

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT**

**FIRST SESSION**

**Tuesday, 5 September 2017**

**(Extract from book 11)**

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## **The Lieutenant-Governor**

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC, QC

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(from 10 November 2016)

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Minister for Finance and Minister for Multicultural Affairs . . . . .	The Hon. R. D. Scott, MP
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FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION**

**Speaker**

The Hon. C. W. BROOKS (from 7 March 2017)

The Hon. TELMO LANGUILLER (to 25 February 2017)

**Deputy Speaker**

Ms J. MAREE EDWARDS (from 7 March 2017)

Mr D. A. NARDELLA (to 27 February 2017)

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Ms Kilkenny, Ms Knight, Mr McGuire, Mr Pearson, Mr Richardson, Ms Spence, Ms Suleyman,  
Ms Thomson, Ms Ward and Ms Williams.

**Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier**

The Hon. D. M. ANDREWS

**Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier**

The Hon. J. A. MERLINO

**Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition**

The Hon. M. J. GUY

**Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Deputy Leader of the Opposition**

The Hon. D. J. HODGETT

**Leader of The Nationals**

The Hon. P. L. WALSH

**Deputy Leader of The Nationals**

Ms S. RYAN

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*Council* — Acting Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr A. Young

*Parliamentary Services* — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

**MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION**

<b>Member</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Party</b>
Allan, Ms Jacinta Marie	Bendigo East	ALP	McLeish, Ms Lucinda Gaye	Eildon	LP
Andrews, Mr Daniel Michael	Mulgrave	ALP	Merlino, Mr James Anthony	Monbulk	ALP
Angus, Mr Neil Andrew Warwick	Forest Hill	LP	Morris, Mr David Charles	Mornington	LP
Asher, Ms Louise	Brighton	LP	Mulder, Mr Terence Wynn <sup>2</sup>	Polwarth	LP
Battin, Mr Bradley William	Gembrook	LP	Naphthine, Dr Denis Vincent <sup>3</sup>	South-West Coast	LP
Blackwood, Mr Gary John	Narracan	LP	Nardella, Mr Donato Antonio <sup>4</sup>	Melton	Ind
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Britnell, Ms Roma <sup>1</sup>	South-West Coast	LP	Noonan, Mr Wade Matthew	Williamstown	ALP
Brooks, Mr Colin William	Bundoora	ALP	Northe, Mr Russell John <sup>5</sup>	Morwell	Ind
Bull, Mr Joshua Michael	Sunbury	ALP	O'Brien, Mr Daniel David <sup>6</sup>	Gippsland South	Nats
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Donnellan, Mr Luke Anthony	Narre Warren North	ALP	Ryall, Ms Deanne Sharon	Ringwood	LP
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Eren, Mr John Hamdi	Lara	ALP	Sandell, Ms Ellen	Melbourne	Greens
Foley, Mr Martin Peter	Albert Park	ALP	Scott, Mr Robin David	Preston	ALP
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Hennessy, Ms Jill	Altona	ALP	Suleyman, Ms Natalie	St Albans	ALP
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Languiller, Mr Telmo Ramon	Tarneit	ALP	Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur	Rowville	LP
Lim, Mr Muy Hong	Clarinda	ALP	Williams, Ms Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
McCurdy, Mr Timothy Logan	Ovens Valley	Nats	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP
McGuire, Mr Frank	Broadmeadows	ALP			

<sup>1</sup> Elected 31 October 2015

<sup>2</sup> Resigned 3 September 2015

<sup>3</sup> Resigned 3 September 2015

<sup>4</sup> ALP until 7 March 2017

<sup>5</sup> Nats until 28 August 2017

<sup>6</sup> Elected 14 March 2015

<sup>7</sup> Died 23 August 2017

<sup>8</sup> Elected 31 October 2015

<sup>9</sup> Resigned 2 February 2015

**PARTY ABBREVIATIONS**

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

### **Legislative Assembly committees**

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

**Standing Orders Committee** — The Speaker, Ms Allan, Ms Asher, Mr Carroll, Mr Clark, Ms Edwards, Mr Hibbins, Mr Hodgett, Ms Kairouz, Ms Ryan and Ms Sheed.

### **Legislative Assembly select committees**

**Penalty Rates and Fair Pay Select Committee** — Ms Blandthorn, Mr J. Bull, Mr Clark, Mr Hibbins, Ms Ryall, Ms Suleyman and Ms Williams.

### **Joint committees**

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

**Dispute Resolution Committee** — (*Assembly*): Ms Allan, Mr Clark, Ms Hutchins, Mr Merlino, Mr M. O’Brien, Mr Pakula 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, Ms Garrett and Ms Ryall. (*Council*): Mr Bourman, Mr Elasmarr and Mr Melhem.

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

**Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee** — (*Assembly*): Mr J. Bull, Ms Halfpenny, Mr Richardson and Mr Riordan. (*Council*): Mr O’Sullivan, Mr Ramsay and Mr Young.

**Family and Community Development Committee** — (*Assembly*): Ms Britnell, Ms Couzens, Mr Edbrooke, Ms Edwards and Ms McLeish. (*Council*): Dr Carling-Jenkins and 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 Gepp 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*): Ms Patten, Ms Pennicuik and Ms Shing.

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

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**Tuesday, 5 September 2017**

**The SPEAKER (Hon. Colin Brooks) took the chair at 12.04 p.m. and read the prayer.**

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

**The SPEAKER** — We acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land on which we are meeting. We pay our respects to them, their culture, their elders past, present and future, and the elders from other communities who may be here today.

### CONDOLENCES

**Hon. Fiona Richardson, MP**

**Mr ANDREWS** (Premier) — I desire to move:

That this house expresses its sincere sorrow at the passing of the Honourable Fiona Richardson and recognises her service to the Parliament and the people of Victoria as member for Northcote, Minister for Women and our nation's first ever Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence.

Speaker, it is an awful thing, changing a person's life from present to past tense, to no longer know a person but to remember a legacy instead. It is harder still when the memories of that person are so immediate, so contemporary.

It is easy enough to imagine Fiona sitting in this place right now, to have her sitting just there sharpening her mind and her wit, to see her kicking her shoes off, ready to speak at this very dispatch box, or to picture her at the doors to this chamber welcoming family violence survivors and those who protect so many in our community into this chamber to tell their story, just like she did not so long ago. But Fiona is not here today, and in her absence we are left with the clearest and most painful of voids — in our Parliament, in our party and in the pursuit of something better.

From the moment Fiona came to this place we knew we were in the presence of someone determined to do what she could while she could. That was evident in her very first words in this chamber. Almost 11 years ago, standing not far from here, Fiona made clear her commitment to doing what was right and what was fair. 'If justice is the guiding principle', she said, 'then there is an obligation to fight on behalf of [all] those who are denied justice'. That same commitment was just as clear in Fiona's last public words too — an update on a new sports stadium at Northcote High School. It could have been a very brief speech, a short speech. Instead, Fiona took the opportunity to make a personal commitment that as Victoria's Minister for Women she

would do everything she could — everything it took — to increase female participation 'both on and off the field'. It was not an empty promise, not some political cliché. As always, her speech was far more than just talk, because if there was one quality that defined Fiona, it was this: she walked the walk.

Fiona spent every day of her working life challenging a culture that tells women that they are less talented, less deserving and less worthy. Before she had even stepped foot in this place she had broken down so much of the party's sexist backroom dealing and brokering — a bad culture that leads to bad outcomes. In doing so, she changed the game for an entire generation of Labor women, and indeed for all of us in the Labor Party. Many of those women sit in this chamber today. But for all that she had accomplished in terms of gender equity and fairness in the Labor Party, Fiona stayed the course and knew that there was more to do, because for Fiona, in my judgement, there was always more that needed to be done, such was her drive and her passion and her relentless ethic to make things better.

Serving as both member and minister, Fiona had the right measure of grit, determination, insight and intelligence to make her a genuine driver of change. And as Australia's first-ever Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, she shone a bright and powerful light on one of our darkest secrets. Like thousands more, it was indeed a dark secret that had defined Fiona's own family. Indeed she said that the scared, skinny kid who found herself living in a refuge with her mum and her brothers had never quite left her.

An immensely private person, Fiona never sought the spotlight, but years later, in an incredible act of bravery, she decided to share that story, letting the pain of her personal experiences open the nation's eyes to the private terrors that unfold in so many homes across our nation and indeed across the world. These experiences meant that Fiona was far more than just an observer — she was a survivor. She knew precisely how much was at stake, and she understood the importance of getting it right. Now, just 1006 days since she was sworn in, our state is fundamentally changed forever. Prejudice is being challenged, culture is being changed and, because of Fiona Richardson, lives are being saved.

Over the course of her lifetime Fiona had many roles and held many titles — mentor, leader, member of Parliament, parliamentary secretary, minister — but far more importantly, daughter, sister, wife, mum. To Stephen, Marcus and Catherine, to Veronica, Hamish and Alastair, I am so profoundly sorry at your loss. Nothing that I say can really make this any easier. But please know — and I do hope there is some small

measure of comfort in a recognition by all of her colleagues, all that knew her and worked so closely with her — that Fiona's work and her legacy will never be forgotten. Although she has left us, the path forward — a path that she so clearly and with such determination articulated — remains. That journey remains for all of us to commit ourselves to.

As Fiona said in that very first speech, it falls to us to create a society that is measurably better for each successive generation, for our children and their children too. That was her aspiration for our party, that is her legacy in life and in her memory that will be the light that guides us all.

**Mr GUY** (Leader of the Opposition) — Today we remember the life of one of the 88 members of this chamber. Her early passing has left so many of us stunned, but Fiona Richardson will not be a person whose name simply goes into parliamentary history as a former member. She was someone who undoubtedly helped change our state. So many little girls will face a safer, happier life as a result of her work, as a result of her focus on family violence and ending that scourge that so many families have experienced.

As a member Fiona has achieved respect from both sides of this house. It is fair to say she had friends on both sides of this house, and she will be sorely missed by many on both sides of this house. Like I did a week ago, I today express my deepest condolences to Fiona's family and friends. Putting politics aside for this sad day, let me again begin by openly expressing my sincere and deepest sympathies to all of Fiona's family and friends, particularly those on the government side of this house, who not only knew Fiona the politician but came up through Labor ranks with her knowing Fiona the person. Today from this side of the house our hearts are open to you and our sympathies are sincere.

As many people seem to forget, behind every politician is a person. Most importantly, Fiona was a partner, a mother, a sister and a daughter. She was a friend to so many, and I noticed how many in here counted her as a friend and relied on her strength and straightforward counsel. While history will rightly remember her achievements that came from this place, those who loved her, who cared for her and who she cared for will remember her firstly and rightly as a person, not a politician.

We all know that Fiona was a no-nonsense character in political and personal life, and her memorial service last week certainly showed that to all who attended. Her memorial service was as her family wanted, not a sad affair but one to celebrate the life of a woman who had

achieved so much in her 50 years. Being born in Africa, migrating to Sydney and growing up in Melbourne, Fiona's photographic tribute showed many images of what will undoubtedly be her greatest achievement: raising two beautiful children with her husband, Stephen.

It is those images that so many people forget about politicians and maybe we do not remind people enough of. While there is combat and debate, while there are long hours and stress, for all of us there are ones we love, and Fiona's children were clearly such a wonderful source of solace and pride. Catherine and Marcus will keep growing up knowing that so many people remain so proud to have known their mum, and I can put on record that as a class of 2006 politician, like a number of us in this chamber, who did get to know your mum, it was an honour to have known her.

As the member for Northcote, Fiona was someone who worked hard for her local community. Having myself lived in Preston for many years and having many friends who live in the electorate of Northcote, I know that Fiona remained active as a local member even after entering the ministry. As many will state today, her defining work came as the first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence. In that portfolio she sought to build bridges within the system to support those impacted. She sought to build bridges to educate people about family violence, its impact and its cost, and she sought to build bridges in our community by bravely talking about her own experience with the scourge with her family on *Australian Story*. As a result of her work building bridges in our society maybe we should name the new bridge at Chandler Highway in her honour, a small token of appreciation saying that our state will not forget.

I know she would never want this to define her, but Fiona's fight with cancer was one that showed open courage and determination. I know this fight was a private one; it was one she did not seek pity or compensation for. She got on and did her job, and the illness seemed to be a distraction from her mission at best. A number of members on this side of the house have remarked on her stoic and exceptionally brave performance at estimates hearings earlier this year. Fiona was clearly unwell — to some observing, she was concerningly unwell. This did not seem to faze her. The suggestion of delaying or cancelling estimates was greeted with Fiona's characteristic glare and a number of pointed and direct sentences indicating that everyone ought to get on with it rather than dwell on the topic any further. Nothing else was said, and estimates went forward with the abrupt and no-nonsense attitude that earned her the respect and admiration of everyone in this house.

At Fiona's memorial I met one of her brothers. The physical resemblance was uncanny. A lovely, decent, polite gentleman, he thanked me for coming along and so many on all sides for coming to his sister's memorial. Let me say to him and to Fiona's family, Stephen, Catherine, Marcus, Veronica, Fiona's brothers and all her family: thank you for sharing Fiona in public life. Your wife, mother, sister and daughter is a person so many of us knew well and will not forget. She has made a lasting contribution and impression upon our state but also on many of us in here personally.

It is an extraordinary thing to be mourning a sitting member, let alone a sitting minister, but it is Fiona's legacy that will be one to so many people that we will find extraordinary, and it is from that that so many people will no doubt remember her and thank her for many years to come. Vale, Fiona Richardson, MP.

**Mr MERLINO** (Minister for Education) — I join the condolence motion to honour the life and celebrate the contribution of Fiona Richardson, member for Northcote, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, a fighter, a complex person, passionate about her values and what she wanted to achieve. Nothing demonstrates this more than what will be her enduring legacy, the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

What Fiona did with her portfolio in such a short space of time was nothing short of remarkable, and the Premier was right when he said last sitting week that he could not imagine a Labor Party without Fiona Richardson. I know from the moment I became involved in the party, over two decades ago, Fiona was at that time a big presence and was for that entire time.

Fiona and I certainly had our differences over the years, but life — and its loss — has a way of putting things into perspective. It has a way of leaving only what truly matters — the mark you have left, and what a mark that is. So today I do not think of our disagreements; I think of bravery, of Fiona's courage and her fight against the cancer that tragically cut short her life. I think of the strength this will give others who face similar battles. I think of her personal experience of family violence and her subsequent determination to tackle this scourge. I think of her success in doing just that, firstly through the establishment of the royal commission and then in responding to and accepting every single recommendation — all 227 of them.

It brought a smile to my face that in her family's statement following Fiona's passing it specifically mentioned getting Respectful Relationships into the

state curriculum as one of her most important legacies. Recommendation 189 is:

The Victorian government mandate the introduction of Respectful Relationships education into every government school in Victoria from prep to year 12.

It is something that Fiona was so very proud of, as am I. Nothing goes more to the heart of Fiona's portfolio, the prevention of family violence, than this recommendation.

I recall jointly announcing funding for the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria for the Partners in Prevention program with Fiona and the member for Macedon at Gisborne Secondary College in 2015. Gisborne was one of 19 Victorian schools participating in the pilot of the Building Respectful Relationships program. That pilot formed the basis of the program we are phasing in right now right across the state of Victoria, and it is something that schools are on board with. At last week's memorial service the principal of Northcote High School, Kate Morris, singled out Respectful Relationships as a crucial part of the school curriculum and of Fiona's legacy. Kate outlined how schools in Northcote were delivering the program, and she said:

We know that the best relationships are respectful ones, and by working together we can create real and lasting change.

The royal commission described Respectful Relationships in our schools as an investment in future generations and a unique and important opportunity to help us move towards a family-violence-free society. It is something that all of us now aspire to. It is something that, as Minister for Education, I am determined to play my part in achieving, to finish the work in our schools that Fiona started.

I also want to briefly mention how hard Fiona fought for the schools in her electorate. Through her advocacy we were able to deliver much-needed upgrades to schools in the Northcote electorate, schools that were close to her heart — schools like Northcote High School and Croxton Special School — and to set aside funding for a new school in Alphington. This is part of Fiona's legacy, and it is one that the government will honour.

In concluding my remarks, I want to sum up Fiona's legacy, and I want to do so as a parent — a parent of two primary school-aged girls who will grow up and experience a better world, a safer world, because of Fiona and everyone associated with the royal commission. I cannot give a greater tribute. As the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition said, above all Fiona was a loved daughter, sister, wife and mum. My sincere condolences to Stephen and their children,

Catherine and Marcus, whose hearts will always be filled by her memory and her light.

**Mr WALSH** (Murray Plains) — I also join the condolence motion for Fiona Richardson. Fiona Richardson was a passionate Victorian, committed to her family, who are in the gallery here today, and committed to her community and to making Victoria a better place.

Fiona was born in Tanzania of Irish heritage. As Fiona said in her inaugural speech, an Irish ancestor ran foul of the law and found himself on the way to a penal colony in Australia. However, on nearing a South African port, he and a convict brother jumped ship and risked death rather than the grim prospects that they believed lay ahead in Australia. In 1969 when the political circumstances in Tanzania became untenable, Fiona's family literally shut the front door of their home and walked onto a boat bound for Australia, carrying nothing other than the suitcases that they could carry. As Fiona said in that inaugural speech, the family was always destined to reach Australia; it just took a few generations longer than everyone thought.

Fiona attended St Thomas Primary School, Methodist Ladies College and the University of Melbourne, where she majored in politics and psychology. I think everyone understands that Fiona was destined to be involved in politics from an early age, joining the Australian Labor Party 100 years to the day after it was formed by striking shearers under a tree in outback Queensland. I am told that Fiona was a formidable force within the Labor Party before she entered Parliament in 2006, and as the member for Northcote she was most definitely a formidable force after that time.

The speakers at the memorial service last week gave us all a great insight into the real Fiona and into the contribution she made to her family, the loyalty she had to her friends and the support she provided to her community and Victoria as a whole. As politicians words are our tools of trade. I compliment the member for Brunswick on making on that day what I think was one of the best speeches I have ever heard, no doubt under difficult circumstances because of her close relationship with Fiona. It captured the essence of a remarkable woman.

Fiona served as Parliamentary Secretary for Education and then Parliamentary Secretary for Treasury and Finance in her first term between 2006 and 2010. Although Fiona spent most of her political life fighting the Liberal Party at elections, in 2010 her main opponent was the Greens. Fiona ran her campaign, as reports go, on local issues and basic services — the

things she knew mattered to the community rather than what the pollsters told her she should be saying. The Chandler Highway bridge is one of those examples of something she fought for, and like the Leader of the Opposition said, it has been suggested to me that that bridge should be named after her to honour the contribution she made to her community.

During that election campaign there was a report in the *Sunday Age* on 14 November 2010, when an adviser was asked about Fiona's campaign versus the campaigns in other electorates where the Labor Party was fighting the Greens. They were quoted as saying:

She believes the Greens are irresponsible and says so loudly and often, to the dismay of the invertebrates and leftists in Victorian Labor.

Fiona had the strength of her convictions and was never afraid to say so. She did not tolerate hypocrites at all. Fiona was appointed shadow Minister for Public Transport after the 2010 election, and as I understand history it was Fiona's policy work that led to the development of what is now the level crossing removal program as a replacement policy for not building the east-west link freeway. She believed that there needed to be an alternative, rather than just tearing up that particular contract.

Following Labor's election commitment in 2014, Fiona was appointed the Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, having ministerial responsibility for the Royal Commission into Family Violence and the government's response to that commission's report.

Fiona was a passionate advocate for equality, and I think Ken Lay summed up her quick wit very well in his contribution. I cannot remember the exact quote, but when asked about women aspiring to be more like men, apparently Fiona's quick-witted comment back was, 'Why should they aim so low?'. I think that sums up her intelligence and wit very well.

To Fiona's husband, Stephen, you were a couple that shared a passion to make the world a better place, and you did that in many ways and for many people. We thank you both for your contribution. To Marcus and Catherine, my deepest sympathy on the passing of a great mum. Fiona Richardson made a real difference for all Victorians, and her life was tragically cut short far too early. Rest in peace, Fiona Richardson.

**Ms HENNESSY** (Minister for Health) — I too rise to make a contribution and to honour and celebrate the life of Fiona Richardson on this condolence motion. I think we would all prefer if none of us were here. The

chamber feels empty without the presence of Fiona Richardson for all of the reasons that previous speakers have outlined. It was not just her formidable political presence and her incredible and passionate commitment to reform and to taking on the job that she did so well. I personally am also going to really miss seeing someone standing at this microphone with their shoes kicked off and bringing a little bit of humanity to this chamber in so many of the debates that have been had in it.

By that I mean Fiona was not a politician's politician; she was a politician like I have not seen before and one that I am not sure we will ever see again. She was a politician without ego, a politician that did not crave affirmation and attention from others. But she was a politician with ambition, an ambition to achieve things; not things for herself but an ambition to achieve reform. It is the easiest of things to come in and to defend and support the status quo, but as we have heard in respect of so many of Fiona's achievements, essentially she was about breaking up the status quo for the purposes of giving people a better and more dignified life.

The Royal Commission into Family Violence of course was an incredible and important part of Fiona's achievements, but one of the things that I think was of equal value and importance was the way in which Fiona was able to articulate and argue and mainstream issues so that you could not have a conversation about family violence without having a conversation about gender equality. Gender equality is one of those issues that many people for many years have been advocating for, but Fiona Richardson's particular political skill, her commitment to her portfolio, her ability to continue to tenaciously make the argument meant that issues of gender equality have now made their way into the political mainstream, and woe betide the politician that ever attempts to exclude them. I think that of all of the wonderful things Fiona did, being able to have in this chamber genuine debate, genuine discussion, law reform and a policy commitment to gender equality being a mainstream political value is something that we ought to never forget.

Fiona was also a person that did not suffer fools gladly. That was something I admired about her very very much. She was direct, she was forthright, yet she was incredibly private as well; again, another characteristic for which I have some great empathy. It is in that context that I think we should look at the incredible sacrifice that she made in her and her family telling their story on *Australian Story* for the purposes again of making the story of people that experience family violence a very mainstream and accessible story as well. To her family, who I know are here in the chamber today, I express my deep gratitude to them all

because putting yourself out there and telling such a personal story comes at a significant cost. As we have heard in some of the other contributions, we all come into this chamber and we all make a sacrifice in respect of our families and our personal lives, but we do so for the sake of broader achievement.

I cannot empathise or understand how deep the pain must be for Fiona's family, who are incredibly proud of her achievements. But when all of the political attention to Fiona's passing ends, we have a family who has lost a mother, a wife and a daughter. I hope they feel a degree of assurance about the ongoing mainstream commitment of the Parliament of Victoria, the government of Victoria and the opposition of Victoria and the many friends that sit on the crossbench to continue to fight for the things that Fiona held dear to her heart. In the meantime, our hearts are with Fiona's family as they are now forced to confront the grief and the reality of life without Fiona, a phrase that I think none of us ever thought we would be saying in this chamber. To Fiona's family — all of our love and compassion is with you. Her legacy will continue and she will never, ever be forgotten.

**Ms SANDELL** (Melbourne) — I also rise to pay tribute to Fiona Richardson and send condolences on behalf of myself and the Greens to her family, friends and colleagues. All members of Parliament were truly shocked and devastated to hear about her passing, me included. As the first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence in Australia we have heard so much about how Fiona strongly advocated for the rights of women and the rights of children. As the Premier has said, the Royal Commission into Family Violence will remain a testament to her legacy.

I have spoken several times in this chamber about the family violence suffered by some of my very close friends and family. I have seen how harrowing and insidious this epidemic is, and Fiona was one of those people who refused to sit by and let that kind of violence continue to flood our community. I sincerely respect her work and her track record on this crucial issue and in particular the bravery of her standing up and sharing her personal story publicly with the world.

I also admired Fiona as a role model for women entering politics and women in other leadership roles. A quote I always come back to in this line of work is 'You cannot be what you cannot see'. Women need to see other parliamentarians, leaders, ministers. If we are to have other women enter these roles, change the face of our Parliament and our business, and make the world a better place, we need to have women who will blaze the trail. Fiona was one of those women. She put up her

hand. She blazed the trail for other women. Girls forevermore will be able to look at Fiona, her legacy and her work and say, 'She did it, and I can do it too'. As a mother of a young daughter I will always be thankful for that.

I know Fiona's colleagues in the Labor Party are feeling this loss very keenly, and I want to send our sympathies in particular to you all. I know that I am on the other side of the chamber in a different political party, often in competition, but we are all human. We all know the experience of loss, and we all know the experience of grief. I can see how much you were hurting when you heard the news and are still hurting. I can see how much it shocked you, and my heart and the heart of everyone in our party goes out to you.

But in particular I want to extend my heartfelt sympathies to Fiona's family. This job can be really difficult. Sometimes we forget that people we are sparring with on the other side of the chamber are real people with families who love them and whom they love. We are not just members of Parliament. We are mothers, we are sisters, we are daughters, we are partners and we are friends. Nobody should have to endure losing a mother at such a young age. I lost my own father to cancer when I was 29. It was terrible enough. I cannot imagine losing a parent at such a young age. So to Fiona's husband, children, mother, brothers, family and friends, I know that at this horrible time words will not help, but I hope you know there are lots of people thinking about you and that your mum, your sister, your daughter and your wife will not be forgotten.

So on behalf of the Victorian Greens and as a woman in politics, I want to say thanks to Fiona for all her work. Her legacy will continue. Rest in peace.

**Ms KAIROUZ** (Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation) — I want to start with an Arabic proverb: open your mouth only if what you are going to say is more beautiful than silence. This speech is going to be difficult because nothing would be more beautiful than silence, but I will try because it is an honour to be able to give it. The Honourable Fiona Richardson: wife, mother, daughter, sister, colleague, friend, the member for Northcote, the Minister for Women and Australia's first-ever Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence. She was smart, strong and sometimes scary.

Like anyone in politics, Fiona had her share of opponents. If she did not, she would not be doing her job. The politician without detractors is the politician who is not taking a stand. Fiona took a stand, and you always knew where you stood with her. She was fierce

and relentless in her quest, and it is fair to say she successfully engineered the entry of so many members into state and federal Parliament. It was never personal for Fiona. It was about policy, politics and numbers, all of which she was very good at. Fiona was a friend and someone who demonstrated her love of the electorate of Northcote and its people with energy and commitment. Fiona was a woman who communicated, who persuaded, who brought together competing views and who found a way forward that each person at the discussion table could abide.

I recall having a discussion with Fiona at Government House when the Andrews government was newly elected. Fiona's face was stoic, a mask that revealed nothing, the way I have always known her. I asked her if she was happy with the responsibilities that the Premier had given her. She looked at me intensely with her piercing blue eyes and replied, 'Yes'. I remember promising myself never to ask Fiona Richardson a question ever again. But not long after that I broke that promise, and I was reintroduced to Fiona Richardson, a warm, funny and fiercely loyal woman.

Fiona and I had many wonderful conversations over the phone, over cups of tea and over lunch as I ate and she watched. She had a lot of self-control. Fiona always kicked off her shoes, and I was always in the highest heels possible. We talked about policy, politics and numbers. We spoke about personal stuff. We laughed, we cried and we talked about family, the past and the future. I learned of the extent of Fiona's own experiences with family violence when she told me about her plan to share her family's story on the ABC network's *Australian Story*. I also learned that behind that stoic face and those steely blue eyes was a compassionate, empathetic and determined woman with life experience that helped shape the work that she led in family violence — a legacy she has bequeathed to women and children all around the nation.

Fiona showed all of us how resilient and courageous she was. The challenges life threw at her lifted her up instead of knocking her down, and she always found a way to create something positive when things were at their worst. Fiona was a woman of principle and purpose. She oversaw the Royal Commission into Family Violence and the establishment of the Respectful Relationships program in the state curriculum. She championed family violence leave for our public sector workforce and turned the state orange as part of the Victoria Against Violence campaign. She was a fearless champion for victim survivors of family violence and established the state's Victim Survivors' Advisory Council, chaired by Rosie Batty. As minister Fiona advocated for a record \$572 million in the 2016–

17 Victorian budget to prevent and respond to family violence, which was later followed by a \$1.9 billion investment in this year's budget.

Since the Royal Commission into Family Violence delivered its recommendations Fiona has worked alongside victim survivors and prevention experts to ensure that our government meets its commitment to implement every recommendation relating to prevention, in particular recommendations 187 and 188. In March Fiona delivered *Free from Violence: Victoria's Strategy to Prevent Family Violence and All Forms of Violence Against Women*, which sets out the intention to create a world-first family violence prevention agency. Fiona was due to bring into Parliament in March 2018 a family violence prevention bill to create this agency. Hours before her passing Fiona requested that this work be completed by her colleagues. Fiona knew that changing attitudes and behaviours takes time — possibly a generation — and that the commitment of the whole Parliament would be needed to ensure family violence prevention investment withstands election and budget cycles. In Fiona's purple mobile phone case was a photo of Luke Batty to serve as a constant reminder of her responsibility to ensure that victims' voices were never lost as we deliver the necessary reforms to ensure women and children are safe.

Fiona was also an incredibly strong voice for her beloved electorate of Northcote. While her local achievements were many, her key achievements included successfully advocating for the widening of the Chandler Highway bridge; securing upgrades to local schools, including Croxton School and Northcote High School; and ensuring the removal of the notorious level crossing at Grange Road, Alphington — a key project derived from Labor's level crossing removal policy, a policy that she engineered in her role as Labor's shadow Minister for Public Transport between 2010 and 2013.

Fiona fought and won many battles. Sadly the biggest battle was the one that she lost on 23 August at 4.55 p.m. My deepest sympathies to Stephen Newnham; to her children, Marcus and Catherine; to her mother, Veronica; and to her brothers, Hamish and Alastair. Thank you for sharing Fiona with us. On behalf of all of the women to whom you gave a voice and who lived a better life due to your toil, I salute you, Fiona. With your efforts you have brought honour to yourself, your family and your community. Rest in peace.

**Mr HODGETT** (Croydon) — I rise today to contribute to the condolence motion for the Honourable Fiona Richardson. It is an honour to speak

on this motion to pay tribute to her life and memory in this place and to pay my respects to a remarkable woman. It is always a shock when people we know depart us, but it is especially so when their passing is at such a young age. Fiona's passing has affected us all, regardless of what side of the house we sit on or what side of politics we represent. Her passing is a loss to us all.

As the member representing the Northcote electorate Fiona served her constituents with distinction. As a member of the government she was a formidable opponent who discharged her various parliamentary responsibilities skilfully and professionally. The Leader of the Opposition said last week, and I think he summed it up well:

It is unique, I think for all of us, to come across a member of Parliament for whom respect has been given and is forthcoming for their values and for their principles and who has transcended all sides of politics for the work that she has done, particularly around the portfolio of family violence.

I often quote and reflect on words by Bessie Anderson Stanley. I quote her in part:

... 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.

Fiona Richardson certainly gave the best of herself and left the place better than she found it. Fiona made a real difference as the Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, and her legacy will be felt most profoundly. For this we owe her our deepest admiration and respect.

On behalf of the opposition I extend my deepest condolences to Fiona's husband, Stephen, her children, Catherine and Marcus, her family, her parliamentary colleagues, her friends and her staff. We are poorer without her. May she rest in peace.

**Mr NOONAN** (Minister for Industry and Employment) — Being a member of a parliamentary team feels a bit like being part of a big family. My political family, the Labor Party, is vast, and I feel privileged to be surrounded by many wonderful people. There are the elders, the aunts, the uncles, the cousins, the brothers and the many, many over-achieving sisters. Like any big family, sometimes you gravitate towards some more than others. Fiona Richardson was like a big sister to me. She was protective, loving, wise, uncompromising and always there when I needed her counsel and support. We sat next to each other at the cabinet table like brothers and sisters do at a dinner table.

Remarkably ours was a bond forged in more recent times. In fact Fiona and I rarely spoke in the early years. But something changed. An evolution started to occur in our relationship from about 2010 onwards, and I have the member for Footscray to thank for that. Fiona and I started to talk about the waste and difficult years of opposition. By nature we focused on the positives; we would rather generate outcomes than criticise. We both wanted to make a difference. Throughout our period in opposition Fiona fed me lots of ideas, connected me to people and challenged me to work outside my comfort zone. We became close, to the extent that Fiona started to tell me how to dress. She was not a fan of an ill-fitting suit or a poor shirt and tie combination. Whilst welcome, her advice cost me a bit more than I expected.

History would record the 2014 state election as the first in 60 years to see a one-term government defeated in Victoria. Under the extraordinary leadership of the Premier I was able to join my friend Fiona Richardson in a Labor cabinet featuring nine extremely talented women. I can honestly say as I stand here today that had it not been for the support and friendship of Fiona Richardson, particularly during our years in opposition and the days that followed Labor's election victory in 2014, I would not have been able to fulfil my ambition to become a minister in a Labor government. That is how much Fiona mattered to me.

Fiona and I spoke regularly by telephone in the days following Labor's victory in 2014. When Fiona told me the Premier had asked her to become Australia's first-ever Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence and the Minister for Women I thought the choice was an inspired one. But then Fiona revealed her family's history to me. At that point I remember being a bit shocked and not quite sure what to say. I offered some words of encouragement. I need not have, because there was a resolve in Fiona's voice that said it all. She accepted the challenge, took the bull by its horns, and the rest, as they say, is history. That was Fiona.

I did not know it at the time, but I said my goodbyes to Fiona in late May. In fact it was the last day Fiona ever sat in the Parliament. We caught up in Strangers for a chat. Fiona was a bit out of sorts, so we spoke for some time, probably 45 minutes. I was reminded on that afternoon that behind Fiona's steely blue eyes was a fragile soul. I did what a friend should do during difficult discussions: I listened. Towards the end of the discussion I took the opportunity to respond, and the words flowed easily. In what would be our last conversation I was able to tell Fiona she was a pioneer and trailblazer. I explained that wherever life took her she would always be recognised for her work to change the course of

family violence in this state forever. Few could ever achieve such greatness and secure profound change.

Notwithstanding a historic royal commission and unwavering commitment by our government to rebuild a system that had failed so many, Fiona remained discontented. Gender inequality nagged at her consciousness. That is what I loved about Fiona — she could always see the bigger picture without missing any of the details. She understood the mark of a masterpiece was to search for famous fingerprints on uncelebrated works of art. That is where her brilliance shone most brightly.

Whilst everyone was rightly talking about tackling the scourge of family violence, Fiona understood that family violence was driven by gender inequality. When she spoke publicly, she challenged men's attitudes towards women. According to Fiona sexist remarks by men belittling women were the origins of the gender inequality challenge. The status quo would never be acceptable, and nor should it. Fiona was determined to lead from the front. She knew how to build power and what to do with it. Fiona channelled that power to drive better outcomes for the powerless victims of family violence and in the process saved lives and challenged entrenched attitudes.

I am so grateful that my last face-to-face contact with Fiona was a positive one. It is a gentle reminder to always reach out and never take our friendships for granted. I also had occasion to look at my text message exchanges with Fiona following her untimely death. Sure enough our last exchange followed an announcement I made in May in support of an organisation called Fitted for Work. Many in the Parliament will be familiar with this organisation's programs and services. Fiona simply described their work as 'awesome'. Fitted for Work received a grant from our Jobs Victoria program to support the delivery of their presentation workshops and outfitting services. On the day of my visit I was introduced to five inspirational women in what Fitted for Work referred to as their Conscious Closet. Each of the women described their stories, complete with struggle, survival and sadness. I was touched by their resilience and spirit. Thanks to Fitted for Work each of these brave women was on a new path of hope, confidence and economic security.

I was so moved by my visit I could not wait to share my experience with Fiona. Fitted for Work's website has a wonderful quote from former head of the UN Kofi Annan, which states:

There is no development strategy more beneficial to society as a whole — women and men alike — than the one which involves women as central players.

Fiona would endorse that message. Fiona was herself, as Kofi put it, a 'central player'. She was our central player, a trailblazer that others must now follow.

Tragically, as others have said, her passing leaves a family to mourn. To Stephen, Marcus and Catherine, thank you for sharing a remarkable woman with us. Be enormously proud of Fiona's contribution to this life and the lives of so many. To Fiona's mother, Veronica Power, let me assure you that Fiona spoke of your influence regularly. She channelled you constantly. I also extend my sympathies to Fiona's brothers, Hamish and Alastair, who were so brave to share their experiences publicly.

As for our family, the Labor Party, occasionally we have to say goodbye to one of our own loved ones. How do we reconcile such a loss? In the days following Fiona's death a thoughtful young member of the Labor Party asked me whether they could do anything for me. My response was simple: use Fiona as inspiration. Farewell, Fi, my parliamentary sister.

**Ms VICTORIA** (Bayswater) — I rise today in memory of Fiona Richardson, the member for Northcote. Being born overseas, she made her way, as we have heard from other speakers, to our beautiful city of Melbourne, made it home, embraced it, went to school here and went to university here. Despite the fact that Fiona and I sat on opposite sides of the chamber, we came to know each other quite well. We were of course both elected to Parliament in 2006, she became the Minister for Women after me, and we had a common interest in our love of photography.

Her roles in the Parliament included serving as parliamentary secretary for education and Treasury and Finance, and as shadow minister for public transport and small business, but her role in the ministry is what she will be most remembered for, not only as the Minister for Women but also as the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence.

She was of course a very strong advocate against family violence. She was very public and very strong about her survival — hers and her family's, as survivors of abuse — so when she spoke about the topic she spoke about it with great passion. She drove the government to establish the Royal Commission into Family Violence, and its report has made a significant difference.

She was also a strong advocate for all women. By parliamentary standards she was really quite bipartisan. She was someone I could work with. She was someone I could respect. She was also someone who could

strongly disagree with you but never felt the need to denigrate another woman or another member of this place. She was a gentle soul with a very strong character, and something I loved about her was her very warm and genuine smile. She beat breast cancer a few years ago, but she could not fight off her last challenge.

My thoughts go out to all of her family, including her friends in the Labor Party, but especially to her husband, Stephen, and to her two children, Catherine and Marcus. I cannot begin to understand your pain, but I hope knowing she was much admired, respected and loved helps you through this time.

**Mr EREN** (Minister for Tourism and Major Events) — I wish this condolence motion was not before the house, but unfortunately it is. As I say, there are two things that we will never know: when we are born and when we will pass away. Clearly it saddens me, it saddens the whole house, it saddens all of her friends, her family and her close relatives of course who share in the sadness that we are experiencing today.

I just want to firstly make mention of those that are hurting the most. There is another saying in the old country: where the flame touches hurts the most. Of course we are all hurting, but the flame is touching most Fiona's immediate family. I pass on my condolences to beautiful Catherine, to handsome Marcus, to very supportive father and husband Stephen, to Hamish, to Alastair and, last but not least, to the mother who brought her into this world, Veronica — there is no question that she would be hurting the most. As a parent I know there is nothing worse for a parent than to bury their own children. It is a very sad day, and 23 August was extremely sad for obviously Veronica with all that she has gone through.

Fiona was a very special person. She knew how to communicate with people, she knew human behaviour and she knew exactly how to treat different individuals differently. I recall I got a phone call from her asking for my assistance in painting her new home in Alphington. I thought, 'This is a strange phone call', and I said, 'Okay, Fiona, I'm not really a handyman at home, but can I just contribute some money and we'll just get some painters in?'. There was a steely silence over the phone. She said, 'John, I don't think you get it'. I said, 'Well, explain'. She said, 'That will be my home for my family, and I want my close friends to be a part of my new home. I want you to come and help in a little way that will remind me of you in my home'. And I thought, 'Wow, that is very deep'. But that was the woman we are grieving for in her passing. In the kitchen when she saw me do the brushstrokes with the paintbrush she said, 'You've done this before, haven't

you?', and I said, 'I told you I wasn't a very good painter'. She said, 'No, you're doing great. Thank you so much'. And so I have done one part of the kitchen. I know a few of my other colleagues also helped out in being a part of the memories in her new home.

There were lots of wonderful words that were said at her memorial on Thursday; it was an overwhelming demonstration of the way Fiona touched the lives of so many people. It was certainly a very fitting tribute to a great woman and a great friend. Fiona was a leader in here in the chamber and within the Victorian Labor Party, and we have heard some of the stories. She certainly was in the thick of things when things got a bit heated in politics, as they do sometimes. She stood up to the best of them in getting her point across, and she was a great contributor not only internally in the machinations of our political party but also in terms of external politics as well. She was very astute and knew exactly what the mood of the electorate was.

Fiona joined the party in 1991, a long time ago. She spent many years working as an adviser and honed her formidable community campaigning skills, and she served as a talented operative within the Labor Party, helping others achieve their goals. After tireless work for the party she was elected as the member for Northcote in 2006. She was quickly promoted to serve as Labor's Parliamentary Secretary for Education and then later as Parliamentary Secretary for Treasury and Finance. In 2010 when she was appointed the shadow Minister for Public Transport — obviously that has been mentioned before — she was an integral part of the removal of the deadly level crossings and spoke, obviously in conjunction with the current Minister for Public Transport, about some of those projects. She was very instrumental in making sure that people were on top of this very important project, and she always commended Jacinta for the work she is doing in that area.

In 2013 she was diagnosed with breast cancer. She was a strong, resilient woman, even though we now know that it was a very aggressive type of cancer, and she continued on with her work and became the shadow minister for small business and innovation. As the member for Northcote, I know she worked extremely hard on all those key issues that related to my portfolio, particularly sport. She homed in on all the things that were so close to her heart. In terms of the Northcote High School development, I know the Minister for Education has worked very hard in making sure we have great facilities out there, and the principal was very happy when we went there and made the announcement. Fiona was ecstatic about that particular announcement.

But there are other things that she was so involved in in my area. Of course there was her love of netball. There is the inner-city netball program — the 64 courts we have committed to, making sure that no woman or girl who wants to play netball is refused because there is no facility. That is why we are dedicating millions of dollars to that particular netball program. She was also part of an announcement I made at the State Netball Hockey Centre — a \$1 million announcement to ensure that we had the best business case going forward to redevelop that very important centre for men and women who want to play hockey and netball. It is of course a fantastic centre. Whenever I had a project in her electorate I always asked her, 'Fiona, as a minister, do you want to do this event on your own or do you want us both to do this event?'. Every time she looked me in the eye and said, 'We should do it together'. So every time we had an announcement in her electorate she insisted that I be there.

She has left a great many legacies. Obviously we have gone through them. As a minister, Fiona's legacy will remain in a number of key policies and programs for our state. Fiona, as has been mentioned, was a trailblazer for family violence reform and the work she has done across the sector, especially the Royal Commission into Family Violence report. She will obviously leave a legacy, and we will all make sure that we implement every one of those things that she has been very strongly and passionately supporting.

I just want to give a short quote. I said this about Joan Kirner, and I think it is very relevant at this point in time to Fiona as well:

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.

When I think of Fiona and the legacy she leaves to her community and to our state, this quote rings true for her. Again I pass on my sincere condolences to her family and of course to Veronica, who has been through so much, and to Stephen, her children, her brothers and indeed all of the family and her staff. She will be sadly missed. On 23 August we lost a colleague and a friend, and the state lost a champion. However, in her memory we will commit to continuing the great work she started. We will continue to demand more than she would have, just as she always wanted us to do — to be the best that we can be and to be the best

government that we can be for the people of Victoria. Vale, Fiona. May you rest in peace.

**Debate interrupted.**

### DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

**The SPEAKER** — I would like to acknowledge in the gallery the presence of a former member for Mordialloc, Janice Munt, and former minister, the Honourable Theo Theophanous.

### CONDOLENCES

**Hon. Fiona Richardson, MP**

**Debate resumed.**

**Ms RYAN** (Euroa) — It is with great sorrow that I join this condolence motion for the Honourable Fiona Richardson. Today is unquestionably one of the saddest moments this house has witnessed. I want to extend my heartfelt sympathy to those on the opposite side of the house who counted Fiona as a friend and a mentor. For the last two and a half years I have sat two seats away from Fiona, but I did not know her very well. To stand here and pretend otherwise would be disingenuous to her and to those who loved her. My reflections today are the sum of my observations of her during those two and a half years in this place and of my discussions with colleagues and friends.

Over the past few years I have learned that the people in this place can impact you in a positive or a negative way through their actions both publicly and when the cameras are off. Fiona, in my observation, was someone who never needed to shout to make her point. She was always so calm, so composed. She was admired, perhaps even feared by some, but above all she was a role model for women regardless of where they stood politically. She demonstrated to everyone that gender is not a determinant of influence or authority.

What I observed was a fearless woman who was not afraid to stand up for what she believed in. Yet, as many of us saw for the first time on *Australian Story*, she too had her own struggles. As the first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence and Minister for Women, she had an insight into victims' experiences that many of us cannot even imagine. Putting aside her intellect, her political might and her very evident skill as a competent minister, it was her personal understanding of family violence which enabled her to put victims at the centre of the state's response to family violence.

Reading through Fiona's many speeches on family violence with the knowledge we now have of her own experiences growing up is both confronting and remarkable. In February 2015, speaking on the Royal Commission into Family Violence, her passion and conviction to take action were clear. While she spoke of the statistics and the numbers of the problem at hand, she kept coming back to personal experience and the personal experience of victims and survivors — what it meant to the individual. She said:

... it is the knowledge of what the statistics truly mean for women and children who bear the overwhelming burden of family violence and the knowledge that these women and children are unsafe in their own homes that has set our determination to do something with respect to family violence.

...

For those of us who have seen the impact of family violence firsthand and the terrible consequences that it brings, this is indeed a watershed moment for Victoria.

Fiona recognised the enormity of her role and of the work that was needed, and still needs to be done, on family violence and that it was not just her responsibility but the responsibility of everybody to act. That was her mandate and the mandate she put to everybody else. She described it as:

... a whole-of-government, whole-of-society crisis that demands that each and every one of us respond accordingly.

I think Fiona did more in her three years as a minister than many politicians do in an entire career, and her legacy will shape the future of many.

Fiona did not attempt to make her work as a politician about her. Instead she let her actions speak. I think there is always a risk with reform that statements, speeches and grand gestures take precedence over action, but with Fiona it was apparent that she wanted to effect real and genuine change.

In taking on the role of Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence she became a voice for those who did not have a voice. I think we all want to live in a state where women and children are safe in their own homes and where they are not subjected to harm or to violence. Members on both sides of the chamber, in both houses of Parliament and across successive governments have worked towards that same goal, but few in this place have dedicated as much time or effort to that end as Fiona. I believe it is now important that the government continues her work by ensuring that whoever does take on that portfolio can dedicate as much time and as much effort to it as she did.

To her staff, who must be feeling an enormous sense of loss — her chief of staff, who wrote a beautiful piece recently, her ministerial staff and her electorate staff — my thoughts are with you. I think it is difficult sometimes for people outside of politics to comprehend the camaraderie that exists between a minister and their staff — with the people who are there next to you in the trenches and who always have your back.

Most of all I want to offer my deepest condolences to Fiona's family and loved ones, especially to her husband, Stephen, and her two children, Catherine and Marcus; her mother, Veronica; and her brothers, Hamish and Alastair. Fiona's passing is a great loss to this Parliament and to our state, but that pales in comparison to the loss of a wife, a mother, a daughter and a sister. Rest in peace, Fiona.

**Ms KILKENNY** (Carrum) — It is with a sense of sheer disbelief and intense sadness that we lost our colleague and friend Fiona Richardson, Victoria's — indeed Australia's — first-ever Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence.

Fiona's impact has been profound. Responding to family violence and gender inequality was the centrepiece of our state budget this year, and as the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, Fiona led the enormous momentum for social and legal change. Starting with the Royal Commission into Family Violence, Fiona uncovered the biggest law and order issue facing our community, and she identified what we need to do to finally break this horrendous cycle of family violence.

To Fiona's children, Marcus and Catherine, Fiona's husband, Stephen, her mother, Veronica, and her brothers, Hamish and Alastair, and their families, I offer my sincerest condolences.

To Tanja, Ashlea, Maree and all of her ministerial office sisters, Fiona's electorate office staff, and her driver, Graeme, we send our love, our support and our thoughts for what will be some very tough times ahead.

And of course to all those Victorian women, victim survivors of family violence, and to all of the men and women who work every day to support them, you have indeed lost a true champion. We must not let you down, and we will not. I say 'we' because it will take many of us to match Fiona's strength and sheer determination.

In Fiona's own words, we will not let the political caravan move on. Together we will seize this opportunity, continue Fiona's charge and make sure that for generations of Victorians to come gender

equality and the rights of women are elevated — elevated beyond election and budget cycles.

Back in December last year I stood proudly as Fiona addressed a room overflowing to bursting point as part of the launch of Victoria's gender equality strategy. Up on stage with Fiona were her children, Marcus and Catherine. It was so fitting, because driving so much of Fiona's agenda to end family violence and gender inequality was the desire to bring about a better world and a gender-equal state for our young people. Please read her powerful, inspiring and compelling speech on why we need to act now. She said:

Violence towards women comes from the very same place that disempowerment comes from: disrespect. It begins with unequal power relations between men and women and leads to gender stereotypes and rigid views about women's place in society.

Violence against women is gender inequality and misogyny at its ugliest and most dangerous.

Fiona got it — she understood — and victim survivors knew this too.

I mentioned last week at Fiona's memorial service that the day after Fiona attended a family violence forum in my electorate I received an email, and I would like to read that again here today. The woman wrote:

Please thank the minister for all her work. I attended the forum and hadn't expected to be saying anything at all, but found myself oddly safe in the space and when I found my voice, felt it somewhat empowering to be able to have an opinion and not be judged according to my 'emotional outburst'. I think I have finally found hope that someone is actually listening, trying to understand and powerful enough to make some real changes that will positively impact the lives of so many women and children ...

Please let the minister know that she is doing an incredible job. We need her.

We sure did.

Last week in my capacity as the Labor women's caucus co-convenor I had the very great privilege, and the very great sadness, of paying tribute to Fiona at her memorial service. It was a surreal moment up there on stage. I remember looking out and it was like this purple mist was just floating above everyone's heads. I spoke about how I, with my colleague Christine Couzens, the member for Geelong, recently met with Fiona. As it turned out, that was Fiona's last week in this place. We entered her parliamentary office and there she was, wrapped in her blanket — that blanket, the one that was so lovingly described by the member for Brunswick in her tribute to Fiona last week.

We look back on that conversation with Fiona and recognise both the magnitude of it as well as the burden. Fiona was unwavering. She said if we are going to end family violence and bring about change for women and children — real, lasting, profound change — we need to fundamentally shift the attitudes, the behaviour and the culture that perpetuate and reinforce gender inequality. She said this is huge. This is about saving lives, and women's lives are just as valuable as men's lives. Yes, Fiona, they are.

Fiona pledged herself to do everything to end family violence and gender inequality. In her own words, it was her pledge as minister to do everything she could to ensure that her daughter has the same opportunities as her son. Thank you, Fiona, for your strength and unwavering commitment to improving the lives of Victorian women and children, and thank you to Fiona's family for sharing with us this wonderful champion of change whose tremendous commitment and dedication to preventing family violence and ending gender inequality saw her working right up to what we now know were nearly her last days. Fiona never gave up, and neither will we.

**Mr WAKELING** (Ferntree Gully) — I too wish to contribute to the condolence motion to acknowledge and remember the Honourable Fiona Richardson. I think I, like everyone in this house, was shocked during the last sitting week of Parliament when we learned of her passing. I remember descending the stairs from level 2, and members of caucus were heading up the stairs, obviously to a briefing. I think it was the member for Broadmeadows who told me what had happened, and it just hit me that one of our colleagues had lost their life.

Fiona was a thoroughly decent person. We all have the opportunity to meet many people in public life as members of this house, but she was always a thoroughly decent person. I, like many, was elected with Fiona back in 2006. I have always found her to be a very quiet person but, again, a very thoroughly decent person. As a shadow minister my dealings with her were always professional, but I always found her extremely approachable.

I pass on my condolences to Stephen and Fiona's children. Having children roughly the same age, it hits home — the impact. My heart goes out to you and your family. Fiona was a strong advocate for her community, and many in this house would know she has advocated for her community in Northcote. But she will be remembered for her work in the areas of women and family violence, and I too wish to pay tribute for the work she has delivered in those portfolios.

I know personally she was a very strong supporter of the Labor Party and the Labor cause. I know this because back in about 1995 I worked with Fiona at the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce. I was starting as an officer in the industrial department, and she was working in an administrative role in one of the divisions — I cannot recall which division — at the time. We were on a tram. We all used to meet at Flinders Street station. We were heading up to St Kilda Road. Kirsten Howe, who is known to some and who was working with us at the time, knew I was involved in the Liberal Party and introduced me to our colleague Fiona. She said, 'Nick, you might want to talk to Fiona about politics because she has an interest in politics'. I just presumed we may have been of the same political persuasion, but I learned very, very quickly that we had very, very different views. We had a very, very spirited discussion about the trials and tribulations of the then Kennett government, but I knew that she was very passionate and had very strongly held beliefs of her beloved Labor Party. In fact she left us at the chamber to go and work as an electorate officer in Werribee, I think, at the time. Little did I know that 10 years later we would both be in this house serving as members of Parliament.

She was a thoroughly decent person, as I said. She will be sorely missed by everyone in this house, and I genuinely say that she will be sorely missed by not only members of the government but certainly members of the opposition. Rest in peace, Fiona.

**Ms COUZENS** (Geelong) — I want to honour and pay tribute to the first-ever Australian Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, the Minister for Women and of course the member for Northcote, the Honourable Fiona Richardson. Fiona Richardson was a woman who cared about women and children exposed to family violence, and she did something about it. Fiona has left such a profound legacy for women and children in this state. She knew that it is the right policy decisions that governments make that have the greatest social impact. The right thing to do is often the hardest and most challenging, and Fiona was the right person. She made it her mission to address this crisis, and she did just that. She paved the way for this unprecedented social change.

Fiona's Labor Party values, her passion, her determination and her courage gained the greatest respect from women's organisations and networks, from the family violence sector and, most importantly, from those Victorian women who have already experienced the benefits of her legacy. There are not too many of us who have the honour and privilege to have known such an amazing woman, a woman who was driven by her own experiences to ensure that

women and children are safe and have access to every support service they need.

In my electorate of Geelong Fiona made a difference. Her regular visits proved to my community that she was a champion for the cause. At one of the Geelong family violence forums Fiona highlighted the 10 myths that we need to overcome on family violence. The first one, as Rosie Batty said, is that being from a good home, being well educated and having strong family and community connections does not protect you from family violence.

Two, family violence thrives under secrecy and the cloud of shame. We must shine a very bright light into some very dark corners. Three, family violence thrives when we fail to believe or when we blame the victim. Four, women are predominately the victims of family violence and men are predominately the perpetrators. Five, you are at greater risk of family violence if you are, first and foremost, a woman but also if you have a disability, if you are from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, if you are Aboriginal, if you live outside Melbourne, if you are aged between 20 and 44 and if you are pregnant.

Six, poor community attitudes and gender stereotypes are directly related to family violence. A VicHealth survey of community attitudes towards violence found that 50 per cent of people thought a victim of family violence was making it up to help her win a family law case. Seven, gender inequality is also directly related to family violence. Eight, the justice system is more often than not a retraumatising system for victims of family violence. Moreover, we need to treat the tragic death of a woman at the hands of her partner or ex-partner in exactly the same way as we treat the tragic death of women at the hands of strangers. Nine, family violence thrives when government and society at large bicker over what to do. We need bipartisanship and, most of all, we need to support frontline services, not cut funding. Ten, finally, we need to change our culture, not just our laws, if we are to tackle family violence. Many in the audience that day got the profound significance of Fiona's 10 points and requested a copy of her speech.

Fiona was due to bring the family violence prevention bill into Parliament to create the agency in March 2018. It was one of her final wishes that this work be completed by her colleagues. Fiona knew that changing attitudes and behaviours takes time — possibly a generation — and that the commitment of the whole of Parliament would be needed to ensure family violence prevention investment withstood election and budget cycles.

Many Victorian women and children will now sleep safely thanks to the Honourable Fiona Richardson. To Stephen, Marcus, Catherine, Veronica, and her brothers, family and friends, our deepest sympathy. You should be so proud of Fi's long-lasting legacy to Victoria. Vale, Fiona Richardson.

**Mr T. SMITH (Kew)** — It is an honour to join this condolence motion to farewell my dear friend Fiona Richardson in the presence of her husband, Stephen Newnham, my good friend. The last day I saw Fiona was 30 May. It was at a Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing. Fiona was clearly very ill and, as the Leader of the Opposition recounted, my friend and colleague the member for Mornington and I went to the chair of the committee, the member for Essendon, and said, 'This can't go on. This woman barely made it up the stairs'. It was funny — she actually said at the outset, 'Go easy on me. I've got a cold'. Typically for Fiona, that was just a chronic understatement. So we caucused, in the spirit of bipartisanship, and put to Fiona that it was possibly best that we do this another time. The steadfast and overwhelming reply was, 'Go back to your seats and get on with it, because I'm not going anywhere'.

I have huge regard for Fiona Richardson. She was a warrior for the Labor Party, a resolute and strong woman who will have my respect for the rest of my life. She is someone who taught me so much, not just about politics and about numbers but about family violence — something that quite frankly three years ago I knew very little about, something that I had never been exposed to, something that I have no personal knowledge of. But she took me into her confidence with her own experiences, which I will be forever grateful for. She also taught me to hate the Greens, and that lifelong lesson will never, ever leave me. I am sure she would not have minded me saying that today.

She was a Labor lion but she was also a great local member, and the bridge that runs between her electorate and mine, I hope — as the Leader of the Opposition and indeed the Leader of The Nationals have quite correctly said — should be named the Fiona Richardson bridge. It would be my honour to have a bridge coming into my electorate named after her.

My father lost his mother when he was 12, and to Catherine and Marcus, I think the bravery that you have shown today in being here — and indeed that you showed at the funeral and memorial service last Thursday in Northcote — is simply outstanding. I shall not forget that day in a hurry. The speech by my good friend the member for Brunswick was breathtaking and I think encapsulated what Fiona meant not just to me

but to all of us who knew her, who met her and who will love her as a friend from now until we depart this world. It was a fitting tribute to a great woman, a tribute that I suspect none of us in this chamber will receive. Only the good die young, and quite frankly may her memory be a blessing for all of us that knew her for the rest of our days.

**Ms GARRETT** (Brunswick) — I had the honour of delivering a tribute to my dear friend and our loved colleague Fiona at the state memorial service last week. I seek leave to have that speech incorporated into *Hansard*.

I acknowledge the beautiful words today in this chamber that lift Fiona's spirit up, lift her family's spirit up and I believe lift this chamber up in honour of her memory.

### Speech incorporated by leave:

The one thing about being a politician, of which Fiona Richardson was an exceptional one, is that we have all said lots of stuff that has been captured for all time. TV, newspapers, *Hansard* — thousands of words fly out of our mouths, much to the delight of all who know us. Which one of you does not get excited — I know the fourth estate do — waiting in anticipation for the wit and candour of the daily lines to be delivered, or the measured and calming ritual that is question time, so easy on the ear, so welcoming to the listener?

Fiona's words as a politician stood out in the main for their conviction and their brevity — an unusual trait in our line of work — and for their delicious, acerbic bite when she was having a crack at her political opponents. And she remains quite the exception in being one of the few politicians whose late-night parliamentary contributions were fuelled only by hot water and lemon, not by a couple of shirazes over dinner.

There are of course times, with all these words whizzing around, that some special ones fall on the page — words that lift the veil and show the essence of the person, unencumbered by the armoury of our trade. With respect to what drove her value system, Fiona included this quote in her inaugural speech:

When we attend to the needs of those in want, we give them what is theirs, not ours. More than performing works of mercy, we are paying a debt of justice.

With respect to what defined her as a person, her most intimate words were reserved for the conclusion of that speech:

... to my husband, Stephen Newnham, and my children, Marcus and Catherine, you are and always will be my proudest achievement. I hope to do all that I can to make you proud.

We are here today to celebrate Fiona's remarkable life, a life lived creating and nurturing a beautiful family; resolutely standing up against injustice wherever it may be; and working tirelessly and with such skill to lift others up to a greater and more equal future.

There has, and will be, much said about Fiona Richardson's legacy and achievements, of which her work on gender

equality and family violence in particular stand tall. We will complete this work in her name and in her honour, and because she simply would not stand for it if we did not.

Fiona was able to do so much for so many in her professional life because of who she was: principled, brilliant, driven, compassionate. Shaped by a brutal start to life, she emerged with a strength and a determination that set her apart. But she also came through with a profound empathy, a gracious heart and a desire to do good — traits that, in light of her early upbringing, she could be forgiven for never possessing, and which are testament to her, her mother Veronica and her brothers, Hamish and Alastair.

When I was diagnosed last year with breast cancer the first person I called was Fiona. She came straight over and hugged me with a force that transmitted strength and love and hope. She knew what to say, when to say it and when to shut the hell up — another unusual attribute in our line of work. She also had a bloody big bag with her, stuffed full with a soft, white fluffy blanket — at first blush, very unFiona.

She explained the purpose of the gift. As a child, she said, when things were very difficult, she had tactile engagement with special objects, such as a toy or a blanket, that she would hold close, breathing in their smells and taking comfort in their familiar touch. This helped her, time and again, find peace while the storm was raging outside. She told me to take the blanket and watch TV with the kids snuggled under it, to give it to my little guy to sleep with; to throw it over their shoulders while we shared family breakfasts. Aside from the occasional muttering of 'Jeez, Mum's coming at us with that blanket again', the kids embraced it.

Then, as instructed by Fiona, I took that blanket when I was admitted to hospital. And instead of disinfectant and bad food, I smelled hot chocolate and marshmallows, and kids' bubble bath and teenage perfume. I smelled coffee beans from my favourite place around the corner, and the Sunday morning newspapers. I breathed in my family in the darkest of nights.

We spent countless hours together, me and Fiona: taking the well-worn path to the river from the family home she and Stephen had so carefully designed together, sunning ourselves in her beloved courtyard, drinking a glorious array of teas while our kids played in the indoor leisure paradise that is Chez Alphington, meeting in Strangers to share our days and reflect on any difficult nights we had endured.

Fiona was a deeply spiritual person. Her understanding of the human condition was complex and rich, and expressed with that articulate clarity that defined all her communications. She did not believe in God in the traditional sense but she believed in the interconnectedness of the universe, of forces and energy that bind us all. She believed in the soul and that this earthly existence was but one part of a much broader mystery to which we all belong. 'Any more talk like that', I would say, 'and I'll have you believing in Jesus'. You can imagine the response to that — eyebrows shooting up, 'How very dare you' eyes.

Fiona meditated a lot, and like everything else in her life she did not do meditation by halves. She informed herself from teachings all over the world. She engaged in dedicated and focused practice, often for hours. During these sessions she would project herself forward and envisage herself well and at peace. Her most precious images were reserved for her

children — dancing at Catherine's wedding, holding Marcus's first-born child.

Fiona will not see these things with her earthly eyes, but she will be there when they happen. What she was able to witness during her time here is the two of you hurtling towards adulthood — brilliant, sensitive, perfectly irreverent and incredibly composed; exceptional for your age and bursting with promise. She knew you, and you knew her.

There is so much of her in both of you, Marcus and Catherine. You have her fierce intellect, her drive and her sense of justice, her timeless and wise spirit, her freaking awesome blonde hair. You were the undisputed light, meaning and purpose of her life. Her immense love for you will hold you in its warmth for all your days.

Stephen, you two were such a force together. Admittedly of course some people have added in a few well-known — and some previously unheard of — expletives to that sentence over the years when coming up against you both.

But whether it was raising your kids, the way you looked at each other even after years of marriage, your shared commitment to the Labor Party and conversely disdain for the great pretenders, or one of my personal faves, how you would hook people into conference calls at all hours of the day or night in which each participant left with — how shall I put this delicately — a very clear understanding of what was expected of them, you have been a mighty couple. Fiona was so proud you were her husband. She referred to you often in many discussions, both personal and professional. You took on this world together and you travelled this last part of her journey side by side.

Veronica, Fiona's name for you was 'soul mate'. We walk with you in your grief.

Fiona did not want to leave this life — she had much more to do. But there was no sadness or regret that she had not used every ounce of the time she was given.

Her legacy is immense, and she did it with such integrity. There were no 30 pieces of silver weighing down her saddlebags as she left us. With every decision she made she respected the oath she had given the community she served. She used her renowned toughness to stand up for and alongside, others, regardless of the personal cost. She leaves us with our community forever changed, a much safer and fairer place.

In her last days she was covered with that precious blanket that you made for her, Marcus and Catherine and Stephen — the one that she took with her to the grave, and a piece of which adorns her childhood toy, now in the care of her beloved daughter; a blanket woven with love and memories, strengthened with courage and honesty, capable of holding a million tears and containing unending joys that will endure beyond her passing. And she would have touched and smelt home — the chopped grass of your soccer fields, Catherine; the crisp aroma of new tennis balls, Marcus; of Bakers Delight buns and Veronica's zucchini slice; of camping fires, hot baths and scented candles; of the river in the afternoon and the farm at first light. And she would have felt the glow of the sun, the cool tiles on her bare feet, the hugs before bedtime, the warmth of your hands. She was surrounded by you, and she surrounds you now and always. It was a life of meaning, a life of conviction, a life of love.

Go well on your journey to the canopy of the universe, Fiona. It was an honour to know you, my friend. You have indeed made your family, and your community, very, very proud.

**Mr WATT** (Burwood) — I rise to speak on the condolence motion for Fiona Richardson. I met Fiona for the first time 11 years ago. In fact I want to recognise Fiona as the second-best candidate at the 2006 election for the seat of Northcote. Northcote could not have had a better member of Parliament; I know, because I tried to beat her. I note, having looked at those results, that it was a pretty good result for me. I had a negative swing of 1.5 per cent, down from about 16.8 per cent to somewhere around 15.3 per cent. Noting the fact that Fiona got over the line with 52.57 per cent on primaries, she did have a swing against her, so I will take the credit for that.

It would not be the last time that the two of us crossed paths. I remember during the 2006 campaign turning up to a street corner in High Street. Fiona had very graciously put a brochure out to the electorate telling people that there would be an opportunity to meet a candidate, so I thought I would take up that opportunity and stand on the opposite corner, something which she did not seem to have too much of a problem with. But the federal member at the time, Martin Ferguson, had very choice words for me for gatecrashing their parade.

Fiona and I did not always agree on a lot of things. I know some on the opposite side have mentioned that. I know that the Deputy Premier might have mentioned that Fiona did not always agree with everybody. I obviously had reasons to have good conversations with her about a number of things. During the last four years when we were in government it was extremely difficult for some of us. I think most people in this chamber who were there at the time would understand that for one particular member of Parliament it was extremely difficult. I had reason to speak to that member of Parliament a number of times. I can remember sitting in the Speaker's office, when the member for Evelyn was the Speaker, and having a conversation with Fiona. Politics aside she said to me, 'How's he doing?'. Politics is tough, but she understood that we are all people. For me to sit in there and have Fiona ask me how one of my colleagues was doing through a very tough time showed how human she was.

It is one thing we miss quite a lot in this place — that is, seeing each person for the human being they are. Politics is really tough, and I know the Leader of the Opposition said in the last sitting week how tough politics is with the vitriol and about what we feel in here. I remember on the Wednesday of the last sitting week that I was speaking just before I found out. One particular member of Parliament, who I will not name,

was engaging in quite a bit of banter in the chamber, so when I heard that she was on her feet I thought I would come back in and give her a serve as well. But I am grateful to some on the other side for letting me know what had transpired, because I would have made a complete goose of myself had I done that. I am not averse to making a goose of myself occasionally, but I appreciated getting the heads-up. Yes, Fiona was a member of Parliament, yes, she was the second-best candidate in 2006 and, yes, she was a staunch advocate for Labor Party values, but she was more than that. She was somebody I knew as a human being and not just somebody I knew that sat across the chamber.

When I saw the press release two weeks ago today I sent her a text message just to say, 'Get better'. I think about how many members of the government whose mobile phone numbers I have in my phone. I did a bit of a search earlier today, and I can find two members of the Labor Party whose mobile numbers I have. Neither of them are with us anymore: one because he did not stand again, and the other is Fiona. It is unusual for me to have such high respect for members of the Labor Party. I respect them as members of Parliament, but I respected Fiona as a person.

To Stephen, Marcus and Catherine, my heart goes out to you. The loss of someone so close, a family member, is difficult, and I very much feel for you.

I also want to remark on Veronica, Hamish and Alastair, and I want to thank them for allowing Fiona to share their story on *Australian Story*. While preparing for this I thought I would watch the episode again. I have watched it previously, but I thought I would watch it again. The reason I wanted to watch it again was to make sure that what I heard in the story was what I thought I had heard. I have listened to this debate and I have listened to people talk about the legacy of a person, but I would like to quote something that Fiona said in *Australian Story*:

... I didn't quite anticipate the scale to which ... my brothers in particular would respond — and me as well — to what has happened in the past. I don't normally ... cry as often as I've been crying through the last little while. And I think, you know, it is about learning about what happened to them. It was awful.

Family violence affects many people in our community. Family violence is something that affects both males and females. I had this discussion with Fiona, and we talked about statistics. I have directed people to Fiona that many people in here would not necessarily think would want to speak to Fiona or that she would actually reach out and speak to. I greatly admire her for not only standing up for what people

would think are typical victims of domestic violence but for helping me to help others who have contacted me about their stories. Each victim of domestic violence is an individual and should be treated as such and with respect.

I want to finish with a couple of quotes. During *Australian Story* Fiona's mother said:

I tried to understand why I had put up with being beaten by my husband for so many years. And then I sort of ... said to myself ... it's because your mother was violent. I thought being beaten was normal, because my mother always beat me.

I want to pay tribute to Fiona's mother for speaking out about the violence she suffered, not only at the hands of her husband, but also the violence she suffered when she was growing up. Fiona recognised this and in one quote I got from the *Australian Story* website she said:

The way that my grandmother treated my mother did condition my mother to an acceptance that family violence or such terrible behaviour was somehow normal and all that she deserved in life.

No person, regardless of who they are, regardless of where they come from, regardless of their background, their gender or their age, deserves to be a victim of domestic violence.

I mention Veronica, Hamish and Alastair because I know what it is like to put your family in the spotlight. I know how difficult it is when we as politicians stand in this place, or not, and thrust our families into the spotlight. I know how difficult it is because I know the conversations, and I wish I had had them before I thrust my family into the spotlight. I know how difficult it is to have a conversation with family, to say to them, 'Yes, it is you', and while I did not ask before I stood in this place and mentioned my family, I respect the fact that Fiona did, and I respect the fact that she had those conversations with her family and they allowed her to use their story. Vale, Fiona Richardson.

**Ms THOMSON** (Footscray) — I rise to pay tribute to the extraordinary life of Fiona Richardson. It is true to say she would have hated that this condolence motion was taking place. She always thought we should do away with condolence motions and I hope she will forgive us and realise that this condolence motion will give comfort to her family and friends for years to come. It is an opportunity to have her achievements acknowledged, not only for her, but for the people who are the beneficiaries of her dedication. Many have spoken and many will of her achievements and legacy as the first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, and the way that she undertook her role with passion and determination to make women and children

safe from family violence. I am going to channel Fiona here and everyone will know on this side what I am channelling. Fiona took on this task the same way she took on every issue — with complete and total conviction and commitment.

To prepare for this condolence motion I sat down with Janice Munt, a former member for Mordialloc and a close friend of Fi's. We have over the past week spoken about Fiona at great length and together shared our stories of Fi. In many ways, this is a condolence motion from us both.

Fiona was pragmatic yet idealistic, optimistic but still a realist, generous but also very private. She had high expectations of herself whilst being her own harshest critic. Fiona was not interested in material things and before entering Parliament did not care too much about how she dressed. She was most comfortable in a trackie and a T-shirt, and as we have already heard, preferred to have bare feet, so much so that when Fiona spoke in the chamber she would slip off her shoes whilst she was speaking, probably another first.

Just after Fiona was elected she asked Janice and me to take her shopping for clothes. You need to remember that Fiona had no real interest in clothes or shopping; in fact she hated it. You also need to know that Fiona could sometimes be quite stubborn, and this was one of those days. We managed to buy a few outfits for both the electorate and Parliament, but not without Fiona fighting us every step along the way. Shoe shopping was even worse, but we did manage to get through it and in the end the newly elected member for Northcote was pleased with her purchases and her shopping expeditions became more enjoyable after that.

Fiona was Labor to her core. That was obvious from her inaugural speech in 2006 in this place when she said, referring to the establishment of the Labor Party:

This passion for justice drives Labor governments still. We believe that individual prosperity should not be dependent upon your postcode; that the claims of the few do not override the needs of the many; that everyone has the right to be treated fairly in the workplace; that difference should be treated with tolerance; that universal health care is a right not a privilege; and that every person has the opportunity to share in the wealth of the community and to reach their full potential.

Fiona had a great understanding of Labor history, but she also had a will to drive Labor's future. Long before she entered this place she worked tirelessly within the Labor Party to ensure we were putting forward our best and brightest at all levels within the party and into our Parliament. She butted heads with some of the most influential people in the party. She was prepared to

stand her ground and put what was always a well-developed case.

Fiona did not always win but she was a formidable force and won more battles than she lost. One that was lost was over a uranium mining resolution at a famous ALP national conference. A lot of pressure was put on three delegates from Victoria's Labor Unity to vote with the national right for a resolution to increase uranium mining. Needless to say, three hands went up against the resolution: Janice's, mine and of course Fiona's.

Fiona understood the backrooms of politics well. She could play the game better than most, but she also believed there needed to be purpose and values beyond just the numbers and the power. She was a fountain of ideas that covered so many areas it was often hard to keep up. Her talent, drive and energy led her to take on positions of influence herself, becoming the second woman to run a major faction of the party. Paul Keating said:

I think leadership's always been about two main things: imagination and courage.

Fiona had both. Whether it is the legacy she leaves as the Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, her policy work as the shadow Minister for Public Transport and her policy work as the shadow minister for innovation and small business, Fiona drove the agenda and developed innovative policy solutions in all these areas. General Norman Schwarzkopf said:

When placed in command, take charge.

That was Fiona. She took command, and she took charge. She would love that quote, because she loved all things military.

When Fiona and Stephen started dating — Stephen is going to hate this bit — they were chalk and cheese. Stephen was the country boy who loved his meat, supported the timber industry and saw no problem with duck shooting. Fiona on the other hand was a vegetarian, wanted to preserve forests and was appalled at the thought that anyone would want to shoot ducks. But they worked as a couple. Both were intelligent, smart and prepared to engage in long debates. They loved, admired and respected each other. Fiona would say that Stephen was a great strategist and she was good at tactics. Even though they were entrenched in politics, they both had the same priority: their family. Marcus and Catherine were the centre of Fiona's world. Politics is hard on families and particularly hard on our children, but Fiona was determined that the children

would always come first and that any ambition she might have would come second.

When Fiona had her first bout with breast cancer, Janice took her to buy a wig. Time was put in to finding the perfect wig — the right one. Fiona took it home, but it was never worn. Enter the marvellous Jodi Dack, who created Baldilicious, a range of hats for women undergoing cancer treatments, and Fiona's preferred headwear.

Almost two years ago Fiona delighted in telling me that with the help of a genealogist her family had discovered that they had Jewish heritage. She was so excited and hopeful that the line also travelled through the women. To celebrate her 49th birthday I took Janice down to my favourite jewellery shop and we bought Fiona her very own Star of David to wear around her neck. She loved it. It was not a religious connection that Fiona felt — she was not religious — but she felt at home with the culture and respected the struggles of Jews over the generations to survive. She was proud at the thought that these may be her people too.

To Marcus and Catherine, there are so many stories to be told about your mum, not just her commitment to making a difference to people's lives as a minister but also the stories about her, like the time she went for her first massage and the time she took Janice and me to see the spooks. That is what she called them. She was so much fun. There are so many stories we could tell, and hopefully you will get to hear them all. You can be proud of your mum for what she achieved and for the person she was. She was so very proud of you.

To Stephen and Veronica, you know how special Fiona was and how special you were to her, how much she loved you and that you loved her. Knowing Fiona, she is still around, watching and grimacing at all this fuss and saying to me, 'Toughen up', but secretly pleased that her legacy has been put on the record. My thoughts and love are with you Stephen, Veronica, Marcus, Catherine, Hamish and Alastair, her friends, family, staff in the ministerial office, staff in the electorate office and to Graeme. Vale, Fiona Richardson.

**Ms McLEISH** (Eildon) — We all come to this place with different backgrounds and experiences. Our backgrounds shape us in such a way that we develop our own sense of purpose and decide what we want to achieve. We also all come to this place as parliamentarians. And although our backgrounds are different — as are our politics — we are all parliamentarians in this place. The loss of one of this collective is felt by all of us. The passing of Fiona Richardson, the Minister for Women and the Minister

for the Prevention of Family Violence, is the first time a sitting minister in Victoria has passed away.

Fiona's background has certainly shaped her, her beliefs and embedded her values. Fiona's early years and difficult family life, where she experienced family violence and life in refuges, clearly had an impact. As a minister she was able to speak, act and provide support to others by drawing on her experiences and the support provided by other women, including the strength of her mother. Deciding to speak up and have your family's story told so publicly on *Australian Story* was indeed a brave move. From Fiona's point of view — and in retrospect by everybody — it certainly was very needed.

During her teenage years Fiona attended Methodist Ladies College in Kew, an all-girls school where girls are absolutely encouraged to do their best but also to know that they can match it very much with men. At this time Fiona had some very formidable classmates. In her year level were the Honourable Nicola Roxon, former federal minister and member for Gellibrand, and the Honourable Mary Wooldridge in the other place. Mary has uncovered a photo of a year 11 class where she and Fiona are photographed together.

Fiona believed in equality and the prevention of violence. In this place she had the opportunity to work in this area. As a colleague from across the chamber Fiona was very approachable to talk about these issues. At one time I was quite surprised when Fiona suggested that we go into Strangers cafe to sit down, have a coffee and talk about an issue. Fiona understood the need for support and, more importantly, the need for women to support women.

At her state memorial service we heard of the support she provided to the member for Brunswick when she too faced her cancer battle. But Fiona's support for women was not partisan. Fiona reached out to support Donna Bauer, the former member for Carrum, on Donna's diagnosis with bowel cancer. It was some six months after Fiona's initial diagnosis. She drove to Carrum to meet with Donna and to provide a level of support that we probably did not appreciate at the time. She provided what Donna describes as sound, stern and practical advice — very stern advice actually. Listening to the stories today, I can imagine that with the tone that Fiona used even Donna was certainly not about to not take that advice on board. Fiona also had a tube of MooGoo with her, which Donna said was such a practical and invaluable gift. Her demonstration of support showed that Fiona believed very firmly in the need for women to support women. Her main lesson to Donna was to look after yourself, especially in this game. Fiona and Donna were each other's pairs during

divisions during the time they were both off on sick leave. They developed a bond over cancer. Fiona's support for Donna is a testament to her character and her ability to walk the talk.

On International Women's Day last year, during a ministers statement, Fiona departed somewhat from the normal course of events to mention that her mother was in the chamber. I found this quite amusing, and we chatted about it later. I thought that other than our inaugural speech, very rarely would our parents come to this place to watch us perform and take pride in their son or daughter going about their work as a parliamentarian.

I thought that for Fiona's mother, Veronica, to come here and watch Fiona in action gave her the opportunity to really experience such pride. I offer my deepest sympathy to Fiona's family, to her husband, Stephen, to her children, Marcus and Catherine, to her mother, to her family and friends and to those on her staff and in her political office. It is an extremely difficult time. As with everybody in this chamber, my thoughts have been with those people for quite some time.

**Ms KNIGHT** (Wendouree) — When I think of Fiona I immediately think about her wonderful spirit of generosity. Do not get me wrong: she was all about getting the job done, but she was also about taking people with her. Everyone talks about the report that came out of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, and everyone should talk about that incredibly significant body of work, but we should not forget that every single one of those 227 recommendations came about for two reasons. The first is that someone — a victim survivor or an advocate — told a devastating and shocking story. The second is that Fiona heard that story. When Fiona hears something that is wrong, unjust, harmful and painful she does something about it, and she brings along those who can help. She is not precious about ownership — she has a wonderful spirit of generosity — and I was so lucky and so privileged to be one of those people that she brought along.

Like the Minister for Industry and Employment, the other day I looked back through the text messages between me and Fiona. They reminded me of how willing she was to share her role. I remembered, through reading those messages, how when Fiona had responsibility for all of the recommendations she invited me to a forum. There was a huge number of people in the room all having some involvement in the area of family violence. It was just amazing being there. We — all of us — spent the day going through each and every recommendation and talking about what was

missing, what could be achieved and what should come first. The energy and enthusiasm in the room was something that I will never forget. Yes, there were disagreements, and there should be disagreements, but the sense of wanting to achieve something, the sense that something big, important and groundbreaking was happening was the dominant feeling in the room. And there was Fiona — regal Fiona — walking calmly amongst the crowd with her cup of tea, giving a word here, an encouragement there and handing over to those who were living the experience in one way or another every day. The respect in that room for Fiona was palpable, and I can still feel it now as I talk about it.

I got a sense of that respect yesterday at the launch of the University of the Third Age state conference. On each table were purple ribbons and a note that read, 'In recognition of the work that the late Fiona Richardson, MP, did as the Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence in the community, you are invited to wear this small sign of acknowledgement of her work. Fiona was a passionate advocate for the safety of women and children and dedicated much of her working life to their protection. Her leadership and vision will be greatly missed by the community at large'.

Her leadership and her vision will be greatly missed, but in true Fiona style, she has left work for all of us to do. She was not afraid to share right up until the end. The work that she has left us is incredibly significant, important, life-changing and lifesaving.

Fiona talked about the importance of prevention right from the very beginning of the royal commission process, and it was music to my ears. Having spent many years working at centres against sexual assault back in the 1980s when they were first established it was just such a relief to hear a minister — a minister no less — talk about prevention. We as a community have been all about the reaction, the counselling and the courts, all important of course. But prevention, that is really where it is at, much like the government's \$168 million *Roadmap for Reform*, which is shifting the children and family services system from crisis response to prevention and early intervention.

Fiona knew that she had an ally in me. She was absolutely focused on delivering recommendations 187 and 188. She knew that just as the prevention of family violence is the responsibility of every single member of our community, the prevention of family violence enacted through legislation is the responsibility of every single member of this Parliament.

Fiona's vision for a family violence prevention agency was very clear and included, amongst other things, permanent, dedicated and enduring funding — and I know she would want me to look at the Treasurer right now; legislated independence; investment driven by evidence and outcomes reducing response costs over time; and co-investment with non-government sources. It sounds a little complex but her motivation was simple — to have an agency that changes attitudes in order to save lives and give families, women and children a better quality of life and a life of peace and ambition, not violence, isolation and control. I share this vision and commit to Fiona and to all the women and children in our community who are currently living in abusive situations that I will help in any way possible to make this agency a reality.

I would like to acknowledge Fiona's staff, particularly Tanja, Ashlea and Maree. Your support for Fiona, her friends and her colleagues has been exceptional. I know that it has been difficult and heartbreaking, but you have continued on delivering Fiona's vision. My deepest sympathy goes to those that she loved the most: Stephen, Catherine, Marcus, Veronica, Hamish and Alastair. I will miss you, Fiona. You were so funny in so many ways and also so reassuring. I cannot begin to tell you how much I learned from you. You were such a generous teacher. I will never forget that you believed in me at a time when I did not really believe in myself. I will never forget that you invited me to help you with this important work. When I think of you, Fiona, I will always think of your wonderful spirit of generosity.

**Mr CRISP** (Mildura) — I rise to talk briefly and to add some of my words to some of the great words that have already been spoken. Fiona was our first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, and she showed that you can take the negatives of life, learn from them and turn them into positives — something I think all of us could benefit from. I would also like to acknowledge the great words that the member for Brunswick found in this week of trying times. Very well done, Jane.

Fiona's contribution to the prevention of family violence was to bring a perspective to it that made a difference. In my particular area, the electorate of Mildura, and in most of our electorates, family violence is present and it is ugly, but it needs to be addressed. In Mildura the incidence is higher than in other regional areas and higher than it needs to be. That was recognised by the minister, and programs flowed to Mildura to tackle and prevent family violence — something my community is better off for. There have been a number of high-profile family tragedies in my area, as there have been in others, and the minister was strong at those times. But there is still work to be done.

I think in life all of us are here because we want to make a difference. In order to do that you need to be involved and get informed, and then you can make a difference. Fiona certainly showed us that. I thank Fiona's family for giving her to us. We all know families carry a great burden when someone wants to make a difference. Fiona has made a great difference to all of us. Thank you and farewell to Fiona — a life short lived but a life well lived.

**Ms NEVILLE** (Minister for Police) — Over the last almost two weeks we have all had to come to terms with what was for many of us a very sudden loss. I have spent a number of years in this Parliament listening to different condolence speeches, in most cases for people I have never heard of. To be confronted over the last couple of weeks with losing not just someone we knew very well but somebody who not long before had sat next to us in cabinet or had sat with us here in Parliament made it all the more difficult.

There has been much said today about Fiona's contribution to the prevention of family violence in Victoria, and I will come to that, but she was also passionate about many other things, including, obviously, the Australian Labor Party — her family, her tribe. She played an incredibly critical role in its modern iteration. As we heard someone say earlier, it is hard to imagine a Labor Party without Fiona. Of the 30 years I have been a member, 20 were with Fiona playing a critical and leading role, and often causing a great deal of fear and sometimes loathing in some people as well. She protected her tribe as she protected her family.

Education was also a massive passion for Fiona, and we heard about that from the principal of Northcote High School at her memorial service. Fiona spoke about education in her inaugural speech, identifying it as one of the key indicators in terms of equality of opportunity. As she said in that speech, if we get that right, we can lift the most disadvantaged children out of the desert of despair and into the oasis of opportunity.

Another lesser-known passion of Fiona's — and the member for Footscray mentioned it — was national parks. As I said, I knew Fiona for close to 20 years, and it was not until the last couple of years that I really got an appreciation of her understanding of nature and the importance it held in her life. Not only was Mount Buffalo a major part of her and, I think, Stephen's life — I am not sure if he enjoyed those bushwalks as much as Fiona did — but she was absolutely passionate about the need for governments to protect national parks. She provided me with some great advice, support and counsel during the implementation of our policies

not long after we were elected to remove 99-year leases from national parks, take cows out of national parks, protect Point Nepean and of course ensure the future of Mount Buffalo Chalet. I very much appreciated her guidance and her absolute passion for the beauty and the importance of national parks for future generations. It provided me with a very new window into Fiona.

But as we have heard today, for most Victorians now and into the future it will be Fiona's work in tackling family violence and gender inequality that will be celebrated and remembered. For too long family violence was seen as a behind-closed-doors issue — something unlucky women and children must tolerate within the private bounds of their marriage and family. In some cases it was thought that maybe they had done something to cause it. When violence was heard about by witnesses outside the family, it too often was met with disinterest or deafness. People would turn away, respecting the privacy of the perpetrator and thinking it was not their role to intervene.

Now, due to the work of Fiona, the Premier and hundreds of women, a spotlight has been shone on this private abuse, and Victoria is now on the path to dealing with and one day preventing family violence. Thanks to Fiona, the Royal Commission into Family Violence and so many women, we have a 227-step roadmap to guide us to improve the situation for Victorian women and children.

When I first became Minister for Police, Fiona sought me out. She understood that change in this area involved the work of so many of us and that one of the key agencies that could protect women and play a role in changing culture was Victoria Police. She was keen for us to work together to make sure that the recommendations targeting the justice system and especially Victoria Police would be a key priority for implementation. She understood just how critical Victoria Police was in not only responding to incidents but also changing the culture of accountability and respect for women. She expressed to me the respect she had for Victoria Police officers across the ranks who had risen to the challenge to address the scourge of family violence.

Police across the state have acknowledged over the last couple of weeks Fiona's contribution and the changes she has led following the royal commission. Many have said that they are seeing some of the biggest and most important reforms that they have seen in their policing careers. The royal commission made 33 specific recommendations directed at police, with many others related to Victoria Police, and they are well on the way to delivering all those recommendations. They have

also indicated to me that they remain as committed as ever — as I am — to ensuring that we finish this important work to honour Fiona and to save lives.

Fiona knew that we needed to focus not just on family violence but on the drivers of family violence. She clearly understood that structures of gender inequality were driving family violence. Sadly we remain a society with countless quiet inequalities, from the persistent gender pay gap to women doing the heavy lifting of parenting and housework and sexist representations of women in the media. Through the state's first-ever gender equality strategy, Fiona was holding Victoria to account in the fight for women to receive the same opportunities, support and recognition that men take for granted. And she was fighting for the safety of women and children.

So thank you, Fiona, always frank and fearless, sometimes scary, always bold and extremely brave, especially through your illness. You will be missed by many in our community, in the corridors of Spring Street and in the Labor Party. My condolences and thoughts are with Stephen, Catherine, Marcus and all her family members. My heart hurts for you.

**Ms SHEED** (Shepparton) — Sitting in this chamber for so many hours over the past three years, it was clear to me that Fiona Richardson was a woman to be reckoned with. When Fiona rose to speak, a silence would fall. There was none of the regular noise or point-scoring that usually accompanies life in this Parliament. She was respected and admired by political friends and foes alike and by many outside these walls, and she clearly knew how to set lofty goals and see them through. As Minister for Women and as Victoria's first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, Fiona championed the rights of women at every opportunity, and the lives of many women and girls today are going to be much better because of the future that she has been able to create for them.

In her previous roles as parliamentary secretary for education and for treasury and finance, both taken up in her very first term, and later as opposition spokesperson for public transport and for small business and innovation, she served her party well. I did not know Fiona well. I regret that we did not have more opportunities to meet together. Our paths really crossed only occasionally in this place, but she always took me aside to let me know what her business was and what the business she was transacting that might affect me or my community was.

When I saw the episode of *Australian Story* on Fiona and her family, I was struck by her steely

determination, something I had seen in this Parliament. She was incredibly determined. She was someone who was not forgotten when she walked out of a room, and she was someone people took a lot of notice of.

When news of her death broke, my staff were quick to share their memories of one of her trips to Shepparton. Fiona was in the town in the middle of last year as part of her six-week statewide consultation to determine the government's blueprint for gender equality. As part of her visit she came to my office and took my staff to see the incredible work done by those on the frontline in the battle against family violence at one of our local women's refuges. There they witnessed firsthand Fiona's passion for her work, her ability to connect with others, her generosity and her endless compassion in fighting to break the cycle of family violence. It is a tragic cycle, and it is one I knew only too well in my many years as a family lawyer practising in Shepparton.

Over my years of practice I have seen some remarkable change. There was a time when at the Shepparton police station there was no dedicated family violence officer. If you rang the police station, you might be told that it was 'just a domestic'. Later Sergeant Ken O'Connor filled the role for many years. Now we have four dedicated family violence police officers in Shepparton, and that is a remarkable change in really only probably the past three years. So the work that Fiona Richardson has done has really resounded across the whole state, and we are seeing results on the ground. I think there are many women out on farms, isolated women, women in towns, women across the regions — not only in Melbourne — who know what she has done and who will benefit from the work she has done. She was not city centric; I can tell you that. She was out and about across the regions.

We have a new courthouse in Shepparton being built at the moment. One of the remarkable things that is coming to Shepparton is our own family violence court. That is something that would have been unheard of in all the years that I practised law. We certainly need it. It is a very busy list in the Shepparton court, and to be able to have a dedicated family violence court in a regional city such as Shepparton will, I hope, engender a lot of change because with the family violence court not only does as a magistrate specialising in that area come, but so do a whole lot of other support services. I think it is an amazing opportunity to see many of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence be put into practice.

The loss of Fiona to this Parliament and to those who loved her is profound. I send my heartfelt condolences to Fiona's husband, Stephen, and to her children,

Marcus and Catherine. Stephen, my children lost their father when they were young. I have to say that in this place there are many wonderful aunties and uncles who will fill your household with stories and who your children will love to listen to for many years ahead. That will help them deal with the loss — to know that they had such a remarkable mother and to share those memories into their future. Her absence certainly cannot be filled, but I hope that you will take some small comfort from knowing that she has left a lasting impression on this place and on this state — on the whole state — and that her legacy will not be forgotten.

**Mr SCOTT** (Minister for Finance) — I would like to rise today to honour the memory of Fiona Richardson. People pass through public life, and through the choices that are made through the utilisation of the power and authority which we are lucky enough, particularly those who have the honour of serving as ministers, to have vested in us on behalf of the community, we seek — and Fiona certainly did — to leave Victorians in a better place for our touching of their lives.

Fiona's life and life in politics is a story in part about power. Power for Fiona was important — I think it should be acknowledged — and it was something she sought to acquire on behalf of those interests which she served. But for her, importantly, power was not a tool in itself. Power was for a purpose and a moral purpose. The exercising of power creates moral questions which confront anyone who is serious about the role that we play as public officials but also the nature of the relationship between those who exercise power and the broader community.

I think there is no more honourable tribute to any person in this place than to know that the exercise of power, which they had the responsibility for, will lead to vulnerable young women and children, vulnerable wives and vulnerable partners being free of terror, being free of violence, being free of fear and living without the fear of someone returning home to do them harm. That work in combating family violence in all its forms is a legacy that is fitting and that will last long beyond the normal discourse we have in this place.

I was struck when I had a similar discussion with local branch members about Fiona's legacy. Someone came up to me after that and spoke to me of their own experience of family violence. This is a person in fact who is not particularly recognised, I would say, as being close to Fiona in the various worlds of Labor politics, but for him the terror that he experienced as a child is something he wished no-one else to experience. Fiona has ensured that less people experience that terror.

Empowerment is a word that is often misused. Fiona's legacy in public life is a story of female empowerment, not because someone granted her a position; that is not empowerment. Empowerment entails the person who is empowered actually holding power. Fiona held power, and she held power in what was not entirely but largely a male world, and she held power on equal terms. That is empowerment, so her story is a story of female empowerment.

To Stephen, to her children, Marcus and Catherine, and to her mother, Veronica, you can look with pride on her legacy. You can look to her life and know that there was much to be proud of in her toughness and in her work to acquire authority and power, but more important were the moral standards at the core of that ultimate utilisation. There will be a legacy which will stand not just as a testament which you and your family can draw upon, and that is important, but also for millions of Victorians and the lives that they lead. Vale, Fiona Richardson.

**Mr THOMPSON** (Sandringham) — Over the last 100 years, almost precisely, Northcote has had five members — all representatives of the Labor Party, so it would not be described as a swinging marginal seat. The member for Burwood was an optimist in running there a number of years ago. Among the representatives, one served for 40 years, another served for 30 years or thereabouts, another served for 10 years and another served for 11 years, that being Fiona.

During her time in this chamber, a number of us on this side of the house, from corridor conversations, saw that Fiona had the potential to be a future Labor leader. That was a narrative that was told, and among the former leaders for Northcote, one served as Premier and one served as the Leader of the Opposition. Observing her demeanour in the house as she moved perhaps eight or nine paces to the dispatch box, she was measured, she was clinical, she was purposeful and she was a very keen advocate.

I had the privilege of getting to know her through a role that I now share with you, Speaker, as a co-chair of the parliamentarians against domestic violence. That is an arena of leadership that does require a strong bipartisan approach. I can contrast the stillness of the chamber now with settings in my own electorate where there are the negative narratives of families confronting domestic violence, of police attending in the early hours of the morning, of an ambulance there, of a fist through a window, of blood over the carpet, of children who need to be cared for or of employment commitments that may not be met. In that context it is important that there is purposeful

leadership, measured leadership and wise leadership. Those were qualities that Fiona brought to her own leadership as Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence and as Minister for Women in this place.

As co-chairs we had the opportunity to listen to the leaders of Victoria Police speak in the Federation Room as they defined the magnitude of the problem of domestic violence from their point of view. Fiona and her staff had the leadership and insight to recruit Patrick Dangerfield to the 'say no to violence' campaign after he had moved from Adelaide to Melbourne but before his Brownlow Medal year. He was part of the significant campaign on the steps of Parliament House, and that was a very important message to have resonate into the middle of Victoria. I pay tribute to his 2016 Geelong colleague Jimmy Bartel and his contribution in combating domestic violence in Victoria, making a very clear message that can be followed by others.

Then there was the debate in this chamber that was addressed by Rosie Batty, Chief Commissioner of Police Graham Ashton, Indigenous leader Muriel Bamblett, Kristy McKellar, Annette Gillespie and Rodney Vlasis, along with the contributions of a number of members, where the issue of domestic violence was exposed and addressed in numbers of wise ways.

In terms of the bipartisan approach to domestic violence being addressed, I had the opportunity on the part of the opposition to draw on experiences firstly as a member of the all-party parliamentary Law Reform Committee, which looked at access to law and legal services in rural and regional Victoria, in the 54th Parliament. The evidence taken both on and off the record was horrific, and the committee came up with multiple recommendations, numbers of which were implemented, addressing the needs and concerns of women in rural and regional Victoria.

There are also the federal initiatives undertaken in relation to this area that have seen support for casework being extended for women's legal services and other agencies; the banning of direct cross-examination of women in family law cases where violence has been raised; the boosting of funding for parenting management hearings; and support for community legal centres. They are some of the initiatives that have been developed within our federal arena as well. It is important that work in this area is undertaken on a bipartisan basis.

I note the comments about Fiona in speeches earlier today, and I pay tribute to those people who have spoken, with their poignant insights and knowledge of Fiona as a parliamentarian, as a mother and within her

immediate family context. I note the very fine speech of the member for Kew — his firsthand insight and his suggestion that the Chandler Highway bridge be named the Fiona Richardson bridge. I suggest a two-way bridge: a Fiona Richardson bridge going one way and a Tim Smith bridge going the other. I note the contribution that she made to building a bridge — this very important issue.

To Stephen, I make the comment that Mount Buffalo is a beautiful place. May you have the chance to return there with your family to remember a place that Fiona enjoyed, and may your children remember her within that precinct. I extend the condolences of the Sandringham electorate to the Richardson and Newnham families.

**Mr PAKULA** (Attorney-General) — When I first started thinking about what I wanted to say today I was determined I did not want to talk about some sanitised or fictionalised version of Fiona. I wanted to talk about the Fiona Richardson that I knew for more than 20 years, the person that I met when she was working in Werribee as an electorate officer for my friend and former union colleague Mary Gillett. But as I listened to some of the speeches at the state memorial service last Thursday and indeed some of the speeches today, I had to concede that even though I knew Fiona for a very long time I have an incomplete understanding of her. I have a superficial understanding of Fiona. I have one that is borne of knowing someone through the prism of politics, rather than knowing her personally in the way that many members of this chamber clearly did. So I want to say to those whose experience of Fiona was much deeper and much more intimate and complete than mine that I apologise in advance for reflections which you might think do not fully capture the Fiona Richardson that you knew and clearly understood so well.

I knew Fiona primarily as a political operative, and as a political operative she was a difficult woman — and that is a description I think she would have been immensely proud of. She was unquestionably a champion for women and children who had been the victims or who indeed remain at risk of domestic violence. She was a staunch friend to many people, and we have heard from the members for Kororoit, Williamstown, Wendouree and Brunswick and so many others today about what kind of a friend she was. She was an iconoclast. When you sat around a table, if there was going to be one person who spoke against the prevailing sentiment — whatever that might be — it was generally Fiona. She challenged everyone, and as is the case with iconoclasts, it was not always welcome. But one thing Fiona did was that she ensured that an

alternative point of view had to be confronted, and I think on almost all of the occasions that she did that we were better for it.

Within the Labor Party Fiona has a lot of incredibly steadfast admirers, and I think the thing that I note about that is that they come from across age brackets, across genders and across factions. I am thinking about people like Kosmos Samaras, Theo Theophanous, Jane Garrett, Robert Ray, Greg Sword and Candy Broad. Fiona was someone who was outstanding at building relationships right across the breadth of the Labor Party. I think back to 2002 and the Labor Unity group, which Fiona was a convener of; it had just started to come apart at the seams. I was convinced then, and I remain convinced today, that Fiona Richardson was the main reason that that group survived — no disrespect to the member for Footscray. She was a shrewd deal-maker, she was a fierce combatant and she held that show together by sheer force of will.

I spent a lot of time with Fiona Richardson over many, many years, whether as a state conference delegate or when I was the secretary of the National Union of Workers. I sat alongside her negotiating agreements; I sat on the other side of the table negotiating agreements with her. We were candidates together, MPs together, shadow ministers together and cabinet colleagues. And there were times in Fiona's life when she and I were much closer than we were at the end of her life. That is regrettable. It is also not uncommon in this business. I am sure that if she had lived longer the wheel would have turned again, as it had so many times in the past.

But what I know for certain, having worked with her on so many occasions, is that her tactical mind was absolutely extraordinary. What I also know for certain, having been opposed to her on many occasions, is that she could be an utterly formidable opponent. There was one time in particular in this building when I had acted politically in a way that displeased her. In a room upstairs we shook hands at the end of all of that and she looked at me with those steely blue eyes, which so many members have described today, and congratulated me. And I thought to myself, 'Mate, you're going to pay for this. You're going to pay for this one day'.

Having started by saying that I did not want to sanitise my memory of Fiona, I do not want to overcorrect either. She was, it is true, one of the first women in the back room with the boys, more than holding her own, influencing outcomes and leading. But she was also a devoted wife to Stephen, she was a devoted mother to Marcus and Catherine, she was a daughter to Veronica and she was a sister to Hamish and Alastair. Having

watched *Australian Story* again just on Sunday, I was reminded of what a tower of strength she was to her elder brothers and how completely proud of her they were. She was a champion of her sector. She was a supportive and caring friend, again as we have heard so often today, and she was that to many, many people, particularly to those fighting battles of their own.

In many regards Fiona is someone who is simply impossible to pigeonhole. She is someone who defies categorisation. Despite her outward quietness and the considered manner which she demonstrated in this chamber on many, many occasions, she traversed and completely inhabited the Victorian Labor Party for more than two decades. She was someone who was an undeniable force. I have got to say, as I reflect on all the people that I have dealt with in the Labor Party and in the Parliament for many decades now, there was nobody else quite like Fiona. It will be for all of us, I think, very, very different and very, very strange now that she is gone. I am not a spiritual person and I do not pretend to know what the purpose of life is, but if it is to leave a mark and it is to make a difference, she most certainly did that. Vale, comrade. Rest in peace.

**Mr PAYNTER** (Bass) — On 23 August, which was in the last sitting week of this Parliament, I said in a members statement:

My thoughts are with the member for Northcote, the Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, and her extended family as she battles multiple tumours. The minister has played a lead role in fighting against family violence in all forms and will no doubt fight the tumours with equal vigour and determination. I get the impression that the minister is tough. She will certainly need to muster all her resilience in this battle. She has my respect and best wishes.

I am glad I took the opportunity on that day to say those words. Little did I know at the time that she was in palliative care and this would be her last day on earth.

I only knew Fiona the politician. I did, however, learn something about the other person at a memorial service last week, where people spoke in glowing terms about her contribution to public life. The member for Brunswick in particular spoke beautifully, passionately and lovingly about Fiona the mother and the friend — a dear friend.

Fiona chose to no longer be the victim. She made it very clear that this is the responsibility of all members of Parliament on both sides: to address gender inequality and the prevention of family violence. She gave a voice to Rosie Batty, Kristy McKellar and others that have been the subject of family violence. I respected Fiona's bipartisan approach to preventing

family violence, and note her attendance with myself and the member for Dandenong at a forum in Pakenham on this issue.

My condolences to Stephen, Marcus and Catherine, and to her mother, Veronica, and the extended family. If life is about leaving a legacy, then, Fiona, yours is everlasting. Rest in peace, Fiona Richardson.

**Ms GREEN** (Yan Yean) — We all remember where we were when we heard the impossible, inexplicable news that Fiona Richardson had died. How could that be? She seemed so strong and indestructible. She was a force of nature — not in the weather sense, not a strong wind or a storm that is here for a short time and then gone, but as strong as steel, as solid as a rock. She was hewn from the earth of Africa, with those sparkling intense blue eyes, as precious and everlasting as the diamonds and sapphires mined in the continent of her birth.

Some 2 hours after Fi's death, at 4.55 p.m., the member for Frankston burst into this chamber and blurted out to me — the first person that he saw — that Fiona had died. My immediate two reactions were to howl like an animal in grief and then give the member a left hook. But I could do neither, because I was next on the speaking list. I had 20 seconds to compose myself and channel, 'What would Fi do?'

I did not know who knew and who did not — we are webstreamed now. I had to ground myself like Fiona always did. The only one thing I wished I could have done was to have kicked my shoes off, but I had shoelaces. Fiona would not have had fussy things like that. I needed to ground myself and get through speaking on a justice bill, which she would have absolutely supported and did support; it was part of her reforms. Then a short time later I had to speak on an adjournment matter. I felt absolute physical pain for days after, as I had contorted my face so much so as to not cry, because Fiona hated public tears and weakness — mostly in herself.

I also remember where I was on the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the Labor Party in 1991. I was nursing my then baby, Carlo, at a Northcote branch meeting, the night that Fiona Richardson joined our great party. So I suspect I may be the member in this place who had known her the longest.

Soon after she joined the Labor Party a fierce bidding war between the factions began for Fiona's talents. I was then the Batman convener of the Socialist Left, and Andrew McKenzie and I nominated her for membership of that faction. I proudly told her, some three months

later, that the Socialist Left executive and the Socialist Left general meeting at Trades Hall had accepted her for membership. She bluntly told me, 'You lefties take too bloody long. You're too slow. I've joined Labor Unity'. Fi was never going to stand around waiting. It is how she lived, and it is how she died. We both loved campaigning, and we worked together on the last Northcote by-election in 1998. I simply cannot believe that we will not be campaigning together on the next one, and that she is now the cause of it.

Fiona was pivotal in recruiting me to Labor Unity and opening the door for me to enter Parliament in 2002, something that I had just never, ever thought that I would do. She assisted so many others into Parliament. As former Premier, Steve Bracks, said at her memorial, not one Prime Minister, two prime ministers — the first female Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, and hopefully the next one, Bill Shorten. The member for Brunswick also said at the memorial that Fiona had been pivotal in Jane's ascension to Parliament. I am sure there are many others, particularly in the north — Jenny Mikakos and you yourself, Speaker — and many, many more across not just the north. A huge legacy, great leadership.

We both became parliamentary secretaries as Fiona entered Parliament in 2006 — she in education and then in transport and finance. I remember well her disdain and disgust at having to ditch her signature trackie daks and T-shirts for parliamentary attire, as the member for Footscray spoke about. Fiona detested shopping for clothes, and as much as she hated shoes she hated pantyhose even more. She was absolutely appalled at waste and could not believe how the scratchy old tables at Parliament House would make a mess of the pantyhose. I just said, 'You've got to keep them in your drawer', and she sort of screwed her nose up and thought, 'What a bloody waste of time'.

I admired her shoelessness. It was not just Marsha and Janice who shopped for her clothes. I would compliment her on a suit or a jacket and ask the brand and where she had got it. She would look at me and think, 'How bloody irrelevant is that?'. She would say, 'Newnham bought it of course. He goes and gets my clothes if Marsha or Janice don't. I hate shopping. You'll need to take Catherine shopping, because you both love all that matchy-matchy clothes stuff rubbish'. I hope I have got it matchy enough today to upset her again.

We were both appalled at us losing government in 2010 and were both frontbenchers in the shadow cabinet. Then, in typical Fi style, she wasted no time sooking about the loss and was resolute and relentless in winning government back. She threw herself into

public transport policy, reading voraciously and travelling the world to find out what was best. The level crossing program is a great legacy. It is an absolutely marvellous legacy of her work across this great city, particularly in the north.

She was fun, she was innovative and she would take any opportunity. Who will ever forget the fare slug? We loved it on this side. I am not so sure they liked it on the other side.

We saw her ferociousness when she defended Janice Munt's daughter, Katherine, after she had been bullied at Parliament station while campaigning very soon after we had lost office. Her ferocity in this chamber in defending Katherine and in seeing what was wrong was the first time that we had ever heard her even allude publicly to her own experience of violence or indeed family violence. I was quite shocked and taken aback because, as other members have noted, Fiona was an incredibly private person and was not about having people know that detail about her life. It showed her regard for Katherine and for all women that she was prepared to begin telling that story.

When we returned to government I was shattered — absolutely shattered — to not be implementing and not working, as I had been the first spokesperson for any party in Australia on the prevention of family violence. It is not a good thing in politics to get too attached to your subject matter. I never think much about fate, but I thought that I was fated to right the wrongs of the two friends I had lost through murders in this way.

Fiona was amazing and compassionate in dealing with and supporting me through my grief at not being able to implement that, but she did not fuss around and waste time about it. She made sure that I was okay. I got out of her way, and she got on and did it. Not only did she grow on that narrative that she had spoken about in defending Katherine but then came that absolute bravery. I have put my personal life out there on many occasions, as many people in this house will know, but there is no way I could have done what she did in telling that deeply personal story.

I want to again thank her and her mother, Veronica Power, her brothers, Hamish and Alastair, and husband, Stephen, and children for telling that story for every woman and child who has ever experienced that violence and for ensuring that into the future there will be less of that going on.

As others have said, Fiona has put this on the agenda. She would be absolutely disgusted that she is not able to be here to implement it. But I know that right to the end,

as others have said — including in her appearance before the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee and the fact that she kept the seriousness of the relapse of her illness so close to herself — she ensured that it would be achieved through the staff that she chose and the many times she raised them, whether it was with the Premier, other ministers, every member on this side of the house and also those on the other side. Her tragic early loss means that we are too afraid of Fiona even in death to step any way back from those reforms. So she should, wherever she is, understand that this work will continue.

In terms of the local work that she did, as I said, I knew her first in Northcote. My son went to Northcote High School and also worked at Northcote high during Fiona's first term. He would tell me how intense she was about pushing for the needs of the school, how intense and relentless she was in asking about what their needs were.

Other members have talked about the duration of preceding members for Northcote. With no disrespect to them, there had been just a ridiculous intersection on St Georges Road just over the Merri Creek that had been an absurd blight on that suburb and that community for so long. One of Fiona's immediate efforts was to get rid of that intersection. The next thing was the Chandler Highway bridge. I think some people had been concerned with the growing Greens vote that maybe this might not be popular. Fiona pushed on and she worked closely I know with her neighbouring member and one of my neighbouring mates here in the Parliament, the member for Ivanhoe, to make sure that it happened. That, in addition to those level crossings and her work on family violence, will be a continued part of her legacy.

Others have mentioned that the Labor Party is a great family. I am not glad that Fiona has gone but I am so glad that she chose very generously to pass on a day when we were sitting, which meant that we were all able to be together and to support each other through her loss. I felt just too broken to even be able to drive home, so I want to thank the member for Eltham. She drove the Hurstbridge line crew home that night. It was a really memorable drive home, with the member for Eltham at the wheel and with you, Speaker, sitting next to me in the back, and riding shotgun was the member for Ivanhoe in the front. We were able to salute Fiona's achievements as the other Hurstbridge line MPs — now we have a gap between the member for Richmond and the rest of us. As we went along the Eastern Freeway we were able to wave up to Grange Road, to that level crossing that is now gone, and up the hill to Alphington where there is going to be a new school that Fiona pushed for.

I think it was the member for Ivanhoe that was the first to say in that car drive so shortly after Fiona's passing that we need to name that bridge after Fiona Richardson. She would not have wanted some girly memorial; she would not have wanted anything. But for someone who was so outdoorsy, who loved trucks and loved machines and had been in the army, I think a bridge — a bridge to understanding, a bridge to so many things — is so fitting for the many ways that Fiona Richardson will be remembered. As we dropped off the member for Ivanhoe just around the corner from the Rosanna station we were able to salute Fiona's efforts again in the work to get rid of that level crossing, and that duplication of track is underway.

Just as when we lost another dear friend, Lynne Kosky, the Premier at the time said that there would be many ways that Lynne Kosky would be remembered, there will be many, many ways that our friend Fiona Richardson will be remembered. I want to say to Fiona that in particular, in your memory, we want to keep up the fight not just in fighting family violence; we want to keep up the fight in getting to the bottom of the causes of cancer and especially the causes that have taken someone so young, so vibrant and so amazing as Fiona Richardson.

On this side of the house we have a terrible, sad legacy. We have not had that many women in Parliament; there have only been 126 of us in 150 years on both sides of the house. The majority of MPs in the north since 2002 have been women. The last person to die in office was actually a Labor woman from the north in Beth Gleeson, a former member for Thomastown, at 46 years old. In the same year we lost the former member for Greensborough, the first female minister ever, Pauline Toner, three days after she retired from Parliament due to ill health at the age of 53.

Fiona, Beth and Pauline have all been lost too soon, along with Lynne Kosky and Karen Overington. Each of these women, who I have served with or been friends with, has been lost to cancer, and there have been so many staffers. We owe it to them and their memory to get to the bottom of this disease, and I am so glad that we have educational and research institutions in the north that will be able to do so. I know another woman, Maxine Morand, a former member of this place who is now the chair of the cancer hospital and a cancer survivor herself, and others will be front and centre in fighting this, and I know that we will all do that in Fiona's name. Vale, Fiona Richardson. Thank you for your friendship and thank you for your contribution to public life and to this fantastic place.

**Mr NORTHE** (Morwell) — I rise on the condolence motion today for the sad and untimely passing of colleague and friend Fiona Richardson. We have all been able to reflect on Fiona's life through her childhood, adult life and career but also as a daughter, a sister, a partner, a mum, a colleague and a friend. I must say, given some of the issues that Fiona encountered in her life and in her childhood days, which have been well articulated, but also through her battles with cancer, it is really a credit to Fiona, her family and those who loved her that she became the person she was — in my eyes, a calm, friendly and extremely dedicated and determined person who always put other people first.

Many have spoken about Fiona's achievements since she became a minister in this term of Parliament. They have been well documented, and rightly so. But it is probably her achievements as a person that many of us have the opportunity to acknowledge today, and I am sure we have got our own experiences and stories about Fiona. One of mine, very quickly, was that some time ago I approached Fiona on behalf of a mate of mine who lived in Traralgon. At the time his daughter was living in the Northcote electorate. It was a very sad situation. My mate's daughter had what you would call 'one with the lot'. She had a myriad of issues, including drug and alcohol, family violence, homelessness — all of the above. It was a really sad situation.

I approached Fiona about that and had an initial conversation with her. She followed up immediately with Jess, this young lady. Over time and regularly she was able to update me and indeed my mate to give some reassurance that things were happening and that services were being put in place to support Jess. I will never, ever forget that, and I know I am probably only one of hundreds of people who Fiona impacted in a positive way, not only in her electorate but throughout her time as minister.

I also know that Fiona was an inspiration to many people, particularly on those issues she was passionate about such as family violence, gender equity, women's leadership and of course cancer. But it is much broader than that, and I can say sincerely and personally that Fiona has inspired others to get busy living. No matter how big the challenges are or how big they have been, you can always make a positive difference, and that is simply what Fiona did.

To all Fiona's family, friends and colleagues, my deepest sympathies are with you on the passing of such a beautiful and wonderful lady.

**Ms D'AMBROSIO** (Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change) — I first met Fiona some 23 years ago. Fiona was new on the scene of Labor factional politics. She was also very young, full of bounce and a confidence that knew no bounds and a conviction that knew no uncertainty. All of this made for a steely resolve to win every contest and to win every argument. It is these very qualities of Fiona that ensured the delivery of the most significant family violence reforms in our history — no uncertainty, no bounds to what was needed to rid our community of its most insidious disease.

I was on the other side to Fiona in many factional contests and arguments, and it is fair to say that we each lost skin along the way, but both of us acknowledged and respected each other's roles and capabilities — or at least I hope she did of me; I certainly did of her. Fiona will be remembered as a champion for those without a voice. Her support for the victim sufferers of family violence was unwavering. Her tireless effort in leading the charge on the Royal Commission into Family Violence is one of the hallmark achievements of this government. Our government received that report in March 2016 and immediately committed to implementing all of its recommendations. To date of course we know that that has been backed up by significant investment. This record of investment is largely due to Fiona's resolve. At the time the royal commission handed down its report Fiona said, 'This report will change everything'. Our government's promise to Fiona, to her staff, to the victim sufferers and to all Victorians is that we will continue her work and ensure we create the lasting generational reform she dreamed of.

It was clear that Fiona did not do things by halves — not when it came to family violence prevention and equality. Fiona's policy work in this area has changed the narrative of family violence in Victoria so much that other states want to emulate the steps we are taking to help fight for victims of this trauma. Fiona understood family violence was not an individual problem but a societal one. Because of Fiona we are now rolling out Respectful Relationships programs across schools and early childhood services, adding more than 300 social housing properties for victims of family violence and expanding specialist family violence services to cope with unprecedented demand. Essentially, Fiona's work has saved lives and will continue to do so.

The result of Fiona's fight for women can be seen in my electorate of Mill Park. Women's Health in the North is an organisation that educates and trains the community and conducts research and campaigns on

issues related to strengthening women's health, safety and wellbeing. Women's Health in the North also leads the implementation of our government's family violence reforms in the northern metropolitan region. Fiona amplified the voice of Women's Health in the North and organisations like it. Her support has meant that women and children in my electorate are happier, healthier and, most importantly, safer.

Italians have a saying when we talk about the health of an older person. The saying goes like this: 'Beata chi ci arriva'. This means that regardless of what may ail you as an old person, if you get to an old age you are truly blessed, because there are those who never get the opportunity to grow old. How true this is when we lose people as young as Fiona was, and how unfair it all is.

Fiona was a mother, a partner, a daughter, a sister, a Labor colleague, a friend and a true champion of Labor values. Fiona achieved so much in her lifetime and paved the way for other women to do the same. Forevermore no-one will be in doubt about the inextricable link between gender inequality and family violence. The changes she put in motion will continue to reverberate throughout our community for generations to come. I offer my deepest condolences to her family — Stephen, Marcus, Catherine, Veronica, Hamish and Alastair — and her many friends. Vale, Fiona.

**Ms EDWARDS** (Bendigo West) — I do not think Fiona was a procrastinator, but I am a shocking procrastinator and I have to say that today, in putting together some words to speak about my friend and colleague Fiona, I have procrastinated more than I usually would. There are some things that remind me and will always remind me of Fiona. Some have already been mentioned: her smile; her sparkling and sometimes steely blue eyes; the way she commanded respect by her poise and stature; the way this chamber was always quiet when she was on her feet speaking, because she always had something profound and important to say; and the way she wore her scarves, a trademark, I think, and wrapped them around her shoulders. My scarf today is one that Fiona often remarked on. She would say to me, 'Oh, you're wearing my favourite scarf today'. These are some of the things that remind me of our beautiful Fiona.

To the members of her staff, particularly in her ministerial office — to Tanja and the team — and her electorate office, I send my love and condolences and I thank you for working with Fiona to deliver her dream. Some of these words are taken from a tribute by Tanja. Fiona dedicated her life to gender equality and improving the lives of those touched by family violence. She lifted the veil on what had been kept

secret for many generations. She forced cultural awareness and demanded change for women and children who endured family violence. Under her leadership Victoria had a world first with the Royal Commission into Family Violence. Fiona and her dedicated team of women warriors instigated a Victoria against Violence campaign, saw Respectful Relationships developed in the state curriculum and developed the state's first gender equality strategy. Ambitious and practical, she personally held Victoria accountable in the fight for women to receive the same opportunities, support and recognition as men.

Fiona spent a lot of time in the regions over the last 12 months, and just 12 months ago she was in Bendigo holding her gender equality forum. She made a number of visits to Bendigo — formal and informal visits. She held public forums and private forums. I want to say thank you to Fiona on behalf of the women and children and the service providers in the Bendigo region. I want to relay their thanks for her enormous contribution to their safety and their future.

I would like, if I could, to read an extract from an article that was in the *Bendigo Advertiser* last week, which included a tribute paid to Fiona by two fantastic advocates in our region: Julie Oberin, the CEO of Annie North Women's Refuge; and Margaret Augerinos, the CEO of the Centre for Non-Violence. According to the article in the *Bendigo Advertiser*:

... Julie Oberin said Victoria was 'now seen as leading the way nationally and to some degree internationally, since the Victorian government not only committed to implementing all of the royal commission recommendations, but released unprecedented funds to ensure that the implementation had the best possible chance of achieving the recommendations'. 'But there is still unfinished work', she said.

Julie Oberin continued:

Ms Richardson was planning dedicated and long-term funding for prevention work, protected by legislation. She had the vision to understand the importance of the prevention work and the determination to protect it from the whim of future governments. It would be a world first and a flagship move which we must continue to advocate for.

I, for one, will continue that advocacy.

Margaret Augerinos said:

Ms Richardson came, without any fanfare, and spent a couple of hours with us, and listened to our experience of delivering services to our community ...

She was particularly interested in how we were working to maximise the safety of women and children and hold perpetrators to account.

During that meeting, Ms Richardson was incredibly aware of the drivers of violence against women and that the only way we were going to prevent this from occurring in the long term was to hold gender equality at the core of all of our work and efforts.

From that day Ms Richardson continued to impress Ms Augerinos with her ‘knowledge and insight into the issues impacting on women and children, specialist family violence services and the broader system’.

Fiona was very impressed with the integrated safety-led model that was developed in Bendigo over the last 10 to 12 years, and stated publicly that that model was the blueprint for future service reform. She told the *Bendigo Advertiser* in August 2016 that the Centre for Non-Violence was being looked at as a best practice model that could be rolled out across the state. This, I know, made our service providers very proud, to know that they were already leading the charge against family violence and leading the change that was needed.

Ms Augerinos went on to say:

On behalf of everyone at the Centre for Non-Violence, we want to acknowledge the great contribution Ms Richardson has made to our community broadly, and more specifically to bringing the community’s attention to family violence.

Ms Oberin echoed Margaret’s thoughts, saying the minister was approachable, with a lot of heart and humanity. Ms Oberin also said, importantly, that Ms Richardson did things because they needed to be done, not so as to be recognised for the work. As Ms Oberin recalled:

She said ‘we can do more and we must’. And she meant it. She left an amazing legacy, but the work is not done.

I want to particularly mention that last year the Family and Community Development Committee handed down a report into abuse in disability services. As chair of that committee I met with Fiona because at around the same time we were working on the Royal Commission into Family Violence, and I said to her, ‘It is so important, Fiona, that women with disabilities’ voices are heard in this process’. She absolutely took that on board. She understood the complexity and understood that women with disabilities in particular face much more violence and many more challenges than other women.

So I was really, really pleased in December last year when we announced a funding boost to support the complex needs of women and girls with disabilities who are experiencing or at risk of family violence. That \$500 000 investment over two years will support women with disabilities in Victoria to push for reforms to make family violence policies and services more inclusive for all women with disabilities. Fiona

mentioned it in the press release when that announcement was made, which I think reflects her very real understanding of this issue:

Women with disabilities are 40 per cent more likely to be the victims of domestic violence than women without disabilities. It is crucial that family violence services can support the needs of these women and girls.

Women with disabilities face unique challenges reporting family violence and accessing support. This funding will help address that.

When I first came to this place and we were in opposition, Fiona was also in opposition after having been in government for some time. The old chookhouse was not a happy place. The member for Wendouree and I made it our challenge to cheer up the members in the chookhouse. One of the difficult nuts to crack was Fiona Richardson. She was indeed hard to get to know, but once you got to know her you knew her very well.

We wrote a song for an upper house member for Eastern Metropolitan Region and our friend, Shaun Leane, for his 50th birthday to the tune of *Jolene*. We sang it to a number of people in the chookhouse, who were probably sick to death of it, but we did get to Fiona’s office and we did sing that song to Fiona. She sat back smiling, her scarf wrapped around her shoulders grinning away, and then she applauded at the end and said, ‘You two really are quite mad’. After that Fiona, the member for Wendouree and I were very good friends, and we enjoyed nothing more than having a good laugh with Fiona.

I want to read Fiona’s last text to me and my last text to her, because I wish I had replied. It said:

Hope tomorrow goes well, Fiona. The gender equality strategy is so important, and I know how hard you and your team have worked on it. You deserve success, as do Victorian women. Go well, my friend. Maree

And as was Fiona’s way, not taking any accolades or credit, her reply to me was, ‘Love you too’. I wish I had replied, ‘Love you straight back, Fiona’. Vale, Fiona.

**Mr WYNNE** (Minister for Planning) — I am honoured also to rise today to pay tribute to the magnificent life of Fiona Richardson. I first met Fiona Richardson at Labor Party state conferences. As those of us on this side of the chamber know, a Labor Party state conference is an opportunity to have robust debate and plenty of deals out in the backroom, and it is certainly an opportunity to ensure that you air your dirty washing. It is a wonderful manifestation of democracy at its best.

I remember the first time I had the opportunity to meet this young woman of probably 28 or 30 years of age, with a shock of blonde hair, amazing beautiful blue eyes and a steely determination. This was the secretary of the then Labor Unity from 2000 to 2006, mentored of course by the member for Footscray, who had been the Labor Unity secretary from 1994 to 2000.

Part of the job of the secretary of Labor Unity was to make sure that you whipped your numbers and that everybody was where they needed to be, particularly if there were tight votes or divisions or counts that had to occur. I remember vividly that Fiona would stand at the front, she would turn around, she would look at her troops and she would be counting them all to make sure that everybody was in their correct place.

Can I say to you, Deputy Speaker, that I was absolutely intimidated by her. This was a woman in fearful control of this organisation called Labor Unity. It was a steamroller, and she drove that steamroller. Part of the role of driving that steamroller was to ensure that you steamrolled over the Socialist Left. Not only did she roll over us, but just to make sure that she had done it properly she would back up and have another go at us.

It was a very, very interesting time to be a member of the Socialist Left because, at that time, we were — how do I put this generously to both myself and my colleagues — slightly disjointed. There was the Socialist Left, there was the pledge —

**Mr Pakula** interjected.

**Mr WYNNE** — Yes, I am coming to you. There was the pledge, and there were still the remnants of the tomato left. People with history will remember the tomato left. This was a great —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr WYNNE** — We had Dimitri in Greece, that is true, but he was — no, I should not go there. But as the Attorney-General quite rightly said, in politics what comes around, goes around, and it is very interesting that we find ourselves now on this side of the chamber. I should not elaborate any further, I do not think; it would be unwise of me to do so.

This was not about Fiona exerting the power and control of Labor Unity. It was about one incredibly important and abiding interest of hers — and that was not only having a Labor government, but maintaining a Labor government. That was always what motivated and drove her. I was in complete fear of this woman. I thought, ‘My God, this is somebody who is incredibly formidable, and I’d better get out of the way’.

Fiona was elected to Parliament in November 2006. She was in the neighbouring seat; obviously I was in Richmond — I am in Richmond and will continue to be in Richmond — and she was in the seat of Northcote. We started to build a relationship because she was not only a fantastic tactician but she was also on about taking up the fight. We had some robust conversations about how we were going to tackle this crowd called the Greens, who she was deeply affronted by. She and I entered the battle not only in 2006 but in subsequent elections, and successfully so. How to tackle them? She only had one way. Her *modus operandi* was straight up, full on and never take a backward step. That was absolutely her approach to this.

We lost government, and between 2010 and 2014 Fiona and I shared seats directly behind the opposition leader’s. I am not saying I hold the record for being thrown out of the chamber more than the members for Kew and Hawthorn, but gee, Kenny Smith gave me a fair old going-over. I only had to look sideways and I was out the door, much to the delight of Fiona. She was always free and frank in her character assessments. She always had plenty to say about those who were then in the government, and if the mood took her, she might have a bit to say about some of our own as well, but her assessments were always honest and very heartfelt.

My colleague here has mentioned the first time that Fiona spoke publicly about her family being victims of domestic violence. This was during members statements, and for accuracy, it was on Thursday, 30 June 2011. She came in and she sat down next to me and she said, ‘I’m going to make a statement today, and I’m going to be talking about something that’s very deeply personal to me’. I said, ‘What’s this about?’. She said, ‘I’m going to be talking about my family’s experience with family violence’. I said to her, ‘Have you spoken to Stephen about this?’. She said yes, she had. He is shaking his head actually, so maybe she had not. And she did, but it was only a very, very brief statement that she made. I will read it. It was in fact part of a contribution that she was making in support of Janice Munt’s daughter, who had been subject to intimidation and alleged harassment. This is a quote:

When I was eight years old, my mum, brothers and I ended up in a refuge for women escaping domestic violence.

It was no more than that; that was all she said. It largely passed by unacknowledged and unnoticed, but not by me. We then had an opportunity to have quite a deep conversation about the fuller circumstances of her life, of her mother’s life and the tremendous issues that they had to confront with domestic violence. I was deeply touched by the fact that she felt confident and

comfortable enough with me to be able to speak of these deeply personal issues. She always said to me that I was clearly not of the Socialist Left — I was not left enough — and that she was further to the left than I could ever possibly imagine and I ought to educate myself on some of the broader issues of significance in relation to left politics.

**Mr Pallas** interjected.

**Mr WYNNE** — The Treasurer says he agrees. These are funny days we are having in here, I can tell you — funny days. That was an opportunity for me to develop a much deeper relationship with this really fine woman.

I remember a time when she rushed into the Parliament — this was in 2013 — and sat down next to me. She said to me, ‘I have to go’. I said, ‘What do you mean, you have to go?’. She said, ‘You’ll have to take over my portfolio responsibilities’. I said, ‘What do you mean?’. She was a deeply private person, as we all know, but she had to leave immediately because I think — and her husband will attest to this — on the day after leaving the Parliament she was actually operated on as part of a significant and massive intervention to address her breast cancer. So I assumed the responsibilities of the shadow Minister for Public Transport for a period of nine months.

During that nine-month period I took the opportunity, when Fiona was well enough, to have telephone conversations with her, but on two occasions I actually went to visit her. The first time was at her mother’s home whilst their own property in Alphington was being rebuilt. I met with Fiona there at a time when by any measure you would have to say she was doing it incredibly hard. Here was this woman who was almost emaciated — she had lost an enormous amount of weight — and she had lost all of her hair. We had a cup of tea, and she just sat there with extraordinary dignity and a deep serenity; there was a peacefulness about her. In no way was she going to ever blame anybody else for the illness she had. She was going to use every ounce of her ability and capacity to get well again. I can still remember that amazing stillness in her.

But even in those moments of incredible challenge she was always interested in what we were doing. How were we going? What was happening in the Parliament? Were we sticking it to the government? And we ought to do more about a whole bunch of things that she felt needed to be done. It will live with me as a lasting memory of what an extraordinary woman she was, as will the great serenity she had at that time.

And, thank God, she got better. She got better and we thought, ‘This is wonderful. What a wonderful thing that she is coming back to the Parliament’. I remember going to visit her in her new house. Stephen was there. As my colleagues mentioned, she was so proud of the fact that a whole bunch of colleagues had actually come to help her paint the house. They had given of their time and their labour, and it was particularly special for her that a number of colleagues gave up their time to do that. As we toured the house she showed how immensely proud she was not only of the design of the house but of what an important place home was to her. It was so important to her, so important to Stephen and so important to her family, and how beautiful it was that her mother was living with them in the house as well. This was almost the complete union, and it was again a really special time.

In her self-deprecating manner she told a joke at her own expense. She told me that one of the things that happened to her through her breast reconstruction was that after her operations all the nurses came to see her to admire the excellent handiwork of the reconstruction. She was immensely proud of that. This is a woman whom we absolutely must celebrate.

When she did return to Parliament she was so pleased to again acknowledge your speech, Premier, on that extraordinary day, 17 May, at the Labor Party conference. As I indicated, these are always robust events, but all of us who were there that day remember the speech that you made about family violence. We are a pretty robust mob, but I remember sitting there, and you could hear a pin drop; the place was absolutely silent. I actually turned around and noticed that at the back of the room a number of big, burly builders labourers were in tears, and I thought, ‘My God. This is truly a great speech, a speech that actually speaks about values, about why we are members of the Labor Party and why these are important issues for us’.

In that context, as part of a debate in October 2014 — we were still in opposition at that stage — Fiona said:

That is why it meant a tremendous amount to me when the Leader of the Opposition announced on 17 May that a Labor government will establish Australia’s first royal commission into family violence. It particularly meant a tremendous amount to my mother, who talked at length to me about it when I got home that night. The time has well and truly come, and the opposition leader has understood that, responded to it and is to be commended for taking that step.

Hear, hear, we say.

On election to government what a wonderful opportunity it was for Fiona to take up this incredibly important national responsibility as the Minister for the

Prevention of Family Violence and as the Minister for Women. She attacked these roles with extraordinary enthusiasm and a really, really deep commitment to actually drive change. The public conversation has changed around family violence because of the work of this government, because of the work of this Premier, but absolutely because of the work of Fiona Richardson. It is an extraordinary legacy, one that is enduring and something that we should never forget and will continue to celebrate. With the 227 recommendations from the royal commission's report there is still a lot of work to be done, but I know that with the commitment of all of my colleagues on this side of the chamber this work will be done. The extraordinary financial contribution that this government has already made to this end is something that we are incredibly proud of.

Last week's memorial service was a meeting of the Labor family, but it was more than that. In her passing Fiona actually reached across the chamber. We have heard beautiful contributions today. I think there is a real sense that we have lost somebody special to this Parliament. It is a very rare thing that somebody can evoke such responses from right across the chamber, because it is a combative place. It is a place that often leaves people bruised. I am really, really pleased that we have had the opportunity to celebrate as a Parliament in the true sense of the word, in the greatness of the Parliament, the wonderful life of Fiona Richardson.

There were some fantastic contributions made at that memorial service. I sent a text to the member for Brunswick which said, 'In all of your public life you will not make a finer speech than you made there'. It was a magnificent speech, and those of us who had the opportunity to hear that speech would agree with my sentiments. The members for Geelong and Carrum, as the co-conveners of the Labor women's caucus, both made beautiful and very, very dignified speeches. It was a cause for us to celebrate — to celebrate a beautiful life, to celebrate a life of achievement and to celebrate a life lived absolutely in Labor values. Fiona's was a life lived always in Labor values, always thinking about the public good and always thinking about how we as a government can make change that is going to be enduring. There is no greater change that has been made than that of Fiona Richardson through her work and her efforts. Today all of us here celebrate that.

Can I say to you, Stephen, you and Fiona were a formidable team. She loved you and you loved her. This is a profound loss for you; I know that. You were just a wonderful team together. And of course to your beautiful children, Marcus and Catherine, and your extraordinary mother-in-law, Veronica. If members get

the opportunity to download that *Australian Story* again, it is a story of amazing women. Veronica, you are an amazing mother. Today we come together across this Parliament to celebrate that. Vale, Fiona Richardson.

**Mr FOLEY** (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing) — I rise to be part of this condolence motion in memory of the life and contribution of Fiona Richardson, the member for Northcote, the Minister for Women, the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence and particularly a Labor Party stalwart. I remember Fiona most as that coming together, the standard-bearer of what we might call traditional Labor values — that is, those who look to government for the leadership role that it can take in the lives of people who but for the role of government would have tougher and more rugged lives in so many ways. Having said that, Fiona was also a champion of reform in the Labor Party and making sure that the changes that were delivered were not only all around bringing together those aspects of making life better for people who needed a Labor government but also about making the Labor Party what it needed to be — modern, relevant, campaign focused and elected.

I knew this because — I was trying to think when it would be — it must have been in the late 1990s when Fiona was clearly on the upward path in the Labor Unity faction. I, for my many clear failings, was on the left executive. In those days there was this strange thing every now and then, a factional roadshow where branches would ask people to come along and present the various cases of each side. For my many sins, and clearly Fiona's many sins, we did a number of those branch roadshows together all over Melbourne. I recall one in the Port Melbourne branch in what is now my own electorate, and let us just say the Port Melbourne branch in the late 1990s was a fairly different place compared to the Port Melbourne of today. The branch was pretty much pre-glasnost. It understood how the world was constructed by the forces of capital and the forces of labour, and the waterfront still meant something. It was also immediately post the Maritime Union of Australia dispute, as I recall it, and there was a very strong view of how the world was operating for or against the interests of working people.

Of course on a factional basis perhaps the Port Melbourne branch was not a happy hunting ground for Labor Unity at the time. But by the end of the meeting some fairly tough, old, grumpy wharfies and some fairly tough young wharfies were smitten with the contribution that Fiona had made — less smitten with my contribution. It was an eye-opener to those branch members. Indeed what I learned from when I went around those branches with Fiona was her view of why

Labor governments were important to working people, people who were disadvantaged and people who needed a strong, activist and modern Labor Party to represent their interests. That was something we were able to clearly share as members of the Australian Labor Party in the Victorian branch despite our factional differences.

But of course we were loyal to our sub-tribes, and while we were never particularly close more generally, I did after that branch meeting learn that we were both vegetarians. In those days you could not actually get a vegetarian meal in Bay Street to save yourself, but of course now we do not suffer that problem at all — there is a vegetarian cafe or restaurant for every single constituent in Port Melbourne. That again showed to me, from the discussions we had over the meal provided by the branch afterwards, just how all-encompassing Fiona's view of politics and view of the world was, not just in the wider sense but also in her personal life and her personal contribution to politics.

Over the subsequent 25 years and up to the present day Fiona continued that strong commitment to the Labor Party, that strong commitment to government being an agent of change and that incredibly strong commitment to loyalty and to people, and she maintained that respectful — I stress respectful — while forceful approach of playing politics hard; that was her defining feature for those on the other side of the factional divide.

I do not pretend to know a lot about Fiona's wider experience. The experience that she recently shared with the world through the *Australian Story* episode really did shape all of our views as to how we are all a complex coming together of the many forces that shape us. I was not surprised to learn that Fiona studied psychology in her post-school efforts, because her ability to understand people and her ability to understand the role that power plays in politics were also deeply embedded in her approach, which I saw over many, many years.

As others have said here today, Fiona was clearly a formidable operator in the Australian Labor Party, and I can assure all those on this side and all those listening that the standing she attained within the party was built on hard work, deep respect for others and the respect that she in turn received. I know that I share with so many on this side of the house and I am sure with the wider Parliament and the wider Victorian community the knowledge that she took that hard life experience into her role as the Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence. As so many people have said on this side of the house and indeed in the wider community since Fiona's untimely death,

those 227 recommendations of the first Royal Commission into Family Violence, all of which have been accepted, all of which are in the process of being delivered, will be an enduring monument to those values of the Australian Labor Party and those values of Fiona Richardson that I saw from the other side of the party divide emerge over the life of a really remarkable Australian Labor Party woman.

I know that in my own portfolio responsibilities of housing, disability, LGBTI equality and mental health that those whole-of-government, whole-of-community recommendations that underpin the royal commission report were the issues that Fiona was particularly ferocious about in holding her ministerial colleagues to account when it came to delivery. I am sure, like others who have spoken, that our responsibility now is to ensure not just that those wraparound specialist services are provided to women and children fleeing and dealing with family violence but that the wider system of those portfolios operates well into the future through the specialist lens of a family violence approach to make sure that Fiona's determination and resolute efforts are delivered in full.

I know that Fiona will be deeply missed. She had a high regard for her family, particularly for Stephen, to whom I owe a particular debt of gratitude, along with the member for Williamstown, because it is now almost 10 years to the day that Stephen was the campaign director who oversaw me and the Minister for Industry and Employment delivered safely into this place. We are particularly grateful to you, Stephen.

I also acknowledge the really sad loss that Marcus and Catherine now have to confront and deal with. Like others have said, the Australian Labor Party might be a family — a pretty funny family — but it is a family, and that support will endure well into the future. We will remember a fine member of Parliament, a fine comrade and a fine person. Rest in peace, Fiona Richardson.

**Mr CARBINES** (Ivanhoe) — On behalf of the Ivanhoe constituency I rise to make a contribution to the condolence motion debate for the Honourable Fiona Richardson, the member for Northcote. A lot of ground has been covered and traversed in relation to her pioneering work as the first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence. I will only add to these stories that we have heard over these past days.

From the Banyule Community Health service and the people who run that service like Mick Geary, plus the people whose children go to school at Alphington Primary School, I would often hear reports about the work of Fiona, Stephen and their family at that school.

Mick was one of the first to pass on his thoughts. From running that community health service in West Heidelberg he understands absolutely and utterly and can speak articulately on behalf the team that he leads about the impact and effect of the work of Labor in government, but also about the effect of the leadership the member for Northcote has made on generations of lives in my community. He understands that absolutely.

Labor in government, whether it was through the Transport Accident Commission, WorkCover or VicHealth, has found ways to institutionalise justice in this Parliament. Part of what Fiona committed herself to and asked us to do was to continue the work around the prevention of family violence in that agency sense, or however we are able to do it, to protect it from the whims of governments that come and go, but still to make Parliament accountable and responsible for it, just as those iconic organisations created by Labor have had the imprimatur and the support of the Parliament. I am sure that that work in this Parliament will continue.

In representing Northcote's neighbouring electorate of Ivanhoe, I was fortunate to be able to tuck in behind Fiona's back wheel as she delivered on our commitment for the Chandler Highway bridge duplication. The brickbats and the slings and arrows from the more ground zero constituents of the Northcote electorate were a far cry from the very pleasant street stalls I hosted and the doorknocking that I did before the 2014 election, when everyone across East Ivanhoe, Ivanhoe, Bellfield and the southern end of West Heidelberg just wanted to talk about the bridge and about what we were doing there. That was absolutely and utterly Fiona's work in government last time. She picked it up again in opposition, ran hard and got it delivered in government when she returned to the Treasury benches.

When we went out there with the member for Mulgrave, the then opposition leader, to announce that policy, cars were tooting, cyclists were giving us the thumbs up and dog walkers were stopping to shake hands. I remember the member for Mulgrave saying as we got out of the car, 'All these people — what are they all doing here? Just how significant is this?', and I said, 'Mate, this is big. This is big for the north'. Labor in government and Fiona, as a local member and as a minister, have demonstrated that this is a government that chooses to take on the projects that have been the collective shrug of shoulders of governments and communities past. She demonstrated that with that project.

As has been demonstrated in her role as shadow minister, while she made sure that a lot of the crowd that were there were her volunteers, staff, team and

constituents, she left it to others to articulate the benefits of those projects. Certainly in my electorate the benefits continue to be seen to this day as the bridge rises from the banks of the Yarra River right now for all, including those 44 000 vehicles that cross that bridge every day, to see. People understand and see that project's delivery as an absolute tribute to her determination, shown over several elections.

I will just touch briefly on Fiona Richardson's role as a shadow minister. It is said that the harder you work, the luckier you get. Having suffered a bad loss to Jeff Kennett, which was only really matched in magnitude by our 2010 defeat, it was made very clear to Labor members who were then in opposition that we were not to feel sorry for ourselves or the people we represented or to feel as though we should be back out there leading with our chins.

At the time Fiona and her staff, and we acknowledge them today, demonstrated down at Parliament railway station. The detail does not matter so much, but at the time those opposite had a one-seat majority. Very quickly and very early on Fiona held the then government to account. This was at a time when people were not that interested in what Labor had to say, certainly not at Parliament station on a working day, but very early on Fiona provided that opportunity in spite of the attitude of some that was along the lines of, 'How very dare you be back out there representing your people and your movement, Labor Party'. Of course very quickly it came to pass just how important that work was. We debated that at length in this place, causing merry hell along the way.

The fare slug has also been mentioned today. Again, I think it goes to the heart of what Fiona was about, which was, 'Get out there and support our candidates, get out there and support our marginal seats, get out there and support our movement'. The fare slug had a full dance card. It was also about the focus not being on Fiona, even if that meant it had to be on the fare slug. I want to acknowledge the conversations that Stephen, Fiona and I had at Alphington at times, comparing notes about campaigning, the work, the tribulations and the trials that we all went through. I am sure the fare slug was kicked around at Fiona and Stephen's home. It was a device that may have lacked the sophistication and the glossy imagery of the GST lemon, for those members who might recall it, but of course Labor in opposition did not have quite the same resources.

I also want to touch on the zone 1 and 2 fares, which we changed once in government. When you represent an electorate like Northcote which is transport rich, with trains, buses, trams and bikes, it is easy to forget

about those of us in the outer suburbs who were paying more for public transport but had a worse service to get into town. Through the fare slug, as well as the DL cards with the catchy, fake \$50 notes sticking out of them that certainly caught a lot of people's attention, Fiona was able to drive fairness and equality in terms of our fare structures in Victoria for people using public transport in record numbers, and that should not be forgotten either.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge that despite being in the Labor Party with Fiona for some time it was as a member of this place that I had more of an opportunity to visit the Saigon Inn. I will certainly miss the eclectic mix of people who gathered at the Saigon Inn, including the former member for Mordialloc, the member for Footscray and the former member for Eltham, if you could prise the menu from his hands. Let it never be forgotten that nobody would ever forget Fiona's order. Invariably she was the last one there because she was always working. The member for Bundoora, the member for Niddrie and the member for Narre Warren South were also there. It was a great opportunity to put politics to one side and discuss what was at the nub of what drove us all to be here in this place as well as to understand more about each other.

Finally, in a political context, we face a by-election in Northcote, as the Labor movement has had to before, with quite a strong success rate, when in opposition. While it will be very sad and difficult, it will also provide an opportunity for Labor to define itself and to understand and reassure itself of its connectedness to its community and what it stands for. Of all of those by-elections that was never more evident than in Melbourne.

I think the context in which we find ourselves again today is interesting. Certainly in Fiona's name we will do everything we can to ensure delivery of those projects that I have touched on, not forgetting of course Grange Road and the \$395 million works on the Hurstbridge line. I note for the record that it will be a trench at Grange Road and a bridge at Rosanna, but I think in part that is as much to do with the topography as it is the advocacy. Let us remember that Fiona would expect nothing less than us doing everything we can to ensure those projects are delivered by a Labor member in a Labor government to hold true to what she has stood for and fought for for many, many years.

To Stephen, Catherine and Marcus, thank you for sharing Fiona with us, with this Parliament and with the people of Victoria. We are very grateful and thankful, and we will do everything we can to ensure that legacy continues.

**Mr PEARSON** (Essendon) — I rise to celebrate the life of Fiona Richardson and the role that she played in public life both in the Parliament and in the party. I first met Fiona around the time of the preselections for the 1998 federal election. Fiona was working in what was then the marginal seat of Werribee. It was there that Fiona played a really important role when Julia Gillard became the federal member for Lalor, turning Werribee into a Labor stronghold. Importantly for me, Fiona came in contact with Claudia Subocz. Claudia and I have worked together on and off for the past 17 years. I will let Claudia tell her story about Fiona:

I met Fiona as a volunteer at Mary Gillett's office. Fiona was Mary's electorate officer at the time. It would have been at the end of 97 or early 98 as we were fighting Kennett's plans to abolish common-law rights for injured workers and the dreaded toxic dump in Werribee.

Not only did Fiona help to consolidate Labor's hold of the state seat of Werribee, she also played a role in helping Australia's first woman Prime Minister win preselection and then the election in Lalor.

I remember in my first week volunteering at Mary's office Fiona found a stray kitten, and during those first weeks she would bring him to the office. Fiona named him Sooty. It requires a special generosity and compassion to adopt a stray animal off the streets. It's unplanned, and you don't know the state of the animal's health or temperament. Most people would have taken the kitten to a shelter, but Fiona took care of Sooty, and she adored him. Fiona cared deeply about animal welfare and the environment.

Fiona's generosity and compassion was not limited to stray kittens. In 1999, when Fiona found out my dad, the sole earner in our household, had left my family, leaving us with a mortgage we could not afford to pay, Fiona mobilised to help me secure a job. That act of generosity saved our home.

In my experience Fiona was fiercely loyal to her friends and family. She loved her Werribee family, and we loved her.

I have been incredibly fortunate to work with Claudia all these years, and I thank Fiona for introducing Claudia to me.

I have not been here long, but I have watched state politics closely for some time. It is an odd and unpredictable business that we are in, and you never quite know where the path you have chosen will lead you. Most of us come into this place to make our mark, to use the power of the state to effect change and to make the changes we desire. For a generation of Labor activists who lost nine state elections in a row, this never happened.

Some ministers reign but never rule, and their impact is quickly forgotten. They join a long and lamentable line of forgotten place-holders who are erased from history the moment they leave this place. In contrast Fiona has

made a lasting impact on our society and our community — an impact that will be the envy of many.

Others have commented today about Fiona's appearance before the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. I can only say that she was strong, determined and committed in relation to discharging her obligations and duties to the Parliament in that hearing. Fiona's time on this earth was far too short, and I cannot imagine for a moment how difficult it must be for Stephen and her children. Stephen, I am so sorry for your loss, but you will be able to look back on Fiona's contribution in tackling family violence with pride in the years to come. Vale, Fiona Richardson.

**Mr RICHARDSON** (Mordialloc) — It is with sadness that I rise today to contribute to the condolence motion. As a first-term MP, hearing the reflections and stories before me and having attended Fiona's memorial service last Thursday, standing here I do not feel worthy to contribute. I do not feel worthy shedding the tears that I have shed alongside friends and colleagues when I see the strength and courage of Stephen, Catherine, Marcus, Hamish, Alastair and Fiona's wonderful mum, Veronica, but I think it goes to the heart of what Fiona Richardson meant to our state, to our Parliament, to her community, to so many, as a result of her crusade to protect those that are most vulnerable in our community who have been subjected to the scourge of family violence. At the memorial service we laughed, we cried and we reflected. The member for Brunswick gave an incredible speech that showed such humanity, such love and such care that will live on for many years to come.

My knowledge of Fiona is limited to the 1006 days since she was sworn in to this place. I remember the first time I passed Fiona in the old chook house — someone with an absolute presence and aura, someone who I had only heard of in mythical terms from a young Labor operative. I passed her, and she said to me, 'G'day, buddy', and I thought, 'I'm in big trouble here. I don't think she likes me'. In fact I went to my mentor and good friend in the other place, Adem Somyurek, and I said, 'I don't think Fiona Richardson likes me very much'. But it was not until we sat down and had occasion to hang out a bit and she started to call me 'Richo' and 'the second Richo in this place' that I thought, 'Maybe there is a little bit of tolerance of another Richo'. At the times that I got to share with Fiona she would ask about my little girl, Paisley, and say, 'We don't have enough Richos in this world. It's great to have another addition'.

I saw something on *Australian Story* in peeling back that shield that Fiona wore, being very private and not

showing any of that private side, but I guess that human side of her with her family was something so significant. I saw it as well when on International Women's Day we played a bit of cricket out on the steps of Parliament with all the sports stars, and she cannoned an off drive almost all the way down Bourke Street, down to the other end, to Southern Cross.

Something special happened in this place on the Wednesday night when we found out about Fiona's passing. Members of Parliament across this place came together for many hours to reflect on her life and her sacrifice and to grieve together. I on that occasion went and had a look at her first speech, and reflecting on her first speech and looking through her contribution, particularly in the seat of Northcote — a seat of Labor superstars, from premiers, former leaders, education ministers, the works — Fiona said:

Each has played a significant role in the development of this state, and I hope in time to be judged worthy in this company.

Fiona Richardson has exceeded their company because she has been the first of many things. Her legacy and her achievement in being the first prevention of family violence minister will live on. Her legacy in constructing the level crossing policy from opposition is something substantial, and each time someone passes through and is safer for doing so it is a legacy to Fiona Richardson.

Fiona talked about a debt of justice in her speech, and for any Labor operative looking here today and anyone that wants to make a contribution to the Labor Party going forward, if you have got time to sit down and read that speech, it is a part of us. It is our blood, and it is what we stand for. You should read it and go through what our values are, because the debt of justice and those terms are something so significant and substantial.

From the day that Fiona was first elected and the 100 years ago under the tree where the Labor Party was formed, this party will go on for many, many years to come. Many heroes before have served proudly, but we have our struggle to continue and the work that Fiona has done is not finished. There is still gender inequality; there are still women and children at risk. It is our duty to ensure that the family violence prevention agency is fulfilled and that we continue our struggle to make sure all women and children are protected.

My sincere condolences to Fiona's family. I cannot begin to think of all the struggles that Fiona went through, and her family, and then to have the cruelty of not being there to reflect on her contributions and the work that she had done is an absolute injustice. It is

cruel. Life is cruel. It is not fair. But the contributions that have been made and her legacy and her work will live on for years to come. I hope that that is comfort to all of you. Vale, Fiona Richardson.

**Mr McGUIRE** (Broadmeadows) — Before fate there is family. Rarely have family and fate been so entwined as in Fiona Richardson's life and duty. Wisdom warns us to wait until evening to see how splendid the day has been. Enough time has passed, I believe, to pay tribute to the light Fiona Richardson's life shone on dark secrets, to declare it has already saved lives and it will save many more.

Fiona was the youngest child, with the same shock of white hair as her brothers, Hamish and Alastair, and blue eyes as piercing as her intellect. She was regarded as her father's favourite. Under Fiona's guidance, revelations concerning his alcohol-fuelled violence within the family featured on the ABC as an *Australian Story*.

Her family's fortitude in wrestling with a dark past underscored a widespread dilemma. Confronting such intimate, brutal truth as a minister of the Crown was exceptional. Bearing witness gave permission to unhappy families to unburden the struggles that leave so many blighted lives. Family violence is the leading cause of death and injury in women under 45 in Australia. Secrets hidden behind closed doors and closed cultures are critical to understanding why, on average, at least one woman each week is killed by a partner or former partner in the Lucky Country.

Ending wilful blindness defines leadership. Premier Dan Andrews established the first Royal Commission into Family Violence after recoiling in horror at news of a father having murdered his own son, 11-year-old Luke. The strength, insight and grace of Luke's mother, Rosie Batty, brought to light extraordinary emotional intelligence. When the Premier appointed Fiona Richardson as Australia's first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence in 2014, he knew nothing of the violence in her family's background. When her father was drunk he assaulted his wife, Veronica, and punched his sons. Veronica revealed on *Australian Story* that she put up with the abuse because, 'I thought being beaten was normal, because my mother always beat me'. Such a disclosure provided insight into the complexities of trauma from family violence and showed that it can cross generations.

What the Premier recognised in Fiona Richardson was strength of character. In a typically forthright response, she told Parliament:

Women have for too long been the silent victims of a system that was almost designed to fail.

As minister, Fiona drove systemic change with the memory of being a scared, skinny kid in a refuge:

I promise to use that experience to do all that I can to realise our vision for a state free from family violence.

Fiona honoured that pledge, advocating for a record \$572 million in last year's budget to prevent family violence and deliver remedies. Investment of \$1.9 billion followed in this year's budget. That was an unprecedented result.

In discussing character, there is no course of error so fertile as the drawing of a hard and fast line. Anthony Trollope reminds us:

We are attracted by salient points, and, seeing them clearly, we jump to conclusions, as though there were a lighthouse on every point by which the nature of the coast would certainly be shown to us.

Accepting the light for so much of the shore it illuminates, I repeat the statement I made to this Parliament without knowing that the possibility of recovery had slipped away from Fiona:

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the leadership and courage of the Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence for her intellectual rigour, dedication and the insight that she has brought to the number one law and order issue confronting Victoria. I remember well her commitment in fighting this cause when she came to Broadmeadows on a cold, wet winter night to talk to families from virtually the United Nations in one neighbourhood about having the courage to confront the scourge of family violence and about the difficulty and the significance of the cultural, generational and systemic change that will be required to deliver a lasting remedy.

Commending another of the royal commission's 227 recommendations being turned into law, I declared:

I think the minister's work ... has been an amazing act in the public benefit ... that will be an incredible legacy.

Within minutes, the numbing news broke: Fiona is gone. The shock was gut-wrenching. Victoria lost a trailblazing minister. A family lost a spiritual leader.

Fiona's words from her 2006 inaugural speech sum up her devotion to her husband and political soulmate, Stephen Newnham, and her children, Marcus and Catherine:

You are and always will be my proudest achievement.

For all who nurtured and cared for Fiona, for all that has taken and all that has meant, we are grateful. Before and after fate, there is family. At this time of loss and

grief, let us remember Fiona Richardson most for delivering immeasurable hope.

**Mr CARROLL** (Niddrie) — Family violence is an issue which has rightly been taken up on the national agenda. When we saw Luke Batty brutally killed by his father, we could not stand by. When we heard courageous women like Luke’s mother, Rosie Batty, come out and speak about her experience with family violence, we could not stand by. I was elected in 2012, at the Niddrie by-election. At the first party state conference the now Premier, then the opposition leader, promised a royal commission into family violence, and he promised that every recommendation would be implemented. At the time it was a very important promise, but here we are today several years after the royal commission, Marcia Neave has done her work, the first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence was appointed by the Premier, and her legacy is living on and on.

When the Premier did appoint Fiona as the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, like everyone else, probably bar a few people, I never knew Fiona’s own tragic story; I only learned of it when I saw that award-winning piece on *Australian Story* that followed Fiona, her mother and brothers as they went back to Tanzania where they had endured the scars of their long-held secret. As we all know, that story itself was introduced by Rosie Batty, who became one of Fiona’s friends and leading partners in tackling Australia’s number one law and order issue, family violence. Make no mistake, Fiona, together with her ministerial staff, public servants and key stakeholders like Rosie Batty, literally did steer the beginning of cultural change and the talks we will take on on her behalf. I want to praise Fiona for her bravery in speaking out on that unique feature on *Australian Story* and congratulate the ABC for their timely revisit of that story.

As the Premier said recently:

Under her watch as Australia’s first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, the dark and silent tragedies taking place behind closed doors in our homes were brought into the harsh and unforgiving light of a royal commission.

Those 2000 pages of that royal commission report stand as Fiona’s legacy.

How I met Fiona, as many people in this place have explained, was very much a rite of passage. As someone who joined the Labor Unity faction about 25 years ago I actually met the member for Footscray first when I turned up to my first meeting, and soon after that I got the phone call from Fiona for a cup of tea. Without mistake Fiona was a veteran before her time.

When news broke of Fiona’s passing on Wednesday, 23 August, amidst the sadness I soon realised that Fiona’s legacy went beyond family violence and gender equality. In fact Fiona, whether it be myself 25 years ago or others 25 years later, was grooming the next generation of Labor kids coming through the Labor Party. Facebook literally lit up that night with tributes from young people explaining their cup of coffee or their cup of tea with Fiona and what it meant for them. She was someone from whom to learn the trade and to learn how to move up in the world of politics and someone who literally should be reckoned with. It was in her DNA to impart advice and wisdom to any young person who wanted to get ahead in the Labor Party.

It must be said too that Fiona was one of the best listeners you could ever talk to. During my campaign for the electoral district of Niddrie in 2014 I had a young local volunteer by the name of Ashlea Gilmore join my campaign. I soon realised from Ashlea’s smarts and talents that she had a higher calling than being an electorate officer for the member for Niddrie, so I recommended Ashlea to Fiona and said, ‘You need to meet this girl and sit down with her’. But as we know, Fiona and Stephen are a unique team and it was not Fiona who interviewed Ashlea; I think it was Stephen first who did the vetting process, but Stephen also, with Fiona’s keen eye for talent, could see that Ashlea should be given the nod. It was fantastic for someone who saw Ashlea join the Labor Party and volunteer for my campaign to see her then become an integral team member under Tanja Kovac as chief of staff and Fiona and take great strides with the leadership that was presented in that office.

Like the member for Williamstown and the member for Wendouree, I have also been looking at a few text messages Fiona and I had exchanged. The first one in my line of communication with Fiona goes back to 22 May 2016. I said this to Fiona:

Fi, your campaign against the Greens at last state election (2014) got a nice mention on ABC *Insiders* program. Enjoy your weekend. Ben

She returned the text very grateful, but she had missed the program because she had been watching her daughter Catherine’s soccer match. For Fiona — progressive, women’s equality advocate — watching her daughter’s soccer match would always come first.

But as we all knew, Fiona was a workaholic, so a text soon followed that Sunday afternoon wanting to know what I, as the Parliamentary Secretary for Justice, was doing for family violence, making sure that our crime prevention grants rightly had a family violence frame, because Fiona knew that family violence

disproportionately affected women from culturally and linguistic diverse backgrounds, women with disabilities, women within Aboriginal communities and pregnant women or women who have recently given birth. Without a doubt Fiona led from the front, and she would not stand by.

I am proud to have worked with Fiona and to have been able to call her a friend. I am proud to be part of the Andrews Labor government, which since day one has taken the issue of family violence seriously. It is not just a matter of having a Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence or holding the Royal Commission into Family Violence. As Fiona would always say, it is about addressing the underlying issues and the root causes surrounding family violence. As the Premier remarked recently, and as Fiona would also often say:

If you actually set out to design a system most likely to fail, you would design the system that we had.

As the member for Footscray rightly pointed out, Fiona did have a keen interest in the military. As former Australian of the Year David Morrison said, it is about walking the walk as well as talking the talk; we should not be a 'nation of bystanders'. It is not enough for men like me, like us, to wear a white ribbon and sign a pledge. It is not enough for us to know that we would never commit an act of violence against our partners or turn a blind eye if we saw it happening to someone else. We need to solve this problem; it is a problem of gender and gender inequality.

I am very proud to have been a friend of Fiona's. I think her legacy will stand the test of time. As the Deputy Premier himself said, the education system through the Respectful Relationships program is forming a key part of the Victorian curriculum to ensure young boys know how to respect and treat women. I think it is very, very important. The emphasis that she used to put on media literacy and understanding its interaction with sexualisation and gender was second to none. The work of the Andrews Labor government is supporting schools to deliver this new curriculum, through core resource development and capacity building, and it is already starting to pay dividends.

We find that most male perpetrators of family violence have an inability to express or communicate their emotions, especially ones like anger, frustration and resentment, and it is what leads to them taking part in a violent act on their partner. As leaders in the community we can make an effort to dispel these myths of masculinity, to show that every man is a real man and that there is nothing wrong with talking about your emotions.

As we have seen with women like Kristy McKellar, who spoke to us in this place about her experiences and the unspeakable cruelty that she fell victim to despite being a confident, successful and attractive young woman, it is plain that it is not just about your circumstances. We need to do things in this place, and we need to continue Fiona's legacy for all future generations.

I want to thank Fiona. She was a friend of the Niddrie electorate. She held multiple forums with me out in my community, and I am forever grateful. Like other members, I was also one of the painters out at Fiona's house. Her particularity I could see was inherited from her mum, Veronica. As the son of a tradesman I had a pretty proud history and thought I was not a bad painter, but Veronica followed me around the house to double-check everything went okay, so I know where Fiona got her steely-eyed determination and fierce attention to detail.

My wife and I recently welcomed a baby girl this year. She does not know it but Fiona Richardson's gift to my daughter Madeleine is the prospect that she will live in a safer and more equal world.

Out of all Fiona's achievements, though, I want to end my contribution with what she said in her final paragraph of her inaugural speech on Tuesday, 19 December 2006:

...to my husband, Stephen Newnham, and my children, Marcus and Catherine, you are and always will be my proudest achievement. I hope to do all that I can to make you proud.

Vale, Fiona Richardson.

**Mr STAIKOS** (Bentleigh) — I too rise to contribute to this motion of condolence for our colleague Fiona Richardson, who left us far too soon. Her death on 23 August left us all in shock and disbelief. You would have to go back a long way to find the last time a minister passed away in office. Although her life was cut so tragically short and she had unfinished business, the funding and the reforms delivered in tackling family violence while she was the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence will be everlasting. We grieve for her as colleagues collectively across this Parliament, but we also grieve for her children, for her husband, for her mum and for her brothers, who will now have to go through life without her. But they always have in their hearts a mother, a wife, a daughter and a sister who wrote herself into the history books by becoming Australia's first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence.

While I have known Fiona through the Labor Party, I cannot say that we knew each other all that well prior to

the 2014 election campaign. I recall one day around two weeks prior to election day that a Galaxy poll in the seat of Bentleigh was released showing the contest going the wrong way. That same day Fiona, the now member for Oakleigh and I were due for an interview on 3XY, the Greek community radio station. Fiona must have sensed that I was fairly rattled by the poll because as we were walking out of the Royal Mint building on William Street after the interview, she simply asked, 'You're worried about that poll, aren't you?'. To which I replied, 'Yes'. She then said, simply, 'It will be fine'. I took great comfort from that, because although we did not know each other all that well, as Steve Bracks noted last week, we all knew she was good with numbers and that she could read those numbers.

But there were some numbers that she did not like. She did not like that at least one woman each week loses her life at the hands of her partner or ex-partner. To say that Fiona was passionate about this portfolio would be underselling her commitment to it. She lived the portfolio. She lived it through the survivors she listened to, through the organisations she worked with and of course through her own personal experience.

Many of us learned a lot about Fiona on *Australian Story*. When the recollection of her personal experience brought her to tears while on camera, she said that tears are a sign of weakness in politics. I remember thinking at the time that the thousands of victims and survivors of family violence who were watching her on the ABC that night would not have seen a weak politician. They would have seen a strong champion for them who had a personal commitment to ending family violence — someone with empathy, someone who was not going to stop until she had done everything she could to make life better for women and girls. Her tears that night were definitely not a sign of weakness. Her appearance on *Australian Story* and that of her family was courageous. It was very brave and reinforced to victims and survivors that not only was their minister working tirelessly for them but she also knew exactly what they were experiencing. Fiona's work as the first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence will not stop with her passing, because her legacy will be enduring. Vale, Fiona Richardson.

**Ms SULEYMAN** (St Albans) — It is with great sadness that I rise to contribute to the condolence motion for our friend and colleague, the member for Northcote, Fiona Richardson. Fiona was a strong, fierce warrior in this house and within the Australian Labor Party. You knew exactly where you stood with Fiona. I knew Fiona for close to two decades. I witnessed her rise from being an electorate officer to factional secretary to later becoming the member for Northcote.

On Wednesday, 23 August, I made the following contribution about Fiona in this place:

... I would like to place on record my thanks to the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence and Minister for Women for her contribution in this area and her passionate advocacy and leadership in this role. I do not believe we have seen this level of leadership in this area before, not only in this state but, I believe, in this country.

Moments later I was shocked and devastated with the news that Fiona had passed away. She was brave, respected and one of the strongest leaders that politics has seen. Fiona was a trailblazer. She was Australia's first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, a mother to Catherine and Marcus, a loving wife to Stephen and a brave warrior for women. She was a gifted and brilliant politician.

One of the first community events I hosted was a family violence forum, and Fiona was our guest speaker. She spoke honestly and transparently, sharing her story and her work with a roomful of women from the west. Her insight was inspiring and important. We also saw Fiona's work with the Victoria Against Violence campaign, including 25 days of activism and the new family violence behaviour change advertising campaign, which brought the fight against family violence to a head. This included the Clothesline Project, a first for my electorate and the west, which brought together many people and community organisations who painted T-shirts with anti-violence messages. These T-shirts were displayed in Queen's Hall, and Parliament House went orange.

These are just a couple of Fiona's many, many achievements. We have heard today about some of the contributions that she has made to the lives of our mothers, daughters, sisters and nieces. All of these projects were instigated and led by Fiona. Fiona's unfinished work will now be up to us all to carry on.

I would like to quote the poet Rumi: 'Find what it is you love to do, and go do it. Everyone will be better for it'. Indeed Fiona found her love of work and changed the lives and future possibilities for generations of Victorians.

Deepest condolences from me and my family to Stephen, Catherine and Marcus, and also to her staff. Thank you, Fiona, for your incredible leadership, strength and commitment. Your legacy will live on. Rest in peace, Fiona Richardson.

**Ms THOMAS** (Macedon) — I rise to celebrate Fiona Richardson and her contribution and leadership in the area of family violence prevention and gender equality. Her stewardship of the royal commission and the voice she gave to family violence victim-survivors

across Victoria will always be remembered. In my contribution I want to reflect on Fiona's work in my electorate of Macedon.

Fiona was my guest at two Macedon Says No to Family Violence forums. These forums were designed to bring family violence into the open and engage with the wider community on an issue that we know has for so long been shrouded in shame. It is an issue that was at best ignored and at worst belittled by those in power.

As we all know, Fiona was a victim-survivor of family violence. The quiet, dispassionate way in which she shared her own experience in order to free others to speak was very powerful. In December 2015 — following the announcement that she had made with the Minister for Education at Gisborne Secondary College, committing the government to roll out the Respectful Relationships program in all schools across the state — Fiona joined me at a forum at Kyneton Secondary College that brought together a range of experts and local service providers, including Cobaw Community Health Service, the Centre for Non-Violence, Kyneton police, Our Watch, local family violence survivor and advocate Belinda Spence, students from our secondary college and 50 or so concerned members from across the local community.

Once again Fiona shared her story and demonstrated what we now all know to be true: firstly, that family violence cuts across class and privilege; and also the critical importance of reframing the conversation away from victim blaming. Instead of asking, 'Why doesn't she leave?', we are now so much more aware of the complex reasons why some women will stay in violent relationships. We are also much more focused on the underlying cause of family violence, which is gender inequality. Finally, we are turning the focus back on perpetrators and holding them to account for their behaviours.

One of the highlights of the session was hearing from two students, a boy and a girl, about their experience participating in the Respectful Relationships pilot, as it was back then, at Kyneton Secondary College. I still remember how affected both Fiona and I were by the young boy who spoke, as he explained how the Respectful Relationships program had empowered him, for the first time, to voice his feelings, to be true to himself, to be able to see the world from different viewpoints and to understand that it was okay for boys to cry. For Fiona and me this was a powerful reminder that our work on gender inequality is as much about liberating boys and men from harmful stereotypes as it is about opportunities for girls and women.

In June 2016 we gathered again, this time at the Hepburn shire offices in Daylesford. Again Fiona attended and met with local councillors, Child and Family Services — or CAFS as it is known — WRISC Family Violence Support, the Ballarat Centre Against Sexual Assault, Hepburn Health Service, local medical practitioners, local Aboriginal organisations, police and so on. We discussed the challenges that were faced by smaller communities like Daylesford and Trentham in accessing services that have traditionally been delivered by large regional cities.

It is extraordinary to think back and reflect that the power of this forum was in bringing family violence service providers like police, health, schools and Aboriginal organisations together for the very first time. I am so pleased that as a direct result of Fiona's visit we were able to identify service gaps there on the spot, and Fiona was able to make commitments to fill those gaps. Today I can proudly say that we now deliver services in Kyneton and Daylesford that before the election of this government, and before our groundbreaking Royal Commission into Family Violence, were not available. Fiona's contribution has truly saved lives.

Fiona understood that there always have been many women working in this sector over many decades with deep, abiding commitments to keep women and children safe. Fiona was always respectful of their expertise and worked to ensure their participation in helping shape the Andrews government's response. So in particular, on behalf of leaders in my community — Libby Jewson of WRISC, Margaret Augerinos of the Centre for Non-Violence, Margaret McDonald of Cobaw Community Health Service — I say thank you, Fiona Richardson, MP, member for Northcote, Australia's first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence and Minister for Women. I send my deep and sincere condolences to Stephen Newnham and to Fiona's children, Marcus and Catherine, and to Fiona's mother, Veronica.

**Ms HALFPENNY** (Thomastown) — I did not know Fiona well, and it saddens me now to know that I never will. As parliamentary colleagues we often work closely together but never actually get to know each other well because we are so focused on our work. But listening today to people from both sides of the chamber, I feel I actually did get a little more of a glimmer or an insight into Fiona Richardson as a person.

Minister Richardson's passing has been a shock to us all, and I believe her loss is felt by us all. Many today have spoken of Fiona's strength and resolve, her steadfast work and unwavering commitment to making

women and children safer. She never gave up on them, and she never gave up on life until the very end.

Fiona Richardson was very generous with her time. She took the time to visit Thomastown and took the time to meet with women to discuss family violence, her vision and the work that Labor was doing to support women through a lens of gender equality. She gave us hope for a better Victoria — a better society for women and children.

Fiona Richardson was a first in many things: the first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence; overseeing the first Royal Commission into Family Violence; establishing the first Victim Survivors Advisory Council; establishing Respectful Relationships into the state education curriculum; a member of the first Victorian government to introduce family violence leave into workplace agreements; and working to bring the scourge of family violence out of the dark and hidden corners and into the spotlight. Strategically she worked on the links between gender inequality and family violence. Hand in hand with this was her work to lift the status of women, working to drive women's equality in all aspects of our society through equality of representation, whether on public boards, in the judiciary, in local government or in the public service.

Fiona Richardson has left a mighty legacy, a strong and broad base on which to combat family violence and gender inequality — a legacy that will live on as others build and carry through the foundation work that she has done. In Fiona Richardson's own words:

... we know that we do not have all the answers and this is an effort that needs to endure for many years to come.

I am proud that our Labor government is being bold in the reforms that we are pursuing to improve the lives of Victorian women. It is now up to all of us to continue this vital work to create a safe and equal Victoria for all Victorian women and girls and, in doing so, make Victoria a better place for us all.

I am very sorry that I never got the chance to say goodbye to Fiona, and I give my deepest condolences to Stephen, Veronica, Marcus, Catherine, Alastair and Hamish.

**Ms SPENCE** (Yuroke) — It is a solemn honour to rise and make a few short remarks on the condolence motion for Fiona Richardson. Much has been said today about Fiona as a member of this place and the ongoing contribution that she has made to the state in that capacity, and I support all that has been said in that regard. It is a truly remarkable and enduring legacy. I

also want to note my appreciation of the support and the counsel that Fiona gave to me prior to me being a member of this place, when we spent much time discussing the very exciting topic of ALP rules and rules reform. Formidable, whip smart and determined, Fiona was broadly respected. To Stephen, Kosmos and I extend our deepest sympathies to you and your family.

**Mr LANGUILLER** (Tarnait) — Softly spoken, Fiona Richardson was a most powerful voice in this Parliament, in the community and indeed in the Australian Labor Party. Labor lost a true luminary, Victoria lost a true hero, women and children lost a champion. Since I met Fiona many years ago in Werribee there was one important conversation that we consistently had, which was about how much she loved you, Stephen, Marcus and Catherine, and how much you all meant to her over and above anything else.

Fiona Richardson, member for Northcote, minister of the Victorian government and so much more, sadly lost her fight against cancer. But make no mistake: she was a fighter, a fierce one at that. Her ability to fight for the things that matter and to fight for others was part of her DNA and in any fight everyone, particularly on this side, knew that if you could, you always wanted to have Fiona in your corner. I respected her so much for that. She fought for her community, she fought for the rights of women and children, she fought for the truth about domestic violence to come out — fiercely. She played a pivotal role in Victoria's gender equality strategy. In one of her last speeches, she said:

Whether you're Aboriginal or a new arrival or living in rural or regional Victoria or have a disability, this strategy is for you.

That is good policy and a good legacy of Fiona Richardson and this government.

I remember that before the 2014 election I attended a radio interview panel with the member for Box Hill. Just before it I happened to be on the phone with Fiona Richardson. I knew that domestic violence would arise as a topic of conversation in that interview with the member for Box Hill and me. I sought Fiona's advice on the subject. Amongst other things she said to me that it was fundamental, in order to address the challenges of family and domestic violence and to improve the plight of women and children, we should where possible try to achieve bipartisanship in policy terms, in legislative terms and in cultural and behavioural terms to do that. That is also her good legacy, I believe.

The royal commission, for which she will most likely be remembered, changed the way government agencies, the courts and police approach family violence. Her instrumental work in this area of policy and law cannot

be understated. The effect that she has had on people's lives must never be forgotten.

As Australia's first-ever Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, Fiona took on a heavy burden. In a system, in a world, that has historically failed victims and survivors of domestic violence, Fiona gave hope to countless women and children — hope that, at last, things would change. In one of her first speeches as minister, she said, 'We can do more, and we must'. We should all do more — for Fiona.

I wish to acknowledge Veronica Power, Fiona's mother, for raising such an inspirational, determined and principled woman. Fiona was a mother to both Catherine and Marcus — and I know how much she loved them. She was married to Stephen — and I know also how much she loved him. She was also a great friend to many and always offered guidance and support to those who needed it. I remember not long ago going through my messages. I had received one from her which said, 'Remember the power of forgiveness. Most particularly the power of self-forgiveness. It can turn the world around in a heartbeat'.

Fiona was a formidable character, along with her husband, Stephen Newnham, and they worked together as partners and comrades for the betterment of our community — indeed for the betterment of the Australian Labor Party and movement. At a personal level I want to say that as it happens in the political world we do not always agree with each other. I think most on this side of the chamber would have had their encounters with Fiona Richardson. But I can say that since I met Fiona in Werribee many years ago the one thing that I know she and I did well was that we never stopped talking to each other. That I am proud of and I am particularly happy with having done: we never stopped talking to each other.

I was one of the privileged ones to have been a painter at her place, and I will not share the stories of which room I painted. I apologise for the imperfections that I left behind. I was amazingly impressed by her courage and honesty on *Australian Story*. Make no mistake, it takes great courage and commitment to do that. She understood that she needed to lead by example and share her personal story with the community to show the community that the minister herself had gone through this experience. She opened up in this story so that it would be easier for other women to do the same, and that was very tough on her personally and indeed on her family. It is no wonder that there has been a public outpouring of grief and condolences from the community. She deserves every bit of it.

Because of her fighting spirit and her tireless dedication to justice Fiona will live on through her legacy amongst us in the Parliament, on this side of the Parliament and in her family and friends. My thoughts, affection and condolences go out to Veronica, to Stephen, to Catherine, to Marcus and to her extended family at this heartbreaking time. I wish to conclude by saying goodbye, Fiona. Goodbye, Fi. Thank you for your hard work and dedication to the community and to the labour movement. Your support over the years, through the good times and the bad, has been invaluable to me personally, and you know and the family knows that I too will miss you dearly.

**Mr NARDELLA** (Melton) — I have known Fiona for quite a while. She was part of the great Labor Party family. Like all families, we have our favourites, the ones we get along with and the ones we rarely see, but every member of the Labor Party is part of the Labor family. Fiona will be sadly missed by many of the members of this Labor family. I also remember when she was working for my friend Mary Gillett in Werribee. She was very active in the party at that stage, and only a few years earlier, in 1986, Stephen Mills wrote *The New Machine Men*, about the backroom boys that used to operate the parties. If this was to be updated today, it would need to be renamed *The New Machine Women and Men* in honour of Fiona, and she would be appreciative of the suggested renaming.

Last year in March I went to the United Nations women's conference with Fiona, Tanja Kovac and the honourable member for Macedon. Fiona was there to learn, engage and develop policies to protect women and children, in the main, from family violence and how to drive generational change within, firstly, Victorian society and, secondly, Australia wide. She was proud of the work that the Victorian government was undertaking with the Royal Commission into Family Violence and had to explain numerous times this initiative, which was released on 22 September 2016.

Not only did we attend many of the sessions in the UN but we also had discussions outside with people changing the lives and mores of the communities they operated in. We went to the Red Hook Community Justice Center, where Mayor Giuliani presided and where this different but innovative local approach was changing lives daily. Fiona did not want to have just a judicial approach to family violence; she wanted an approach that incorporated a number of key areas. We also visited an integrated police sexual assault and violence centre where, instead of silos, many agencies work together to not only bring to justice perpetrators but help women and children rebuild their lives. We went to a session with ministers from the Nordic

countries, who all talked about being feminist governments but how this was central to gender equality, to valuing women in their societies and to treating them as equals.

Through these and other meetings Fiona absorbed views and questioned positions and policies but thought deeply about what needed to be done to enhance and cement this generational change. She always wanted to go back to the United Nations women's conference to update the world on the Victorian family violence royal commission and what we had done. The family violence agency and an independent, hypothecated, ongoing funding source to eradicate family violence from within our society, just like VicHealth is funded by a 5 per cent levy on tobacco, is one of the legacies that Fiona left for the future that I would like to see continued. It is needed to perpetually continue her role and all the hard work done by her ministerial office and her department.

From the Labor family to her family: this is a very difficult and heartbreaking time. The thing that will get you through will be the memories, the laughter, the good times and remembering the treks through the bush. I will miss Fiona, and I give my sincere condolences to Stephen, Marcus and Catherine, her mum, Veronica, and Hamish and Alastair, who has been in the gallery here today. Vale, Fiona.

**Mr DIMOPOULOS** (Oakleigh) — I would like to pay my respects to Fiona for her work, for who she was as a person and for the difference she has made not only to Victoria but to Australia. I did not know Fiona well, but I knew of her since the 1990s and early 2000s when I attended my first few Labor Unity meetings, and she was obviously a key person in that group. I had gotten to know her a bit better since being elected to this place. I got to see the energy, the enthusiasm and the commitment not just to her portfolios but to people in general. She was determined to leave this place having made a difference, and she did make a difference.

Only a few months back, as others have said, Fiona appeared at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee in her role as Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence and Minister for Women. At the time Fiona was very unwell. Most people would have had the day off work, but she was determined to appear and answer questions on matters related to her portfolios. This is particularly significant given the landmark funding for family violence measures that had been provided just weeks earlier in the government's May budget — something I know she was very proud of. It was her steely determination that I remember that afternoon and, knowing what we now know, it was an

incredibly courageous performance. To say that she was across the detail even while unwell would be an understatement. A political observer might call it 'clinical', and I say that with the utmost respect because, as we know, it was blessed with an emotional attachment to her portfolios. That real passion was developed into real change.

Life can be very unfair. I think there are a lot of us here who have been very reflective over the last couple of weeks. Fiona was only a few years older than myself. She was my generation. I think that is what hits the hardest. It has reminded me of how precious life is, but more than that it has reminded me about how important it is to do something while you are here, not just in this place — important as it is not to be a bench warmer — but anywhere in the community, whether it be helping a charity or a local sports club or working with the disadvantaged. Everybody has a gift to offer. Fiona's gift was to help those whose plight was hidden for far too long.

Through her work and through the Royal Commission into Family Violence, those people now have a voice, but more than that they have the support mechanisms in place to provide them with real help. Her achievements were profound and enormous. As we have heard, there was the Royal Commission into Family Violence, establishing the Victim Survivors Advisory Council, the UN UNiTE campaign, family violence behaviour change programs and advertising campaigns, Respectful Relationships in Victorian schools, family violence leave and much, much more, including the unfinished business that others have talked about with the family violence prevention agency and the other matters she wanted us to tackle.

It is no accident that Fiona Richardson was a Labor member of Parliament, a member of the Labor party and a Labor minister. It is no accident that the Labor Party attracted her. It is a great party and it attracts great people, and Fiona was one of those great people. Nor is it an accident that some of her best achievements were part of this government, the most progressive Labor government in Victoria's history led by a Premier who stood shoulder to shoulder with Fiona for gender equality and stood shoulder to shoulder with Fiona for equality full stop — and he will continue to do so.

My deepest sympathies to Stephen and to their children. I cannot imagine the pain of losing a partner, a mother, a child or a sister. My sympathies also to her staff, her friends and other loved ones. If there is some comfort, it is knowing that lives have been changed and lives have already been saved thanks to the work of Fiona Richardson and thanks to the legacy she leaves us. It is

a legacy not just for Victoria but for all of us. Rest in peace, Fiona.

**The SPEAKER** — Before bringing contributions on this condolence motion to a close I would like to add a few personal comments. I have listened to the emotional contributions from both sides of the house about Fiona and her achievements. On more than one occasion today and last week she has been described as a political warrior. No doubt this characterisation stems from her fearless approach to politics, initially within the world of the internal ALP machine. I count myself fortunate that in the internal toing and froing of Labor politics she was on my side. It is important to be honest and indicate that we had a difference about direction in recent times. This does not, however, diminish the respect and friendship of many years nor lessen the shock of losing someone who had been so close for so long.

In the brutal world of Labor politics she was fierce and ferocious, uncompromising and unwavering. She was not someone with whom people would want to pick a fight, so the warrior tag fits nicely, despite her gentle manner and genuine empathy for people around her. As shadow Minister for Public Transport in opposition years she revelled in the policy work but also in holding government to account. They were happy days, before cancer, travelling the state with the fare slug.

After the 2014 election I watched in awe as she was assigned new battles when she was asked to turn her sights against entrenched enemies — family violence and gender inequality. She applied the same ferocity and tactical smarts to these monstrous scourges, and as the first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence she helped bring the suffering of victims out into the light.

Of course her brave telling of her own family story will be remembered as a key moment in the fight against family violence — what courage! I watched *Australian Story* again last week, as many people have said they did, and was left amazed at the strength of Fiona's mum, Veronica, and her two brothers, Hamish and Alastair — in an extraordinary story of strength and resilience. Fiona was a private woman and intensely protective of her family, as most members in this place are, so the decision to put her family in the public spotlight was the strongest possible sign of her commitment to the fight against family violence. Yet the hardest part of losing Fiona is not the contribution she has made as a minister and the further work she would have done, it is a family losing a mum, a wife, a daughter, a sister. We can only but offer our support to you, Steve, Catherine and Marcus. We know this must be an unbearable time for the family, and our thoughts are with all of you.

**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 Fiona Richardson, the house now adjourns until 9.30 a.m. tomorrow.

**Motion agreed to.**

**House adjourned 4.48 p.m.**

