

**The Hon. Kevin Rudd MP**  
**Leader of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party**  
**Address to Caucus**  
**13 September 2013**

It is an honour to be elected to this Parliament to serve the nation.

It is doubly an honour to be elected as a Labor Member of Parliament to represent the values, vision and robust achievements of our movement.

And I thank you for the honour of serving as your Leader and as Prime Minister of Australia.

To those of you elected to this place for the first time, I welcome you with every word of encouragement.

No one's political career is ever smooth.

Each of you will face great challenges in the future.

But you are also part of a new beginning and great successes lie ahead for you all.

It is also a time to remember fallen comrades.

I have spoken to most of them in recent days.

All fine members, one and all.

And I encourage each and every one of you to reach out into the future in letting all of them know that we are in fact a Labor family who look after each other.

And for those of you who have come back among us from the most impossible situations (like Michelle Rowland our most extraordinary

Member for Greenway), you have inspired us with your hard work, tenacity and belief in our cause.

For the campaign that has been fought, I have given it my all but this was not enough and I of course accept full responsibility for the outcome.

Throughout this campaign we have all fought the good fight.

And together we have preserved the Party as a viable fighting force for the future.

In 2007 we began with 57 seats and we were able to secure victory notwithstanding the large swings that were required.

We were able to defeat John Howard with a swing of 5.4 per cent.

In 2013 we begin with 55 seats and with a larger number of their seats falling within three to four per cent.

And most importantly we have preserved among you the next generation of Labor leaders, and the one following them as well.

This next election is therefore entirely winnable for whoever you elect as your next leader.

Throughout this campaign you have been well served by a leadership group, a Cabinet and an executive who have worked their guts out for our Party and our Government.

I could not have hoped for a more loyal and more effective Deputy than Albo.

I also thank the ever steadfast, ever sensible and ever reliable Penny Wong in the Senate.

As well as the continued wise counsel and support of Jacinta Collins, our Deputy in the Senate.

I also want to pay tribute to the extraordinary campaigning skills of Bill Shorten – not just campaigning skills, also governing skills in securing the support for the Better Schools Plan to support 70 per cent of the school kids of the nation.

And then Chris Bowen, our Treasurer who effortlessly prevailed over his counterpart in every single debate in the campaign.

For my other Cabinet colleagues, it becomes invidious to name names but I cannot let it pass without acknowledging the extraordinary work of Tony Burke and Mark Dreyfus in the development and implementation of the Regional Resettlement Arrangement.

And then Mark Butler, our Minister for the Environment, for his passionate defence of non-charismatic fauna, but more importantly for accompanying me on the road for several weeks, his good humour for which he will be awarded the order of Lenin with iron bar and cross.

And for another of our most effective media performers, Tanya who throughout the campaign so effectively took up the fight on health.

For Jenny, her work as the policy coordinator for the campaign I thank you, but also at a different level for her extraordinary work on DisabilityCare Australia and the fact that together we were able to, on the eve of the campaign, conclude a truly national disability insurance scheme by getting Western Australia across the line.

For Kim Carr for his passion for the car industry; his brother Bob for his passion for the world and Joel for his newfound passion for the bush.

For Gary for his formidable work with the resources and energy industry.

For Brendan for his wise counsel on the future of TAFE and training.

For Catherine for her extraordinary presence around every marginal seat in the country bringing good news and glad tidings to all; and for Julie who has flown our flag so courageously in Tasmania.

And for Richard as one of our great achievers in the region and the world.

And my thanks for the other members of the executive including my two parliamentary secretaries Alan and Ed.

As in 2010 and 2012, I understand number of folks in recent days have been free ranging in their character analysis of me.

I have not responded because I do not believe this is in the best interests of our Party and our future.

And to those who have made these criticisms, I bear none of you any malice and instead hope for your and our collective success in the future.

There has been some debate about our rules. The rules we adopted as a Caucus at the Balmain Town Hall back in July.

As you know, I am a passionate believer in the democratisation and de-factionalisation of our Party.

I believe this to be the best means of preserving our ancient values while continuing to adapt them to our modern circumstances as we have done now for more than a century.

I believe that our tens of thousands of rank and file members across the country are excited about being able to vote for their leader.

Some have been concerned in particular at the moth it will take for such a process to conclude while we have an acting Leader.

I think we should bear in mind that our British colleagues have a four month electoral process, as do the Canadian Conservatives while the US Democrats run a six month primary before settling on their candidate.

I believe it is within our wit and wisdom to manage this for just 30 days, particularly given the enormous opportunity it provides for the first time for our rank and file to have their say.

As I said at the outset, as your Leader and as your Prime Minister, I accept full responsibility for the outcome of this election campaign.

The buck stops with me.

There are of course other debates to be had under our new leadership for the future.

The fair and balanced coverage of the media during this election campaign, where many will have different conclusions.

The question of campaign finance reform where I believe we face the real and present danger of political parties being able to win elections on the basis of their fundraising alone.

But whatever the future these and other debates holds, I believe we should hold fast to our legacy of achievement.

Our great achievements at home and abroad.

Our great achievements on the economy.

Our great social reforms including the health and hospitals plan, the better schools plan, DisabilityCare Australia, Paid Parental Leave, the biggest increase in the aged pension in Australia's history, homelessness and social housing, the National Apology and the national partnership on closing the gap.

And then our great reforms on climate change, ratifying Kyoto, adopting a Mandatory Renewable Energy Target, a carbon price as well as the preservation of marine parks around our coastline.

We should all own this legacy with pride.

We should not turn our back on any of it.

These are not my achievements.

These are not Julia's achievements.

These are all our achievements as a progressive Labor Government representing the interests of working people across our vast continent.

With these remarks I bid you farewell as your leader.

Albo, as of now becomes your acting leader and I wish him well.

Just as I wish the new Leader of our Party (whoever he or she may be) all the best for the future.

In the many messages I have received, following the events of recent days, the one that has stuck with me most has been from an American friend who has followed our debates intensely.

Quoting Teddy Roosevelt his message said *“It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by the dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcoming; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions and spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who, at worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly; so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory or defeat.”*

Colleagues, I am no Teddy Roosevelt but he certainly sums up my approach to political life which is one of never dying wondering.

And I know it is your approach to political life as well.

And our common arena is the future of the Australian nation.

ENDS