, as we were in her.

Others have said many more eloquent words than I can offer about her being Victoria’s first, and so far only, female Premier. But I think it is important that I, on this side of the house, also recognise the importance of her groundbreaking achievement. Thousands of Victorian girls, of all political persuasions, now know they can ‘do politics’. They know they can do public life in various ways; they just know they can.

As Ms Kirner herself said:

[Now] young women and their daughters know that they can be premiers, they can be leaders of the state, and they can be leaders of the nation.

This is important and society changing. Victoria is a different place because of the Honourable Joan Kirner, AC. I join in offering my condolences to Ms Kirner’s family, colleagues and many friends.

Ms GARRETT (Minister for Emergency Services) — It is an extraordinary pleasure to rise today to pay tribute to a woman who had an extraordinary career, made a huge contribution and has left a lasting legacy across this state and more broadly. Joan Kirner was an exceptional and genuine advocate for women

and children. She was extraordinary in her commitment to social justice, education and the environment. Victorians are greatly enriched by her extensive contribution to public life, and the Labor Party is in her debt in a very deep way for her ongoing mentoring and the roles she played in changing the shape of this great party.

Joan and I shared a couple of important aspects of our histories. She was a Penleigh girl, as I was for some time. Penleigh Presbyterian Ladies College bred us determined and tough in Moonee Ponds. We were up against Lowther Hall Anglican Grammar School and St Columba's College, and of course we had St Bernard's College and Essendon Grammar School nipping at our heels.

Where you were raised, when you ended up at Penleigh, determined which football team you went for. I grew up opposite Princes Park and was a passionate Carlton person, and clearly Joan was in Moonee Ponds and a passionate Essendon person. We heard earlier about the Yorta Yorta woman at Joan's funeral, and I am sure Joan may have been involved in putting a curse on the Carlton Football Club. As we say goodbye to our great hero Chris Judd today, after doing his anterior cruciate ligament in a narrow loss to Adelaide in which Eddie Betts played against us, I would like to say to Joan, 'Enough is enough now. The curse has come to its end'. It is hurting us all. I know the Premier does not agree with me, being a passionate Essendon man, but —

Mr Andrews — Apparently not.

Ms GARRETT — Apparently not. Apparently it did not end, so I think we will keep praying to the gods that people see fit to return Carlton to the glory that it deserves. But more important than a shared school history —

Mr Foley — It is not a Carlton footy club condolence.

Ms GARRETT — I am sure Joan would have appreciated the long reference I am making to football, and she would also have appreciated Chris Judd's great talent, despite the fact that he wore the navy blue.

Moving on, of greater significance than our shared school history is that Joan Kirner was a mentor to me and many others. In 2009 I was running for the very marginal seat of Brunswick. I was also on Yarra City Council which, as we know, is a hotbed of excitement and work. I had two small children, and I was working at Slater and Gordon. I recommend this as a weight loss tool, but not much else. I rang the people at EMILY's

List, and they said, 'Joan Kirner is going to be your mentor'. I said, 'Right, because I am not stressed enough'. But she set up a coffee with me, and she set it up at a coffee shop opposite Parliament House on Spring Street. I was absolutely terrified of sitting down with this giant of the Labor movement, and she was simply exceptional. From the moment you sat down, she drew you in with her warmth and her intellect. She pointed over at Parliament House and said to me, 'That's where you're going. Don't let the boys bamboozle you. Arm yourself with information, be strong and true to your values, stand up for yourself and look after other women', like she looked after us.

She has given us so much, on all sides of this house. She played a huge role in establishing EMILY's List. Her role in ensuring that we have affirmative action targets was second to none, and all of us owe it to her to make sure that those targets are genuinely realised. I know the national conference is coming up where those things will be discussed. Her presence meant something; her words meant more. She was sharp of wit, searingly articulate, passionately political and deeply empathetic. She walked in other people's shoes. Whoever she met she was present with them — she looked deep into their eyes and she shared their journey.

In 2013 she personally rang a huge range of people, including me, to say she had been diagnosed with cancer. I spoke to her at length. She was brave and honest in that discussion. We shared the journey I had been on with my mother's cancer, and we spoke about the importance of living each day as normally as possible — living between the tests with a sense of purpose and not being defined by those arbitrary moments. She spoke like that, with such courage and honesty. She was a genuine inspiration on many fronts of her life.

I will finish with a quote from an article that Rachel Power wrote about Joan Kirner's contribution to feminism:

In 2000, when former ACT chief minister Katy Gallagher was being encouraged to run for Assembly, she was filled with self-doubt and worry about the impact on her family. 'I agonised over these things', Gallagher recalled this week. 'I went to an EMILY's List training session. To my horror I found myself in a room alone with Joan Kirner, like an interview! I explained my situation: at the time I was a single mother, my daughter, Abby, was only three years old and I was finding life a struggle.

'Joan said: "That, my dear, is why you will be a brilliant politician". This was my defining moment. I knew then that Joan Kirner believed in me'.

Joan Kirner gave many of us those defining moments. It is up to us to ensure that her legacy continues. Rest in peace, Joan.

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) — I did not have the privilege of knowing Joan quite as well as so many other people in this place. When Joan Kirner was Premier I was studying at university in New South Wales. The Joan I know is through EMILY's List, of which I am very proud to be one of the Victorian co-convenors. I do, however, have another connection with Joan. I live in Seaford, which is in my electorate of Carrum. Last night I was reading a transcript of an interview Joan did with Peter Thompson in 2002 on Radio National. Joan mentioned that each holiday her mum used to save up and take her away, and I could not believe what I read: Joan and her mum would go on holiday to Seaford. In Joan's words:

Imagine going on a holiday to Seaford —

how fortunate, Joan. It is wonderful.

In that same interview Joan mentioned an incident from grade 5 at school. Her grade 5 teacher used to dish out corporal punishment to the boys but never the girls, until Joan that is. Apparently there was a girls' gate and a boys' gate at the school. The girls' gate was the tradesmen's entrance. Recalling the story, Joan said:

There was no-one around and I said, 'Let's take our bike out the boys' gate. It's closer. This is just stupid. Let's go out this gate'.

Joan and her friend went out the boys' gate, and who should be hiding behind the bike sheds but her grade 5 teacher. The next morning Joan and her friend joined the boys and received the same punishment as them. Peter Thompson then said to Joan:

And you've been going through the boys' gates ever since.

Joan's response was:

Yes, I suppose I have. And what's more, holding them open for other people.

It is Joan holding those gates, doors, windows, arms — whatever they might be — open for other women that I wish to speak briefly about. Joan was a mentor; she was a role model. She wanted to make sure that women were empowered, that women were supported to not only reach the doors but to go right through them. Joan recognised the need to support women and the need for our parliaments to truly reflect our communities, because Joan knew that more women mean more representative parliaments and better policies.

To this end Joan was absolutely committed to giving other women the confidence they needed to take on leadership roles. In the early 1990s Joan was part of a group of women leaders who came together to fight for affirmative action policies in the Australian Labor Party. She was joined by Carmen Lawrence, Kay Setches, Helen Creed and Julia Gillard. With Joan's help, an initial target of women being preselected in 35 per cent of all winnable state and federal seats was set in 1994. This target was later lifted to 40 per cent.

At the same time, and to assist in achieving affirmative action policies, Joan helped establish EMILY's List. This is a not-for-profit, political support network committed to supporting women to become members of federal, state and territory parliaments. Since its beginnings in 1996 — and Joan was there right from the beginning — EMILY's List has assisted more than 210 women to enter Australian parliaments. I am just one of them. Joan understood and recognised that a critical mass of women in our parliaments would have a significant impact on legislation of benefit to women, children and their families. With the help of Joan and EMILY's List, affirmative action has seen an increase in the proportion of Labor women federally from 14 per cent in 1994 to 38 per cent in 2015. As we have heard, in Victoria women make up 47 per cent of the ALP caucus and 41 per cent of cabinet, with all nine female ministers being members of EMILY's List.

The Australian Labor Party was acknowledged in a 2012 UN report for its efforts in promoting gender equality. The UN said affirmative action and EMILY's List had demonstrated how a 'combination of concerted strategies can bring about increased women's political leadership and gender-sensitive policies'.

Joan held the volunteer role of EMILY's List co-convenor for the first eight years, and after that she remained an active supporter and ambassador for EMILY's List. As we have heard from others, Joan was always available to mentor new candidates and hand out advice to MPs and other women. She remained a tireless and vocal advocate for the key principles of EMILY's List: equity, child care, equal pay, diversity and choice.

Joan was not only passionate about gender equality but also recognised the need for economic equality. In this regard she was committed to gender gap research and the way it can and should be used to inform policy debate and campaigns on social issues and gender equality. As a legacy to Joan, EMILY's List will be establishing a Joan Kirner fund to continue the important work of gender gap research. Now more than ever it is vital that we continue with gender gap pay

research. We have gender pay gaps of more than 18 per cent, and we still have very low numbers of women in leadership positions in both the corporate and public arenas as well as in government, with overall representation of women in parliaments standing at just over 30 per cent and with Liberal women still struggling for representation in the absence of a quota in their own party.

The day before Joan's death, Labor leader Bill Shorten launched EMILY's List's new *Status of Women 2015* report. The report shows where women's representation currently stands in Australia and overseas. This report, now quite timely, underpins the campaign by EMILY's List, started by Joan nearly two decades ago, to enshrine 50 per cent Labor women's representation by 2020. This reform, if passed, will be known as Joan's law.

Finally, to polka dots. I am wearing polka dots today not because Joan ever wore them but because of what they have come to symbolise. Joan reclaimed polka dots. These spots represent Joan — Joan, the tireless crusader for women, education and social justice. In the words of my friend and EMILY's List national co-convener Tanja Kovak, polka dots have been transformed into a 'feminist badge of honour'. Dear Joan, I am so very proud to be wearing them.

Honouring Joan Kirner's memory, we will drive the campaign for gender equality. As Joan said:

Women's collective experience is important, our collective wisdom is unbeatable, our collective strength is formidable and our continuing exclusion from an equal share of power in shaping society is untenable.

This is a pledge from which Joan never wavered. We will continue to honour that pledge.

Victoria has lost a great friend, a great teacher, a great mentor and a great woman.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — I am delighted to pay tribute today to the late Joan Elizabeth Kirner. In doing so, I thought it would be interesting to think about what Joan did with political power when she acquired it — and what her government did. To some extent you could almost be forgiven for forgetting those two years of government, because they were so brief. But if you compare the state as it was in August 1990 when Joan Kirner became Premier to what it is today, you see it has been completely transformed.

Some of the little things that were started back then have a profound impact on the way we live today. Before Joan became Premier you could not go shopping on Sunday, as there was no Sunday retail

trading. We did not have the Melbourne Major Events Company. That was a Kirner government initiative designed to make a play for the 1996 Olympic Games that then morphed into a broader play to try to attract more events to Victoria.

We can also look at some of the changes around gaming. There was no casino, and there were no electronic gaming machines (EGMs). I remember working at a part-time job when I started university in 1991, when people were still getting on the buses to go north of the border to have a punt on the pokies. Hundreds of millions of dollars were lost to the state every year because of that. Of course there are adverse consequences of gaming — I would not suggest otherwise — but not everyone who has a punt on an EGM is a problem gambler, and the billions of dollars that have been raised through the creation and establishment of that industry have rolled into the coffers of the state treasury over the last 23 years, which has helped fund essential services.

I served as chair of Kindergarten Parents Victoria, which is now the Early Learning Association Australia. That was a Kirner government initiative designed to give the parents of kindergarten students the opportunity to understand and play a role in the way their children were taught. When I was chair our philosophy was to focus on a quality early years education to make sure that kids had the best chance in life. We understood, appreciated and acknowledged that early years education plays a critical role in a child's development. Again, that was through Joan.

On some infrastructure projects, planning was underway during Joan's time to build what would become the Domain and Burnley tunnels. The method of funding was going to be a levy on petrol. The reality was that circumstances did not allow that to occur. In terms of some other issues — the member for South-West Coast outlined a couple of these initiatives — you can look at the partial privatisation of Loy Yang B, which was 49 per cent. This freed up capital and allowed the state to start to deploy that capital for other projects and initiatives. That was an important initiative. The reality is that it paved the way for the full privatisation which subsequently occurred. Under the Labor government that would have been a far softer and gentler process than the blunt instrument applied by its successor, the Kennett government.

It is also worth acknowledging — and the member for South-West Coast touched upon this — the headwinds that the government was experiencing at the time. They were substantial and significant. It is interesting because our views and consciousness are shaped by

what happened in the 1990s with the recession, with the high levels of debt and with the dislocation that occurred. What we do not realise, or appreciate to some extent, is the set of circumstances which led to that. In 1981 the all-parliamentary Public Bodies Review Committee said, and this was quoted in the *Victorian Commission of Audit* report, volume 1, chapter 2, page 33:

... Victoria should seek to increase its public sector net debt as a share of GDP so that funds for capital works can be provided.

That was not just the view of the Labor Party; it was the view of all parties in the Parliament at that stage. It recognised that there were challenges that the state needed to confront and that it was entirely appropriate to use debt to fund those challenges at that time. The reality is that in terms of 1991–92 dollars, and again I refer to the *Victorian Commission of Audit* report, volume 1, page 34, chart 2.1, the net debt of the state of Victoria in 1981–82 was \$20 billion.

At the time the Cain government was elected there was an enormous amount of debt. Over the course of that time there was an increase in interest rates, therefore the payments on that debt increased significantly, which put enormous strain on the budget. The point I wish to make in terms of what Joan did is that as Premier she got on with it. She understood that government is a rare gift. It is a case of using political power to further advance the cause of the people who have elected you.

Similarly, looking back at the 1991 Special Premiers Conference, it established a National Grid Management Council that related to the coordination of electricity generation. It also looked at establishing the national competition policy, which focused on harmonisation and improving coordination between the states. These were initiatives that Joan presided over and participated in.

Coming back to my earlier comments, the Victoria of August 1990 was fundamentally different to the one we live in today because of the initiatives that Joan, her government and her administration took. They were tough times; they were difficult times. Joan did not shy away, though, from making those tough decisions in order to do what she thought was right while remaining true to her values.

Joan had left the scene when Julia Gillard became Prime Minister, and I remember thinking about what that meant. At that stage I had two daughters. We dragged them out of bed late that night so they could watch Julia indicate that she was going to become our Prime Minister. It was such an important event for my

girls to see. If you hark back to 1990, 1991 and 1992, it was profoundly influential to women of my generation to see Joan become Premier. I asked my wife — who joined the party in 1992 and who is often far more eloquent than me — what she thought of Joan, and she said:

Joan was a person who was decent, driven by the desire to make things better for the community and individuals, not by the desire to further her own interests — someone who had a genuine interest in people and who would remember small details that others would forget, a woman's woman, a people person.

I could not have said it better myself. My sincere condolences go out to Ron and Joan's family. Joan made such a fantastic contribution to this state, to the cause of the Labor movement, to the Labor Party and to women throughout this state and the nation. Vale, Joan Kirner.

Ms THOMSON (Footscray) — I rise to pay my respects to Joan Elizabeth Kirner, a formidable woman in any capacity. In a piece in the *Age* in 2004, headed 'Joan Kirner — what I've learnt', Joan was quoted as having said:

You do have to be able to laugh at yourself in politics because otherwise you wouldn't be able to go on.

She went on to say:

My politics has always been about community politics. What I find I can do is help people make the connections that people need to make. I suppose I have moved back from power to empower, but sometimes when I see something that really needs to be done and I can't do it, I think that power beats the hell out of influence.

I think that sums up Joan. She was courageous, she was compassionate, and she was committed. She thrived on the connections she made with the community and never forgot the people she met; she was always connected to them. It would be remiss of me not to mention the Braybrook Community Hub in my electorate, which Joan went to visit after she became Premier. We talked with the leaders and members of that community house about programs they could undertake to increase their skills as community leaders. That was Joan.

Even though Joan was suffering from osteoporosis and was probably in a fair bit of pain, I do not think I ever heard her complain once. Not once did she talk about herself and her ailments — or only possibly in the sense of her frustration of it limiting her capacity to participate.

I met Joan just before she became a member of the Legislative Council. We were both members of the

Labor education policy committee. I can certainly attest firsthand to the important role she played in framing our education policy in the lead-up to the 1982 election. She was definitely a force to be reckoned with, and she was someone you really listened to when she talked about the needs in education. In 1983 we both still served on that committee, and I had just had a baby. My son, Ben, was probably only a couple of months old — maybe not even that. Joan had encouraged me to bring him to the education policy committee meetings. In those days — yes it was a long time ago, and I am showing my age — there was no such thing as child care being provided. Either you did not participate or you left your baby with someone else or had to take them with you. As I was still feeding Ben, there was no alternative but to take him with me. This was at Joan's encouragement. I do not think I would have done it off my own bat.

I arrived with my two-month-old son, Ben, to the education policy committee meeting at the ALP head office, which was then in Drummond Street, and proceeded to lay him out on a blanket on the floor, because there was of course nothing to put a baby in at the ALP head office. I was very lucky that he was a very good baby. Ben was playing quietly and making the little noises that babies do in the corner. Joan disrupted the meeting to pay attention to Ben, play with him and say what a good baby he was. I think that summed up Joan. She was a human being before she was anything else. Her passion for people overwhelmed everything else.

When you met with her when she was Premier — and I had occasions to meet with her when she was Premier — she always took the time to talk about how you were going and how your family was going, and she would catch up on your kids; she remembered their names and remembered how many times you had taken the baby to policy committee meetings and remembered when I had stopped taking them because I felt it was too disruptive. She was an amazing woman like that. She did not forget people. I think we saw that in spades at her funeral. When her drivers were mentioned before anyone else and every single person who looked after her at Peter MacCallum was mentioned by name, it demonstrated who Joan Kirner was — she was very much a people person.

Everyone has spoken about her contributions to women in politics and of the role she played in establishing EMILY's List and the support she has given to women in politics. Certainly she and I shared the same passion to see more women in this place and to see legislative change on a woman's right to choose. I was proud to be a member of the Parliament for that vote. We did not

always agree, and we were certainly not in the same faction, but I respected that woman in spades. She was an extraordinary individual with a huge capacity to contribute. What we have not stressed is her ability to support anybody she saw who wanted to make a difference. It did not matter what walk of life they were from and it was not just about politics — it was the men and women at the Braybrook neighbourhood house who wanted to upskill to be ready to be able to look after their community and it was all the communities she visited. It was not just for women, it was for all people. She was an extraordinary human being.

People have talked about her achievements as a minister and about her achievements as Premier, but I will always remember Joan as a person who contributed to communities. Vale, Joan Kirner.

My condolences to Joan's husband, Ron, who had to withstand the barrage — and I know that for partners it is a lot harder when your partner is the one in the firing line. Joan was certainly in the firing line, but she always laughed. She always had a laugh. I can remember the Spot on Joan function that was held at the height of Joan being in the firing line. It was a function that was held not because she ever wore polka dots — as the member for Carrum pointed out — but because the organisers were prepared to send up the critics and she was prepared to laugh the loudest. I will always remember that of Joan. She had an amazing sense of humour. She was always quick to have a laugh. She was a really warm and endearing human being.

My sympathies go to Michael, Kate and David, to her grandchildren and to Ron. I hope that you will allow us to remember her in this way, and we thank you for giving us Joan.

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) — I rise to express the thanks of the residents of the electorate of Ivanhoe for the life, community service and leadership of former Victorian Premier and Labor Party leader, the Honourable Joan Kirner. I would like to add a few reflections and observations, particularly in regard to Landcare.

As many people have touched on today, Landcare is a permanent national program to protect our land and waterways that was established by Joan, alongside the late Heather Mitchell, in Joan's time as Minister for Conservation, Forests and Land. Many ministers and MPs get an opportunity in their time in this place to put their names to buildings, but not very many get to establish and create movements that are statewide, nationwide and international such as the Landcare movement, which Joan helped to create and establish.

This week the Landcare Australia website has an article about the establishment of and finding a name for Landcare. One of the stories Landcare Australia promoted this week states:

A group of staff tasked with drafting a proposal for a program based on neighbourhood groups tossed around some names and proposed to Joan Kirner, the name 'Total Land Care'. The story goes that Joan Kirner retorted that she did not want to be known as the 'Minister for TLC', so it became simply Landcare.

In my role as Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment, I have met with many Landcare groups, as has the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water, the member for Bellarine, who cannot be here today. Time and again over the past six or seven months people have come up and said, 'Do you know of the great work that Joan did in establishing Landcare and her continued advocacy and interest in that program today?'. People right across the length and breadth of regional Victoria wanted to make sure that we as a new government understood that contribution and that we were encouraged to promote and strengthen Landcare in the Parliament as its custodians, just as Joan had done.

Landcare has survived in the form that Joan helped to establish it. Landcare is not to be constrained by bureaucracies and it is not some cookie cutter operation; it remains a community-driven project. Each Landcare group is different, yet they all hold the same values regarding working together in the common interest for Victoria's land and waterways. I think the fact that Landcare has been able to sustain itself in a way that has worked with bureaucracies and governments while maintaining the flexibility to respond to local needs is exactly the way Joan Kirner would want it to operate, in that it is absolutely about community environmental action driven at the local level in every corner of Victoria.

The Victorian National Parks Association, in touching on a range of other achievements during Joan Kirner's time in the environment portfolio, noted that:

She steered legislation for Errinundra and Coopracambra national parks in East Gippsland through Parliament, added the Rodger River wilderness to Snowy River National Park and substantially increased Little Desert National Park.

Importantly, she fought hard for a new Alpine National Park, and though the initial legislation she introduced failed in the Legislative Council, its momentum eventually brought the park into being.

She also introduced the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act, groundbreaking for its time.

To this day this area continues to occupy a range of commitments that the Andrews Labor government has made, and it will be the focus of some further work by the current minister. It continued:

She oversaw strategies for managing wetlands, rainforests and whales, and negotiated a timber industry strategy aimed at sustainability.

We have come a long way to this point, and the markers that were initially put in the ground around those critical issues continue being built upon today. Amongst her greatest achievements was the introduction of Landcare, which I touched on earlier, but Joan Kirner's achievements go much further. There are other aspects in relation to management plans for parks across Warrandyte and the Dandenongs, such as the Dandenong Ranges National Park. There is a range of initiatives like those that were established by Joan's ministerial work.

I will touch briefly on education, as the Leader of the Opposition mentioned this earlier. For those of us who were in the year 12 cohort of 1991, which was the transitional year when we moved from the higher school certificate to the two-year Victorian certificate of education (VCE), I note the work of Joan Kirner as education minister to create continual assessment throughout the year, particularly for English, and to expand access to the curriculum are changes that remain today.

As anyone who has worked in education policy areas would know, the tough work — the work that is often hardest to do and that which is the least glamorous and most grinding — is in the development, improvement and sustaining of changes to the curriculum. Many education ministers come and go, fiddling at the margins and getting bogged down in ideology. People also get caught up in education capital, which of course is critically important, but it is also imperative to ensure that fundamental changes are made to the way in which people are taught and to the opportunities that they have to learn. Empowering our teachers to be able to deliver these changes and our students and parents to be able to understand them is difficult, but sustaining that through something like the VCE is something that Joan has done. This is a lasting change, and it is the toughest and hardest sort of change to make. Lasting and respectful change to the education curriculum is the most difficult to make. Joan Kirner did profound work for the environment and profound work for education.

I will also touch briefly on EMILY's List. I saw EMILY's List firsthand when it was still in its infancy as a program and a movement. I saw its advocacy in places such as the Bellarine electorate in 1996, where

Elaine Carbines, a teacher with a young family, took on the role of a candidate of the Labor Party during a pretty hard time for the party with the support and advocacy of EMILY's List and people like Joan. I saw firsthand the absolute importance of the movement for people in electorates like Bellarine, which cover substantial geographical areas. They have changed a lot in 20 years. We do not use fax machines or things like that now, but for candidates like Elaine to be able to get both material commitments and moral support from EMILY's List ensured that they felt they were representing the Labor Party and the movement.

What is particularly memorable for me is that while the Labor Party candidate for Bellarine was not successful on that occasion, they were successfully elected to the other place for our party at the 1999 election. That was possible largely because people like Joan, through their advocacy and supportive work, were able to encourage Elaine and other women to continue their contributions in seeking representative politics both in the Labor Party and in the Parliament.

It is a credit to Joan and her work with EMILY's List that countless women have not been lost to the Parliament or the Labor Party, because they have been encouraged to continue to make those contributions. For Elaine in particular I know that having that support in 1996 was a very big part of her being able to stump up and tackle that challenge again in order to have that opportunity to make a contribution in the Parliament. That is absolutely a credit to the work that Joan has done, and I am sure that many other women have had the opportunity to back themselves with great support from her.

Lastly, I touch on her work in the role of communities ambassador with neighbourhood renewal. Earlier I was talking with the member for Bellarine about the work done for the Whittington neighbourhood renewal, but I also put on the record that the neighbourhood renewal project in West Heidelberg empowered local residents, particularly in public housing estates, to have a greater say and have their voices heard about the resources and priorities they seek from the government and its departments. The project provided the opportunity for Joan to come out and talk to our neighbourhood renewal group, but in particular it was valuable because it created an opportunity to put the acid on both bureaucrats and MPs to make sure that those neighbourhood renewal meetings were useful. It ensured that we were listening to and empowering the people for whom we were gathered in the room and that we were doing our best work with and for them.

Joan's work was often best done at half-time with a tea or a coffee, and after that local residents had an opportunity to have a word with her and put to her questions they needed to make sure were asked. It was not for Joan necessarily to speak for these people, but she made sure that she shared a platform with them so their voices were heard and their priorities were listened to and acted on. The neighbourhood renewal project came at an important time, and Joan really understood what her role was. It was to engage people and to make sure that their voices were heard and that government always responded to the needs of local communities, particularly those without a voice. Perhaps at times the process acted as a bit of an administrative enema given the way some of the groups operated and to make sure from Joan's perspective that people's voices were heard.

In the toughest of times great people get the toughest jobs, and the 1992 election was certainly a tough job. It was the first time that I got to cast a vote for a Kirner Labor government. That was a baptism of fire for the voters in Ivanhoe. As has been touched on by the member for Footscray, we gave out a lot of spot-on Joan bags at the time. Joan's performance in the 1992 election showed not only the good grace and humour but also the steely determination of Joan Kirner in leading not only the Labor Party but the state. She has left a lasting legacy, as has been touched on, in environment policy and everlasting reforms that are getting stronger today. Her legacy in terms of education has also been touched on, and the Labor Party is now a more inclusive party because of the work Joan did. It is a more representative party because of the reforms she played a role in. She demonstrated how the Labor Party needs to respond and conduct itself when it is tested at the most difficult times.

It is with the deepest of condolences that I give thanks on behalf of the Ivanhoe electorate for Joan's life and thank and give thought to Ron and the family.

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I also rise to express with this house my condolence upon the passing of Joan Elizabeth Kirner. In many ways Joan was the embodiment of somebody born in the fiery crucible of politics. She wore the tag of an activist with pride, and she demonstrated everything that is valuable to our community in activism. The Premier indicated today that Joan Kirner was not somebody who could determine the time at which she moved into governance, but rather she was remembered for that time and how she dealt with the challenges that confronted her.

Joan Kirner was not somebody who spent her time worrying about how her life or her works would be reported. She invested in living legacies, and those legacies adorn the Andrews government in both our cabinet and our caucus. As a consequence of the opportunities that come from the education that she was such a fundamental part of providing we have talented female representatives and talented representatives from multicultural backgrounds in Parliament. Joan made an investment in a living legacy, and the Labor Party should be proud to recognise the outstanding adornment she was to Labor in leadership.

I had a very similar experience to that of the member for Williamstown. The phone call I received from Joan Kirner started out somewhat differently, but fundamentally the message was the same. She told me I was going to win preselection. I thought, 'That's nice. She's called me to tell me that. Presumably in Labor Party parlance that means that party is going to support me'. But, no, not for Joan; she did not want me to sit back wondering for one second if her values were wavering. She said, 'You might win, but I'm not supporting you'. I had known Joan Kirner for the better part of 15 years, and we had worked very closely together on many issues over that time. But the thing that I respected was that Joan was prepared to make that call. She did not have to. She did not have to pick up the phone and tell me something I did not want to hear, but she wanted to remain true to her values. She wanted to remain true to the people who showed up every day and were part of the network of systems that she was attempting to establish. She was really proud — and she had every reason to be proud — of the systems she had established.

She never really sought public life, as the Premier said, but her demeanour, her commitment, her tenacity and her values really demanded of her that she take part. It was part of her nature. It was inculcated in her. In fact, whether it was her work in the environment — including the establishment of Landcare groups, of which there are now 4000 right across the nation — or the implementation of the Victorian certificate of education, you could not come across a more substantial change than the one which Joan Kirner drove. She drove the educational change out of a sense that she did not want to see kids left without opportunities — kids left to fend for themselves in circumstances where far too often the values that were ascribed to them in an educational sense were subjective. She wanted it to be the right of every kid to be able to achieve their full potential, confident in the knowledge that when the state ran an education system, it would do it in a way that meant kids could have confidence that they were graded fairly and accurately.

That is what she stood for so much. It was about giving people opportunity and making sure that there was that level playing field, no matter where you came from, in terms of how you would get your chance in an educational sense.

In many cases Joan did not allow herself to become a hostage to the time she governed. She filled every unforgiving minute in government with 60 seconds of time well run, and she did it because she never lessened the significance of the struggle that so defined her. As a person she took the view that activism was not a pejorative word; it was something that was fundamentally part of her make-up and something she was proud to wear as a community activist. Indeed that was how she described herself in many ways. When people asked, 'Are you a former Premier?', she would say, 'I'm a community activist'. It was so much about what Joan Kirner actually stood for and believed in: empowering people and empowering opportunity.

Joan Kirner was a community activist. She was a role model. She did not just deal with people as ships in the night; when she had a relationship, she would invest in that relationship and she would make a distinct and deliberate effort to enhance, embolden and in many cases empower the people she dealt with. She was proud of the western suburbs and proud to be a representative of them. She never forgot what it meant to come from a background not so much of disadvantage but of the need to continue to improve your opportunities in life.

Of course Joan believed in and was a robust advocate for gender equality, a social justice. The one thing I found with Joan is that she never lost sight of the fact that she had to hang true to her principles all the way along and, might I say, so did her husband, Ron. There was a story that amused me that I think Joan actually told about when she was the Minister for Education. There was a strike, and the Australian Education Union (AEU), as it was wont to do, was looking for the opportunity to protest against the education minister. As it transpired it decided to picket Joan's house. Ron, who was an AEU member — a very strong AEU member — went out the front and tried to convince the protesters that they should go picket the electorate office, not the house of the minister. Anyway, they were not for turning, and they decided they were picketing the house, so Ron invited them in to meet with the Minister for Education in her home. The protesters said, 'Wait a minute, you're a teacher. Shouldn't you be on strike?'. He said, 'I am on strike'. They said, 'How do you get along with the Minister for Education given that you're on strike?'. I think Ron's

comment was, 'She is not the Minister for Education in this home'.

Joan was always somebody the community could be close to and feel relaxed around. People would recognise that she had this capacity to separate herself from the day-to-day responsibilities of office. That made her so much more a substantial member of Parliament. I was recently reading an excerpt around the premiership of Joan Kirner in *The Victorian Premiers — 1856–2006*. The article that was written about Joan described her in the following terms:

Throughout her career, Kirner was considered to be a tough operator; outspoken, resilient and direct.

I can vouch for the accuracy of that observation. The other thing I thought was really interesting in the broad observation is that, almost by way of epilogue, this is what the article had to say about her:

She demanded that both the party and the Parliament become more accepting and open to women; she was defiant in the face of sexist media and political commentary, and outed many a politician for inappropriate and gendered language. Moreover, Kirner remained resolute and determined during difficult times; she was shrewd, tough and ambitious, and demonstrated that such characteristics were equally fitting for a female Premier.

Joan was unique. She was not just the first female Premier but the first Premier to come from a background in community activism, and that is something she was immensely proud of. It was not just a descriptor she adopted; it was a way of life and a value system that she lived large. She emphasised in her maiden speech to this Parliament that she believed the success of Labor governments was very much dependent upon continuing the development of effective linking mechanisms between all parts of our party, including the parliamentary wing and the public. She did not see the business of politics as being there to sit in judgement. She saw the business of politics as rolling up your sleeves and taking the opportunity to win the battle of ideas. She never saw it as a gift which she could bestow in any way she saw fit; she saw it as part of the continuing activism and struggle that so defined her life.

Of course politics in many ways can be defined as your value system. I will not do justice, I am sure, to the conversation I had with Joan I think more than 10 years ago when we were discussing what it meant to pursue a political career. She said something about politics being about values and about choices and that how robustly you embraced your values would dictate how committed you were to follow through on the choices you made in public life. That really defined Joan — not

just that she had a value system she had confidence in but that she had a value system she was robustly prepared to pursue, something that meant a lot to her and provided her with a moral and ideological touchstone during some of the most difficult times governments could endure.

I do not think it was a coincidence that more often than not the women she inspired, including, might I say, former Prime Minister Julia Gillard, considered her as much a mentor as a friend. We have heard from so many people who in the development of their careers were gifted in the knowledge and support of Joan Kirner. Her warmth and determination worked to the betterment of all causes that she cared about. She reminded us that the personal is political and that our politics should always be connected to the people they affect. She stated:

There is no such thing as being non-political. Just by making a decision to stay out of politics, you are making the decision to allow others to shape politics and exert power over you. If you are alienated from the current political system, then just by staying out of it you do nothing to change it, you simply entrench it.

I express my condolences at the passing of Joan Kirner, a woman who was the personification of dignity and grace. She endured a debilitating illness but never once gave into it. As with many other things she endured, she persevered with a smile and rock-solid determination. She taught us a lesson about dignity and grace in the face of adversity. I believe she will be remembered as having helped us all find the better part of ourselves. Vale, Joan Kirner.

Mr EREN (Minister for Tourism and Major Events) — It is with sadness that I speak on the condolence motion for Joan Elizabeth Kirner. Joan had the great honour and privilege of being Premier of Victoria, the leader in this chamber and a leader within the Victorian Labor Party. We as Victorians had the pleasure of having Joan as our first-ever female Premier. Her election to high office said a lot about her and the Labor Party, which was progressive in many ways.

Joan was a hero to many in her local community and to women across Victoria. She came from the kind of background which seems unlikely to give rise to political leadership but often makes for the greatest representatives. Joan's father was a fitter and turner and her mother was a music teacher. My father was a fitter and turner and came here as a migrant. As I did, Joan transitioned from the upper house to the lower house of the Victorian Parliament. Like many members in this chamber today Joan came from humble beginnings.

She was a community-based leader with a passion for reform and improvement in society. Her roots were not in the party hierarchy. Joan led with the sole intention of bringing about a greater level of equality in society. Joan's parents instilled in her from an early age a strong sense of equality and social justice, which could be seen in her leadership and her later life. As the member for Williamstown she was able to draw on her own experiences to provide solid representation for her constituency and, having been a teacher for a number of years, the education sector.

Alongside this, Joan's achieved her greatest success when she led the government. She will always be remembered as the first, and thus far the only, female Premier of this state. Having been elevated from the position of Deputy Premier in 1990, following the resignation of John Cain, Joan inherited a government facing difficult circumstances beyond its control. She always led the party in a fair and diplomatic fashion and stressed the importance of a focus on the communities represented by members of this place and the other place.

As a minister Joan's legacy will remain by way of a number of policies and programs still in place in our system today. Joan was a trailblazer in education reform. In previous contributions we heard what a champion she was. She actively associated herself with a number of committees and organisations prior to becoming Minister for Education. Her presidency of both the Victorian Federation of State School Parents Clubs and the Australian Council of State School Organisations provided Joan with a breadth of knowledge of educational systems and a clear understanding of where educational reform was necessary. Of her many educational reforms the most enduring are the reduction in class sizes, the improvement of school retention rates and her work on the Victorian certificate of education — the VCE.

In her role as Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands — and I know a number of members have made specific mention of this — she established the Rural Women's Network and notably Landcare, which has helped protect the natural wonders of this state for many years. As a female leader Joan proved that women were able to represent electorates just as well as men, even in the highest office of the state. Joan was able to foster a stronger commitment from both sides of politics to open their quarters to women. The women who sit in this chamber today are testament to the unbridled commitment she had to promoting female representation in the Victorian Parliament.

Labor representatives from my own area of Geelong and the broader Western District are Jaala Pulford and Gail Tierney in the other place and the members for Bellarine and Geelong in this place, all of whom are female. I am the only male Labor member from the Western District. It goes without saying that Joan's influence in the Labor Party has meant that our levels of female representation have always been high — and so they should be. She was seen as motivated and at times tough and discerning — all attributes that have become synonymous with strong female leadership in politics.

As a Labor member Joan maintained that the best form of representation is that which comes directly from the people one represents. She believed that deep engagement and a sustained connection with the community should always serve as the paramount purpose of representation. I had the pleasure of hosting Joan on a number of occasions when she came out to my electorate, which takes in Corio and Norlane.

Mr Wynne — Neighbourhood renewal.

Mr EREN — Yes, neighbourhood renewal. I was the president of the Corio Norlane Development Advisory Board and the president of Northern Futures, a wonderful organisation out there. She would come out and give me sound advice about how to move forward in such areas. The Minister for Planning is sitting behind me, and I know that he is very proud of his previous portfolios and has influenced that area in a dramatic way himself. It was wonderful to see Joan's passion for all she represented. She had so much enthusiasm, even in the later stages of her life. When politicians retire from this place, many often want to go to a place where they can have a pension and on occasions come back here and make some worthwhile contribution towards society. But Joan Kirner worked non-stop 24/7; even in retirement she was constantly making sure that every minute of her day was consumed by the work she loved to do. We do not come across people like her very often.

I will refer to some of the positions Joan held. Outside the parliamentary arm of the Labor Party, she was elected president of the Victorian ALP. Her influence within our party has ensured that we continuously strive for equality within our ranks through such actions as the motion to entrench ALP affirmative action, which requires women to be elected to 35 per cent of parliamentary and party positions; the development of EMILY's List; and the co-authorship of the *Women's Power Handbook*. These are all examples of how Joan helped establish policies that encouraged and educated women to rise to take on the representative roles they have since thrived in.

When politics is removed from the life of a politician, a person remains. As a person Joan had a number of personal attributes which made her not only successful in her professional career but also an example of dignity and humbleness in her personal life. Determination, unfaltering commitment to a cause, a strong work ethic and a commitment to equality irrespective of personal circumstances are attributes that we should all strive for individually.

I pass on my condolences to Joan's family and close friends. In particular I pass on my deepest condolences to Joan's husband, Ron, and to her children, Michael, David and Kate and their families. Vale, Joan Kirner.

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — It is great honour and privilege to speak on this condolence motion for a great woman, Joan Kirner. Back in 1982, in her inaugural speech, Joan Kirner made the observation that with her election the ratio of women to men had increased from 1 to 8. She went on to state that this was:

... a very small step towards reasonable representation, which should 50-50.

I know that Joan was so proud to see 27 women elected to the Labor caucus in 2014, and that that ratio is now 1 to 3. She was also enormously pleased to see nine women in cabinet, all of whom in some way have been influenced by, supported and actively championed by Joan. Of course she was there to see the Premier announce that under his government at least 50 per cent of appointments to government board positions and appointments to the judiciary would be women. What a fantastic and game-changing announcement by a Premier who is committed to gender equality, and what a fantastic announcement in the true spirit of all that Joan held dear.

I have to say that nine women in cabinet is three more than the Liberals have supported into this chamber. Thank goodness for The Nationals. Who would have thought that The Nationals would lead the charge in conservative politics by providing opportunity to women in parliament? But, as always, Joan has left us in no doubt that there is more work to do, and EMILY's List Australia — the organisation Joan founded with her great friends Kaye Setches, Leonie Morgan and Helen Creed among others — has thrown out the challenge to the Labor Party for rule changes to increase Labor women's representation to 50 per cent by 2020.

I will speak briefly about Joan's support for women, her pioneering role in Landcare and share some personal experiences. The questions that Joan's passion for seeing more women in Parliament raise are: what is

so important about getting women into Parliament; and what changes will this make? Women's participation in the Parliament is important not just because it is fair, right and equitable but because women can and will change politics. We know that having women in Parliament has changed the debates, and with women's increasing representation we now see evidence of this as our parliaments debate issues like child care, early childhood education, pay equity, family violence, reproductive rights and workplace harassment. These are all issues of deep concern to Victorian women and issues that should be debated in this house and in parliaments around Australia. We owe this to Joan. It is because of women like Joan that these issues are now being championed by women for women.

Women in Parliament will also change the style of politics. This is something that Joan believed very deeply and something that she demonstrated herself. On her own retirement from Parliament her colleagues noted as follows. Dimitri Dollis, a former member for Richmond, said:

Very few people in this chamber have done as much as she has done to change the style of politics: to bring about a stronger, tougher yet gentler, kinder, more intellectual, competent and intelligent way of debating issues.

Sherryl Garbutt, a former member for Bundoora, said:

Having a woman Premier was different; she was not just someone in the same mould. Joan listened more; she sought and considered all views.

As many speakers have said today, Joan was well known for her consultative and inclusive style. Even today some politicians still scoff at consultation and consensus in politics, but Joan knew that in order to deliver the really big reforms it was important to take the community and her colleagues with her.

When Joan was Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, she joined with the then president of the Victorian Farmers Federation, Heather Mitchell. As others have noted, at that time the joining of a feminist Socialist Left Premier with a president of the Victorian Farmers Federation was perhaps a coupling that many did not expect, but it was a very successful one. It was successful because those two women set about meeting with farmers and talking directly to them.

As we know, and as the member for South-West Coast reminded us, Joan faced some pretty tough characters when she was there, not least of which of course were people from my neck of the woods in Tallangatta. We heard that she had some pretty robust confrontations out there but she persisted, and her great strength was her determination to take good ideas to the people,

persuade them to come to her point of view and take them with her on that journey.

What a great and enduring legacy Landcare is. As the member for Ivanhoe told us, Joan did not want to be remembered as the ‘Minister for TLC’ so she shortened Total Land Care — the name suggested by the department — to Landcare. Landcare started here in Victoria, was taken up nationally and now enjoys international success as a model. Joan was one for consultation and inclusion.

I will tell you about the time that I first met Joan Kirner. She was then the Premier and I was a young union apparatchik working for the member for Thomastown’s father. John Halfpenny was a great Labor leader himself, but let us say consultation, consensus and indeed round tables were not his style. It was the early 1990s and Australia was in recession, with a huge youth unemployment issue. As Premier, Joan wanted to convene a round table of employers and unions to talk about the initiatives we could put in place to try to find a pathway to employment for young people. As I said, the then secretary of Trades Hall, John Halfpenny, was not interested in round tables, particularly with people who, he noted to me, had never voted Labor in their lives. As a consequence, he dispatched me to be his representative at that meeting.

I remember walking into this room and observing a woman who even then showed persistence and tenacity. The writing was on the wall, let there be no mistake about that; we knew it in the labour movement at that time. I think I was probably the only other woman in the room. Joan demonstrated that she was going to make people put their ideas on the table. She was not going to let people get off scot-free: she wanted to hear from the industry groups and major employers what they were going to do, as addressing the issue of youth unemployment was not just a challenge for government but a challenge for all of us. I am not sure that I made a great contribution on that day, but I certainly left the wiser for having watched a woman who was a true champion of bringing people together in order to develop good and lasting policy.

A few years after that first and slightly terrifying encounter with Joan Kirner I met her again as a member of a small group of women charged with organising the launch of EMILY’s List in Victoria. It was my great pleasure at that point to be able to sit in on meetings with Joan. These meetings were held in hotel rooms and in women’s houses, and again I observed how Joan could get so much done in a short space of time by taking people with her. She had a big vision and knew where she wanted to go, but she knew

how to take people with her. Importantly, and other people have commented on this, Joan knew how to get the work done. She divvied up responsibilities. She made certain that we all knew what we were meant to do, and we were left in no doubt that if we did not do it, we would not want to show up to the next meeting.

Her tenacity was on display in the establishment of EMILY’s List. There were some grumblings at the time within the Labor Party that EMILY’s List might just shake things up, and indeed it has. From these humble beginnings, women supported by EMILY’s List have only continued to grow. The support offered by EMILY’s List reflects so much of Joan’s style. EMILY’s List is about providing training and mentoring. It is about making sure that there is someone on the end of the phone when you are having a difficult time. It is about women supporting women, friendly calls and, I must say, good fun events. I do remember that Joan was adamant about this. We were not going to be eating chicken and beef at various —

Mr Foley — The San Remo Ballroom!

Ms THOMAS — No, not at the San Remo Ballroom. EMILY’s List events were to be stylish, reflecting Joan herself, and indeed they were. Eighteen years after those first few EMILY’s List events, we have more Labor women than ever in Australian parliaments. In fact in 2008 the current Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, said:

EMILY’s List is arguably the ALP’s biggest faction —

a comment I am sure Joan would have really appreciated.

As commentators in the press have noted, and indeed as members have said today, Joan epitomised politics with purpose. Throughout her life she was purposeful, whether it was in reducing class sizes and campaigning for education facilities or implementing a new senior secondary certificate in order to increase the number of young people completing year 12 and expanding their opportunities. She sought power in order to achieve change for the betterment of all Victorians but in particular those who were most disadvantaged. She sought power to protect the environment through the expansion of national parks. She sought power to protect our farmland into the future through the delivery of Landcare. Throughout all of this Joan had an unashamed focus on social justice, a phrase that has fallen out of fashion but still speaks to Labor’s core values of fairness, opportunity and equality.

Joan Kirner was a truly amazing woman. It has been my great privilege to have known her, to have had

many conversations with her over the years and to have received her support. Joan's memory will live on through the Labor women and men of this Parliament. We owe so much to you, Joan. You are a true Labor hero.

Mr NARDELLA (Melton) — I also rise to speak about Joan Kirner and offer my sincere condolences to her family. I am the only Labor member in this house who was here when Joan was the leader of the party after the devastating loss in the 1992 election. That period of time was extremely difficult for the Labor Party. The party had gone through some very hard times and difficult preselections. The 14 members who were left in the upper house and, I think, 26 members who were left in the lower house really needed leadership support at that very difficult point in time. All parties go through it; the Labor Party is not unique in this. However, Joan Kirner was there, and she provided leadership, support and encouragement through some really difficult times.

After that election we went through some all-night sessions debating legislation to do with getting rid of WorkCare and introducing WorkCover and legislation relating to changes to industrial relations and a range of other matters that were also going through the houses at that time. Also, hundreds of thousands of people were marching to Parliament House opposing those changes because of their draconian nature.

All through that process one person was there to lead the remnants of the Labor Party in this Parliament but also to lead the community in its fight against — and people have said this before of Joan — the unfairness of leaving people behind. The people being left behind were extremely vulnerable people who, for example, had been injured at work. Joan was at the forefront, assisting us not only to get through that period but also to rally the community, which she was so good at doing, and to protect the weak and vulnerable in our society.

I remember those times extremely well. They were certainly very difficult times, but Joan was a real rock for the members of Parliament in that caucus. It needs to be understood that even in that caucus a number of members were difficult and, in a sense, they did not get along. But when the call came and everybody needed to put their shoulders to the wheel, the one person who was there to assist everybody to do that was Joan Kirner as the then Leader of the Opposition and leader of the Labor Party. Until the Honourable Jim Kennan and later the Honourable John Brumby took over, Joan was there to assist everybody, including the community, through that time.

My relationship, and friendship, with Joan Kirner goes back quite a while. In August 1985 I was at an Altona Socialist Left meeting where all the comrades were huddled in the electorate office talking about issues in our federal electoral assembly. Joan came in and said, 'We've done it!'. When we asked, 'What have we done?', she said, 'We've done it. It's been pulled out of a hat. We've won control of the upper house'. She was joyous because that was the only time we had ever had control of the upper house. This was during the period of the Cain government, and we had not had control of the upper house in the preceding three years. It was the only time the Labor Party ever had control of the upper house, and it kept it for only two weeks. However, that is when the WorkCare legislation and the occupational health and safety legislation went through. It was before the Nunawading by-election when Bob Ives unfortunately lost his seat. Joan Kirner knew the importance of being able to pass good Labor legislation for the disadvantaged, the people the Labor Party stands up and cares for. That time was really important for us.

As a party we have been through some really difficult times. I remember I was an organiser with the Australian Labor Party when Joan Kirner attained the position of Premier of Victoria. I remember being at ALP head office in Carlton South when a car pulled up and the then Premier, John Cain, got out. He went to see my state secretary, Peter Batchelor, and informed him that he was resigning his commission as Premier of Victoria. There was quite a lot of activity until the decision was made by the caucus to elect Joan — and she was elected — as Premier of Victoria. I remember my predecessor, the Honourable Giovanni Sgro, getting a phone call from Caroline Hogg asking him to come back from his overseas trip, which he did, to support Joan.

At that time it was tumultuous not only within the party itself but also within the wider community. In August 1990 Joan's first public outing as Premier was to the country conference at Colac. Everybody was there. There were farmers and their utes, dogs, cows and horses. There were people against what was happening with Pyramid Building Society, there were people against the petrol tax to pay for the Pyramid collapse and there were people there from a whole range of disaffected causes. In the main a lot of them revolved around the difficult economic times we had gone through, in the October 1987 stock market crash and then the 1989 property crash. The culmination was massive rallies occurring outside the Colac town hall, where we were having our country conference. One thing that occurred was that Joan came in the front door and went out the front door. That was the nature and the

character of Joan Kirner. She never took a backward step and was absolutely respected for that.

Lots of people have talked about Joan's loyalty to her friends, and she certainly was loyal. Again, as a reflection on Joan, one of the most difficult things we went through as a party back then was the 1991 preselections. One of the difficulties with preselections is that there can be a redistribution of electoral boundaries. The Treasurer at the time was the Honourable Tom Roper, who was at Joan's funeral last week, and his position was under threat. He had lost support on the ground, and in the preselection system within the ALP the vote is split 50-50 between the central panel and members of the local branch. He was in danger. Joan called everybody into her office. If an Exocet missile had come into her office at that time, it would have wiped out the whole intelligentsia — the elite, the leadership — of the Australian Labor Party. Joan was getting everybody to work together on that really serious problem. Eventually she did save Tom Roper, and we did then go to that election. She would really fight hard for her friends, and she was extremely loyal to them.

One of the things members have reflected on today is Joan's lateness. The story I want to tell relates to the 1992 state election. I did all of the party's campaign launches for that election. I went out there and I set it up for the cameras. I remember we were at a kindergarten in Northcote. All of the cameramen, the journalists and the newspaper people were there. The question was, 'Where's Joan?'.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr NARDELLA — Absolutely. 'Where's Joan? We're waiting'. We were told on the mobile phone, 'She's on her way'. We had just gotten mobile phones back then; they were donated to us. First it was, 'She's only half an hour away'; then it was, 'It should just be another 10 minutes'. An hour and 15 minutes later she turned up. That was the major event for the day. Everybody was a bit irked about waiting, but once she got there and she gave her speech, that was all forgotten, because she was engaging and she talked about the real issues that the people wanted to hear about and wanted solutions to. Lateness was one of the difficulties that we experienced with her, even when she was Premier.

The Our Community conference will never be the same. I remember going to the Our Community conferences when Joan was speaking. She would mesmerise the delegates. She would talk to them about the issues that concerned them and how to tackle those

issues. One of her interesting sayings was, 'What are you going to do about it?'. Some of the discussions that occurred were about how you find solutions to the things that are affecting communities at various levels: at the micro level, at a district level, at a regional level and then at higher levels. It was really important for those delegates to hear Joan and hear of her experiences, and she will be sorely missed for that.

I want to finish off on education. Some people might say I am getting a bit old in the tooth.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr NARDELLA — Yes, maybe a few. When I went through school I was unique.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr NARDELLA — I still am; thank you very much. At that time, within the whole community of Victoria, the number of people who did form 6 — or year 12 as we call it now — was around 23 per cent. To go to university was a massive step. That changed with the coming of the Whitlam government. Honourable members need to understand that by the end of Joan Kirner's term as Premier, through the things that she and her colleagues did and what the previous Premier, John Cain, did, that figure became 80 per cent. As a result of that, the aspirations of those working-class families could be realised and what their kids could achieve in their lives increased. They could have the opportunity that previously only a very few select, elite, hardworking or exceptional people had in their lives. That achievement of going from 23 per cent to 80 per cent within a space of around 20 years, with the intervention of the Cain and Kirner governments, was I would say quite miraculous because of the effort it took to pull people up from where they came from. One of Joan Kirner's major legacies is the wellbeing of people in our community, and the opportunities the young people of that time — who are now old, as well as bald and fat — had to achieve their aspirations.

I think the member for Essendon touched on this or the member for Bentleigh — I cannot remember. When Joan was elected Premier, in all of that period of time there was one good front page in the *Herald Sun* — only one. Members can go back and have a look. The work that people like Piers Akerman and others did to destroy that government — to destroy what it did, what it achieved and what it was trying to do under extreme economic circumstances — was despicable. Some older members might remember the stickers saying, 'Is that the truth? Or did you read it in the *Herald Sun*', which we all put on the back of our cars. That was one

of the really disappointing aspects of that time — that unfortunately a number of those organisations went after Joan personally, as well as going after the government.

Having said that, Joan was a fantastic person. She was somebody I absolutely respected and had a lot of time for. She had a lot of time for me, and I appreciate that. We had many chats both in Strangers Corridor and elsewhere. I offer my condolences to Ron and the family, including David, who I know personally from working with him for a period of time at the ALP head office. Vale, Joan Kirner.

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — A portrait of the Honourable Joan Kirner, AC, Victoria's first ever and only female Premier, *Still Opening Doors*, was on display at her funeral at Williamstown town hall last Friday. Like many, I have been with Joan Kirner in many rooms, in many places. It was always a pleasure and a privilege to welcome her and to be welcomed by her. Joan ventured wider and higher in the places and people she met than did most of us. She led a busy and powerful life. She was always a well-prepared teacher, a leader looked up to, especially in difficult times — the boss. She was always pleased to see you and everyone else in any room anywhere. She was a keen listener, a leader who led by example — first among equals.

There is much to say about Joan's life, public and private: bright child, star student, community activist, mother, politician, Labor Premier, feminist, friend, grandmother and, as the Premier said today, the Labor Party's great companion. My parliamentary colleagues have eloquently spoken. It has been a tad heartening to see the media coverage of her — the best ever at last.

Deputy Speaker, it is as though Joan were in the chair, making sure each of us is making our own special contributions to her story. My brief contribution will feature the three-plus years we spent working together on the Hampton Park community renewal project in my first term as the member for Narre Warren South. I loved every minute of it, and I know Joan loved it too, and everyone loved Joan. I noticed on that long rollcall of organisations and groups Joan was involved with — and I know for sure there are many more in many other places that she regularly supported, visited and plotted and planned with — the absence of the boardrooms of the big end of town. It is my strong contention that they too would have greatly benefited from her sharp instincts, her contemporary insights and her indefatigable work ethic. As the strongest advocate for social justice I have ever met, her involvement would have resulted in a more inclusive, much improved corporate environment for workers, employers, the

community and the environment. 'Dividends all around' would have been the call if Joan had been involved.

She was really thrilled with the Premier's commitment to 50 per cent female representation on government boards and appointments. It would be a fitting tribute and acknowledgement of Joan Kirner's enormous contributions to the lives of all Victorians — yes, she touched all Victorians — if the business world joined that project too. It is time. It is time to catch up.

Instead, groups like the Hampton Park Community Renewal Committee got the benefit of Joan's presence and purpose. Recently, at Joan's Williamstown home over a cuppa with me and — another first — former Speaker Judy Maddigan, she declared how much she had enjoyed her role as Victorian Communities Ambassador and how valuable community renewal projects are for governments and communities alike. She had a profound belief that the people who are affected by decisions should be part of making them. In fact she said she was going to write a letter to the Premier. I know she did, because that same afternoon she rang me to tell me it was in the post. There is still more to do on Joan's everlasting to-do list.

I recall Joan arriving at Hampton Park, alighting from a big white car. I do not think everyone really believed she was going to come, but she did, in her own inimitable style. She just kept coming, day and night, to make sure we kept going, and of course we did because we did not dare not to; she checked up on us. I asked members of the Hampton Park Community Renewal Committee how they remember Joan. I know Joan would value their comments, as she did everyone's and would have wanted their views to be heard together with ours, because we were all privileged to have her as our constant mentor, dear friend and belligerent and beguiling advocate. At this stage I put on the record my heartfelt and enlightened gratitude to Ron Kirner, their children Kate, David and Michael, and their grandchildren for sharing their wife, mother and grandmother with us.

To the good people of Hampton Park, Erica Maliki, who transformed her anger and grief into community action. We will never forget the Walk for Hallam Road. She said:

Joan was an absolute inspiration to me. She is quite honestly the best woman I ever met and made me believe that anything I put my mind to, I could achieve. As an ambassador to the Hampton Park community renewal she made us strive to make it work. Her presence at our meetings and constant encouragement helped make the project such a success.

Vanassa Gerdes, who led a business organisation and partnered it with a community development project — win-win! — said:

Joan Kirner was an inspirational woman — passionate, a great leader, and her generosity was outstanding — we'll miss her. She had a huge impact on us and I know was much loved by everyone involved in community renewal.

Tony O'Hara, a long-serving community leader who got even more done with Joan by his side — roads were his specialty — said:

Joan played an integral role in helping the local community secure the much-needed upgrade of Hallam Road — her advice and involvement was exceptionally valuable.

Lynette Kelaher, a councillor at the time and just learning a new role, said:

I found Joan to be such a warm and generous woman, who was always so willing to provide advice and comfort. She was a true inspiration and mentor to all women.

Warren Calder, president of just about everything in Hampton Park, including renewal, said:

When you met her she was not like a politician. She made you feel you could do it, made you feel good about yourself — more, she made you feel better than you ever believed you could feel about yourself. We had one hell of a good time together and after 15 years of disappointment, we got that damn road.

Then there is Eddy Vrieze, a retired teacher whose wife, Kaye, had worked with Joan. Kaye told him, 'Eddy, get involved. You'll learn something'. Eddy said:

Joan was remarkably sharp on providing advice. She would listen to everything and was always able to come up with a solution to any problem we had.

Kaye, who is also on the Victorian Women's Roll of Honour, said Joan would move mountains to support any program that would assist those in need.

Pamela Thornton, who became a newsletter coordinator in her retirement, said:

Joan had a wonderful ability to see the heart of the problem. Clear thinking was one of her strengths. When our committee was at an impasse, tossing thoughts around, Joan was able to bring it all together and say, 'How about this?', and suggest a motion we could all approve of. It was magic. Her empathy, modesty and ability to just have fun are the attributes I think of first. Such a pity she could not stay longer.

For me, the people have said it all. Joan opened doors for all of us. So many people — so many of us — are so grateful for the generous, resilient and honourable life of Joan Kirner.

I will end with a lesson from Matthew 7:7, which says:

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

Or to paraphrase Joan, sitting outside the then Minister for Education's office:

We're not going anywhere until you let us in and listen to what we have to say.

Vale, Joan Elizabeth Kirner.

Ms HUTCHINS (Minister for Local Government) — I rise to join this condolence motion for Joan Elizabeth Kirner, AC, a well-respected and loved Labor leader and our first and only female Premier.

Joan was a teacher. She started her teaching career in 1963 as a technical school teacher. She would spend almost 20 years as a teacher before entering politics. For many us in generations X and Y, doing 20 years of anything is almost unheard of, let alone spending alone 20 years as a teacher before entering this place.

Joan served on boards and was president of various school groups, including the Victorian Federation of State School Parents Clubs. Although Joan left teaching to pursue politics, she never actually stopped being a teacher. She spent her whole life mentoring, passing on what she had learnt and equipping the next generation to continue to fight for the causes she devoted her life to. That is where I met Joan — as a mentor and as a teacher of politics, along the way of my political life.

To pay respect to Joan is to acknowledge not only all of her achievements but also the sort of person she was. Many of my colleagues here today have talked about the generosity of Joan's spirit, how she would always ask her colleagues how they were travelling, how their families were and how politics was for them on every single occasion she came across you. It was extremely special. Joan was always extremely supportive.

In 1982 Joan was elected to the other place as a member for Melbourne West Province, and in 1988 she was elected to this place as the member for Williamstown. As a member of the newly elected Labor government she busily set about her tasks very seriously, including the various committees she sat on and extending her undeniable talent to go on to become the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands in 1985. Joan would go on to hold several other ministries, including her beloved education portfolio and, when she was Premier, the Minister for Women. They were the two portfolios that defined her time both in and post

politics — the empowerment of all Victorians through education and gender equity.

Back in 1987, at the tender age of 15, I had the privilege of having a great politics teacher at school, which inspired my love of politics. Unfortunately, though, I had a very uncooperative maths teacher, who was not very supportive. After arguing with me one day about talking in class, he made the comment in front of the whole class — my maiden name was Sykes — ‘Ms Sykes, if you don’t shut up, you’re never going to amount to anything in life other than the president of the mothers club’. To which I retaliated, ‘If I become the president of the mothers club, I should be so lucky, because I will not stop there’.

It was only a few years later that Joan Kirner became Premier. I was sitting in the back of the car with my parents and I remember listening to her story as they went through her career before she arrived at the esteemed position of Premier. I heard that as part of her journey Joan had been the president of the parents club at Croydon North Primary School. This gave me inspiration — not to mention the fact that my mum was also the president of the mothers club at my primary school — about how personal activism could lead to political careers and career choices for women.

In 1990 Joan became Premier. Many have spoken about her tenacity and bravery in taking on that role when the economy was in such a difficult position and the government was struggling to deal with it. Beyond the politics of Joan’s time as Premier, the simple act of having the courage to take on the role and be an example for every woman in Victoria left such a powerful and lasting legacy. We can only wonder just how many women are now in power or in leadership roles in Victoria as a result of Joan’s example.

In Joan’s final speech in this place she said:

To have been the first woman Premier of Victoria was not only a great opportunity but also a great chance to say to the young women of Victoria, Liberal or Labor, ‘You can do it, too’.

After Joan’s career politics came the birth of EMILY’s List in 1996, thanks to her great support and encouragement. That organisation is dedicated to empowering, networking and supporting women to run for elected positions in local government, state parliament, across our party and in federal Parliament. Building upon the great debates in 1993 — which I was proud to be a part of — around the affirmative action campaigns, we saw EMILY’s List boost and support the number of women in our elected positions. In 1980 there were 60 Labor women in parliaments around

Australia. There are now 152. I put that down to the great lot of work done by EMILY’s List.

Joan was also a very astute political observer. She could often sum up people in the flash of an eye. In 2005 I had the opportunity to attend the federal launch of Labor’s child care policy in the lead-up to the federal election. I had a four-month-old baby on my hip. I walked into that launch with the then Labor leader, Mark Latham. All of the mothers with babies on their hips got chaperoned to the front and asked to stand in front of the cameras while the new Labor leader made his announcements.

Babies being babies, they do not always behave just because the cameras are on. My four-month-old decided to exercise his lungs numerous times at a pretty high pitch in the middle of the leader’s speech, during which Mr Latham kept stopping and glaring at me. There was not much I could do. After a few minutes of this happening and with announcements constantly stopping because of the baby’s noise, Joan could see I was getting a little distressed at the situation and walked across the room in front of the cameras and took my son from me, put him on her hip and continued to stand there. When the press conference was over she turned to me and said, ‘If that man cannot survive through a squealing baby, I don’t know how long he is going to last in politics’. She was a great observer and she was always very encouraging of women when they had to bring their children to events, as we have heard from previous speakers.

I would also like to touch on another great story of Joan’s, one which I am not sure that many people in the house would know about, and that is her meeting Lady Gaga. In 2009 Joan was on a plane going to a conference and there was a woman sitting next to her who was dressed quite exotically — she was in long boots, had long hair and had on lots of make-up. People say that fate often has a good sense of humour. On that day fate certainly had a good sense of humour because Joan sat next to Lady Gaga on that flight from Melbourne to Adelaide.

Neither of them really knew who the other was. At first glance the pair were not drawn to each other, but on the flight they started talking about America, Obama, the presidency and everything. Eventually Lady Gaga asked Joan what she did. Joan told her that she used to be the Premier of Victoria, to which there was a blank stare. After explaining that the premier is essentially the same as a governor, Lady Gaga was quite impressed and asked Joan what it was like to be a female governor. Joan replied, ‘Why don’t you tell me what it’s like to be a female singer?’. Lady Gaga said, ‘It’s

really tough actually'. Joan retorted that being a female governor was just the same. They went on to agree that they had both come to the realisation in life that what people thought of you did not matter as long as they knew what you stood for. I think fate shined down on both Joan and Lady Gaga on that flight that day.

A good friend of mine, Mel McGrath, who could not be with us at Joan's funeral on Friday because she is overseas, had this to say in reflecting on Joan and her life:

Before I met Joan I had never met an older woman made of such steel, with such a mind and who had to break down so many barriers to carry her power. Long after she was Victoria's first and only woman Premier she looked out for young women, passed on her wisdom, gave us a hand and the occasional kindly kick up the bum. I am braver because I knew her. I trust myself more because she trusted me. I learnt what a woman with power looks like close up and I learnt that I can make a difference if I want to.

I think those words are very fitting, and I could not agree with them more.

Four years ago I had the privilege of being elected to the national executive of the Australian Labor Party. It has been a long four years in that role. During that time I was also appointed as a member of the subcommittee of the national affirmative action working group, which is something I have taken very seriously over the last two years. It has not been an easy road discussing issues and negotiating with all the groups across all the states. That group has now finalised its work and will be reporting to the national conference in Melbourne in July. It is a 20-page report that contains many recommendations; it has both Joan's fingerprints and foresight all over it. It continues to support affirmative action quotas for preselection and it looks to enforce rule changes so that those quotas are upheld at preselection time. It also goes further in outlining an engaged plan to build the membership of women and improve women's representation in appointed and elected positions across the party. I look forward to having those debates at the conference and know that Joan will be watching over us.

I thank you, Joan, for your advocacy, for leading the way for women in our party, for leading the way for women in this state and for putting the ladder up and helping others to climb it, because all too often there are women who make their own way up and do not do that. You certainly did. Thank you for your support in the affirmative action debate for many years now, thank you for helping to establish EMILY's List and, most importantly, thank you for supporting me on my journey. On Friday at Joan's funeral Helen Reddy's voice belted out of the speakers singing *I Am Woman*.

The most fitting tribute to Joan was that so many women at the funeral joined in and sang along. That was a fantastic tribute.

I pay my condolences and respects to her husband, Ron, to Michael, Kate and David, to her grandchildren, to her cousins, to her broader family, to all those who would have called her a friend, to all those at EMILY's List and to all those she mentored. She is leaving a big hole for us to fill in the Australian Labor Party. To quote a phrase from EMILY's List, which I know was coined by Joan:

When women support women, women win.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — This is indeed a sad and solemn day for this Parliament, for Joan Kirner's family and for thousands of her friends across this great state who loved, respected and admired her. It is, however, a chance to celebrate a life well lived and to marvel at the triumph that this wonderful woman achieved and what she has meant to the women and girls of this state in the recent past, the present and the great future that unfolds before us.

Other speakers before me, from the Premier onwards, have spoken of her many achievements in public policy. I want primarily to make a personal reflection as a now middle-aged woman on how she impacted my life. When I first stood for election in 1976, to the student representative council for year 7 gold at St Ann's College in Warrnambool, only four women had ever been members of this Parliament. When I first voted in 1982 and saw Labor elected to office in Victoria for the first time in my lifetime, there had been only 11 female MPs. At that election there was a mass influx of an additional six female MPs, one of whom was Joan Kirner, and for the first time another great role model of mine, Pauline Toner, became the first female minister in any government in this state. It is remarkable to think that a mere eight years later Joan Kirner would become Premier. What an amazing achievement it was to go from a total of 17 women having ever been members of this place to Joan Kirner being Premier in only eight years.

It was during her first term in Parliament, in 1985, that I met Joan Kirner. To me she had always been David's mum. The place was a share house in Turner Street, Abbotsford, opposite Victoria Park, where David lived with my sister, Gabrielle, and Warrnambool sisters Jane and Lyn Farrell. Many a Young Labor gathering happened there. I met a young Lily D' Ambrosio, Andrew Scott, Michael and Brendan O'Connor and a young Julia Gillard. If only those walls could talk! It is just amazing to think of that house, and I can see the

Minister for Industry is also remembering just how remarkable it was for her and I to have met the first female Premier and the first female Prime Minister in that house.

My country uncles loved and admired Joan because of Landcare. My country aunts loved her because of the Rural Women's Network, where I later had the privilege to work. Both these networks demonstrated that Joan believed in justice for all; it was not for her to confine her concerns to traditional Labor areas. I heard on Friday the former Victorian Farmers Federation vice-president, Alex Arbuthnot, speaking about Joan's time as Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands and the establishment of Landcare. Today, a mere 30 years on from the formation of Landcare, 91 per cent of Australian farmers — not just farmers in this state but farmers across the country — are either Landcare members or adhere to Landcare practices. I saw firsthand the power of the Rural Women's Network in embracing and enhancing women's leadership in small communities all over the state by supporting women to lead, by having them recognised for their leadership and by supporting their men and communities through many difficulties, including drought and dislocation.

The member for Footscray earlier mentioned the Spot on Joan event, which I had the privilege of attending. I can see the Minister for Industry is nodding again. I think we have moved in the same circles. I went there with my mum — I do not think my mum voted Labor until the late 1990s, and she may not have even voted Labor until I was elected in 2002. After hearing Joan talk about her early working life, my mum, who is only two years younger than Joan, said, 'You just don't know what it's like to see that a woman heads this state'. That event showed Joan's great sense of humour and her determination to stare down the critics. Who could ever forget her impersonation of Joan Jett and her performance of *I Love Rock'n'Roll*.

Joan was an inspiration to all in public life not to take ourselves too seriously. I have many examples of Joan not taking herself too seriously. One of them is from 1994, and the Premier has already mentioned that day in Parkville when the Labor Party passed its first affirmative action rules. The next day Joan was to announce her retirement from Parliament. A large group of us was celebrating the affirmative action achievement — the 35 per cent by 2002 rule — which I am pleased to say we have never needed to invoke; we just got there ahead of time. In the lower house we have never had to use it, even when we went to 40-40-20 rule. I know Joan will be looking down on us when the debate on Joan's law occurs at our national conference here in Melbourne in July.

At the beer garden at the Railway Hotel in North Carlton my then toddler son, Carlo, was playing at Joan's feet. He roared out loudly so that everyone could hear, 'Mum! Here's a caterpillar doing a poo — and Joan Kirner!'. I was pretty devastated, and everyone was looking at me. Joan just roared with laughter and said, 'He's just like my grandson, Ned — and he has his priorities right'. She knelt down with Carlo, and together they watched the caterpillar doing a poo — she certainly did have all-ages appeal.

I posted some photos on Facebook last week. One of them was Joan at her 76th birthday party last year, to which I went with my mum. It was a photo of her and a family friend, Denise Ryan. Last year I was at the Victorian Women's Honour Roll for International Women's Day at the Windsor Hotel. I was there with my 16-year-old work experience student Isabella Tatchell from Monivae College in Hamilton. She was so excited to meet Joan and have her photo taken — Joan's appeal had not lost its gloss all those years on.

Joan was a much-loved leader. She was our first and only woman Premier. She was an adviser, friend, confidante, mother, grandmother, teacher, parent leader, warrior for choice, would-be rock star and Bombers supporter. My personal and political lives are so much richer for having known and loved Joan. I will treasure the many handwritten letters sent to me containing wisdom, sage advice and support. I especially valued her beautiful, loving words to me after the horrific Black Saturday fires that helped me through the fog of my grief and gave me the strength to lead my community at its worst hour. I take this opportunity to read those terribly scrawly words handwritten on the card that Joan wrote with so much love. The card is dated 12 February 2009, and it was written at her home in Williamstown:

Dear Danielle

Just a note to do three things.

First, to congratulate you, your staff, volunteers and government and non-government workers —

she always thought of the workers —

on the magnificent job they have done in fighting these tragic fires and beginning the rebuilding of local communities.

Second, to remind you and yours to take care of yourselves as you work — indeed you have to, to ensure you can keep caring for the community you represent.

Third, to offer my support, if ever you need it in the rebuilding program, particularly rebuilding community. It will be a long process made easier by working together.

Danielle, you've probably shed many a tear by now. But remember it's your empathy and ability to connect your community's needs to government that is appreciated by your electorate. Love and best wishes from Joan Kirner.

I know many in this place had similar handwritten notes from Joan. She never stopped caring about everyone in her circle. Hutch Hussein said at Joan's funeral on Friday that she felt like she had an extra mother, and I think many of us feel that way.

I want to thank the fantastic members of my community, the hundreds of them, who have made some lovely comments about Joan on my Facebook page and in the condolence book that the Labor Party has established. I am so glad the Premier has indicated that we will do something long lasting to commemorate this fantastic woman and her contribution to this community.

It is quite remarkable that when Joan Kirner entered this place in 1982 only 17 women had served in this Parliament. She was one of the 17. Now in a short time — that is, from the first time I voted — much work has been led by Joan Kirner, and now 126 women have served in this Parliament, 76 of them Labor women. I think Joan touched each and every one of us. Thank you so much, great sister.

I conclude, just as the Minister for Local Government did, by referring to the fantastic song *I am Woman*. It is an anthem for so many of us who have gone into public life, and I am proud that it was written by an Australian, Helen Reddy. Joan Kirner embodied every line of the song. I will always think of you, Joan Kirner, whenever I hear or sing that song. Vale, Joan Elizabeth Kirner. You will be missed by so many. Deepest sympathy to your fantastic gentle husband, Ron; to my old young Labor mate, David Kirner; and to Michael, Kate and the large extended family. Thank you so much for sharing her with us.

Mr SCOTT (Minister for Finance) — I rise to offer my sincere condolences to the family and friends of Joan Kirner, especially her husband, Ron, their three children, Michael, Kate and Dave, and her four grandchildren. Much of what I would have said has been already touched upon in great detail by previous speakers, but there are a couple of points I would like to make.

The career of Joan Kirner touches on one of the most important debates, but if I were honest, I would say it is often inferred rather than said directly. Hers was a career that directly touched upon the equality of who has access to and wields power in our society. We are elected representatives, and we have a very privileged

place in the community by being able to make laws and form executive government through the parliamentary system. But it would be a lie to say that access to power has been or even today is equally distributed in the community.

Joan Kirner did much more than most politicians, and perhaps more than any politician, to address one aspect of democratising access to power. She saw a great wrong in that women had not been given fair access to power, particularly in elected office but also in broader aspects of society, and with an unflinching will she confronted that and sought through her actions, both in the Parliament and in great part outside of the Parliament, to address this great injustice. Through her work with EMILY's List and within the party but also in terms of advocating in the community she sought to democratise and more fairly share within the community the opportunities of those with access to power by ensuring there was greater representation of women in forums such as this, including federal Parliament, and in other forums.

If our democracy is to live true to the creeds upon which we seek to hold it, then who is elected, what background they come from and, in the case of the issues highlighted by Joan Kirner's life and work, what gender they are is an important issue and one that is often touched upon, as I said, by inference rather than directly confronted — because power is not equally shared in our society and any pretence that it is does not reflect the facts. Joan did many things in her life, but she believed deeply in equality, both in equality of opportunity and in more equal outcomes, and her life was about ensuring that positions of power and authority were more fairly shared in society, and that once power was obtained, it was used both to create further equality of opportunity and more equal outcomes for society.

In making this contribution it is worth my touching upon not just the issues of greater representation in parliaments and in other positions of leadership but also in confronting issues of equality in terms of education, because in 2015 it is hard to think about the sort of society that existed when Joan Kirner became active in politics. There was an expectation in the electorates I represent that children would not go to university, that they would go to a tech school, obtain a trade and that the opportunities that existed in the leafy suburbs to pursue academic pursuits would not in large part be for them. Her reforms to and work on the Victorian certificate of education (VCE) went a long way to redressing that, but those battles are still not finished; we do not live in Utopia.

There was a significant change in the expectations in our society about fair access to opportunity in all forms of social advancement and employment through education, that great tool of meritocracy, and of broadening opportunities in the community. Her work in ensuring the reforms around the VCE went a long way towards ensuring greater equality of opportunity and, indeed, equality of outcomes. It is important to note Joan's focus on ensuring that children who faced disability had access to fair opportunity as well as her deep commitment to equality of opportunity, which is a task that is certainly unfinished, in terms of our Aboriginal community.

Much else has been touched on by previous speakers, and I do not intend to go over the same ground in detail. But in her life Joan was drawn to combating injustice and ensuring that power and authority in our society was more evenly and equally shared, and that the talents that were for so many generations shut out of decision-making and unfairly shut out of positions of authority were afforded an opportunity to make their rightful contributions to our community. Vale, Joan Kirner.

Ms WARD (Eltham) — I am sure Joan Kirner would be happy to know that I was just talking about Essendon's dismal performance on the weekend with another Essendon supporter.

I stand in Parliament today on the shoulders of the Labor women who have come before me and who opened the doors that have helped to bring a record number of female Labor MPs into this place — women like Pauline Toner, Lynne Kosky and former Premier Joan Kirner. Without these women my journey into politics would no doubt have been a lot harder. I salute their bravery. Today I salute Joan Kirner, a formidable woman with a strong heart, a strong mind and a very strong will.

It has been a joy to listen to the personal recollections of Joan, which paint a very clear picture of the kind of woman she was. She was a thoughtful, clever and inclusive woman who contributed an immeasurable amount not only to the Labor Party but also to our state. I cannot emphasise enough how important it was to be in Joan's presence not only for my own political apprenticeship but also for those of so many Labor women.

We have heard many stories of Joan over the last week, and what I think summed up a lot of what Joan has meant to us, especially on this side of the house, was the idea that with Joan we finally had our own female Premier who was not closed off to us. We could find

her not on the golf course or in a club filled with men but in public bathrooms and toilets, caravan parks and camping grounds as well as at a huge number of events where women were gathered. It is a lesson that I know the current Premier takes very seriously.

We were finally getting a bit of what the blokes had had for aeons — informal, direct access to power. Women had access to our own, to someone who had shared much more of our journey with us than any other Premier. She knew what it was like to have jobs denied you because of your gender. She knew the challenges of juggling children and work. She knew the challenges of having your appearance being remarked on before any other part of your character.

This treatment of Joan's appearance by so many during her time as Premier was just terrible. It was awful. Those stupid cartoons of Joan in her spotted dress, brandishing her handbag, clearly illustrated just what so many men — and some women — thought of the idea of women in power. Joan herself spoke many times of the sexism she experienced, and often it would be in tones that would reflect her sometimes naughty sense of humour. She would gleefully tell this one story, revelling in the silliness and lack of imagination of some in the media. She would talk of the *Herald Sun* cartoonist Geoff Hook, who said:

Frankly, I have had this nightmare that one day a lady would become Premier or Prime Minister ever since women started entering the political arena. How could we possibly ridicule a member of the opposite sex, a sex we've been brought up to respect, open doors for, give up our seat on the tram for?

The cartoonist then went on to suggest that in Joan's protestations about not owning a polka dot dress 'she is really telling her husband it is time he bought her one'.

It is so interesting to note just how at sea many in the media were at experiencing a woman with power. It is maddening to see that there are still some in our media who struggle even today with the idea of women in power. It was not the caricature of herself that Joan disliked, as we have heard — Joan was not one to take herself too seriously — it was the portrayal of her as a person lacking strength, a leader who was not capable of managing power, because she was a woman. Joan said:

I always think there is a sense of strength that comes through in cartoons about male political leaders ... There is a tendency still to portray me as a housewife. I am, but I am not just a housewife. Most women are, but not just. It's not the dress.

Men, said Joan Kirner, are judged by their contribution, while women are judged by their image. Joan went on to say in her interview with Jane Cafarella:

I've been in the public eye for 25 years. I've never had any problem with criticism. I've given a lot and I've copped a lot. But I believe I've got a role to play by insisting that women be judged by their contribution — not somebody's view of what they should be about.

This is exactly right. Women should be judged by their contribution, not by what someone thinks they should be or what they wear or their style of hair.

When we look at media at that time, we see that women were not to be taken seriously and that they could only be viewed through one prism — that of their appearance. In 1999 Jenny Macklin, now the federal member for Jagajaga, commented on the inability of cartoonists to see 'the politician that is the woman'. During Joan's time in this place, she was seen by a vast number in our media for the polka dots she never had rather than for the woman she actually was. Over the last week we have heard a little about polka dots and much more about the woman Joan was and what she gave to our state and to the Australian Labor Party. It is Joan's legacy that has lasted, not the polka dots — and they have faded away.

One of the most important gifts Joan gave women, especially Labor women, was validation. She validated our frustrations, our views and our passion to have our voice heard. Her push for increased female representation in my party has been a great success. The Andrews government has an unprecedented number of women in its cabinet, and as a new MP it is wonderful to have so many supportive women in our caucus. I look forward to seeing many more come into this Parliament.

Joan recognised us. She recognised everyone she came in contact with, and that recognition empowered people. I have a great story from a friend of mine who is also a great friend and supporter of many on this side, Jennie Juchnevicius. Jennie, like Joan, has a passion for education and was involved in an education committee which had a meeting with Joan when she was Minister for Education. As they went around the table at the start of the meeting to introduce themselves, people spoke up their CV, keen to impress the minister with how awesome they were. When it was her turn, Jennie said she was a just a mum and the crossing supervisor — or, more likely, Jennie said she was just the lollipop lady. Joan's response is very indicative of not only how caring she was, how perceptive, but also how smart she was.

'Oh', Joan said, 'Well, you are the most powerful person here'. 'How is that?', said Jennie, a little confused — no-one had said that to her before. Joan said, 'Well, you know everything that is going on. All

lollipop people do. Everyone talks to you'. A conversation then ensued about what Jennie knew — what she had heard. Jennie was indeed the most important person in that room. Jennie has never forgotten that meeting, the recognition Joan gave her and the validation Joan gave her.

Joan was good at her lifelong vocation as an activist because she was actually interested in people. She cared about what was happening in their lives. We had a lot of conversations together on the phone when she would ring to either check on Jenny Macklin or give her a job to do. Most of the time it was both. As has been noted by many, it was hard to leave a conversation with Joan without a job to do, either one Joan had given you or one you gave yourself after being inspired by Joan. When Joan rang we would talk about politics, but we would also talk about camping and a variety of other day-to-day things, including our shared love of the Essendon Football Club. She would then get off the phone to me but would not want to go straight on to Jenny Macklin. No, she would want to talk to Robin Burke about where Robin had just been four-wheel driving so the two of them could compare notes. Eventually she would get on to Jenny, and jobs would be allocated.

Joan gave a great deal to my party and to my gender. She gave us an enormous gift in donating so much of herself to the Labor and feminist causes. She has made a very strong mark on the ALP, one that is long lasting and will never fade — unlike those stupid polka dots. It is through this increased representation of women in our Parliament that the Labor Party has a more comprehensive understanding of policy and its effects on the broader community. I cannot thank Joan enough for what she has given us. Her legacy will live on through the progressive policies of the Labor Party and the increasing presence of women in key decision-making roles.

My condolences to all who loved Joan, which is a great many. It is certainly a marker of a life well lived when it is so clear how deeply Joan was loved and respected. We will miss her greatly.

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Industry) — I rise to say a few words about Joan Kirner. What a woman! She was one of a very special kind. Joan was a champion of many causes, so many of which are dear to so many of us still today. When Joan took on a cause, she took on a fight, and she meant it with every fibre of her being throughout every waking moment. There was never rest for Joan — not before victory at least.

Joan began her political life as a community activist and remained one throughout her life. On retirement from the Parliament she did not return to community activism, because she never left it. Her Victorian ambassadorship of the community renewal project is one great example. Not many politicians can have that said about them.

In every facet of her life — as a mother, a teacher and in her paid and unpaid political career — Joan was first and foremost a real leader and a champion for social justice and community. She was a problem solver. She had the certainty that only great confidence and true leadership brings. She floated the dreams, hopes and successes of so many women. In the words of her great friend Jenny Beacham, you could do anything after you spoke to Joan. It is a statement that rings so very true.

Together with many on this side of the house, I was blessed to have known Joan, to have learnt from her and to have been nourished and supported by her. She had an extraordinary gift for identifying what held you back and what gave you inner strength. She was very frank in giving you advice about what you needed to do to get rid of what held you back so that you could grow, deliver on your inner strength, follow your dream or simply fix a problem. I have never met anyone who has matched her skill in that area.

I grew up not having known a state Labor government until I was about 17. The 1982, 1985 and 1988 elections produced a burst of energetic Labor women leaders who shone a bright light for girls and women everywhere, including myself. Amongst them was Joan, who served in several ministerial portfolios and went on to become the first woman Premier at a most difficult time for the Labor government. As always, Joan relished the challenges and rose to gain widespread support and respect for her leadership, which only continued to grow after she left Parliament.

Like my mother, Joan made me feel that I could do anything. Joan showed us what we could achieve by being clear, strong, decent, dignified and generous. Like so many other women, I treasure her notes of encouragement and her phone calls along my political journey. I also treasure the beautiful dress she gave my newborn first daughter. Joan was renowned for such gestures. She always put her best foot forward and extended a gesture, a welcome or an embrace. In this case she welcomed another girl into the world.

I want to mention one of Joan's significant legacies, the affirmative action policy of the Labor Party. Like many other Labor women, Joan watched with dismay as defeated women left politics after the 1992 election. A

significant change had to occur to avoid the marginalisation of women in marginal seats, which was a hallmark of that time. Joan did not waste any time. The result was a tumultuous but concerted campaign that resulted in changes to the party's rules so women could get fair representation, not just in preselection but in the Parliament. Many factional leaders fought very hard against this change.

Not content with changes at the state level, Joan moved to the national level with a whole bunch of women. I remember well the plan that if we got the rule changes up at the national conference, all women there would occupy the central stage of the conference as a show of strength. I urge members to look at our benches here today. I know Joan was very proud of our achievement, and the only way is up. Joan knew it was not enough to work outside the Parliament. What also mattered was bringing women's voices into the Parliament and into government because it would mean better decisions would be made in every policy area, resulting in equal opportunity and fairer outcomes.

Joan always had an eye for future leaders. She ensured that EMILY's List had T-shirts printed in kids' sizes with the slogan 'Future Prime Minister' stamped on them. Some members in the chamber are nodding their heads in remembrance of that.

We thank Joan for her advocacy, for abortion law reform, for education and environmental achievements and for the humour she displayed in turning polka dot caricatures designed to demean women in power into proud Spot on Joan events which celebrated women in power. She hit the heights with the infamous Joan Jett episode of the *Late Show*.

Joan was a generous, wonderful woman. She has left a remarkable and indelible mark on me and on many other Labor supporters and community members. Joan, I will miss your phone calls, your notes and your presence. We will all miss you terribly. My condolences go to Joan's husband, Ron, her children, David, Kate and Michael, and also to her grandchildren. Vale, Joan Elizabeth Kirner.

Mr HOWARD (Buninyong) — I am pleased to briefly share some of my personal memories of Joan Kirner. Joan Kirner first came to my attention, as she did for many people across Victoria, when she became the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands. She immediately stood out as she demonstrated a refreshing, inclusive approach to the role, bringing environmental issues to the broader community's attention and encouraging community members to

become involved in addressing the issues of environmental degradation.

As a secondary teacher I was pleased when Joan became the Minister for Education. She took us forward into a new era, ensuring that education was for everybody and that all secondary school students were able to consider completing year 12. To do that she had to challenge the education system at the time to ensure that courses offered at higher levels of secondary education were flexible and responsive to the needs of young people. She aimed to ensure that students who might have otherwise fallen out of the education system could continue to be engaged. The culmination of her efforts was the introduction of the Victorian certificate of education, which saw the final year of secondary schooling become a course spanning years 11 and 12. The result of that has been so many more students in our schools going on to complete year 12 with raised aspirations and going further into higher education in one form or another. That is a really exciting contribution.

I remember so many of the exciting changes that took place in education under Joan Kirner's leadership as education minister. Many of us were interested in exciting directions in progressive education, but I guess that such changes are not quite so exciting to those who do not take such an approach.

I did not meet Joan Kirner until after 1999 when I was elected to this house as the member for Ballarat East. At our first meeting, at a community event in Daylesford, I introduced myself to her. She responded by saying, 'I know who you are. You're the local member of the area we are in at the moment and you're a former teacher. Haven't you got a role as parliamentary secretary for environment?'. She already knew so much about me, which surprised me. I was taken aback that somebody like Joan Kirner had taken an interest.

We have heard many members, especially Labor women, say that they were encouraged by Joan Kirner. She did a fantastic job of ensuring that women were given the aspiration to strive for the highest office and to achieve, whether it was in parliamentary spheres or in a whole range of other areas. Joan did a fantastic job of that, but her encouragement was not exclusively for women; she also was a terrific support to the male members of this house.

Whenever I met her over a period of years I felt that Joan was taking an interest in and supporting me. As I said earlier, soon after I was elected Joan had observed that I had become parliamentary secretary for

environment and that my role included a review of Landcare. I had several discussions with Joan during that time because, as we know and as we have heard from so many other speakers, she founded Landcare with Heather Mitchell with a view to seeing how people from rural communities could be involved. These days we all know that Landcare is not just about rural communities and that there are urban Landcare groups. Landcare is about empowering people in the community to take an interest in their environment, to come together to support their environment and by doing so empower their own communities.

While speaking about the review I was undertaking of Landcare, Joan emphasised to me the importance of supporting Landcare into the future and empowering it so it could be invigorated and go on to grow into the future. We know that Landcare continues to operate as a very important movement across this state and in other Australian states and that other places around the world have adopted the Landcare model.

Although Joan was a leader in supporting women, on many occasions after I became a member of Parliament and through the years, every time I met her at the community functions she so readily attended she expressed an interest in what I was doing. She showed great warmth, encouraged me and sometimes wanted to offer advice. We always had an intellectual type of discussion where she was clearly interested in what I was doing and wanted to feed into that interest.

Joan was a sensational support, so warm and so supportive, and I will miss those opportunities I had to speak with her. On those occasions I could not help but admire her and share an affection for her. I always enjoyed that twinkle in her eye, and I will miss her sense of humour.

As so many people have already said in this house today, Joan gave Victorians so much through her involvement in this place, particularly when she became Premier. However, we know that since then she had continued to be involved in community life.

Every time I walk through Queen's Hall I love looking at the painting of Joan that has already been referred to. It really epitomises a woman who was warm, caring, friendly, approachable and supportive, and who not only pushed the case for women to strive higher, as they have done since her time in so many ways — and I look forward to that continuing — but also supported the fellows around her in many ways. Clearly she leaves a fantastic legacy. I pass on my condolences, as have so many others in this house, to her husband, Ron, and her family.

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) — Sometimes we forget just how far women have come in a relatively short time — or how far behind they were. In fact, much was achieved in Joan Kirner's lifetime. The first woman was elected by general election to the Victorian Parliament in 1937. Joan was born in 1938, yet on the day of her passing we see that 48 women have been elected to the 58th Victorian parliament. Many more have come and gone in that time. This has come about because of women like Joan Kirner, with her lifelong drive to ensure that women participate in decision-making at all levels and in all aspects of life. Whilst that job is not complete, she certainly pushed it well along.

Joan Kirner, among many things, always fought for women to be part of decision-making. I found an old article published in the *Age* during the 1970s. It is an interview with 'Mrs Ron Kirner' — as it states — in her capacity as president of the mothers clubs association. She was calling mothers to arms, stating that it was high time mothers and parents had real influence and involvement in the education of their children and were not just left to make decisions on the fillings in sandwiches in the school canteen.

I did not know Joan Kirner well. As a young woman I remember her taking on the difficult job of Premier of Victoria. It was difficult for her as both our first woman Premier, leading the way and breaking new ground, and coping with the difficulties involved in the last years of the Cain and Kirner Labor governments, governments that during their time did so much. While members here have spoken about many aspects of that time I want to add a couple of my own: groundbreaking legislation such as the health and safety laws that governed this state and were the best in the country; tenancy laws that provide rights for tenants; as well as the revamping of our education system, providing more equality and more access. There is also the innovative and visionary work around Landcare and other programs.

When looking through *Hansard* I also noted that then Premier Joan Kirner — and this reminds me of something that rings true today, with the demise of the automotive industry and manufacturing in this state — in 1992 reminded us that it was a state Labor government at the time that brought to this state the new Toyota Altona plant, which provided so much employment, skills and income into the future. Again we are seeing the rise and fall of a life cycle. Joan Kirner also had to contend with a very hostile media that made disparaging comments about how she looked, what her style was and what she wore. Does that sound familiar? Yes. As a young woman I had great admiration for Joan Kirner, our then Premier, her

dignity, her down to earth manner, her strength and her integrity.

After leaving Parliament, Joan continued her political activism. She saw politics not just as a job but as her life. She believed in people and had a desire to make a better society. She worked on EMILY's List, mentoring, promoting and supporting women, and she put her energy, support and well-respected name behind many events and campaigns to progress social justice values and to work with our community.

I am sorry, Joan, that Victorian parliamentary Labor women did not get to celebrate your 77th birthday with you as we had hoped to do. I pass on my condolences to Joan's husband, Ron; to her children, Michael, David and Kate; and to her grandchildren. Vale, Joan Kirner.

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — I am very fortunate to be able to say a few words in memory and to celebrate the life of Joan Kirner. This is very much a celebration of the mentoring roles she undertook for female ALP members. We have only to look around us to see the success of the work she undertook, given the number of female members on this side of the house, but her work was for not only ALP women but women generally, full stop.

I also want to celebrate the work that Joan undertook in relation to Landcare. We have only to look at the environment in our regional and rural areas to see that the state of the land in rural and regional Victoria is much better for the work that Joan undertook.

I will say a few words to congratulate her family for the generosity with which they shared Joan with so many people and also for the support they gave her to undertake this marvellous work for Victoria. Of course, above all else, she was the first female Premier of Victoria, and I congratulate her on that.

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing) — It falls to me to briefly wind up this important condolence motion. It is impossible to have been active in the Victorian Labor Party over the last generation or two of activists and MPs and not to have been impacted by the contribution of Joan Kirner to her times, to her party, to this Parliament and to her community. If nothing else, her lasting legacy and the link to her past and our future is to be found in the number of strong, powerful and competent women who make up a substantial part of this Andrews Labor government's frontbench and backbench. This stands as a monument to her contribution and that of other

activists in the Labor Party to making sure that equal representation means equal representation.

During the time of Joan's activism — whether across education or parliamentary experiences, as leader of the state or in her subsequent life outside of Parliament — her achievements have been many, and many on both sides have appropriately recognised that today. As Premier, a minister, a social reformer, a promoter of women to leadership and a reformer of party, government and community, her achievements have been many. Equally we have heard of her contribution as a partner, a mother, a grandmother and a friend to many. Her contributions are manyfold, and my colleagues have spoken more eloquently on them than I have.

I restrict my brief comments to the portfolio responsibilities I have in this government, particularly around creative industries, cultural aspects and her lifetime focus on supporting people with disabilities having access to rights and participation in our community, particularly through education. Her passion for equality and justice is reflected in her support for arts and the cultural sector, which has been well recognised in this debate. Her time on the board of the Melbourne Museum and indeed her role in and contributions to Scienceworks in the west of Melbourne — which was subsequently backed by another great woman of the west, Lynne Kosky — stand as significant achievements. Her role in the Playbox Theatre, her support for the Women's Circus through the Footscray Community Arts Centre and its role in the west, her contribution to the Living Museum of the West, her role in the Australian Children's Television Foundation and her role in the Australian Workers Heritage Centre all speak to her substantial contribution to making sure that the key attributes of cultural access were both democratic in flavour and accessible to as many people as possible, as well as achievable in terms of contributions to communities. That legacy continues to this day. It is our hope that, in the very near future, when we roll out the public policy debate around what an arts and cultural policy for this state should be it will build on the contribution Joan made.

I will very briefly discuss Joan's role in and contribution to disability access to education. When first elected to the Parliament, Joan contributed to the then seminal report on disability access to education and was part of a substantial push, together with many of her friends in the then Cain Labor government's cabinet, to ensure accessibility for people with disability, particularly children with disability, to mainstream education. The report Joan and her

colleagues did in the 1980s shaped much of the contribution she was able to make when she became the education minister and what was rolled out consistently in that period of time.

When we look at that contribution now, on the cusp of rolling out the national disability insurance scheme, a scheme that has bipartisan support in both this place and in the federal Parliament, that significant contribution to ensuring that all children, particularly those with disability, have access and support to ensure that they can fully participate in society reflects Joan's deep commitment to equality and, more importantly, to the value of education as the empowering vehicle to achieve that. In this respect her achievements are many.

Many on this side of the house and many on the other side of the house have reflected well in this debate. I am sure I speak once more on behalf of all members of the house when I offer our deepest condolences to Joan's family, her many loved ones, her wide circle of friends and the many people across Victoria who valued her contribution and indeed loved her and will miss her deeply. Vale, Joan Kirner.

The SPEAKER — Order! I would also like to pay tribute to the Honourable Joan Elizabeth Kirner, our first female Premier, who served the state of Victoria in that role from 1990 to 1992. I was saddened to learn of her passing last week after her courageous battle with cancer.

She was first elected to Parliament in 1982 as a member for Melbourne West Province in the Council. During her 12 years in Parliament she had an impressive political career, serving as Minister for Education, Minister for Women's Affairs, Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, and Minister for Ethnic Affairs. She was instrumental in the formation of the first Landcare groups and oversaw the introduction of the Victorian certificate of education.

I take this opportunity to remember Joan for her dedication to social justice and education reform, and her work to promote multiculturalism and gender equality. I respect and look to her as I compliment her work in these areas.

If I may, I wish to add two important contributions that the Honourable Joan Kirner made. One, having had many discussions with her in relation to this matter, let me say that she understood that multiculturalism and a fair go for migrants, particularly asylum seekers and refugees, was importantly about improving the education system and making it available to all Victorians.

The second contribution, given my personal experience of and work with her, related to the introduction and establishment of the first comprehensive workers compensation system in the history of Victoria — WorkCare. It was the first time that Victorian workers were able to enjoy attempts to prevent injury in the workplace, to rehabilitate those who had the opportunity to rehabilitate themselves and to return to work and/or receive compensation. I was very privileged to have launched arguably the first workers compensation rehabilitation return-to-work workplace agreement at the Monash Medical Centre with Joan Kirner.

I pay tribute to her and, importantly, to the many contributions and tributes that were made in this house. May I highlight before I finish that Joan Kirner, a former Premier, today has received exactly what a former Premier should receive — respect and tributes very strongly from both government and opposition members. I believe that this house is proud of that, and I am sure that the Honourable Joan Kirner and her family and friends would be equally proud of that.

Joan was passionate in the causes true to her heart. She worked tirelessly to promote an increasing female representation in politics through her work with EMILY's List Australia, which she co-founded in 1996. My sincerest condolences to Ron, Michael, Dave and Kate for their loss. She was a beloved wife, mother, grandmother, friend and colleague. We will miss her tremendously.

Motion agreed to in silence, honourable members showing unanimous agreement by standing in their places.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I move:

That, as a further mark of respect to the memory of the late Honourable Joan Elizabeth Kimer, AC, the house now adjourns for the remainder of the day.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned 4.59 p.m.

