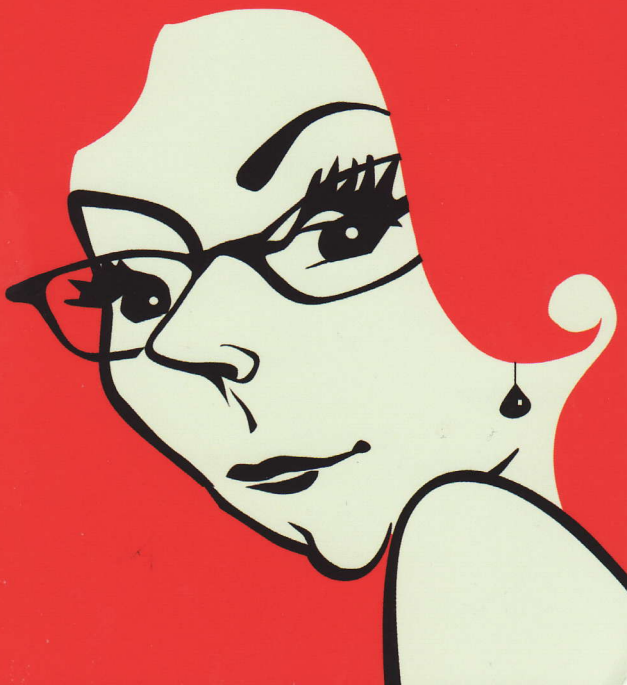
BEWITCHED & BEDEVILLED

WOMEN WRITE THE GILLARD YEARS

EDITED BY **SAMANTHA TRENOWETH**

TANYA PLIBERSEK
JANE CARO
EVA COX
CLEMENTINE FORD
KATHY LETTE
CHLOE HOOPER
HELEN RAZER
SHAKIRA HUSSEIN
EMILY MAGUIRE
TRACEY SPICER
RUTH HESSEY
CATHARINE LUMBY
HELEN PRINGLE
CAROL JOHNSON
CLAIRE HARVEY
& SPEECHES FROM
ANNE SUMMERS
and JULIA GILLARD



***Bewitched and Bedevilled: Women Write the Gillard Years* is a provocative analysis of Australian attitudes towards the nation's first female Prime Minister.**

A selection of Australia's most influential, entertaining and controversial female voices examine the country's reaction to Julia Gillard and debate the successes and failures of her prime ministership.

Bewitched and Bedevilled investigates Gillard's position at the receiving end of a barrage of sexism and misogyny; questions why she was so vehemently attacked; and discusses the role this played in her ultimate undoing. *Bewitched and Bedevilled* also uncovers the impacts (reinvigorating, divisive, disturbing) of the Gillard years on feminism, on the Australian community and on our image abroad.

Packed with wit, ire and incisive comment, this is a compelling anthology for all those who were intrigued or outraged during Julia Gillard's tenure as Prime Minister.

hardie grant books

POLITICS

ISBN 978-174270693-1

Published in 2013 by Hardie Grant Books

Hardie Grant Books (Australia)
Ground Floor, Building 1
658 Church Street
Richmond, Victoria 3121
www.hardiegrant.com.au

Hardie Grant Books (UK)
Dudley House, North Suite
34–35 Southampton Street
London WC2E 7HF
www.hardiegrant.co.uk

A Cataloguing-in-Publication entry is available from the catalogue of the National Library of Australia at www.nla.gov.au
Bewitched and Bedevilled: Women write the Gillard years
ISBN 978 1 74270 693 1

Cover and text design by Josh Durham/Design by Committee
Typeset in Bembo 12/15pt by Cannon Typesetting
Colour reproduction by Splitting Image Colour Studio
Printed and bound in Australia by Griffin Press

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: THE QUEEN'S KNICKERS AND OTHER STORIES

Samantha Trenoweth

It was a perfect blue-sky day in February 1954. The sun beat down like a hammer and a hot wind blew in from the grasslands out west. The royal plane had landed, the stairs were in place and photographers jostled, cameras aloft. They were waiting for the young queen—pretty, newly married, on her first tour of the Commonwealth. The nation adored her. Her every public moment was captured on newsreel and in print.

Elizabeth II emerged from the cabin, fresh as a rosebud and flawless: flared chiffon sundress, petite hat, triple-string pearls, matching bag and gloves and peep-toe heels. But as she stepped onto the tarmac, the hem of her frock was caught by a wily puff of outback wind and blown waist high. There was an audible intake of breath—for there, for the world to see, were the monarch's knickers. They were visible perhaps for a second or three but, in those seconds, every photographer, with shutter poised, weighed fame and fortune and a worldwide newswire hit against courtesy and responsibility.

My father, a photographer for the *Sun* newspaper, was covering the tour. 'If one shutter had blinked, they'd all have gone off,' he said, 'but they didn't.'

The Queen caught her errant skirt with grace, photographers exhaled, shutters resumed their clatter and the carnival moved on. But I ask you, if the Queen had suffered a similar misadventure last week, what are the chances that there would be anyone left, in the industrialised world, who hadn't sighted the royal Cottontails?

That story of my dad's has come to mind, time and again, in recent years, in part because, as I grow older, I hanker for a world in which the interface between personal and public life is managed with even a suggestion of dignity or respect, and the political conversation is more than a soap opera broadcast at deafening decibels. Of course, I don't really believe that world existed in Bob Menzies's Cold War crazy Australia in 1954, but I hang onto the hints of it. Yes, there was an excess of sniffing around for communists under mattresses, but the political debate was at least somewhat focused on political issues, rather than fruit bowls or cleavages or molluscs or knitted toys or a grab bag of 'woman as harridan' archetypes.

For me, the Gillard years were characterised by mounting fury—largely with the media. Not principally with nutcase, right-wing commentators, of whom I had very low expectations to begin with, but with your ordinary, workaday news editors and press gallery journalists who, it seemed to me, couldn't fail to see the forces ranged against the Gillard Government but obstinately refused to out their game.

The barrage was constant. A salvo was fired at the government by Alan Jones, the Rudd faction deployed chemical weapons in the bunker, the Opposition lobbed the odd shell from across the chamber but really they didn't have to do much because the Murdoch press and the tiny band of ALP usurpers had the role of opposition covered. Through sheer will, the government kept churning out legislation, ticking off solid reforms (in health, education, taxation, housing, the environment) but very little of this was reported. That Gillard negotiated an effective government out of a collection of Labor stalwarts, disgruntled plotters and disparate independents was perhaps her finest achievement.

'Don't write crap,' Julia Gillard advised a gathering at the National Press Club. 'It can't be that hard. And, when you have written complete crap, I think you should correct it … Now you would say it's not your job to change minds about a government policy, and that's true, but I think it is your job to get information to people that's accurate and rigorous.'

For a whole swag of reasons, journalistic rigour was a rare commodity during the Gillard years. Oh, I've heard the excuses. The media is in flux and mainstream outlets are struggling to survive. Journalists are fighting tooth and nail to retain their jobs in a diminishing pool and learning to deal with a 24/7 social media cycle. Subeditors and fact-checkers have largely been made redundant. There is a palpable sense of desperation at the regular Media and Arts Alliance drinks (thank God they're not held on a rooftop bar). But does any of this excuse the shoddy way in which the Gillard years were reported?

'This is not *Celebrity Big Brother*,' Gillard told a pack of news crews baying for prime ministerial blood, but large

tracts of the media have dealt with the online revolution by catering to the gutter and applying a reality-TV model to news reporting.

Reality TV is not, in fact, a simple matter of recording reality. Reality-TV producers are in the business of manufacturing conflict, engineering dissent and heartbreak and glory, editing out the tediously precise weighing and measuring of ingredients but being sure to capture the moment when the soufflé hits the floor.

For three years, every political journalist in the Canberra press gallery surely knew that Kevin Rudd was actively undermining the government with an eye to reclaiming the top job. But they must also have known that he didn't have the numbers, couldn't possibly challenge for the leadership, was roundly despised by the vast majority of his colleagues. So, really, there was no story. Or if there was, it was of a bitter little man, sitting in his office with Thérèse and his six besties, plotting an impossible revenge.

What hauled that scenario out of the realms of impossibility was the complicity of the media. People love a feud, they love a killing, they love a public hanging. Those stories receive infinitely more internet traffic than, say, budget analysis or the intricacies of education reform. So, editors commissioned the soap opera, beat up a leadership skirmish from a mirage, painted a picture of parliamentary pandemonium. And they repeated it so regularly that people started to believe it.

It was madness. It was as if the press gallery, swinging voters—even the odd, now estranged, member of my extended family—had drunk the Kool-Aid that had been so perniciously provided by Kevin Rudd/Alan Jones/Tony Abbott/Andrew Bolt/Larry Pickering and co. (An alliance

deserving of a Stephen King novel.) But hell, the Kool-Aid was there, it was convenient and it quenched a thirst for a witch burning or a public flaying that we hadn't even recognised we had.

It also played to the insecurities of a bunch of blokes (and some of their good ladies) who had been locked in their sheds since 1975. A woman prime minister? Well, who'd have bloody thought? While not actively calling for witch burning, they felt quietly vindicated by it. If pressed, they might have conceded to a yearning for simpler days, when men steered family and country and women quieted unwanted ambition with a shandy in the ladies' lounge.

The Kool-Aid had the effect, too, of dimming comprehension of the political process. Gillard was dogged by the lamentation: '... but I voted for Kevin.' No wonder she wanted to overhaul education. I imagine her watching a parade of aggrieved Aussies on the nightly current affairs, and willing someone to take a moment to explain the Westminster System. 'No,' I hear her sob into her knitting, 'the good "burghers" of Griffith voted for Kevin. You voted for your own local MP, and the Labor leader was selected from among those representatives by the caucus.' (Or that was the case until recently.) No one hears her, of course. Australians have watched so much American television that they phone 911 in an emergency and are convinced that they elect a president.

However, a cultural diet of *The West Wing* and *Law and Order* is not entirely to blame. Labor manufactured the glamour that surrounded Rudd. His government was swept to power in a presidential-style, personality-driven campaign, and voters were justifiably confounded when the man they had been taught to trust (the man who delivered them from

the dark ages of the Howard Government, apologised to the stolen generations and signed Kyoto faster that you could say 'selfie') received a first semester report card that painted him as bossy and belligerent.

And as this mad circus played itself out in the daily news, on talkback radio, on fatuous Facebook pages and sometimes even in my own lounge room, I waited for the cavalry to come. I waited and I waited.

Anne Summers galloped over the hill at the first whiff of trouble, of course, eyes aflame, sword drawn, banner unfurled. I looked behind her. Surely she was leading a Trojan horse stuffed full of former writers for *Ms.* magazine and the staff of Keating's Office for the Status of Women. No. Nothing. At least nothing with enough artillery to make a difference. Where were they? What had silenced the brave women of the left?

Some of them, like me, were waiting, ever hopeful that the cavalry was just a clarion call away. Others, like Kerry-Anne Walsh and the magnificently anarchic Destroy the Joint crew, were typing furiously, but not quite furiously enough. A great many had their fighting spirit quelled by two or three crushing disappointments: Gillard's failure to champion gay marriage, the race-to-the-bottom on asylum-seeker policy, and the selling out of single parents. Then there was the whole, maddening when-is-a-tax-not-a-tax debacle: a policy victory but a marketing failure. If it's a tax that makes for fewer kids on Ventolin and prevents the Bureau of Meteorology from getting out the Pantone book and devising another new colour for the temperature map this summer, let's just pay it! How was it not possible to claim some moral higher ground on this one?

These were the issues that were raised, over and again, when I mustered this small brigade of writers. 'History will be fairer to the Gillard Government,' I had been telling myself (and anyone else who would listen) for months. I am not a political journalist (perhaps this is already evident) but I am a journalist with an interest in both history and politics and it seemed clear to me that women should begin writing this moment in history now. I wanted to collect the opinions of women because so much of the early commentary on the Gillard Government had been written by men and because women had, by and large, been much more directly and emotionally affected by the slant of that commentary and by Gillard's prime ministership.

I imagined (optimist that I am) that I would approach a cross-section of women, that they would fall into formation, and a passionate defence of the then prime minister would be off to the printer before you could say 'moving forward'. But the editorial process proved much more complex and interesting than that.

This book was conceived and largely executed in the final months of the Gillard Government, and it reflects the whole palette of emotions that this group of insightful, brilliant, provocative women navigated as they watched its demise. One watched from as far away as England, another from as near as the Front Bench. It was difficult to watch from anywhere. These women are novelists, historians, journalists, politicians, true believers and recalcitrants. None of them watched the final months, I think, without that sense of pending, unavoidable injustice that feels like a stone in the stomach or, as Gillard herself said, a fist to the gut.

Emily Maguire has written a searingly personal essay, which weaves together the everyday misogyny she has encountered in her own life and the worst of Julia Gillard's treatment by the public and the press. The historian Carol Johnson has approached her subject with objectivity and academic rigour, but the result is no less gripping for that. Reasoned analyses of the Gillard Government's truckloads of legislation were so thin on the ground while they were in office that much of this reads as revelation.

Former health minister Tanya Plibersek and award-winning journalist Chloe Hooper offer moving insights into the Real Julia Gillard and the inner workings of cabinet. Helen Razer observes the impacts of Gillard's rise and fall on voters (and gardens and wine drinkers) in the electorate of Hotham, while Shakira Hussein and Ruth Hessey reflect on the Gillard years in an international, multicultural and an archetypal context.

Tanya Plibersek laughs at the notion that there was some sort of feminist cheer squad that had Gillard's back (and invoked the talk of misogyny and gender cards) in those final months. 'I wish,' she says. And taking these essays together, it's easy to see why that cheer squad, that cavalry of feminists, failed to materialise. I've not asked them but I assume all the women in this book would colour themselves some shade of feminist. But their opinions on everything from paid parental leave through DisabilityCare to the effects of sexism on the Gillard prime ministership are vastly diverse.

'There will be some days I delight you, some days I disappoint you. On every day I will be working my absolute hardest for you,' Julia Gillard announced when she achieved

the prime ministership. And she did that. On this we are all agreed.

In September 2013, Julia Gillard re-emerged as a public figure, stepping into the role of elder stateswoman as comfortably as she would a pair of her favourite pumps. She was greeted with a combination of respect, admiration and goodwill that was never afforded her as PM. Australians, it seems, are prepared to accept women in the pedestal positions of public life, but they are not yet ready to see women hold their own in the confronting rough and tumble of the prime ministership.

BACK TO THE BARRICADES

Eva Cox

When I was first asked to write this essay, Julia Gillard was still prime minister, so I wanted to explore the many conflicts and contradictions that were emerging in the tenure of our first woman PM.

My original interest was in looking at whether having a woman as PM would, in itself, generate better attitudes and policies in areas identified as women's concern. In the earlier days of the women's movement, we'd pushed the equal opportunities argument, assuming more women in top positions would create the necessary gender changes. More recently, the idea seemed to have narrowed to just getting women there so they could share the power rewards. I wanted to explore the complex cultural issues that were already emerging around the often uncomfortable relationships between feminism and power.

The subsequent change from Gillard to Rudd and the reactions among feminists have reinforced my concerns and raised some new issues. Then (and now) as a long-term feminist, I supported Gillard being *in* the job, but couldn't

wholeheartedly support what she was doing *with* it. I was pleased we finally had a female prime minister, as a possible indicator that political choices were more merit-based than the dearth of senior women suggested, but I was uneasy about many social policy directions that she and her government were pushing. Despite her being PM, and having a record number of women in Cabinet, the government's policy directions were increasingly and narrowly focused on market economics. The constant emphasis on working people in paid jobs did not often include broader social needs or some feminist understanding of the importance of the multiple unpaid social contributions so often made by women. Could one hold Gillard and her Cabinet accountable for these deficits?

I decided, initially, that it would be fairer to evaluate her performance as the PM, but not as a female PM, as she made no gender claims in her role. I have always held that we should judge women, particularly those in positions of power, on the same criteria as we judge men in the same positions—neither more nor less harshly. So I strongly objected to slurs like 'Lady Macbeth' that were used to describe her role in the prime ministerial power shift.

I was also wary of unrealistic expectations—that she would be better as PM simply because she was a woman. Leadership, power and women is still a fraught area of analysis. In 1996, I wrote *Leading Women* (published by Random House) because I noted that many women, even feminists, found this concept difficult. One factor then (and that remains so) was that women too often expect more of women leaders than they do of men. For example, all woman leaders are expected to have empathy but this is never expected from an equivalent man. On the other side, men will often misjudge women in

power because they are female and, ergo, either not like them or not feminine enough.

Because of all this and because the Gillard ascension saw her put no particular emphasis on 'women's policy' in her first Ministry (with a very junior minister belatedly assigned to the portfolio), I maintained that any measuring of her performance should be based on the general quality of what she did and how. If she wanted to downplay her gender and her role as first female PM, why should I raise it?

I had one caveat, however. If she were, at some later stage, to claim feminist credentials, I considered it legitimate to add this dimension to my criteria for assessing her performance.

The rest, of course, is history. My approach changed when Gillard chose to deliver her 'misogyny speech' because she unintentionally opened Pandora's box. Her timing was politically interesting, as it came when the complex Slipper-as-Speaker deal started unwinding. Angry at Abbott's attacks, she struck back at his gendered views, but without expecting the resultant much wider impact.

The original limited analysis by the Canberra media also focused on the Slipper connection. All failed initially to register the wider effect of her speech, which went viral locally and internationally. Most women who heard it recognised echoes of the pain and abuse they had also suffered from too many examples of sexism. Her very well delivered, heartfelt speech gave them the impetus to tell of their own experiences of disrespect and gender-based hostility. As the PM belatedly became aware of the effect of her speech on the wider political scene, she began to make more gender-related comments and the media took greater note of gender as an issue as well.

Julia Gillard's delivery of this speech clearly added sexism and misogyny to the official political agenda, and so (I felt) also legitimated a feminist viewing of her government's credibility on policies that related to gender inequities. This tension was oddly illustrated when a basically sexist policy on cutting sole parent incomes passed the Senate on the very same day that she made the 'misogyny speech' in the House of Representatives. I became aware of the coincidence at the time and raised it in the media but there was no sign that the prime minister had even noted that this policy had gender issues.

I began to consider more deeply how her government's policies were affecting women. The general pitch of the policies strongly focused on Australia's economic performance—to my mind, so strongly that they often failed to promote good policies that recognised the social, rather than economic, contributions that most women made. Gillard frequently reiterated her focus on the value of paid jobs as the ultimate contribution to wellbeing, but failed to recognise the social benefits of unpaid contributions, such as community engagement, caring and child rearing. This was what struck me in a nutshell but there were details of the policies and their implications that I had yet to consider. So I set to work.

Analysis of a Prime Ministership

Gillard's background in industrial relations law taught her high-level negotiation skills. She made a fractious minority government work by using these skills to manage significant reforms. She passed a lot of Bills—over 500—and 85 per cent were supported by the Opposition. She was very obviously competent in managing the government's business and earned some extra points for doing so under difficult circumstances.

She is reported as being good to work with and creates warm interpersonal relationships in informal settings. She is good on her feet in parliament and an excellent debater. However, as a national leader, she had problems in connecting with the public and electors. Some claim this was mainly the effect of managing the hung parliament and being the butt of nasty attacks by the Opposition and sections of the media. However, this was not the whole story. There were many other problems, judgement errors and questionable policies.

It was evident, from early in her term of office, that Julia Gillard was seriously not connecting. Even when she delivered political speeches, she often did not connect with the public. Some of this may be attributed to content. Her social vision was a relatively narrow reiteration of the need to get a job and the value of economic contribution. Even the costs of the much praised National Disability Insurance Scheme and the increased funding of children's services were justified by the increased workforce participation of those benefitting from such services. There is a need for leaders to show some wider vision. They need either to offer the type of creative leadership that excites the public (for example, Whitlam, Hawke and Keating) or the reassuring, solid ordinariness of Howard.

Moreover, Gillard's chronic failure in the polls to develop trust or engage sufficient voters was exacerbated by tensions in the ALP and the hostility of her predecessor. These all added to the perception of a leadership deficit, which was not specifically gender-based.

There is no question that, as a female PM, Julia Gillard was subjected to grossly unacceptable examples of sexist abuse and criticism. Did these attacks seriously affect her ability to

deliver as PM and did they contribute substantially to her eventual demise? Or were there other factors at work? Is there any real basis for the claims made by some feminists that she was a superb PM who was so betrayed and undermined by misogyny that her demise will discourage others from trying for such positions? I am certain that sexism was at work here, but I believe that her demise also resulted from a mix of personal, policy and political circumstances.

Some of her government's non-traditional-Labor policy directions (the boat people farce, the continuation and extension of the Northern Territory Intervention, extending income management and defending generally low welfare payments) contributed to overall images of bad decision-making. These indicators of deficient broader social priorities were countered only partially by more progressive policies, like Gonski and the National Disability Insurance Scheme, both now renamed.

My analysis of her government's policy record in the several key areas important to women shows some gains: in equal pay, an increase in the tax-free threshold and parental leave payments. However, these improvements only serve women in the paid workforce and there were serious problems in other areas of concern, such as welfare payments and recognition of the social contributions of unpaid work. This focus on paid work as the ultimate measure of wellbeing is narrowly economistic and macho and reinforces the idea that equality means women must take more male roles. The failure to value social roles is a serious feminist omission.

The Gillard Government's main 'women's policy' initiatives addressed matters originally raised in the 1980s. While the introduction of funding and new legislation was important,

in the areas of equal pay and parental leave the problems are only partially solved. The equal pay case, taken by the Australian Services Union, is a positive example of Gillard's contributions, both as the employment minister and PM. Her industrial relations changes made sure it was possible to take an equal pay case, and it was funded under her regime and successful, resulting in an award increase for about 150,000 welfare industry workers. The claim, however, has not been followed up by other feminised industries, and the pay increases were stretched over eight years and required government subsidisation to be affordable. So the battle for equal pay continues and the gender pay gap is still there. A promised Equal Pay Unit is not likely to make fast changes, nor is the provision of some stopgap funds to other feminised industries, such as childcare and aged services. However, during Gillard's prime ministership, there were welcome, if small, steps forward.

Another long-term feminist demand tackled was national paid parental leave. The feminist claims were for 26 weeks' leave at actual pay rates in order to 'normalise' parenting leave as a workplace entitlement. The government version is not this, but offered a minimum wage rate payment for those entitled to unpaid leave. While low-paid workers benefit under this scheme, as few have employer-funded leave, it is only for 18 weeks, and also leaves out those with no unpaid leave entitlement. Yet the government has vociferously defended its model against the versions offered by the Coalition and the Greens, which would pay related rates for 26 weeks, plus Super, albeit with salary caps. Neither Gillard nor her minister acknowledged the validity of feminist requirements to move from a welfare payment to workplace entitlement.

On the other side of the ledger, the reduction of sole parent payments was a serious feminist negative, making poor parents even poorer. Again there are echoes of the Gillard mindset that failed to value women's unpaid work roles. The main aim of the sole parent cut was, it was claimed, to get more sole parents into paid jobs, despite government data (Australian Bureau of Statistics figures for 2011) showing that most of those whose incomes were to be reduced already had part-time work. The welfare-to-work initiative started under the Howard regime but the ALP Government extended it to over 100,000 previously exempted recipients—despite the lack of evidence that the earlier cuts had helped more sole parents to find jobs. This targeting of sole parents, like income management on the unemployed, seems more driven by the desire for electoral targets. The PM was sticking to her policy of 'tough love', as recorded in her last interview with Anne Summers.[1]

Supporting women's right to paid work is clearly feminist but using coercion, and ignoring the time needs of parenting, is definitely not. Over the years, I have undertaken multiple surveys of sole parents, who have overwhelmingly reported that they wanted paid jobs but only ones that fitted in with their primary carer roles. Appropriate balancing of time in paid and unpaid work is essential to good feminist policy making. To override such priorities can only be seen as a loss of gender cred and fails to recognise wider issues for both women and men who want a better life balance.

There are other examples of Gillard's poor feminist judgement. She tried to repeat the success of the misogyny speech during her final weeks in office by delivering a clumsy, clunky speech to a hastily set up 'Women for Gillard' network. On that same day, however, she publicly supported a male rather

than female candidate for a safe seat preselection—while exhorting women to see the ALP as their party!

These few examples show why Julia Gillard may have had problems projecting her sincerity and feminist leadership credentials. However, the end to Gillard's term in office, when it came, had little to do with any of this.

Julia Gillard faced a very diverse and difficult set of problems when she claimed the role of PM—and there were other issues as well. Katherine Murphy summed these up well in an article in *The Guardian*:

> Perhaps she could have recovered if she had not compounded shock with aftershock—if she didn't go on unsettling people. Gillard's consistent failure to reassure is the common thread behind the series of events that have led her to this day, to this inexorable end.
>
> The revelation that nice girls do carry knives was compounded by her pre-election evasion on the carbon price, which in the hands of Tony Abbott and his amplifiers became The Great Lie. There were broken promises, a budget surplus promised for years and never delivered, the emissions trading scheme that became a 'tax' in an authority-sapping compromise ...
>
> Her brittle veneer of social conservatism on gay marriage, unconvincing and out of time. The recruitment of Peter Slipper in a naked attempt to boost parliamentary numbers and buy time. The overly long tolerance for Craig Thomson, despite serious allegations against him.
>
> The stumbles and misjudgements stopped Gillard expanding into her office. They fed the public perception that Gillard's prime ministerial identity was a protean thing,

never entirely convincing, never entirely stable. Was she the 'real Julia' or something else – perhaps just the sum of her latest grand bargain; perhaps an undisclosed agent of the Greens, or the unions?[2]

The move against her, in which she lost the prime ministership, was primarily political, not sexist. So I am concerned by the reactions of some feminists who seem determined to see her demise as caused by sexism and misogyny alone. For example, I was tweeted as guilty of undermining her position when I raised some issue critical of her, and there were other wild abuses of those of us who were not seen as fully supportive. Such tensions in social media and print make it harder to analyse the difference between her performance issues and the wider problems faced by all women in power.

Where To from Here?

The end of the tenure of our first woman PM meant, among the varied flak that was flying, gender became a very hot topic—in fact, overheated. Julia Gillard herself accurately situated the gender contribution in her elegant and admirable concession speech, by stating that her gender was neither the whole issue nor a non-issue but was part of it. The discussions since have seen divides both within definable feminist circles[3] and the wider commentariat.

Had Gillard stuck to her original intentions of ignoring the gender questions, would these issues have been raised? She made it clear in the early stages that, while acknowledging she was a ground breaker, she would be a PM on the usual terms. She copped some particularly nasty, personal, sexist crap and resentment about her mode of accession. Politics are tough

and, combined with a Labor minority in the House of Reps and the Opposition's cries of illegitimacy, she experienced more than the usual prime ministerial pressure. She showed admirable toughness in dealing with the negotiations, tensions and insults, but these absorbed a lot of public attention. She didn't flinch or complain but ploughed on with her admirable determination, which also may have made it harder for her to move easily on some difficult policy areas.

On the wider questions, gender remains an uncomfortable fit with power politics. The major political party structures are based on loyalty and leadership in often macho terms. Women in the major parties are still few and very much in the minority, so they need to adapt and fit into the current structures if they want access to power. Patronage goes with numbers and power, so few women can offer it. Those who succeed are there on sufferance, which means they shouldn't try to make any of the changes that threaten macho power models. Change is hard to see when terms like 'women's issues' and 'women's policy' are still used to narrowly define and ascribed social areas as non-mainstream politics. In an era where market forces are still seen as the dominant paradigm for serious policymaking, the exclusion of non-market well-being means most social policies that coincide with feminised areas of responsibility lose traction.

Therefore, the relatively few powerful women in politics are still obviously gender-identified. Their behaviours will often be judged differently from those of their male peers, even if they try to act as men do. Julia Gillard made it with the support of a range of men, and some women, from the usual unions and other factions or groups. She was apparently accepted on that basis and, aside from her involvement in

(Labor women's support program) Emily's List, did not make use of the feminist networks, as such.

Yet, when Gillard's problems began to appear, her gender became an issue. The wide reactions to her role and demise, as the first female PM, suggest that many women who were not very aware of feminist concerns have started to question the maltreatment of powerful women. As the discussions have impacted widely on women in the party and on the outside, the subsequent debate and, hopefully, changes may be her enduring legacy.

Debates within Feminism

There are some serious questions for those of us actively still involved in feminist change. The events and coverage of Julia Gillard's tenure raise wider questions about how feminist and women's groups deal with the support and/or demise of senior women. On the international front, there have been some acerbic feminist reactions to advice from two powerful women, Sheryl Sandberg[4] and Anne Marie Slaughter. Some of the commentaries and hostility suggest many unresolved issues in how feminisms deal with women and power. Locally, tensions arose when Anne Summers started questioning those of us whom she saw as not supportive of the PM's plea to women voters to back the ALP as the pro-woman party.[5] After the vote against Gillard, Summers[6] excoriated some women ministers for being disloyal, for not resigning their posts once she was defeated.

Other women seemed to be more interested in acknowledging her undoubted contribution by elevating Gillard to an impossible status and performance that made her demise seem purely sexist. This last approach needs to be classified as

damaging reverse sexism: expecting women to be supportive of her just because she was a woman, which is overly simplistic and also problematic. It also suggests that no woman, even if good at her job, can succeed because of rampant sexism. This is wrong and not a message we need to promote. Women and men should be able to vote for members of parliament on the basis of the public good and not be expected to offer blind gender loyalty.

Reverse sexism (supporting a woman just because she is a woman or because she identifies herself as a feminist) undermines our claims for real equality. If we want women to be seen as more than a singular (minority) category, we must accept that women are as capable as men of good and evil. Feminism means our identifying and offering support against sexism, but it should not be gender loyalty per se.

Women share the full range of human diversity with men, from the very competent to hopeless. Making the case by claiming women are a homogenous group, or share inherent characteristics, damages our claims for gender power and equity. There are differences, but these are relatively few and blurred. So claiming the need for expressed solidarity means we risk being Other, defined and identified by characteristics that men ascribe to us. We need to recognise that equality means we are neither inherently nicer nor more evil than men.

This means that feminists need to draw lines between campaigning against sexism and discrimination and our capacity to assess and discuss the merits or otherwise of what women do. We should support women who suffer unfair sexist discrimination and abuse, but also recognise that some women can be part of the problem, and are not just passive

victims. If we allow women to police other women, demand conformity to either radical, normative or conservative views, we risk discouraging change. We need more passionate and powerful debates to restart the feminist revolution.

I would like us to explore why, forty years after the second wave hit Australia, feminism seems to have stalled. I am primarily blaming the '80s neoliberal revolution, which removed the idea of the common good and social progress from political agendas and replaced them with economic growth. This dominance of the market model undermined much of the collectivist ethos and optimism about wider social change that drove many earlier social movements, including feminism.

Progress, at the more powerful levels, is too often assessed solely in terms of the quota of women working in male roles. Change is seen as a crude headcount of the proportions of women in the top jobs, despite these institutions being still massively controlled by accepted macho values. And the women who make it are not likely to make changes that threaten their often tenuous grip on power. This is why I believe the Gillard Government's push for more women in paid work was much too limited an aim.

There has been inadequate analysis of how serious feminism has been diminished by external changes. One possibility seems to be that the public faces of feminism are generally less pushy—instead, they politely ask the continuing macho power brokers to let us share their world. Have we silenced ourselves in the corridors of power, worried that we may not be seen as nice?

There are many groups railing against the rising sexism and apparently slowing changes, but little analysis of why

the rises are happening or how to stop them. There is activity at street level and online. While there may be disorderly sluts walking at the street level and protesting sexism and bad images, wider political activity is missing.

So maybe the lesson we should draw from the demise of the Gillard Government is that women and leadership are still an uncomfortable coupling. As a feminist, I think we need to explore why so few of us take on power and change and thereby run the risk of odd failures. We need to start making clear that women also have big ideas, and that feminists still want change to the gender basics to ensure that the contributions that have traditionally been offered by women are more suitably shared and rewarded.

How do we promote a new movement with the unfeminine tensions, risk-taking and conflict that are part of necessary change projects? It isn't easy, as shown by reactions to my sometimes pushy and aggressive political interventions. How can feminists make it easier for women to make political changes and not be put off by the experiences of some women, like Julia Gillard, who had a tough time?

I suggest we start by increasing our visibility, sharing our expertise and experiences and showing how we can raise different views. We need to offer solutions, not just complaints. We need to support the dissidents and outliers who raise new feminist options, while also being able to give and take on the maybe passionate arguments and debates we need, so we can explore ideas and solutions.

CONTRIBUTORS

JANE CARO wears many hats, including author, editor, lecturer, mentor, social commentator, columnist, workshop facilitator, speaker, broadcaster and award-winning advertising writer. She runs her own communications consultancy and lectures in advertising creative at the University of Western Sydney. She has published four books: *The Stupid Country—How Australia is Dismantling Public Education* (with Chris Bonnor), *The F Word: How We Learned to Swear by Feminism* (with Catharine Fox), *Just a Girl* and *What Makes a Good School* (with Chris Bonner). In 2013, she edited *Destroying the Joint: Why Women Have to Change the World.*

EVA COX AO as born in Vienna in 1938, and grew up as a refugee in England. Her feminism started when she was cross in kindergarten that boys were offered drums and girls the tambourine or triangle. These early experiences primed her political activism and made her an irrepressible advocate for making societies fairer. She is an unabashed feminist and passionately promotes inclusive, diverse and equitable ways of living together. She was the ABC Boyer Lecturer (1995) on making societies more civil. Her 1996 book (*Leading Women*) explained why women who made a difference were usually labelled as difficult, a label she wears with pride. She is a sociologist and researcher, has been a public servant, political staffer, welfare CEO and academic, currently as Professorial Fellow at UTS.

CLEMENTINE FORD is a freelance writer, broadcaster and troublemaker based in Melbourne. She enjoys cups of tea on stormy summer afternoons, men with beards and the collected works of Nancy Mitford. You can read more of her work at clementineford.com.au or follow her on Twitter @clementine_ford.

CLAIRE HARVEY is deputy editor of the *Sunday Telegraph*, Australia's biggest-selling newspaper.

RUTH HESSEY wrote and directed the award-winning documentary film *Waste Not*, which has been translated into Chinese, Turkish and Spanish. Before migrating her skills to the Total Environment Centre,