



CONSIDERATIONS  
FOR  
AUSTRALIA'S  
NEXT  
WOMAN  
PRIME  
MINISTER

DR DIANN RODGERS-HEALEY

# Considerations

for Australia's next  
Woman Prime Minister

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Published by the Australian Centre for Leadership for Women (ACLW)  
www.leadershipforwomen.com.au

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First published 2013.

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Book Design by Richard M. Healey  
Cover Design by Aaron Healey

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**National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication entry**

Author: Rodgers-Healey, Diann, author.

Title: Considerations for Australia's next woman Prime Minister /  
Dr Diann Rodgers-Healey.

ISBN: 9780987334176 (ebook)

Subjects: Women prime ministers—Australia.

Women politicians—Australia.

Political culture—Australia.

Sexism in political culture—Australia.

Other Authors/Contributors:

Australian Centre for Leadership for Women.

Dewey Number: 324.22

## Acknowledgements

I would like to especially thank each of the women leaders who were keen to be involved in this initiative and generously gave their time and openly responded to the questions posed in this book: Kathy Bensted, Chilla Bulbeck, Leslie Cannold, Jane Caro, Maria Delaney, Michelle Deshong, Maria Dimopoulos, Georgia Prattis, Lynette Dumble, Kirsty McLaren, Barbara Pocock, Shirley Randell, Margaret Reynolds, Christina Ryan, Natasha Stott Despoja, Margaret Thornton and Nareen Young.

I would like to also extend heart-felt thanks to Richard Healey for his talents and efficiency in making this publication possible within a very short time frame. To Michael and Julie Foye, Christine Langford, Lindsay Oades, Hurriyet Babacan, Alison Hemsley, Lorraine Denny, Gary Quinn, Mabel Tang, Kate Britt, and Ann Barbato, thank you so much for your constant support of my work and vision.

Thank you to my wonderful family - Philip and my sons, and also Ines, Deleena and Eddie Rodgers.

I dedicate this book to my father R. S. Rodgers for his enduring love and recognition of all that I do.

# Preface

The end of the Prime Ministership of Australia's first female Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, is one of the most historic national events that marks 2013. On 24 June 2010, Julia Gillard became Australia's 27th Prime Minister and the first woman to hold the position of Prime Minister of Australia and Leader of the Australian Labor Party (ALP), positions which she held from 2010 to 2013, having been elected to the House of Representatives in 1998 as the federal Member for Lalor in Victoria. Before becoming Prime Minister, Gillard served as Deputy Prime Minister from 2007 to 2010 in Kevin Rudd's Labor government, where she was Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Minister for Education, and Minister for Social Inclusion. [\[1\]](#)

On 26 June 2013, Gillard was defeated in a leadership ballot by Rudd and announced that she would not contest her seat at the forthcoming election and was retiring from politics.

Following her defeat in the Australian Labor Party leadership ballot on 26 June 2013, in her Farewell Speech [\[2\]](#), Gillard reflected on the challenges she faced being the country's first female prime minister: "the reaction to being the first female Prime Minister does not explain everything about my prime ministership, nor does it explain nothing about my prime ministership. I have been a little bit bemused by those colleagues in the newspapers who have admitted that I have suffered more pressure as a result of my gender than other prime ministers in the past, but then concluded that it had zero effect on my political position or the political position of the Labor Party. ...What I am absolutely confident of is it will be easier for the next woman and the woman after that and the woman after that, and I'm proud of that."

The purpose of this book is to make things easier for the next Australian woman Prime Minister by exploring and raising considerations surrounding challenges that she might encounter in the context of gender, leadership, and the broader Australian context. In this regard, it is underlined with a reflective, interpretive and explorative stance of

Julia Gillard's Prime Ministership in order to extrapolate considerations and suggestions for a future woman Prime Minister.

Through inviting women leaders in Australia to contribute their views, and employing a qualitative research framework to analyse their views, this book seeks to bring to the fore key considerations from an engaged and experienced group of women leaders from diverse professional backgrounds.

The first chapter is the author's attempt to interpret the Prime Ministership of Gillard from a gender and leadership perspective. It includes relating theory to what was experienced to enable an understanding of the ideological forces that constrain the full participation and recognition of women as leaders. This chapter was written at the same time as other women were invited to offer their views in response to five questions posed by the author to catalyse a discussion on gender and leadership and any other issues they wanted to raise. The 5 research questions reflected themes in the discourse during Gillard's Prime Ministership that had to do with gender and leadership.

Chapter 2 presents the complete and unedited emailed responses of the 17 women leaders. Their bios and photos have also been published with their consent. The invitation to be involved had been sent to 65 women leaders from different backgrounds in Australia.

Chapter 3 presents the results of an Inductive Content Analysis [\[3\]](#), [\[4\]](#) which was applied to the responses for the 5 questions. The overall conclusions reflect key themes as considerations within the scope of this explorative research that inform and justify suggestions for Australia as a nation and for the next woman Prime Minister in Australia.

This book is not intended to be an exhaustive analysis of Gillard's Prime Ministership, nor does it claim to have exhaustively analysed every aspect of the 'gender-wars' or Gillard's leadership and the political environment during her Prime Ministership. It seeks to, against a backdrop of Gillard's Prime Ministership, understand, question, discuss

and raise through a range of reflections, observations and insights, some poignant considerations.

Ultimately, it hopes to move the discussion forward so that Australia will have a woman Prime Minister sooner rather than later.

## About the Author

Dr Diann Rodgers-Healey is the Executive Director of the Australian Centre for Leadership for Women (ACLW) a virtual Centre at [www.leadershipforwomen.com.au](http://www.leadershipforwomen.com.au) which she founded in 2000 and which is run on a not-for-profit basis. Through the Centre, Diann works with teams of community and industry leaders on common goals to advance women in the community and in workplaces. She has established national leadership awards to recognise initiatives by women and men for the advancement of women in organisations and in the community. She has conducted and published research on areas associated with Australian political leadership and the media, women getting into boards, women's global activism, women's leadership in education and the corporate sector. She has facilitated national virtual campaigns to raise awareness by involving expert panels analysing government policy, the concerns of disadvantage in the community, and the impact of climate change.

To build leadership capacity, challenge mindsets and build an empowering discourse on leadership and gender, Diann works with individuals and organisations as an Executive Business coach, mentor and strategic facilitator. She has also publicly conducted Leadership Conversations with politicians, Aboriginal women leaders and community leaders.

Diann's academic appointments are Adjunct Professor in The Cairns Institute of James Cook University and Associate Fellow of the Australian Institute of Business Well-Being (AIBWB) at the University of Wollongong (UOW). She has held positions of leadership and management in Sydney and London in education, business and the not-for-profit sector, and has lectured in leadership, management and education in the University of Wollongong.

Diann's views and research on women's leadership have been featured in the publications including the Australian Financial Review and The Conversation. She has contributed to the review of women's policies and has also presented papers on women in leadership and women's activism. In 2009, she was awarded The World of Difference 100 Award



from The International Alliance of Women (TIAW) in Toronto, Canada. In 2013 she was the Finalist in the NSW Premier's Woman of the Year Award. Diann is the author of books including "Abandoning Leadership for a better way of being for women and men." "Women's Activism - insights for empowering women from global women activists." She is currently working on a book on the topic of Merit.

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# Chapter 1: Interpreting Julia Gillard's Prime Ministership to extrapolate considerations for a future female Prime Minister

## 1. Gillard's Legacy

The 43rd Australian Parliament was led by a woman for the first time since Federation in 1901. For the first time since 1940, the Parliament was hung and Julia Gillard successfully negotiated the formation of a minority government with the Greens and Independent MPs Rob Oakeshott, Andrew Wilkie and Tony Windsor.

As Prime Minister, Gillard achieved a formidable legacy having achieved a number of significant ground-breaking reforms as “put on the public record” [\[5\]](#) by the Victorian Women's Trust, some of which Gillard also noted in her farewell speech [\[6\]](#) and reiterated after the election [\[7\]](#), a legacy which included Paid Parental Leave, pricing carbon, DisabilityCare, an equitable model for funding primary and secondary education, the Royal Commission into child Sexual Abuse in Institutions, the National Broadband Network, and strengthening relationships with China and India.

Furthermore, as Gillard reflected, “In such challenging times, no government would have got everything right, but Labor did get the big economic calls right.” [\[8\]](#) Under Gillard's Prime Ministership, Australia's economic strength [\[9\]](#) was being envied by “the advanced Western economies” [\[10\]](#) and Australia was seen to be “one of the safest trade and foreign investment destinations globally, ranking alongside Canada, Germany, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland, according to an analysis of 131 countries on Dun & Bradstreet's Global Risk Indicator (GRI).” [\[11\]](#)

Putting aside the fact that some policies were controversial such as on immigration and asylum seekers, reducing economic support for single parents, the position on same-sex marriage, the re-negotiated mining tax, [\[12\]](#) and the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Bill 2011, [\[13\]](#)