

Labor Party was losing its way under Rudd: Gillard

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How Gillard toppled Rudd

Kevin Rudd, although last night standing firm, this morning decided not to challenge Julia Gillard's attempt to take-over as Prime Minister.

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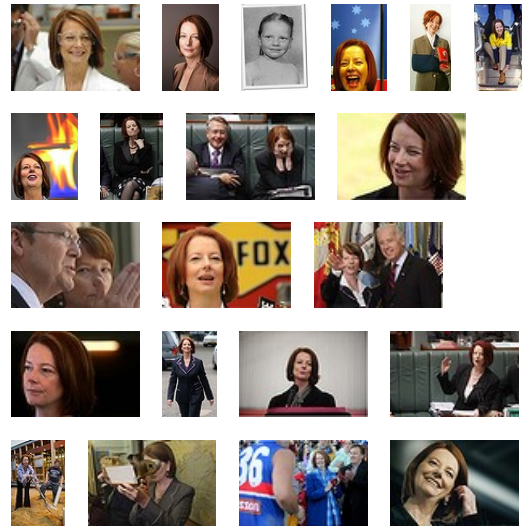
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Julia Gillard has defended her role in a leadership ambush of Kevin Rudd - including a verbal swipe from Deputy Opposition Leader Julie Bishop - saying she did what was best for her party and the country.

The prime minister of just two hours told parliament this afternoon she'd done lots of thinking about the direction of the Labor Party in recent days.



The many faces of Julia Gillard
Julia Gillard at Monash University in
June 2010. Photo: Craig Abraham



She said it was a good government that had “lost its way” in some areas.

“I formed the view that the best way of making sure that this government was back on track ... was to take the course that I took last night and this morning,” Ms Gillard told parliament.

But Ms Gillard, who earlier paid tribute to her predecessor, defended the leadership assault.

“I am well aware that there are others who will look at that and will form a view as to whether I took the correct course - that is the nature of politics.

“(But) I made a decision and I stand by it absolutely.”

Ms Gillard paid tribute to outgoing prime minister Kevin Rudd, but said she believed the Labor Party was "losing its way" under his leadership.

In her first speech since she was appointed Australia’s first female prime minister, Ms Gillard said she had felt a responsibility to "step up and take control and make sure the government got back on track".

"Ultimately Kevin Rudd and I disagreed about the direction of the government, I believed we could do better," she said.

Ms Gillard said she felt "truly honoured to lead this country, which I love".

"I’m utterly committed to the service of our people," she said.

During question time, Deputy Opposition Leader Julie Bishop asked Prime Minister Julia Gillard if the “same ministers” were conducting negotiations with the mining industry with the “same \$12 billion” of

budgeted revenue from the resource super profits tax and, if so, what policy change had there been.

Ms Bishop also took the opportunity to take a swipe at Ms Gillard by referring to the "unprecedented assassination" of former prime minister Kevin Rudd.

Ms Gillard was quick to return the sledge.

"I thank the same old deputy leader of the opposition for her question and wish her well as she serves her third leader," she said.

Gillard cancels proposed mining tax ads

Earlier, Ms Gillard used her first press conference to address the government's stalemate with the mining industry over the proposed resource super profits tax.

The prime minister cancelled the taxpayer-funded advertising campaign promoting the proposed tax.

Ms Gillard has asked the mining industry to cancel its advertisements as a show of "mutual respect".

Ms Gillard said she was "throwing open the government's door" by cancelling its advertisements as a show of "mutual respect".

In turn, she hoped the mining industry would open its mind and cancel their own ads.

Lodge 'not appropriate' until after election

But she said she believed that, rather than moving into The Lodge in Canberra, it was appropriate for her to continue living at her home in Altona and her flat in Canberra until she received the endorsement of the Australian public at the general election.

"I'm very happy in my home in Altona (in Melbourne's Western suburbs) ... very happy in my flat in Canberra," she said.

"I'd be happy to stay there for a considerable period of time.

"Indeed, I believe it is appropriate for me to stay there until we have an election and I have fulsomely earned the trust of Australian people to be prime minister."

She said she would ask the Governor-General in the next few months to call a general election.

Gillard accepts role with 'humility, resolve'

Ms Gillard said she had given three-and-a-half years of the "most loyal services I could offer my colleague Kevin Rudd".

"Can I say Australians one and all, it's with the greatest, humility, resolve and enthusiasm that I sought the endorsement of my colleagues to be the Labor leader and to be the prime minister for this country," she said.

"I have accepted that endorsement."

Ms Gillard was sworn in as prime minister at 12.30pm.

Values of hard work and 'doing your bit'

The Welsh-born Ms Gillard grew up in South Australia.

There, she said, her parents taught her the value of hard work, respect and doing your bit for the community.

"It is these values that will guide me as Australia's prime minister," she said.

Ms Gillard said she believed in a government that rewards those that work the hardest "not those that complain the loudest".

She said hard work, decency and effort should be rewarded.

"The people who play by the rules, set their alarms early, get their kids off to school, stand by the neighbours and love their country."

Gillard to lead 'strong, responsible government'

Ms Gillard said she would lead a strong and responsible government that would take control of Australia's future.

"Improving and protecting the essential public services and basic rights our people depend on including so importantly their rights at work," she said.

Ms Gillard emphasised the importance of working as a team.

"I also believe that leadership is about the authority that grows from mutual respect shared by colleagues, from ... hard work, team work and spirit."

"It's these beliefs that have been my compass during the three-and-a-half years of the most loyal service I could offer to my colleague Kevin Rudd."

Rudd government 'was losing its way'

Ms Gillard said she had asked her colleagues to make a leadership change "because I believed that a good government was losing its way".

Health and education services, and fair treatment at work, were at risk at the next election, Ms Gillard warned.

Ms Gillard said she took her fair share of responsibility for the Rudd government's record, including the errors.

"I know the Rudd government did not do all it said it would do and at times it went off track," she said.

Ms Gillard said Australia was emerging from the biggest financial crisis the world had faced since the Great Depression, with the lowest debt and among the lowest unemployment rate and highest growth rate in the world.

She gave credit to every hard-working Australian for what had been achieved in these difficult times.

"I give credit to the Labor giants Bob Hawke and Paul Keating as the architects of today's modern prosperity," she said.

"I give credit to John Howard and Peter Costello for continuing these reforms," she said.

"And I particularly give credit to Kevin Rudd for leading the nation in such difficult times and keeping people in work."

Ms Gillard said she could assure every Australian that the federal budget would be back in surplus in 2013.

'I will re-prosecute the case for a carbon price'

Turning to Labor's failed attempt to introduce an emissions trading scheme, Ms Gillard said she was disappointed that Australia didn't have a price on carbon.

"In the future we will need one," she said. "But first we will need to establish a community consensus for action."

"If elected as prime minister (at the next election), I will re-prosecute the case for a carbon price at home and abroad."

Ms Gillard said she had her differences with Mr Rudd over the direction of the government.

Rudd a man of 'remarkable achievement'

"I believed we needed to do better," she said, adding Mr Rudd was a man of "remarkable achievement".

"He made wonderful history for this nation by saying sorry to indigenous Australians," she said.

"He was the leader who withdrew our troops from Iraq and had the foresight to reinforce our commitments in Afghanistan."

"He was the leader who saw us through the global financial crisis. The leader who turned his intelligence and determination to health reform, combating homelessness and closing the gap for indigenous Australians."

Changes to cabinet, ministers to be announced

Ms Gillard said there would be some changes to cabinet and ministerial arrangements, which she should announce at an appropriate time.

She summed up her vision of Australia as "a nation where hard work is rewarded ... a nation that prides itself on the excellence of its education system".

"We should not be afraid of the future."

Australia should be "a bright democracy for the world to admire, and a sanctuary for all of our people," she said.

"Can I say to the Australian people, there will be some days I delight you, there may be some days I disappoint you, on every day I will be working my absolute hardest for you."

Ms Gillard had a message for Australian troops, noting the recent loss of life and injuries in Afghanistan.

"(This) reminds us of the depth of the sacrifice that our serving men and women be called on to make," she said.

"Our thoughts are certainly with the grieving families," she said, referring to the three soldiers killed in a helicopter crash on Monday.

Swan's new role an 'unexpected privilege'

New deputy prime minister Wayne Swan said the role was an "unexpected privilege".

"Today we move forward with an intelligent, strong, competent and compassionate leader," he said.

"She has been a first-class deputy prime minister and she will be a first-class prime minister."

The day was not a day for celebration, Mr Swan said.

"Today is a day to knuckle down and to get back to work, and that is precisely what we are going to do."

Mr Swan praised Mr Rudd, a fellow Queenslander.

"It's a really tough day for Kevin, for his family and for his staff," he said.

"I'd like to pay tribute to the hard work that he's put in in his time as prime minister, but also in his time in public service over a long period of time."

Strong border protection pledge

There has been speculation that a Gillard-led government would shift further to the right on border security.

Ms Gillard said she understood Australians were "disturbed" by the number of unauthorised boat arrivals, and pledged strong border protection.

"I can understand that sense of anxiety," she said, adding Australia was a sanctuary. "It's our home."

The government had a responsibility to manage the nation's borders and manage the question of asylum seekers "in the best possible way".

Ms Gillard said she had "no truck" for fearmongering on the issue for political advantage.

"But I am full of understanding for the perspective that the Australian people that they want strong management of our borders and I will provide it."

Rudd 'has future within Labor caucus'

Ms Gillard said it had been a tough day for Mr Rudd and his family with whom he would probably choose to spend time.

Mr Rudd had indicated to he saw a future for himself in the federal parliamentary Labor party.

"Not many hours ago at our caucus meeting I said I believed Kevin Rudd had a great future in the Labor party and in the parliamentary caucus if he wanted one," Ms Gillard said.

"There are plenty of times for those discussions."

First woman, 'maybe first redhead' in top job

Ms Gillard said she was well aware she was the first woman to step into the top job and perhaps the first redhead.

"First woman - maybe first redhead - we'll allow others to delve into the history and I'll allow you to contemplate which was more unlikely in the modern age," she said.

"But can I say to you I didn't set out to crash my head on any glass ceilings.

"I set out to keep my feet on the floor and to be there walking the streets talking to Australians about what's the right thing for this nation."

Ms Gillard vehemently denied she was beholden to Labor's factional bosses, pointing out she was no political rookie and had been in Canberra since 1998.

"I would defy anyone - anyone - to analyse my parliamentary career and to suggest that on any day I have done anything other than made up my own mind, in accordance with my own conscience, and my best views about what's in the interests of the nation," she said.

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Julia

Gillard

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42%

Julia Gillard

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