

Resignation Statement

2 February 2013

Today I announce my decision to not contest the next election, and to resign as the Attorney-General and Minister for Emergency Management.

Since my election in 1998 it has been an absolute honour and privilege to serve the community of Gellibrand, the Labor Party and the nation. But it's a demanding and exhausting job. I expect 200% of myself, and I cannot honestly commit to that work rate for a sixth term in Parliament.

Now is the right time for such an announcement. But it is a difficult one given the wonderful job I have and that there's so much more good work to be done.

I am extremely proud of how much Labor has achieved, has underway and will deliver in the future.

But for me personally, times have changed. When I was elected 15 years ago, I hadn't even met my husband Michael and my daughter Rebecca was a long way from being born. If I run for office again, she'll almost be in high school before I might retire.

I admire the work the Prime Minister has done on behalf of Australian families and am extremely grateful for her understanding of the needs of mine.

In the five years I have served in Cabinet I am proud of what we have achieved, but I believe it is now time to let Labor's good work be continued by others, under the tough and wise leadership of the Prime Minister. It is time to give other smart and capable Labor people a go – people with the energy to now give their 200%.

I would like to thank all of those who have worked with me in both of my portfolios, my office, my two departments and their agencies. Never let the detractors, the hours and the endless processes deter you from the important and positive work being undertaken!

In a very busy year as the Attorney-General and Minister for Emergency Management, I had the honour of, amongst other things, to:

- Successfully defend the plain packaging legislation before the High Court;
- Appoint two High Court Justices, a new Federal Court Chief Justice and help establish the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse;
- Reform laws to protect children from domestic violence, protect privacy in credit reporting and direct marketing, increase penalties for tobacco smuggling and introduce compensation for victims of overseas terrorism;
- Kick-start consultations and detailed policy work to reform national security, anti-discrimination and native title laws; and
- Restore judicial discretion for people smuggling offences and established an independent reviewer for security assessments of irregular maritime arrivals.

In my four years as Minister for Health and Ageing, I was privileged to be able to undertake significant reforms across the whole portfolio – including:

- Focusing on patients – by prioritising and investing in GP Super Clinics, local primary health care services, ehealth records and the MyHospitals website;
- Making preventative health central to our efforts, with the world first plain packaging of tobacco, amongst other tobacco measures – as well as the new preventative health agency;
- Introducing access for nurse practitioners and midwives to Medicare and the PBS and increasing GP, specialist and nurse training;
- The rollout of Regional Cancer Centres, hundreds of hospital and health infrastructure projects and a health reform agreement with the states and territories; and

– Getting the backroom in health right – with national activity based funding, proper performance measures and accountability locally and from the States – reforms that will be worth their weight in gold in the future.

My only regret as a Health Minister was the time spent fixing the many problems left by Mr Abbott after his time in that role.

As a local MP, I'm proud that we have invested \$90 million into local schools, as well as into Victoria University and TAFE. You no longer need to leave the western suburbs if you want to train to be a doctor. The Government has also invested heavily in new social and public housing, the Westgate freeway upgrades, a massive regional rail project and smaller projects like the Yarraville community centre, the child care centre and the Bulldogs community facility.

While it is time for me to retire from politics, I strongly encourage the next generation to consider public service as a path for them. And particularly to women I say the sky is the limit and the political system needs you!

I've found constant inspiration from the goals Labor has worked towards. Whether it was reducing the distance it takes for regional kids and families to get cancer treatment, or increasing the training opportunities in the suburbs for the next wave of Australian doctors and nurses.

Whether it is when natural disasters cruelly hit hard working people, or when we debate human rights and national security – priorities that are not mutually exclusively – the causes are important, and matter to the way Australians live their lives.

Historically it has fallen to our party, the Labor Party, to be bold, and to achieve the big things for the Australian people. In this I've been honored to have been part of a Cabinet delivering some of the biggest and most ambitious projects of our time: surviving the global financial crisis, rebuilding schools, building the NBN, increasing the pension and pricing carbon.

Too often in politics 'delivery' is regarded as a slogan, rather than seeing the true and the positive difference good Government can make. For my part, I've seen that difference, in big and small ways, each and every day we've been in office. It's my strong view that the community needs us to: those relying on us to get dental care, to get the protection of the NDIS or to be helped into jobs all need a Labor Government working for their interests.

All this is Labor's mission.

I will continue to work for the Labor party and these causes for this election year, but also long into the future.

I would like to give special thanks to Julia, Kevin and my cabinet and caucus colleagues, to my wonderful staff over the years (especially Chris Picton, Narelle Wiggan, Angela Pratt and Hamdi Koyu), the people of Gellibrand for their confidence and support, the Labor Party and my family (especially the steadfast Michael, and my amazing mum).