

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Tuesday, 9 June 2015

(Extract from book 8)

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Procedure Committee — The President, Dr Carling-Jenkins, Mr Davis, Mr Jennings, Ms Pennicuik, Ms Pulford, Ms Tierney and Ms Wooldridge.

Legislative Council standing committees

Standing Committee on the Economy and Infrastructure — Dr Carling-Jenkins, Mr Dalidakis, Mr Eideh, Mr Elasmarr, Mr Finn, Ms Hartland, Mr Morris and Mr Ondarchie.

Standing Committee on the Environment and Planning — Ms Bath, Mr Dalla-Riva, Mr Davis, Ms Dunn, Mr Leane, Ms Shing, Ms Tierney and Mr Young.

Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues — Ms Fitzherbert, Mr Melhem, Mr Mulino, Mr O'Donohue, Ms Patten, Mrs Peulich, Ms Springle and Ms Symes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Heads of parliamentary departments

Assembly — Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Mr R. W. Purdey

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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

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Herbert, Mr Steven Ralph	Northern Victoria	ALP	Symes, Ms Jaelyn	Northern Victoria	ALP
Jennings, Mr Gavin Wayne	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Tierney, Ms Gayle Anne	Western Victoria	ALP
Leane, Mr Shaun Leo	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Wooldridge, Ms Mary Louise Newling	Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Lovell, Ms Wendy Ann	Northern Victoria	LP	Young, Mr Daniel	Northern Victoria	SFP
Melhem, Mr Cesar	Western Metropolitan	ALP			

¹ Resigned 25 February 2015

² Appointed 15 April 2015

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

ALP — Labor Party; ASP — Australian Sex Party;
DLP — Democratic Labour Party; Greens — Australian Greens;
LP — Liberal Party; Nats — The Nationals;
SFP — Shooters and Fishers Party; V1LJ — Vote 1 Local Jobs

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Tuesday, 9 June 2015

The PRESIDENT (Hon. B. N. Atkinson) took the chair at 2.05 p.m. and read the prayer.

GOVERNMENT WHIP

The PRESIDENT — Order! I inform the house that I have received a letter from Mr Melhem. He writes:

I wish to advise you that effective today I have resigned from my position as Government Whip for the Legislative Council.

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — I rise to advise the house that Ms Jaclyn Symes is now the Government Whip in the Legislative Council.

CONDOLENCES

Hon. Joan Elizabeth Kirner, AC

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — I move:

That this house expresses its sincere sorrow at the death, on 1 June 2015, of the Honourable Joan Elizabeth Kirner, AC, and places on record its acknowledgement of the valuable services rendered by her to the Parliament and the people of Victoria as a member of the Legislative Council for Melbourne West Province from 1982 to 1988, member of the Legislative Assembly for the electoral district of Williamstown from 1988 to 1994, Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands from 1985 to 1988, Minister for Education from 1988 to 1990, Deputy Premier from 1989 to 1990, Minister for Ethnic Affairs from 1990 to 1991, Minister for Women's Affairs from 1990 to 1992 and Premier of Victoria from 1990 to 1992.

It was with great sadness but in some ways great joy that last Friday I joined thousands of Victorians in mourning the passing of Joan Elizabeth Kirner and attended, on a crisp winter's morning in Williamstown, an extraordinary tribute to an outstanding Victorian, an outstanding woman and an outstanding citizen of not only this state but this nation, someone who was an embodiment of what is decent and right in terms of the attributes that bring people to political life, to community activism and to supporting one another in our community.

At the commencement of her contribution Joan Kirner's great friend Caroline Hogg described Joan Kirner as the bravest person she had ever met. Only in Caroline Hogg's heart of hearts does she know the dimensions of why she believes Joan Kirner to be the bravest person she has ever met. From my vantage point I know a number of reasons for that being an appropriate description of Joan Kirner.

From my vantage point I interpreted her bravery in a number of ways. I am aware from the stories that were told on Friday, which are stories I had heard previously, of Joan as a child railing against the imposition of arbitrary rules that she believed were inequitable and in fact not sustainable in the sense of natural justice. From her very early years Joan showed the courage of her convictions to stand up to what she saw as a form of oppression, even in her own classroom situation.

Later on, as a parent of a child going to school, she was confronted with a situation where she was told that her child would be joining a classroom of 54 students. Many people in our community will know that being the parent of a schoolchild is quite often a disempowering process. Well, Joan Kirner was not disempowered. Joan Kirner was brave enough to say that was not going to be the case — not only to tell the teacher and the principal but to go to the education department and to camp outside the Minister for Education's door to insist that that not be the circumstance for her child and the other children who were going to be compelled to attend a classroom of that size.

Joan Kirner demonstrated through those couple of events that she also was prepared to be a contrarian. In fact she celebrated being a contrarian. She celebrated saying the things that needed to be said in whatever circumstances she was in, whether she was in Parliament, the party room, the cabinet room or the community. She did not balk at saying what she believed had to be said. To say what had to be said, it often took great courage to keep to the courage of her convictions, given the pressures and circumstances she found herself under.

I was also pleased as I was leaving Williamstown town hall on that crisp, winter morning to hear a Kirner family member say they were so pleased that the sun had come out for Ron. I thought it was extremely moving at that moment to recognise the great love of Joan Kirner's life, Ron, and to know that he would find some relief and some degree of satisfaction in the sun having come out to shine on this very significant event. It was significant in a variety of ways. I will briefly draw on some of the highlights from my perspective of what happened at Williamstown town hall last Friday morning.

We had the good fortune that Bishop Philip Huggins was the facilitator of the event. He is a man of great compassion and humility, and he has a great sense of inclusion. It was extraordinary the way in which he made everybody at the event feel. Whether they were speaking, had a prominent role or were in the back

stalls, they all felt as if they were participants in this great community tribute to Joan Kirner. He sent goosebumps down the spines of perhaps 1000 people when he talked about the family gathering around Joan's bedside at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre to say their farewells to her a week before, as they waited for her to die. He talked about a family radiating with an abundance of goodness and love. He created an extraordinary image of this family, who came together to support their loved one at that moment.

In a very telling way, he also described a painting of Joan Kirner that was prominent at the front of the stage. It is a painting entitled *Still Opening Doors* by Dawn Stubbs, which is a very evocative picture of Joan holding open a door with her right hand. Her left hand is cupping her heart in a welcoming gesture to engage with her. Philip was absolutely clear that in the last residual part — whilst she is opening the door and welcoming people into her heart — Joan is about to make a telling statement. I think we are all beneficiaries of some insight into the personality of Joan Kirner. One of my favourite paintings in Queen's Hall is the portrait of Joan Kirner. Again, in a very different form — a somewhat cheeky form — it is welcoming an engagement with people in her office when she was Premier. Maybe we could all pass by and share a moment with Joan in that spirit of her openness and her engaging nature.

While most of the stories were of great gravity, great moment and great personal commitment, there were also some reflections on the importance of the Essendon Football Club in Joan Kirner's life. I raise this as a way of uniting the contributions of some of the men who spoke. Joan's cousin Max Cole talked about Joan's family and her parents, John and Beryl Hood, who were both staunch Essendon supporters, which led to Joan's lifelong commitment to the Bombers. Paul Briggs said he and Joan were united by their support of the Essendon Football Club, and Paul tells a most apocryphal tale of Joan exhorting him and other members of the Yorta Yorta community to place a curse on John Elliott and the Carlton Football Club — which anybody would know was not required. That curse was self-initiated and self-actualised on the field, so the spiritual intervention of the Yorta Yorta people was unnecessary. But the story illustrates the great spiritual connection between Joan and the Yorta Yorta people, a connection she also shared with other Indigenous communities around Australia. She dedicated her life, in the name of justice, to supporting Aboriginal people in many circumstances.

Speaking of the slightly apocryphal, the last reference I heard to the Essendon Football Club was during the

singing of *I Am Woman*. I was concerned that it was not being sung with as much gusto as it perhaps should have been. I suggested to one of my sisters in the Victorian cabinet that they needed to sing louder because they were at risk of sounding about as enthusiastic as the Essendon cheer squad. They did boost it up a little bit after that. But whilst *I Am Woman* may have been sung in a less than fulsome way, that was certainly not the case with any of the words spoken by the women at the event. Every woman spoke with great resolve, great warmth and great admiration and love for Joan Kirner.

Jenny Beacham uttered the immortal phrase that from her perspective, 'You could do anything after you talked to Joan'. I think many thousands of people who came into Joan's orbit would share that view. She was an extremely inspirational person who could motivate you to do what was required to get things done. Then Candy Broad spoke of the things Joan did get done. Beyond Joan's great achievements in education, Candy reminded us of her extraordinary contribution to the national parks system in Victoria between 1985 and 1992. Some of that work was during her time as Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, but even after leaving that post, in Joan's time as Deputy Premier and Premier more than a dozen national parks were added or extended in the state of Victoria. Those diverse national parks include the Alpine National Park, the Murray-Sunset National Park, the Tarra-Bulga National Park, the Point Nepean National Park and the Bunurong marine park. An extraordinary transformation of the national park system in Victoria occurred on Joan's watch.

Emily Lee-Ack spoke of Joan's extraordinary contribution to the creation of EMILY's List and of the momentum in affirmative action that is achieving new levels of empowerment, mentoring, guidance and campaigning for greater representation of women, not only in the Victorian Parliament but in other states and around this nation. Emily described the demanding Joan, the insatiable Joan and the glorious Joan. It was very telling, powerful and warmly told.

One contribution that was unfortunately not made was by Kay Setches, a great friend of mine and of Joan's — a fellow traveller in the establishment of EMILY's List. Alongside the very important, significant contributions of many other women, Joan and Kay have done so much work in relation to EMILY's List. Their journey has been an extremely powerful one. I know that Kay would be grieving for a variety of reasons, including the fact that she had only left for Europe about three days before Joan's death. I am sure Kay was anticipating a

grieving process and has had to endure great depths of that emotion in the last week.

In terms of depth of emotion, I think anybody who was at the event would have been overwhelmed by the tribute from Hutch Hussein, who described Joan as her surrogate mother. In an extraordinary coincidence in the life cycle, Joan's passing came within a 24-hour period of Hutch giving birth to her second child, Eamon Kirner Lack Hussein. Hutch's words were so deeply felt; they resonated with the depths of care, compassion and support shown to her, with Joan's unswerving commitment to supporting her as a young woman raising her children and to helping her find her identity and her political empowerment. She embodies the breadth and depth of love and care Joan Kirner demonstrated toward others.

The remainder of Joan's family chose silence and a stoic resolve in support of their loved one. Ron, Kate, David, Michael, Ned and Sam, who were all pallbearers at the funeral, chose not to speak. However, it was very clear from the contributions of all those who know the family that Ron was the rock and the sheet anchor of Joan's life. It is very telling that the very few words attributed to Ron on the day were written on the back leaf of the order of service from the funeral, and related to a trip to the Kimberley in 1998 when Ron had penned a few simple words relating to shimmering creek stones and a black rock. I think it may well be that Ron's chosen words were living out the other's expectations of their connection to the earth. I know sufficiently well that Joan and Ron loved being in the natural environment, they loved being in the Kimberley and they loved exploring nature and the wilderness, and certainly those very few words attributed to Ron are totally embedded in a great depth of connection between the two of them.

That depth of the connection in terms of Joan's contribution to the Labor Party, to Parliament, to good government and to the community was also recognised by the Premier this morning in his contribution to the condolence motion in the Assembly. On behalf of the Victorian government he indicated that we will miss this proud and dignified woman who, even in the grip of pain and illness, smiled so often. That is very true. Joan was riddled with osteoporosis and had been for a number of years. In fact it led to great pain and some degree of physical impairment. She also had the misfortune of losing the sight in one eye. However, every time we encountered Joan we also encountered the depth of her humour, compassion and liveliness. She inevitably had a spark in her eye and a smile that she shared with us all.

In fact she was always looking for the best in us, and that is another comment that the Premier made this morning: Joan taught us all a lesson about dignity and showed us where to find the better part of ourselves. 'We love you, we thank you and we will miss you', were the Premier's concluding words.

When I thought about how I would conclude my contribution, I thought about the great elements that bring Joan together — her love of not only family but community, her ability to ride through many difficult times, her great composure in the face of the political ill winds that she was subjected to, and to be totally stoic and resolved in trying to achieve a greater sense of justice and fairness for our community and better outcomes for us all. She was very exposed to the elements.

In fact for two reasons I was mindful of the situation outlined in the Samuel Beckett play, *Happy Days*. In the first act of that play the main character, Winnie, is stuck in the mud up to her waist, and for the second half of the play that rises up to her neck, and she has to suffer a great weight and still maintain her commitment to life and her perseverance. In that play she and her husband try to remember a line that indicates their resolve, and that line in *Happy Days* is the first line of Caroline Hogg's reading at the funeral from the play *Cymbeline*:

Fear no more the heat o' the sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages;
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages:
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

Most times when we refer to someone's passing, we wish that they rest in peace and that their loved ones have a sense of peace, and that is my sense today also. I hope that Joan Kirner rests in peace, that her pain and suffering is over and that her family and loved ones know that this is the resolution of an extremely wonderful life. But whilst I emphasise 'rest in peace', I also know the life force of Joan Kirner, which is restless. It is a restless life force. She will not be happy and her life force will not be happy, nor will the people who live in her memory, until we do all we can within our own capacity to deal with inequality, with lack of respect and injustice.

I devote my political life, on behalf of my colleagues, to living in that restless environment in pursuit of a greater sense of justice and equity for the people we support. In Joan's honour, I will stay slightly restless, whilst I hope she rests in peace.

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I rise to support the condolence motion, to acknowledge and celebrate the life of the Honourable Joan Kirner, AC. In doing so I extend my condolences on behalf of the parliamentary Liberal Party to the Kirner family — to Ron, Michael, Kate, David, her four grandchildren and her many friends, colleagues and the communities that she continued to represent so passionately right up to her passing on 1 June 2015.

It was a privilege to attend the funeral. The Leader of the Government has spoken very eloquently about many of the very touching moments — and there were many more. What really struck me is that the funeral felt very much like it was Joan. It was warm; it was friendly. There was laughter; there were tears. There were stories — there were lots of stories — and through some of those stories you could hear that Joan had had a little bit of a hand in directing how the service was to be conducted. So while it was for her, it was also of her and so much about her.

What was very clear was that from her earliest days — from her first act of public defiance as a 10-year-old — right throughout her life, she always stood up for the things she cared about. One of the strong and common themes for me was that so many people said, ‘She made us believe in ourselves’. In many different ways that was very much a strong message that came through.

We all smiled when the song *I Am Woman* came on. The laughter and the tears were both part of the process. I must say in response to the Leader of the Government’s comments about the singing that I was a bit concerned to see on the news that night the Minister for Planning, Richard Wynne, also singing along quite actively: ‘I am woman, hear me roar’! I thought that was a sign of great support for the women who were there — and of course for Joan.

The story has been recounted a number of times, but Joan’s activism began when she was outraged about her child being in a class of 54 pupils. She said very clearly to the principal at that point that it would not be her child for whom that would be the case. I think Joan’s formidable vigour came to light through the protests and the petitions which eventually saw extra teachers put on and extra classrooms built. That was probably part of the momentum that inspired Joan to achieve and to continue to achieve on this front. She later became president of the Victorian Federation of State School Parents Clubs and also president of the Australian Council of State School Organisations, which really cemented her profile as an education advocate. In due course she was awarded an Order of Australia, in 1980, for her contribution to community services.

We all know she was elected to the Victorian Parliament in 1982, and in 1985 under the Cain government she became the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Land. As has been mentioned a number of times, Joan’s establishment of Landcare was one of the very significant and lasting achievements of that time. Not only is it something that has captured minds and has endured here in Victoria, but it has expanded nationally. Just today I was having a word to my sister, who is actually the network coordinator of the Landcare network in South Gippsland, and I heard stories of the work that continues to be done. There is very much a connection to not only what needs to happen today and into the future but also to the legacy that was established through Joan’s work in making sure that Landcare protected our environments and our communities.

Joan moved to the Legislative Assembly as the member for Williamstown in 1988, and it was at that stage that she was promoted to the education portfolio. This was, I think, the realisation of her true passion. During her tenure as the Minister for Education she was very committed to improving outcomes for students in the education system. Implementing the Victorian certificate of education model, decreasing class sizes and increasing retention rates were all achievements that Joan sought, worked hard for and delivered. That has, no doubt, positively impacted on the lives of many Victorians, who would not know that it was her legacy and that they have her to thank for the quality of the education they received.

Joan will always hold a very special place in Victorian history for being the state’s first — and at this point, still, only — woman Premier, which she was from 1990 to 1992. She took over the premiership of Victoria in difficult circumstances, and I have often seen this referred to as basically being a poison chalice. Despite the challenges she faced, Joan’s values and leadership did not waver. She was admired for her stoicism, while always displaying great encouragement and compassion. She worked through very challenging situations with, as one would expect, the strength, capacity, engagement and commitment that we know she had.

While obviously Joan and I were on opposite sides of politics, we always maintained a very mutual respect for one another which transcended that party politics. I always admired her for her strong beliefs and for the role she played in promoting the equal representation of women, not only in politics and in Parliament but in society as a whole. Joan’s work with EMILY’s List no doubt changed the Australian Labor Party, and it helped

elect over 200 Labor women into parliaments across the country, at both federal and state levels.

The very strong slogan, which was also talked about a lot at the funeral — ‘When women support women, women win’ — is true not only for women on the Labor side of politics but actually for all women in all walks of life. I have no doubt that Joan’s work has lifted the bar not only for Labor women but actually for all women in Parliament in terms of the representation and the equality that we seek. There is no doubt that Joan’s commitment and determination to achieve gender equity remains unsurpassed by anyone we know. She leaves a very strong legacy in that regard.

We all seek to make personal connections in relation to this condolence motion and our contributions to it. I was very fortunate to deal with and get to know Joan over a number of different issues over a number of years. One that stands out is the issue of reproductive rights for women. One thing I will never forget and probably one of the things that I was most nervous about when we had the abortion law reform debate — I was then shadow Minister for Women’s Affairs with responsibility for the opposition’s response and the leadership of that response in Parliament — was Joan’s presence in the gallery throughout that entire debate. She was a very formidable presence for those making a contribution to that debate, no matter who it was, because they knew of the work she had put in over many years and her strong advocacy for reform, as well as her absolute support for the debate and the efforts and achievements being made through it.

Joan was also a longstanding supporter of the Victorian Honour Roll of Women. She was added to the Honour Roll of Women in 2001, when it was established. She attended meetings many times, and as the Minister for Women’s Affairs I had the opportunity to talk with her about the honour roll and engage with her on it. She always loved to acknowledge the successes and contributions of women from all walks of life. In fact in March this year, at this year’s Honour Roll of Women event, was the last time that I saw her. She was sitting at the front, and the line-up of people wanting to say hello and catch up was significant. It was wonderful to see her there as a strong supporter right until the end.

The Queen Victoria Women’s Centre Trust is another organisation that she has always strongly supported. She had an active and ongoing role at the centre. In fact it was at the Queen Victoria Women’s Centre that many women who had supported the abortion law reform bill gathered to acknowledge the many years of work that had gone before, those who had supported it and the work that needed to be continued.

I was very pleased that she was appointed as Victoria communities ambassador in 2001. Former Deputy Premier Peter Ryan chose, appropriately, to extend her role, and I was very pleased that during the course of the last government she continued in that role for as long as she was able to. One of her responsibilities in that role, whether it was specific or a role she just grasped and took on, was the role of community renewal. As the then Minister for Community Services responsible for community renewal I had many meetings with Joan in relation to the work of communities right across the state, whether it was in Rosebud West, Whittington, Wendouree West, Laverton or Craigieburn — and the list goes on of those community renewal sites.

Joan would always come in with a huge amount of detail about what was happening in each community because she had visited, spent time with and worked with those communities going through the community renewal process. She believed strongly in building the capacity of individuals to be able to make decisions for themselves, to plan and then deliver the solutions they needed for their own communities. She was vital to the process in doing that work locally but then also working as an activist and advocate back to government in relation to the funding and support that was needed to realise those aims. A large part of that was in creating new jobs, new skills pathways and community infrastructure — all the things that she knew made a significant difference in those communities that were in the community renewal process. It was a pleasure to be able to work with her and learn from her advocacy in the work she did in communities right around the state, right up until the last couple of years.

Tributes have been paid far and wide, and there are voices we hear regularly and voices we do not hear often of people who are all in a chorus of acknowledgement, recognition and celebration of the work done and the legacy left by Joan. She made an extraordinary contribution to the Victorian community as an activist, as a member of Parliament, as a minister and as Premier. She was a woman of real principle and strength, motivated at her very heart by her belief in social justice and her vision of a fairer society. She served this Parliament and the people of Victoria with honour and distinction.

On behalf of the Victorian Liberal Party I offer sincerest condolences to her family. I also take the opportunity to thank Ron and all the members of her family for their generosity in sharing her, because there is no doubt that right up until her last days, while she loved and was passionate about her family, she also

loved and was passionate about Victoria and the people of Victoria.

The Leader of the Government spoke about a restlessness, which was a common theme. In fact I wrote in my notes from the funeral that she was always restless for a beautiful or more beautiful world, which I think was a comment made by Jenny Beacham at the funeral. I acknowledge that that restlessness has made a significant difference and resulted in a significant contribution to the lives of so many Victorians. It is a real honour to be able to acknowledge and celebrate her work. While restless in life, we hope and wish that she rests in peace in the years to come. We will always acknowledge her as a great woman and most importantly as a great Victorian.

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — I feel quite privileged today to be able to take part in debate on this condolence motion for Joan Kirner, first woman Premier of Victoria, feminist, community activist and all-round good woman. I do so on my own behalf but also on behalf of the Greens. I thank Mr Jennings and Ms Wooldridge for describing so beautifully what happened at the funeral last Friday, because it was an extraordinary gathering of people from all walks of life who clearly had great regard for Joan.

I knew Joan for many years — as my member of Parliament for Williamstown, as a Premier and as a campaigner for women’s rights. She knew me as a community ratbag or spokesperson on Coode Island — depending on the day — as a kitchen hand here in Parliament who used to make her cups of tea and sandwiches, and as an MP. There were often times that Joan and I did not agree with each other, but in the end we realised we agreed more than we disagreed.

I have some funny stories about Joan that I would like to share today. At the time of the Coode Island explosion, I was working in Parliament House as a kitchen hand. A few days after it happened, I was in the lift when Joan got in. She said, ‘That’s a very strange outfit you’ve got on today, Colleen’, and I replied, ‘I actually work here in the kitchens, Ms Kirner’. She thought that was really amusing. It was one of the things we laughed about over the years.

At community meetings when things were very tense she often used humour to calm things down and bring people together. I once saw Joan at a rally at Wilsons Promontory protesting an attempt to establish resorts there. There was a great array of people on the sand, some holding signs bearing the slogan ‘Save Wilsons Prom’. Joan and her family were there.

Who can forget Joan’s television performance as Joan Jett? Nobody will ever forget that night when people around Victoria screamed, ‘Joan Kirner’s on the telly as a rock ‘n’ roll singer!’. It was one of those amazing nights. I know that video has been posted on Facebook a great deal, and that has meant younger people have been able to see that amazing image.

Just after the 2010 election, as usually happens, I had to wait three weeks to find out whether I had been re-elected. During that time I attended a function at which Joan was the MC. She acknowledged me and said, ‘I hope you win, because I quite like you’. I thought, ‘That’s not a bad thing to be told’.

One of my most important memories of Joan was when she rang me to tell me that the debate on the decriminalisation of abortion was due to start within a few weeks. She gave me my instructions. She told me what needed to be done and how the campaign should work. After hearing people speak at the funeral on Friday I gathered that this was a fairly common thing for Joan to do. She would bring people together, give them their instructions and outline what needed to happen. During that debate, I saw Joan sitting in the gallery day after day. She was in pain a lot of the time. Her osteoporosis was very severe. The chairs in the gallery are not comfortable, but I never heard her once complain. She was here almost as a guide for us, and I greatly appreciated that.

In one of our chats during that time, the thing that really struck me was Joan saying to me that it had taken 20 years to get enough progressive women in the Parliament to make sure that that legislation actually passed. This was no six-week campaign; it was a lifetime’s work.

Joan’s work paid off on so many different fronts — on Landcare, on the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 and on national parks. Joan continued to support all kinds of community campaigns. I would like to refer to a few messages that people have either posted on Facebook or sent directly to me over the last week or so. The first one is from Robyn Gregory, who is the CEO of Women’s Health West. She said:

I worked in the women’s policy coordination unit in the Premier’s department in the early 1990s when Joan was Premier and I remember attending a Reclaim the Night march. Joan walked around talking to each of the women who worked in the government-funded women’s agencies; she knew everyone’s names, where they worked and treated them so personally. About 15 years later I saw Joan at a forum and figured I’d reintroduce myself but she saw me and said, ‘Robyn Gregory! I hear you’re at Women’s Health West and you’ve just written a PhD on abortion. You need to get that published. let’s talk about who you need to talk to ...’

What always struck me about Joan was her drive to improve the lot of all women. She truly embodied the phrase 'the personal is political'. Her great skill was to remember women, to support them to lead work and collaborate to change the conditions for all, and then to go about the task of linking them together. It was never about Joan; never about ego; it was always about equity and justice for women. She inspired us at Women's Health West — as a passionate 'westy' and a great leader.

I received the following message from a representative of the Save Williamstown group:

Much has been and will be written about Joan Kirner's achievements. However, I feel it's important to recognise that Joan was always a fierce supporter of the community with respect to the former woollen mills.

One of the many great things about Joan was how hopeful she was about the community making a difference to the former woollen mills site. Joan would very often respond to our emails with positive and encouraging comments.

If there is one thing I will take inspiration from Joan, it was the ability to stay hopeful through always seeing how people standing together can win.

I often saw Joan at the Save Williamstown rallies. No matter what kind of weather or how she was feeling, she would always be there to support that campaign.

The staff, volunteers and friends of the Louis Joel Arts & Community Centre were deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Joan and offered their condolences to her husband and family. They said they were privileged to have had Joan visit the centre on a number of occasions, and they will remember her as a great supporter of the community and the neighbourhood house sector.

Josh Fecker, a young man I do not know personally, sent me a message about Joan. He said:

I fondly remember meeting her whilst I was on work experience with former opposition minister for transport Geoff Leigh at Parliament House, Victoria. Joan came unannounced to question time with her daughter ... After Parliament paused to acknowledge her presence —

Mr Fecker was sitting next to her at the time —

I asked her why she allowed the introduction of poker machines to Victoria. She nodded, placed her hand on my shoulder gently and replied, 'Hindsight is a wonderful thing'. She then patted me gently a few times on my shoulder, smiled warmly and asked my name. I replied, and she said, 'Thank you, Joshua'. I was captivated and in so much awe. I stared at her for the whole period, ignoring the shenanigans around me. My memories were of a graceful, warm lady, whose presence naturally commanded respect; I could tell she had her heart firmly cemented in the people of Victoria.

Mr Jennings talked about the wonderful eulogy delivered by Hutch Hussein last week. On her

Facebook post, Ms Hussein talked about how she had lost a passionate friend, feminist and selfless trailblazer for those who came after her. Ms Hussein said:

Today I lost many more things. Apart from a friend and mentor, I lost the woman who's been my surrogate mother for nearly 20 years. So fortunate to be loved and inspired by her and to say my final goodbyes this morning. Now the privilege of writing a short eulogy to do justice to an enormous legacy ...

She did that beautifully. Joan Kirner House, run by the Williamstown Community and Education Centre, sends its sincere condolences to Joan's family and friends, saying:

Joan was an inspiration to us all. We will miss her.

Just two months ago I went to visit Joan at her house. I knew she was not well, and I thought I might stay for about an hour and have a chat. Three hours later was when I left. While her body was not working well, her brain was working overtime. She was figuring out what the next campaigns were, what we would do in the western suburbs and what things were left to be done to improve women's lot in life.

I thought the portrait shown at the funeral in which the door was open, showing Joan's readiness to engage and talk to anybody, symbolised Joan very well. She will be missed by many people in the community. I too would like to thank Joan's family, especially Ron, because her family did lend her to us for a very long time. She was Premier at a very difficult time, and as we look back now I think she did a remarkable job. She certainly did a remarkable job as a community activist and as a feminist in these last decades.

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — Joan Kirner was a remarkable woman, and her many professional achievements are well known. She was Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, she was a passionate reformer in education, she was a committed environmentalist, she was our first female Premier, she was a friend to many and she was a mentor to what must be countless people.

I joined the Labor Party in July 1990, and at what must have been only my second meeting in that little window between 7 August 1990 and 10 August 1990 the then local member for Bendigo West, David Kennedy, came to our branch meeting keen to canvass people's views about what he should do in relation to an impending decision to be made by the state parliamentary Labor Party on who would replace John Cain. I thought, 'My goodness, this is exciting!'. I am not sure I had encountered an occasion quite as momentous as that. I was 16 years old, and ever since that time I feel I have

in part tripped along in Joan Kirner's footsteps — in a number of different ways.

Being of a different generation of Labor women, I have had opportunities that existed because Joan and her contemporaries made it so. Living a lifetime committed to women's rights, to social justice, to education and to the environment, she was such an effective advocate and such an effective campaigner, politician and leader who managed to achieve so many lasting reforms. The legacy she has left to the Parliament, to the Victorian government, to the Labor Party and indeed to the western suburbs in terms of her support for community and her community advocacy is extraordinary.

When Joan first became Premier the media portrayed her in polka dots because I do not think the cartoonists knew how to draw a female leader, such an extraordinary thing that it was. I feel the time is probably right to state for the record that Joan maintained she never owned anything with polka dots and she wondered how that representation had come about. I, however, have my polka dots on today as, I suppose, a mark of respect and to represent what an absurd public portrayal she had to overcome. I think we need to acknowledge that this is still a challenge for women in politics, particularly those in some roles.

I grew up, then, in the shadows of Joan Kirner. As a student at Bendigo Senior Secondary College, I remember her — as Minister for Education and then as Premier — visiting what she described as the jewel in the crown of the state education system at the time. While I had known Joan Kirner for over 20 years, I only really got to know her in the last five, through a greater level of involvement in EMILY's List during this period.

EMILY's List is an organisation that Joan was instrumental in founding, but it is important to note that Joan was not a figurehead. Joan was a very active and influential participant until very recently. EMILY's List defines its task in a very simple way: members of EMILY's List sign up to being in support of equity, child care, equal pay, diversity and choice. These are simple goals. They are goals in relation to which members of Parliament, state and federal, have achieved enormous things, but they are goals that are enduring because the work in many respects remains undone. EMILY's List is also a very practical organisation that raises money and provides mentoring and training support. Indeed Joan Kirner and Moira Rayner wrote *The Women's Power Handbook*, which is really a guidebook to navigating power structures often designed to be oblique.

I know that previous speakers have talked about Joan's commitment to increasing the number of women in Parliament and also her commitment to choice and to abortion law reform. These things are not unrelated. This was a 20-year project to have sufficient numbers of pro-choice women in the Labor Party in our parliaments to achieve sufficient support for the proposition that abortion ought to be decriminalised.

It was in 1994 and after a good number of years that the Labor Party decided to establish targets for the preselection of women amid arguments about safe seats, marginal seats and upper house versus lower house seats. This is a topic that we revisit from time to time, and indeed it is a topic we will revisit at our national conference in not too many weeks time. It was not until 2007 that this Parliament resolved to remove abortion from the Crimes Act 1958. Without the work of EMILY'S List, the advocacy of Joan Kirner, the changing of the rules to ensure more women were elected to Parliament and the identification, support, mentoring, training and campaigning for those women, that reform would not have happened.

We encounter many different types of leaders in our travels. Joan was a leader who was tireless, practical and collaborative. If it is possible to be collaborative and bossy, she was very bossy. But she was bossy in a really good way. She would take people aside and make them try a little harder or stretch themselves a little further than they might otherwise have done. That was particularly the case in her mentoring and leadership of women, particularly women embarking on a career in the Labor Party. However, I note that that was not exclusively something we benefited from.

As Mr Jennings indicated in his contribution to this motion, the speeches at her funeral last Friday spoke volumes about Joan Kirner's influence over people in a number of different ways, but Emily Lee-Ack's speech, in which she talked about a test that Joan had set for her, resonated the most with me. Emily told a story that any working parent can probably relate to. She had an unwell child and she had to miss a terribly important meeting interstate. She pulled out of the meeting, woke up the next day and her child was fine — infuriatingly so. The child went off to child care and Emily went off to the EMILY's List office having missed the flight and the opportunity to go to a series of very important meetings.

Joan got Emily on the phone and said, 'Come on, we'll see you there. You can still make it. Jump in a cab, go to the airport; get moving'. This story was really all about Joan testing Emily to see whether she would take an opportunity, even one that was pretty impractical

and hard to achieve. Joan wanted to see whether Emily, if presented with an opportunity, would jump at it. She was an incredibly instructive and practical mentor and leader for women. I think I can speak for many in the EMILY's List family, including Ann, Tania, Hutch, Lisa and countless others, and say that we all now feel a greater responsibility to support women to win because Joan is no longer here to help us do that, or to do it where we have failed. We will all now have to work a little harder on this important and ongoing task.

I would also like to express my deep condolences to Joan's husband, Ron, to the Kirner family and to all who knew Joan and loved her. I thank, as others have done, her family for their extraordinary generosity over decades, including the recent days and weeks as they have shared Joan with all of us.

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — On behalf of The Nationals, I too take the opportunity to join in speaking on this condolence motion for the late Joan Kirner. I do not want to go into Joan's parliamentary career and achievements because they have been well highlighted by the Leader of the Government, but I would like to talk about some of the observations I have been able to glean from the press clippings and the historians in regard to the life of this very significant Victorian.

I think one of the better summaries of how Joan came to be Premier is contained in a chapter written by political author and researcher Dr Jennifer Curtin in the book *The Victorian Premiers*. She wrote that Mrs Kirner had a special place in Victoria and Australia, and in political history, in her role as a gender trailblazer. She said that that role overshadowed the legacy of her premiership. It has been well documented that Joan Kirner inherited somewhat of a poisoned chalice because of the economic and social chaos of the Cain government and it was thought by Labor strategists that putting a female in the role of Premier might at the very least save the furniture.

It has also been well documented that this might have been a terrible time for Joan Kirner to have been appointed Premier. However, she certainly made a very good fist of it. Unemployment had nudged 11 per cent when she took over the role, debt was at a crushing \$25 billion and the State Bank of Victoria, Pyramid and Transcontinental financial disasters were all very present. One article I read said that one of her biggest challenges was a union that was flexing its muscle within the labour movement and in the presence of a very hostile public. It is now the view of history that Joan Kirner seized this opportunity to become Premier and used it to achieve genuine reform for women in this

state. She was able to extract positives out of a tragic set of circumstances and that in itself is quite remarkable.

She was known to have chipped her colleagues for any instance of sexist language, and I am sure it must have been much worse 25 years ago than it is today. But Joan did not rant and rave about feminism, nor did she ever use her gender to achieve political outcomes. She never used it to fend off opposition attacks. She simply got on with the job of doing rather than seeming to do and showing women how to take their rightful place in life, not just talking about it. Perhaps that was because she was not a child of the political process. She came from an everyday, modern-day, middle-class Moonee Ponds family. Her father was a fitter and turner and her mother a music teacher. They gave her something that was very special — that is, a great education.

Instead of taking the usual pathway that Labor Party members take to this house, she took a different pathway. Perhaps this had something to do with her slightly different view of the goings on in this place. She came to politics through her work with a school parents club, trying to improve education through community work and campaigning.

I consider myself lucky to have met Joan on a couple of extended afternoons. One was about the other. Joan Kirner was invited to open Our Place, which was an Eaglehawk-based community project. She knew I was also going to be there, so she sent me an invitation to catch up so that we could talk about the movement behind Our Place. At a restaurant in Little Bourke Street we sat down to have lunch. It was the first time I had had the chance to meet her, and I had no idea what to expect. As Mr Jennings said, she was a tad frail with osteoporosis and failing eyesight. However, as all speakers have said, she was incredibly sharp of mind. Her interests were very firmly around regional and rural education outcomes, how they could be improved and how we could build on the amazing work of Landcare.

She also wanted to talk about her mighty Bombers. I was not aware, as Mr Jennings has made us aware, that Joan, along with Paul Briggs, put a curse on the Carlton team. Had I known that, in the interests of good football I might have asked her to remove the curse before she died, because it is just not fair that Carlton is going through what it is going through at the moment.

On Landcare, Alex Arbuthnot, who was the vice-president of the Victorian Farmers Federation at the time Landcare was founded, said:

That brilliant idea that Joan Kirner had has become an Australian icon.

He also said she was a ‘great lady’. He hopes something magnificent can be done to remember her. Landcare has become an international force and has spread to 21 other countries. Something like 92 per cent of Victorian farmers belong to Landcare and there are 40 000 land carers in Victoria. Let us hope it remains as strong a force as it currently is.

Joan is fondly remembered in education circles where she achieved widespread reform, including the creation of the Victorian certificate of education.

I spoke to the former Leader of The Nationals, Peter Ryan, about Joan Kirner, because I knew he had asked her to do a range of jobs for him when he was the Deputy Premier. He spoke warmly about the role she played in the Advancing Country Towns project, with its nine regions around the state. They were given financial assistance and it was Joan’s task to report back to him on their progress — which of the respective regions and country towns were doing well and which ones were doing not so well and where additional help was going to be needed. I had that conversation in 2012, when Joan was very interested in the goings on in each of the communities for which she had taken on responsibility.

Joan Kirner came across as a person totally devoted to the welfare of Victorians, and for that we can have nothing but the utmost respect for her. She was a very warm lady who at the opening of Our Place was able to speak glowingly about the Eaglehawk community, how it had worked its way through Black Saturday, how the community programs had risen out of nowhere and how they were fulfilling an amazing role in some of our poorer communities. I have enormous sympathy for Ron Kirner, her children and her grandchildren.

Mr HERBERT (Minister for Training and Skills) — It is a great honour to pay tribute to someone who has left an indelible mark on our state and will for generations to come. Joan Kirner was an outstanding Victorian, who was adored and admired by many.

Ms Hartland mentioned the Joan Jett and the Fishnets concert. I had the honour of being at that concert. I have to say that it got widespread publicity, but every Labor person who was there — everyone who was there really — left that concert loving Joan just a little bit more than when they arrived.

Joan was a proud Labor woman, a committed teacher and a tireless advocate for education and women. She was the first and only female Premier Victoria has seen. I am proud to say that we shared many values, many conversations and many commitments, in particular

around education, fairness and equity in education. She was active in her school mothers clubs, attended the conferences held by the Federation of State Schools Parents Clubs and became president of the federation in 1971. She was also president of the Australian Council of State School Organisations. She was a local activist and was appointed to the Whitlam government’s newly created Australian Schools Commission.

Joan had a great presence about her. One of her great strengths was her ability to remember a face and to remember a name. Even if you only had one conversation with her, the next time you met her you would have a great connectivity with her as if you were a long-lost friend. I noticed it when Joan, as Premier, was talking on stage or perhaps waiting to talk: she would cast her eyes around the audience, and anyone who met her eye instantly knew that she was paying them a little bit of respect. It was a great gift of hers. She connected with thousands of people in that way.

I will not go into great detail about her history, as the Leader of the Government has already done that. There is no doubt that as Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands her achievements were many. We owe many of our national parks, much of our landscape and the formation of Landcare to her policy and her drive.

As has been mentioned, as Minister for Education she introduced the Victorian certificate of education. At the time it was probably the biggest reform of the era. Standardising the curriculum and judging students on their skills ultimately made schools fairer places.

As the first woman to serve as Premier of Victoria, she governed with determination under endless pressure, and her achievements were many. I came onboard as a young adviser with the government when Joan was Premier. They were pretty tough times. Victoria was in the depths of recession, as was most of the world. Each day you waited for another bad news story to appear in the paper and another event that you had to deal with. Despite all of that, Joan led with incredible determination and drive. Many people have wondered why she took on the job at that point — Labor was certainly not going to win the next election, the coffers were depleted and there were so many challenges ahead. Joan took it on because she was a great believer in doing something and in making life better for people.

Any member who went through those days — I think the Leader of the Government is one of the few here; he was an adviser with the planning minister at that time — drew inspiration from Joan Kirner’s drive and courage and from her great desire to be a force for

change in improving people's lives no matter what the circumstance. That legacy continues with many people.

Social justice, inclusion, equity and fairness are terms that have been associated with Joan Kirner. As Minister for Education there is no doubt she was driven to give every student in our state the opportunity to advance themselves in education on merit, no matter what their background. In fact she believed that every person in Victoria had a right to a better life, regardless of their postcode or where they came from.

There were other sides to Joan. She understood that leadership involved partnerships. She knew that a Labor government had to forge links with business and other communities. She was a passionate advocate and tireless worker for the Committee for Melbourne and other leadership groups. At the time this was a bit unusual for Labor, but she knew that achievements driven through partnerships were much stronger.

We have heard about her many achievements in co-founding EMILY's List. More than 400 women have been supported in their campaigns for office through EMILY'S List, and there are more than 210 elected officials in parliaments around Australia as a direct result of her efforts. She was awarded the Companion of the Order of Australia in 2012 in well-deserved recognition of this work.

Despite her passing there is no doubt that her legacy continues. Thousands of people derive great inspiration from her actions and her teachings. She will be missed by all those who loved and admired her, and I join others in extending my condolences to Joan's husband, Ron; her children, Michael, David and Kate; and their families. Vale, Joan Kirner.

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — I rise to speak on the condolence motion for the late Joan Kirner and in doing so extend my condolences to Mrs Kirner's husband, Ron, her children and their partners, and her grandchildren. I am not going to go over the career of Joan Kirner, because it has been well documented by many people. I would just like to add my own personal observations and anecdotes to this motion.

Joan was a person who only needed to meet you once to know you for life. She had a very rare talent for doing that. Often you can meet people many times and they still do not remember you the next time they meet you. One thing that endeared many people to Joan was her capacity to remember them. I first met Joan in 1997 when I was doing the Fairley Leadership course. She came to speak to us, and from that time on she always knew who I was. She always asked me about

Shepparton and was always willing to talk about our community. Of course Joan was on the other side of politics to me and she knew that from the first time we met, but she was always gracious and always encouraging. She was always willing to support people in their endeavours, not because they were from the Labor side of politics but because they were women or because they cared about getting the best for their community. Joan was a genuinely warm person who was genuinely interested in whatever she was speaking to you about.

As a member of the Victorian Honour Roll of Women selection panel from 2003 to 2008 I got to know Joan, who chaired the panel. The panel met several times annually to decide who would be on the honour roll, and it was wonderful to have the opportunity to get to know Joan better through those meetings.

When I became a minister one of the first people who asked to meet with me was Joan Kirner. She had a genuine interest in early childhood education, in housing and in community building, and we had a long conversation that day. There were many things that we agreed upon, and there were things that we respected each other's views on. I thought my then adviser was going to fall off his chair when Joan lobbied for the reintroduction of technical education in Victoria. After the meeting he said to me, 'Wasn't it her government that abolished the technical schools?'. As we have heard, Joan was always willing to learn from past errors, so I was pleased to hear her acknowledge the value of technical education for many of our young people.

One thing that Joan and I always agreed on was Williamstown. Williamstown was her electorate, and on my mother's side of the family it has been the place of her family home since the mid-1850s. I lived there until we moved to Shepparton when I was aged 15. I went to Robina Scott Kindergarten, which is right across the road from the Williamstown town hall, where Joan's funeral was held. Staff and students at the kindergarten made a sign acknowledging Joan, and it was hung from the fence to be read by people attending her funeral. I also went to primary and secondary schools in Williamstown, and it is the place where I started my political career as a junior councillor.

The Williamstown town hall holds mixed memories for me. I note Ms Pennicuik is smiling because this place also holds memories for her, having grown up in the neighbouring suburb of Newport. It was a place where as children we lined up for our needles, so there are bad memories, but it was also a place of great festivities. I can remember my grandmother taking us upstairs to the

gallery of the town hall many times to watch my parents at balls. It is a place of great celebration for the Williamstown community, and I am glad it was a place of celebration to mark the life of Joan Kirner. Williamstown is still where most of my family reside. We have lived there for seven generations, and although Shepparton is now my home if I were to ever move back to Melbourne, Williamstown would be the only place I would move to. Williamstown, and our love for it, provided a platform for Joan and I to have a cross-party alliance, and I was pleased to have that friendship with her.

Joan Kirner, of course, was our first female Premier, and it was a role she took on when times were tough, as many members have said. It was also a time when the men in her party had run our economy down and she was left holding the baby. Personally I think Joan Kirner saved the Labor Party from obliteration at the 1992 election. This election was devastating enough for the Labor Party, but it would have been much worse if it had not been for the efforts of then Premier Joan Kirner.

Joan Kirner will always be remembered for her warmth and compassion, her undying efforts to promote the cause of women and her commitment to community before her election to Parliament, during her parliamentary career and in her post-parliamentary life. Her passing is a great loss to Victoria.

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I rise today to offer my condolences to the family of former Premier Joan Kirner, who lost her two-year battle with oesophageal cancer last Sunday. To her husband, Ron, her children, Michael, David and Kate, and to her grandchildren, I offer my deepest sympathies for their loss. We are all poorer for having lost Joan.

I also wish to take this opportunity to celebrate her life and achievements and reflect on her lasting legacy in this state. In her maiden speech to the Victorian Parliament on 29 June 1982 Joan swore that all her actions in Parliament would be informed by a strong sense of social justice. This commitment to social justice, to the pursuit of fairness and equality, was something from which Joan never wavered from that day until her last. As the first, but certainly not last female Premier of Victoria, Joan proved that women could rise to positions of power in our community. In *The Women's Power Handbook*, which she co-wrote with Moira Rayner, Joan subscribed to the view:

You have to believe that you can effect change, that you have the ability, the right to try, and the will. You must believe that you are worthy of power.

But this rise was not easy and the difficulties she faced were numerous.

As many members know — and this has already been remarked upon — during her tenure as Premier, Joan was a favourite target of *Herald Sun* cartoonist Jeff Hook. Hook repeatedly portrayed her as a harassed housewife wearing a polka-dot dress, despite the fact that Joan did not own a polka-dot dress at all. I have to admit that unlike Ms Pulford, who has embraced polka dots, the cartoons by Hook are probably the reason I do not own a single polka-dot item in my wardrobe. He put me off polka dots for life! However, later in life Joan and others in the Labor Party went on to embrace polka dots and sought ownership of them. I correct myself: the only polka-dot item of clothing I own is a very faded, worn, probably torn T-shirt with the words 'Spot on Joan' emblazoned on it. At one point those T-shirts were a fundraising vehicle for the Labor Party.

In *The Women's Power Handbook* Joan pressed Hook on why he persisted in depicting her in this way. He responded:

Well Mrs Kirner, I know how to draw Henry Bolte and I know how to draw Bob Hawke, or John Cain or Paul Keating, but I've never had to draw a woman in power before and I don't know how to draw you.

I certainly hope cartoonists have progressed since that time, and I am sure Julia Gillard has some opinions on this particular issue. It was a challenging time for Joan Kirner in terms of how she was portrayed and, unfortunately, ridiculed by so many during her ascension to the significant position as Premier of this state. I believe the cartoons strengthened her resolve later in life to support other women to enter politics and seek positions of power.

Many members have already remarked upon Ms Kirner's significant contributions as a member of Parliament, as a minister and as Premier, and her championing of education, the environment and the people of this state, particularly those living in her beloved western suburbs. However, I want to focus my remarks on her time after Parliament, the time with which I am most familiar.

When Mrs Kirner left Parliament she sought to demonstrate to all Victorian women that it was possible for them to reach their potential. She was instrumental in supporting other women to follow in her footsteps. In 1996 she co-founded and was the inaugural convenor of EMILY's List, an organisation which supports progressive women to be elected to political office and of which I am proud to be a member. EMILY's List seeks to encourage women through fundraising. Its

motto is 'When women support women, women win'. It also offers practical support to women through mentoring, particularly political mentoring. It is a demonstration of just how practical Joan was that she would think to co-author a book entitled *The Women's Power Handbook*. It shows how determined she was to impart to others her wisdom and experience.

Joan was a driving force for the affirmative action rule changes that entrenched the party's affirmative action rule, which required women to be preselected to at least 35 per cent of winnable seats. I had the great good fortune to be at the historic 1994 ALP national conference in Hobart when this rule change was finalised. It was a very joyous occasion for the people present, particularly the women who had campaigned on this issue. A personal highlight for me, then being of a very young age, was being asked by Joan to present flowers to the then Prime Minister, Paul Keating, in gratitude for his support for this particular rule change. That is something I have never forgotten.

Joan showed women the way. A generation of women, particularly Labor women, now owe a great debt to Joan Kirner. Her legacy of championing women in politics is still alive today. I am proud that in this government 44 per cent of the Labor caucus is made up of women. She has instilled in us all the desire to seek greater gender equality. In showing our gratitude, we all owe it to her to do everything in our power to ensure that we achieve 50 per cent representation by women. I am hoping that at the upcoming ALP national conference later this year we can put in place Joan's rule.

Personally, I think it is important that we try to keep Joan's legacy alive. I will do so in my commitment to ensuring that every child has the best possible start in life through early childhood education. In 2012 Joan Kirner delivered the social justice oration — I encourage members to read that very interesting speech — in which she urged governments to invest in education to:

... ensure that no child's educational opportunity, from child care to tertiary placement, is inhibited by their parents' income or the school's location.

I am proud to be part of a government which is committed to making Victoria the education state and to making Joan's vision a reality. In the same speech, Joan also stressed the importance of developing a strong early childhood education system, from birth to school, as a basis for a just and equitable society.

In fact it was Joan's experience with the early childhood education system in this state that propelled

her into politics. Her first foray into public life was as the president of the Croydon North Kindergarten from 1963 to 1966. At the very moving state funeral on Friday we all heard that subsequently when she took her son to school in the Croydon area and found that there was only one teacher for more than 50 children, Joan was propelled into action, organising a petition and staging an ongoing protest outside the education department until the school was granted extra teachers and classrooms.

From there Joan was appointed to the Victorian Federation of State School Parents Clubs, and then in 1975 she was made president of the Australian Council of State School Organisations. Unsurprisingly, given her background, Joan recognised and supported the vital role that parents play in their children's education. I, too, recognise that and am committed to ensuring that all Victorian parents are supported to be the best parents they can be.

As I left last Friday's moving state funeral honouring Joan, I was touched by a sign that I saw attached to a fence of the kindergarten right across from the Williamstown town hall. On that sign I read:

Joan, thank you for your passion and dedication to our education.

That was a very fitting tribute from that local kindergarten to the late Joan Kirner.

Joan's reputation was as a kind and generous person. This has been corroborated by people from all walks of life. It was certainly remarked upon at her state funeral on Friday, as was her remarkable memory and attention to detail, including the fact that once she had met someone she would never forget that person. A story about Joan's compassion was shared with me by my driver, Andrew. Last week he was very moved when he heard that Joan Kirner had passed away, as he had had the great privilege of driving Joan on many occasions. He told me that she was such a popular passenger that the drivers would all queue up to drive Joan. The story he shared with me that says a lot about the compassion Joan had was that when his mother was ill in hospital Joan Kirner, then Premier, insisted that they detour via the hospital to pay her a visit. She showed that she made compassion her official duty.

Every time I saw Joan she would ask after my mother. That was because years ago I had told her the story of my mother's ambition to become a schoolteacher, which she never fulfilled after she left for Australia at the age of 16. Instead, my mother channelled her hopes and ambitions into her daughters. Joan, being a teacher herself, was clearly interested in my mother's story.

Joan taught women to not be shy in the pursuit of power — not for its own sake but in pursuit of her social justice values. I refer again to the Joan Kirner social justice oration, which she delivered in 2012. As I said, I think it is a very worthwhile read. Towards the end of that oration Joan set out her values:

People matter;

women matter as much as men do;

all people deserve to be treated with respect (and treating people with respect gains respect);

people affected by decisions should be part of making them;

equity before the law and in the distribution of resources underpins a successful, socially just society.

The values she articulated say a lot about the late Joan Kirner.

Joan was generous with her time. She was warm, but she was unwavering in the pursuit of what she thought was a fair and just society. She was, above all, a wonderful servant to the state of Victoria and its people. So I say: thank you, Joan Kirner, for all that you gave throughout your life. May you rest in peace and may you never be forgotten.

Ms FITZHERBERT (Southern Metropolitan) — Today we remember a distinguished former member of this place, Joan Kirner. She distinguished herself in many ways. She was a teacher who, as a parent, became a prominent advocate for children, schools and education, leading to Joan being awarded the Companion of the Order of Australia in 1980 for her contribution to community services.

She joined the frontbench shortly after her first election to Parliament in 1982. She went on to hold several portfolios and become a senior cabinet minister. As education minister, Joan oversaw significant reform that endures today. By 1989 she had moved to the other place and was deputy leader. When her party and the government were in crisis in 1990, she stepped forward to claim the position of leader and in doing so became Premier of Victoria, the first woman to do so.

These facts on their own show in a simple way someone whose achievements in politics and government gave her a place in history, but so often it is what people do after politics that is most revealing of who they really are as a person. Joan Kirner retired from Parliament in 1994. She had led her party through a very tough campaign and the loss of government in 1992. She had served as opposition leader for a time. On any view, she had fought the good fight. It would have been quite reasonable for her to simply sit back

and enjoy her retirement, but Joan continued to fight for the causes she believed in. In particular she was an unstinting champion for Labor women and for greater representation of ALP women in Parliament. Through you, President, I say to those on the other side: how lucky you were to have a powerful and vocal advocate like Joan Kirner.

Joan was a public champion for women, in particular through EMILY's List, but I know she also worked for women in a very private way. In recent days many women have spoken about how Joan Kirner was a valued mentor to them. Many others have stories of an unexpected phone call from Joan Kirner that coincided with a challenge or problem. I know that some years ago, after having an opinion piece published in the *Age* on an issue of mutual concern, the current member for Ripon in the other place was pleasantly surprised to receive a supportive call from Joan.

In recent days, since Joan's death last Monday, there has been a lot of talk about how the media and in particular cartoonists responded to Joan's physical appearance and wardrobe. When she was Premier, Joan Kirner was a lightning rod for this kind of comment. I am struck by the good humour and lack of complaint that Joan showed in responding to depictions that were often savage and very personal. Those two qualities — not complaining when to do so would be more than reasonable, and managing to show good humour when someone has a go at you — are, in part, why Joan Kirner is remembered today with respect by many who never shared any of her political views.

In recent years Joan faced a range of major health challenges with the kind of fighting spirit and lack of complaint that Victorians became used to seeing from her. This too was a great credit to her strength of character. Cancer of the oesophagus is a truly horrible disease, and the treatment — radiation and chemo — is not for the faint hearted. I remember being told at the time of Joan's diagnosis that she had laughed at the irony that she had been diagnosed with what she called 'a bloke's cancer'.

I crossed paths with Joan Kirner a number of times over the years. I first met her at a community event in Williamstown at around the time that she left Parliament. I remember being impressed that she moved around the room and personally and very warmly greeted every person at the event. She was no longer the local member. She was not obliged to do so, but she did so anyway. It was the mark of a very good politician and also of a woman who treated others with respect.

More recently I had dealings with Joan through the Royal Women's Hospital. Joan had been instrumental in seeing the dismantlement of the Women's from the Royal Children's Hospital when the two were, for a time, one entity. Joan had the view, as do I, that it was a mistake for the two to be together. They are much better and much stronger when they are apart. Joan kept a close eye on the Women's, something of which I was intensely aware. She knew that great public institutions cannot always be assumed to be self-perpetuating. More often they need vigilance, protection and support, and she offered bucketloads of that.

One of the many women championed and advised by Joan was Dale Fisher, who was CEO of the Women's for many years. When we formally farewelled Dale from the Women's, both she and Joan very much regretted that Joan would be unable to attend. She was due to have chemo the week of the farewell and knew that she would be too sick to be there. I suggested asking Joan if the Women's could visit her at home before the treatment started so that she could record a message for Dale that we could then play at the farewell as a surprise. The staff told me that they really liked the idea but then insisted that I was the person to ring Joan, whom I barely knew, to ask to do the recording. So I duly made the call.

Joan rang back when I was in the middle of cooking dinner for my kids. We talked as I stood in my kitchen with a hungry — and increasingly grumpy — three-year-old literally hanging off my leg. However, Joan, who was clearly quite bored by being stuck at home, was up for a chat about all sorts of things. So I stood in my kitchen surrounded by the dishes and stove and had a chat with Joan with a kid literally hanging off my leg. My daughter started off by whispering, 'I'm hungry; when's dinner? What's for dinner?'. This quickly turned into very loud complaints about dinner being 'yucky' that unfortunately could be heard from the other end of the phone. This is when Joan Kirner laughed at me very loudly down the phone and asked what we were having for dinner, and she then informed me that my daughter was very fussy. I should say for the record that she is not.

That was definitely not my most poised and professional moment as chair of the board of the Royal Women's Hospital, but I knew for sure that Joan Kirner was one of the last people in the world who would judge me for it. I was told that, ever the pro, Joan recorded the message for Dale Fisher in one take.

Dale left the Women's to be CEO of the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, where much later Joan spent the last two weeks of her life. It is surely no

coincidence — and it is so fitting — that when she died, Joan was in the care of a remarkable hospital headed up by a woman whose career she had helped guide. I pay tribute in particular to Joan Kirner's decades of advocacy for women and children, including many years before and many years after her time in Parliament. I offer my condolences to her family and many friends.

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria) — It is an honour to contribute to today's condolence motion. In August 1990 Joan Kirner did not just tap on the glass ceiling, she smashed right through it to become the first, and to date only, female Premier of Victoria. In doing so she showed extraordinary courage and determination. She was after all, as we have heard today, accepting a poison chalice by taking on the leadership at a dark period in Victorian history, when economic recession had done its worst. As I have come to learn, and as is very apparent today, this was typical of Joan — full of grit and never one to shy away from a challenge. She entered the Parliament after a history of community activism and advocacy which shaped the values that she brought with her, including social justice, equity and fairness. It was these same values that she lived, defended and fought for and that were the hallmarks of her time as a backbencher then minister, Deputy Premier and finally Premier.

It was an honour to be at the state funeral on Friday, and I reflect on the comments of Yorta Yorta leader Paul Briggs. He spoke of Joan's strong links with Indigenous Australians and of Joan being troubled by the poverty and injustice being faced in her community. He reflected on the fact that it was the 'her' that is important, because she did not see herself as separate to that community. I am a huge fan of Paul Briggs and all he has done for Aboriginal Victorians, especially in Shepparton via the Rumbalara Football and Netball Club. I am an enthusiastic sponsor of this club, and I am even more proud to be involved when I know that Joan Kirner was so supportive of everything that Rumbalara is doing and trying to achieve.

History has now shown that despite taking over in the midst of an economic maelstrom, Joan's time at the top did see the beginnings of a move out of the recession, although Labor's defeat at the election was all but inevitable. She weathered many a storm, none more so than the personal criticism often directed towards her — the kinds of things almost exclusively directed at women. As Ms Fitzherbert has also reflected, she responded with a wit, charm and resilience that remains an excellent example to us in this age of social media and intense scrutiny. In fact she turned that personal criticism on its head.

Joan showed her brilliant sense of humour and her somewhat questionable vocal abilities when she appeared on the then widely watched *D-Generation* in leather to give Joan Jett's *I Love Rock 'n' Roll* an absolute hammering, such as it has probably not received since. It was one of those rare moments when politicians cease to take themselves too seriously and remind us that they too are people. I think Joan would have liked the crowd participation in the singing of *I Am Woman* on Friday; contrary to the experience of Mr Jennings, I was sitting next to the member for Wendouree in the other house, Ms Knight, who was very loud and knew every word. It was powerfully moving.

After such a tumultuous time amid the rough and tumble of Spring Street, one would have understood if Joan had decided to resort to a quiet life out of the public eye. But as we have heard, she was far from done; she still had much to do and no plans to stop. When she took over in 1994 as Victorian ALP president she implemented a reform to entrench Labor's affirmative action rule, the legacy of which was obvious in the election of November last year.

Joan's instigation of that monumental change and her continued advocacy and ongoing support as a founding member of EMILY's List — encouraging progressive Labor women to embrace the political process and actively engage and participate in it — has been life changing for many of us who stand here in this place today. I am now the Victorian co-convenor for EMILY's List, and on a personal level I thank Joan and her founding sisters for what is a great inspiration and support for women seeking to be involved in the political system. This is part of the legacy that Joan has left to the Labor Party and for which it is so much the better.

A former member for Northern Victoria Region, and a woman I have immense respect for, Candy Broad, spoke on Friday of her experiences of knowing Joan Kirner. Candy was a close friend and former chief of staff to Joan, and confirmed that Joan 'was tireless in promoting women and community whenever, and wherever, she could'. Candy also said:

She could be stubborn, wilful and downright unreasonable in her pursuit of these goals, but we are all better off because of that determination.

During a personal reflection at Joan's funeral, Hutch Hussein summed up what Joan meant to so many when she said:

She has not just given us wings, but taught us how to fly and along the way challenged and supported us to stretch those wings.

Hutch is a close friend of the Kirners, and her contribution on Friday was moving. She was amazing; she did such a great job in presenting her message when her heart was clearly breaking. She has lost what she described as a surrogate mother, whom she has memorialised by giving the middle name 'Kirner' to her son Eamon, who was born just 18 hours after Joan passed.

I know during last year's election Joan made time to impart her wisdom and advice to many a candidate. I also know she donated to many women's campaigns, even if they were unlikely to win their seats. They were still out there taking her lead and having a go, and because of her legacy, so many more will do the same. To Ron and family I extend my condolences. While we have lost an icon of the labour movement, you have lost a piece of your heart and your lives. Please know how grateful we are that we got to share in her. Vale and rest in peace, the very Honourable Joan Kirner.

Mr BOURMAN (Eastern Victoria) — The Shooters and Fishers Party wishes to associate itself with this motion. In particular we send our best wishes and condolences to Joan Kirner's family and friends.

Ms SHING (Eastern Victoria) — I have listened with a great deal of sentiment and nostalgia to the contributions of those around the chamber this afternoon. The things that have united this house and indeed united the Victorian community in relation to the contribution of Joan Kirner come down in my mind to four key things: authenticity, fearlessness, focus and warmth. I would like to touch on those attributes, which Ms Kirner had in spades and which she made available to those around her, irrespective of from which end of the political spectrum they hailed, including those in the community more broadly who perhaps were not able to avail themselves of the same tenacity in lobbying for improved outcomes and reduction of disadvantage across Victorian communities.

I first had cause to become very interested in Joan Kirner and her work when I was an angry adolescent. It was during this time, whilst trying to hone my own argumentative style and work out how best to prosecute a point of view, that I came across the daily deluge of negative media attention being given to Ms Kirner when she occupied the position of Premier. It was relentless. It was sleet and hail; it was slings and arrows; it was a deluge of complete and utter insult designed to undermine, to set up obstacles, to trip. In the midst of it all Joan Kirner kept walking, very clear in her focus and in what she wanted to achieve, knowing full well who she was and what her goals were.

She was, without fear or favour, honest in her dealings with people. She was honest in her dealings with parliamentary colleagues, she was honest in her dealings with the media and she was honest in her dealings with people who looked to her for counsel, for guidance, for wisdom and for that humour for which she was famous. She was absolutely fearless when prosecuting her point of view. She taught me and countless women like me so much about the nature of holding a view, understanding a view and not being afraid to prosecute that view and to push it — to push it using the right types of information. Being well equipped, being well resourced and having knowledge on her side was a complete asset to her character in the way she operated at a parliamentary level and in public.

As an angry adolescent I remember facing a dinner party guest at my family home who had labelled Ms Kirner with all the slings and arrows that the media had thrown in her direction. He labelled her all of the things the media had attempted to make stick, and I remember calling him on it. He was an ageing gentleman of 70-plus years. He was set in his ways, and he was not about to be turned upon by a relative upstart — the angry adolescent that I was at the time — and told that women deserve more respect. It got to the point where I was invited to leave the table to prevent any further chaos resulting from the conversation that I had started and would not let go of.

That was the kind of tenacity that Ms Kirner taught me through her conduct and her actions. It is not acceptable to stand by and allow something that you perceive to be an injustice to go on without question, without scrutiny or without calling it what it is. Joan Kirner was to so many the catalyst for finding a voice. Many of those people who found a voice because of her, whether through education or involvement in politics, were women. Women received the great benefit of the first footprints she trod through the political landscape of Victoria's history as a woman.

It is easy to forget that she blazed a trail through this landscape that had otherwise been dominated by tradition and convention. We were steadily emerging from the idea that women had yet to earn their stripes in terms of having a seat at the table of decision-making, having a seat at the parliamentary table and having a seat other than at a breakfast table where they could talk about domestic affairs and nothing else. We still see this in large part across the political spectrum. We still see leaders talking about ironing boards and women having 'the vapours'. We still see the feminisation of something being perceived as a weakness. Joan Kirner started us on a path that made absolutely sure women could find their voices, knowing that someone had been

there to tread those first tracks through the landscape in Victoria and make a difference.

Joan's focus was extraordinary. Her character and strength were writ large in her actions — to create and to reform access to education and to create better opportunities for children irrespective of the economic and social circumstances of their families. These things are intergenerational legacies. They will mean that thousands of Victorians will continue to receive the benefit of what she imparted, and they will provide that same benefit to their families, their children and to their children's children. Joan's is a very big family as a result of this. Joan was, as many speakers have indicated, lent to us to make a difference, and now we see the ricocheted ripple effect. We see the snowball effect and the enormous tsunami of goodwill, of insight and tenacity that Joan created and that continues to make positive change in our communities.

Joan was warm and encouraging. She was self-deprecating and had an amazing sense of humour, but even more important than that was her authenticity in terms of telling women like me that we could go ahead and find our voices and be empowered, that we could be involved politically without fear of coming across the same sorts of slings and arrows that she came across without knowing what to do with them.

There is a quote that I would like to place on the record that many people here would have seen over the past weeks. Ms Kirner said:

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

Thanks to Joan Kirner there are many people who are not prepared to stay out of it, who are not prepared to allow the status quo to be entrenched. Thanks to Joan Kirner and her work, and the loan that we had of her for her life, there are thousands of people who will have their voices heard across a range of issues, voices that will go on to reduce and identify disadvantage, to make the lives of Victorians better and to share in the equity of a good, functioning community and society as a result. Thank you, Joan Kirner, for all that you gave me. Vale, Joan Kirner.

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) — I will speak briefly to the condolence motion and pay my respects to Joan Kirner. While it is a sad day, I have to say that I have so enjoyed listening to all the stories about this most glorious Joan. She blazed a trail for so many women in politics and outside of it. While I knew

a lot of it, I have learnt so much more today, listening to the debate on the motions in both houses. Her work on EMILY's List has seen a swag of women enter Parliament. As Ms Wooldridge has said, her work helped all women in politics, regardless of their political persuasion. It has changed this place. Victoria as a state is better off for that, and certainly society is better off for what she did for gender equality.

When I started my career as a political lobbyist in 1992, Joan Kirner was the Premier of Victoria, Carmen Lawrence was the Premier of Western Australia and Rosemary Follett was the Chief Minister of the Australian Capital Territory. It seemed at that time that we were absolutely smashing that glass ceiling. I do not think we completely shattered it, but we have certainly come a long way with the work of Ms Kirner, Ms Lawrence and Ms Follett. Then I look around this room and see the wonderful talented women here, and I wonder whether the next female Premier of Victoria will come from this house again, as Ms Kirner did.

I did not get to meet Ms Kirner personally, although I attended many of the same events as her. As Ms Wooldridge said, seeing those queues at the Victorian Honour Roll of Women luncheon showed what an incredible star she was. It was quite awesome to see those extraordinary people scrambling to pay their respects to her.

I wrote to her a number of times. On the weekend I was trying to find some of those letters, but it was a long time ago and a long time before email. However, I do remember writing to her, not surprisingly, about X-rated films and their lack of availability in Victoria. I received a very tongue-in-cheek letter back from her, basically directing me to a large blue tent where there were a large number of adult films being sold. She said that the signs outside were boasting an inordinate array of subjects. She did not mention whether she had been in the blue tent or not, but she certainly seemed to know a lot about it, from my memory of that letter.

In listening to the stories today and also having the opportunity to read a lot more about her work, and particularly when she was the first woman to be elected as president of the Australian Council of State School Organisations in 1975, I can see that once she got her teeth stuck into an issue, she did not let go until she could effect change, and boy did she effect change in the education sector. Her legacy lives on in my region in the number of great schools I have visited in the short time I have had so far in this house. I now have a much greater appreciation of the work Joan Kirner did to make them the great schools they are.

In saying that, I understand from my reading that she was a collaborator in many things. Today I hear that, yes, she was a collaborator, but she was a very bossy one according to Ms Hartland and Ms Pulford.

Obviously it was Joan's work on reproductive rights that particularly inspired me. Hearing that she fought for this for 20 years makes me even more vigilant in relation to maintaining what she enabled us to achieve. It also reminds me that maybe I need to learn a little bit about patience.

I was thinking about this, and Mr Jennings mentioned this: I have always been annoyed by Joan Kirner's portrait. It was something about looking at all the men with their arms folded or in these very powerful positions, and Joan Kirner was much more open. As I heard the Minister for Health, Ms Hennessy, mention, she has a come-hither look in that portrait. I think I now have a much greater understanding of that portrait and who the woman reflected in that portrait was. I now like that portrait a lot more. I looked at it just before I came back in to the chamber today; I like it very much.

Some members have mentioned the rendition of Joan Jett's *I Love Rock 'n' Roll*. That was a very personal experience for me, because it was the first time I had seen someone on television who had the same singing voice as I did! I think that was absolutely inspiring.

I would like to offer my condolences to Joan's husband, Ron Kirner; her children and extended family; and all those who have come to know, love and adore her.

Debate interrupted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The PRESIDENT — Order! I wish to acknowledge Mr Ron Wells, a former member of this place, who is in the gallery today.

CONDOLENCES

Hon. Joan Elizabeth Kirner, AC

Debate resumed.

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — It is a great privilege to pay tribute to Joan Kirner today. I was very sorry to be unable to attend her funeral last week, but I was able to listen to the broadcast on the ABC. I thank the ABC for that. I would like to assure the Leader of the Government in relation to the remarks he made about singing at the funeral that I did sing very loudly to *I Am Woman* and also to one little song by Gillian Welch, which was also played at the funeral.

I grew up in Newport, and I was living in Williamstown when Joan was elected to Melbourne West Province. By 1988, when she was elected as the member for Williamstown, I was living outside the electorate, but I still had family living there and visited weekly if not more often. I followed Joan's career closely not only because of geography but because she was a force of nature and a rarity in state politics as we knew it then.

Joan liked to shake things up, and I admired that. Joan had great ideas — even brilliant ideas, as Mr Drum said. One of her best and most far-sighted ideas was pioneering Landcare. Landcare was launched in 1986 by Joan Kirner and Heather Mitchell, the then president of the Victorian Farmers Federation. By the end of 1986 there were about 10 Landcare groups in Victoria, and by 1989 Landcare had been launched as a national program. Today there are upwards of 5000 groups across the country. Landcare is revolutionary in its approach, and the model has withstood the test of time.

At the first Landcare conference in 1988 there were already 150 landholders involved, and it is now international. There are not many people who can point to a movement they started which is now an international movement — and a lasting movement that is having great effects in caring for the land and the flora and fauna of our land. I took a close interest in Landcare because my cousin Marion Pennicuik was a state Landcare coordinator, and I know she was very proud to work on that program and was truly inspired by Joan.

Joan was a champion of public education, as so many people have already outlined. That is an area that is also dear to my heart. She introduced the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988, which urgently needs a recommitment. Perhaps the current government could embark upon that in her honour, in view of the many species at risk of extinction in Victoria.

Joan stood up for women and women's issues, which has also been so well articulated by speakers today, particularly Ms Hartland, Ms Wooldridge, Ms Pulford, Ms Mikakos, Ms Shing, Ms Lovell and Ms Patten. Joan mentored many women, and she was very influential in changing the way in which the community saw women's issues.

I was disappointed by the introduction of poker machines to Victoria. In my early twenties, while on a working holiday around Australia, I spent some time working at the North Ryde RSL, which was full of poker machines. I saw for myself — and I think many Victorians did not understand at the time — the damage

that was being done to people who were attending that RSL every day, day after day, playing the poker machines and losing lots of money. I was disappointed by that, but we know that Joan later said she regretted that decision.

Joan was a wonderful woman and a wonderful person. I admired her for her courage, her determination, her dignity, her integrity, her humour, her generosity, her boundless energy and her achievements in Parliament and in public life. My admiration for Joan increased over the past decade as she suffered with health issues but still pursued all of the causes that she believed in. She was inspirational on so many levels.

It is very clear from listening today to what people have said about Joan, both in this and the other chamber, that she is regarded with great respect across the political spectrum. When I think about the events I went to and the queues of people lining up to meet Joan, it is clear that the community had great affection for her. People felt as though they knew her, even if they had never met her before or were just meeting her for the first time. That was the sort of effect Joan Kirner had on people, and many speakers today have articulated her great qualities — some of which were innate and with which she was born and others which I know she cultivated.

I would like to extend my condolences to her parliamentary colleagues, both past and present, who I know will miss her very much, and to her loved and loving family and friends.

Mr DALIDAKIS (Southern Metropolitan) — Joan Kirner was a pioneer. My two daughters, Zoe and Asha, are of a relatively young age and will be blissfully unaware of the pathway that Joan Kirner has forged for both of them. My eldest daughter is very cognisant of the work that Julia Gillard has done on behalf of women, but we need to go further back in the labour movement to Joan Kirner and the work that she has done. I look forward as my daughters grow older to the opportunities that will be afforded to them, both in the context of the broader society but also potentially within the labour movement, which is due in no small way — in nearly every way — to the pathway that Joan Kirner pushed through.

Such is the circle of life that the Labor family has had a pretty tough 12 months. The passing of Gough Whitlam, the passing of Lynne Kosky and now the passing of Joan Kirner have left a void in our broader life that cannot be filled. They were, and will remain, three greats of the labour political movement because

they all forged very different roles and provided great opportunities for all of us, especially Joan.

Many in this chamber and outside would be aware of my forestry background and the three and a half years I spent as the chief executive officer of the Victorian Association of Forest Industries. But many people would not be aware that Joan Kirner was widely regarded in the industry as the best Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands that the forest industry ever saw or ever had. It was because of her ability to work with conservationists, sawmillers and forestry scientists throughout the industry that they had the understanding that in order to be successful they had to work together.

It is no surprise that in nearly every contribution we have heard thus far it has been widely acknowledged that Joan had the ability to bring people together and forge a pathway, which is the great trail that Joan has left us with. Of course in forestry that is no small feat. It can be, as we have seen at times in this chamber and outside the chamber, an issue that is both passionate and divisive, and yet Joan was able to forge a pathway whereby she brought people together. Everywhere I went I was well reminded that as a former Labor staffer and proud member of the Labor Party I had big shoes to fill in replicating anything that Joan had done throughout the industry.

To Ron and his family who survive Joan, I pass on my deepest sympathies and condolences. In the tradition of both my Greek and Jewish backgrounds, I wish them a long life, and I wish Joan's friends a long life as well. In concluding my contribution in honour of Joan Kirner, I note that on hearing of her passing I made the following comment: Joan was a stalwart, a pioneer and a wonderful person. Victoria was better off for knowing her, and now Victoria is poorer for her passing. That is probably the best way to end this contribution. May she rest in peace.

The PRESIDENT — Order! It occurs to me that often as politicians we are like the kid at the birthday party who gets to blow out the candles after everyone else has done all the hard work in baking the cake, presenting it and putting it on the table. We cannot say that about Joan Kirner, because Joan Kirner was not simply a person who came along and trumpeted out what other people had created in terms of policy, thought and strategies to take Victoria forward. Joan Kirner was an architect of much of that work. She was not simply the voice that communicated it but one of the key people in terms of developing that policy that would take us forward, and especially in those areas which she held most dear, which included some of the

women's issues and social issues that have been touched upon by speakers today. Those issues certainly included education and they certainly included Aboriginal rights. They touched on health, they touched on transport and of course they touched on conservation. Joan Kirner was a remarkable woman.

I take issue with Ms Pulford, because as I understand it from my discussions with Mrs Kirner she actually did have a polka dot dress, but she wore it on simply one occasion. She was absolutely amazed that the image then stuck with her forever. I understand she wore it to the races, but in any event I am pretty sure that she had one polka dot dress that she wore on one occasion and the image stuck with her forever, captured in the way those cartoonists so cruelly do.

One of the things that was touched upon at the funeral last Friday was that Joan Kirner was only in Parliament because of a very narrow preselection win. If I am right, I think it was a single vote that got her across the line for preselection to come into this place and into this house. Boy, do we owe that one person who voted for her and ensured that she got across the line. No doubt it was one wavering person who had the fortitude — because I understand it was a contentious preselection, as so many Labor Party preselections appear to be — to ensure that Joan Kirner came to this place. And what a visionary that person was. That person gave us a woman of great strength, great courage, great ability, great tenacity and great intellect. Joan Kirner was a woman who by any measure was an outstanding Victorian.

It is interesting to note that one of the reasons for the margin perhaps not being greater at that preselection was that Joan Kirner did not come from one of the traditional channels that now bring people to Parliament, as indeed they did then. She was a community activist rather than a union person. She obviously had associations with the union movement, particularly through her work in state schools and her background in education, but she was a community activist, and a very good one and a very resolute one. She came to this place as somebody who had a great understanding of the community, of the power of the community, of the needs of the community and of the possibilities of the community. In that sense she was a remarkable advocate for that community.

Joan Kirner was determined, she was indefatigable, she was constructive, she was visionary and she was disarming, as some members have touched on in their various comments today. There was a mischievousness about her. Her sense of humour was almost wicked. She would say something and have a bit of a giggle, or

she would turn up her eyebrows. She just had a whimsical approach that was part of her disarming manner.

I will refer to some comments Joan Kirner made in a little while in a slightly different context, but I reflect on a video that she made in which she talked about her time as Premier and as a member of Parliament. She said that the Cain and Kirner governments ought to be recognised for a number of social advancements they made possible. There is the work they undertook in some social policy areas, and of course her interest in those areas continued in the years after she left Parliament. That work has been referred to in speeches today.

Ms Kirner acknowledged that the Cain and Kirner governments would never be regarded highly for their economic credentials, but she pointed out that from her perspective, and from the perspective of most Labor Party people at that time, they were caught in the perfect storm of the recession, high interest rates and all sorts of other difficulties, including rising unemployment. She acknowledged that that was an area where they had not been perceived well and that they would probably have that cross to bear into the future. However, she was certainly proud of the social achievements of the Cain and Kirner governments, and she can take great credit for driving many of those achievements at that time.

Obviously Ms Kirner was an outstanding mentor to so many people, and we should not be surprised that she was a co-founder of EMILY's List. She took it upon herself to encourage people, empower people and inspire people. I am not sure that she always saw that she was inspiring, but I think she always knew she was empowering. She went out of her way to engage with people, provide them with encouragement and provide them with guidance. As we heard during the funeral service, sometimes she did this with a motherly approach.

Joan Kirner was the boss. She knew what ought to happen and the way in which it all ought to be done. She did things with a great deal of wisdom. I am sure she did not offend anybody in the way she put matters to them; she simply ensured that they burnt the midnight oil. Under her leadership everyone was encouraged to work considerably harder. I said earlier that she was indefatigable. That is also something that came out during the funeral service the other day. We heard about her work ethic in her time as a community activist, certainly when she was in Parliament as a member of this place and then the other place, and when she rose to the office of Premier, as the first

woman Premier of the state. What a great honour that is. That is a mantle she will hold forever.

Even after Ms Kirner left this Parliament she continued to do much work to mentor people, inspire people and empower people, and she continued that right up until her last days. One of the people who spoke at her funeral, Paul Briggs, said that he had gone in to see how she was. He said that as he left the hospital he reflected on how most of the conversation consisted of Joan Kirner quizzing him on whether he was looking after himself, whether he was doing the right thing, how he was going and so forth. That was the woman.

In terms of her encouragement of women, she has left an outstanding legacy. I am sure that many women in this place have taken much from Joan Kirner's leadership and trailblazing. That has also been reflected upon in this place today.

There is one other thing I would like to share. It is a personal story, and I have told it to a few people. It has been remarked upon how once you had met Joan Kirner, she knew you for life. She had an extraordinary capacity to remember people. Some years ago, in 1992, I was at the harvest festival in Werribee. Joan Kirner floated by with an entourage, and she stopped in her tracks, turned around and said, 'You're out of your territory, aren't you?'. I said, 'Yes'. She said, 'Nunawading, isn't it?'. I said, 'Yes'. 'Bruce', she said.

I am not bad at remembering faces, sometimes I get by with names, but it can be difficult when you see people totally out of context. It was an extraordinary ability; she knew people, she remembered them and she engaged with them. She was remarkable in that sense, and that stood her in very good stead, as has been reflected upon. She remembered not just the people but their circumstances, the things that were important to them and the things that they were doing. It is such a significant ability to have, and she used it so well. It was at the core of much of the fine leadership she showed.

I conclude by referring to a couple of songs from the funeral service. I am not particularly good at *I Am Woman*, for reasons that might be obvious to most, but the song that impressed me most is a song I have always loved. There is no doubt that when I hear it in the future I will reflect on Joan Kirner, and I am sure I will hear it again many times. It is one of the fine anthems of a songwriter of this country, Paul Kelly — *From Little Things Big Things Grow*. It was played at the end of the funeral, and I think some of the seeds that Joan Kirner planted in her contribution and public

service have certainly grown and will continue to grow. That is her legacy.

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

The PRESIDENT — Order! I will indicate very quickly that in Queen's Hall we have a condolence book for Mrs Kirner, which will be passed on to her family, so I encourage members to sign that condolence book. If members have guests in the place this week, perhaps they might mention the book to them because I am sure many people would like to contribute to that book.

We also have a condolence book there for the people who were killed and those who have faced all of the tragedy that has surrounded the recent earthquake in Nepal. Depending on the message, members should please make sure they are writing in the right book. Both of those condolence books are in Queen's Hall.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — By leave, I move:

That as a further mark of respect to the memory of the late Honourable Joan Elizabeth Kirner, AC, the house adjourn until tomorrow.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned 4.31 p.m.