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**LAUNCH OF KEATING AND KELTY'S SUPER LEGACY  
MELBOURNE**

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*\*\*\*Check against delivery\*\*\**

Thank you, Marsha, for that introduction.

The very first act I undertook as a young lawyer at the Transport Workers Union, an act that I thought at the time was a very menial, small and routine was to vary the Transport Workers Award to update its superannuation clause. Just the beginning of reading Mary's book makes you realise a small and menial act like that was part of a much larger achievement, a colossal achievement of the entirety of the Labor movement. Reading Mary's book gives you a sense of that. It made me feel a little bit better, and maybe even a little bit special, about having done a small thing in the context of something which had a much bigger significance than I understood at the time.

It seemed important to get the stories down before those present at the creation of the modern system passed on writes Mary at the very start of her book, and thus we have Mary's mission in writing: Keating's and Kelty's super legacy. It is a fantastic endeavour she has undertaken, and we are much the richer for Mary embarking on this task. In the process she tells an inspiring story, a story which absolutely about one the of the great achievements of the Labor movement.

Mary writes, "in the 1980s and the early 1990s, Kelty and Keating, from its two wings, drove the Labor movement to excel in policy development like never before." The modern superannuation system was crafted through their combined efforts.

This is a story of the partnership of two remarkable individuals, but their partnership embodies a much bigger relationship, a relationship between the two wings of the Labor movement, trade unions and the Australian Labor Party. Because this was, as Mary tells us, firstly, an idea which initiates within the Trade Union movement, an achievement won through an industrial struggle.

But that is only half the story, because at the end of the day the achievement won through the industrial struggle was put in legislative cement through the Hawke and

Keating years, and particularly the superannuation guarantee legislation under the Keating government, of which Mary herself was ultimately apart.

When you read it, it is hard not to think about our movement in a bigger sense. The relationship between the Labor Party and trade unions is something which is questioned now. The relevance of trade union movement is something which comes up for question nowadays. Indeed, the relevance of the trade union movement comes up for questions on occasions as well.

I love being a member of a party which is a union-based party. As a social democrat, I love that, as distinct from what our American cousins experience. The relationship between the Labor Party and the unions is fundamental to how the Labor Party goes about winning governance in office. The achievements of the union movements stand today in one of the most egalitarian societies on the planet. We can still say that, and that is an achievement of the trade union movement. Reading this book affirms the faith for those of us who have dedicated our lives, like so many in this room have, to the Labor movement. This is a read which will make you feel warm at night as you go to sleep.

It is an inspiring story about the battle for reform, reform which began within the Labor movement, within union movement itself. There were those who questioned whether or not superannuation was the most important issue, as Mary tells us. Surely, wages came in more importantly.

There were those who also said, as Mary reminds us, maybe running superannuation funds takes unions away from their core function of representing Labor and takes us down to the path of getting engaged in capital. There was a fight internally within the union movement itself, and there's a wonderful quote from Greg Sword which goes exactly to that question which Mary puts in her book. This was a fight at the coal face of the workplace, it was an industrial struggle to make this happen. It was an industrial struggle to pay superannuation contributions – also, to get employers to paying those funds into what we now know as specific industry funds. This was also a political fight.

Our conservative opponents have never liked superannuation. There has never been a conservative government that has increased the SGC rate. At best what we've had is a begrudging impotence in the face of superannuation, but more often than not what we've found with conservative governments is utter hostility towards superannuation and definite attempts to undermine it.

Our national superannuation system, as Mary describes it, is not just a great idea whose time had come - it is certainly that - but what it is is a fight waged across the entire spectrum of the industrial and political movements by the Labor movement.

Ultimately, this is an inspiring story of big policy. Big policy of the Hawke-Keating years, big policy of the Kelty era of the trade union movement. Policy around social justice, social justice which saw everyone have the opportunity to have a dignified retirement income. Superannuation was no longer just the province of the wealthy few.

But it's not just social policy - this is big national economic policy, as Mary reminds us. What we have in the superannuation system today is national savings which have helped build infrastructure around the country, which as Mary reminds us was absolutely fundamental to getting us through the Global Financial Crisis. Mary points out that we have the best coverage of life and disability insurance of any country in the world thanks to our national superannuation system. And what this has done in terms of easing the national budget in respect of retirement pensions is fundamentally important as well.

On page 225 Mary says, in Kelty's words, the philosophical framework of the Hawke and Keating governments might seem a bit oblique. In reality it was clear: open up the economy to the rest of the world, increase productivity, promote competition - but part of the distribution would be powerful safety nets, national healthcare, superannuation and wages. In turn these super safety nets would promote adaption and change, thus increasing productivity.

This was the Australian social democratic agenda of the 1980s and 1990s. We then observed, in 2016, that this foresight ensured the system has become an indispensable part of Australia's economic and social policy, notwithstanding waning union power.

What comes when you read this book at the end of the day is a ripping yarn. It is a ripping yarn about one of the fantastic achievements of the Labor movement. It's derived from first hand from first-hand accounts that Mary herself has elicited through interviews with Prime Ministers, Ministers, Treasurers, ACTU Presidents: Chris Bowen, Simon Crean, Bob Hawke, Paul Keating, Bill Kelty, Grace Mathews, Kevin Rudd - giants all.

But the book also bristles with Labor personalities, certainly throughout my time, but also Labor personalities going right through the history of this movement. Bill Landy, Bill Mansfield, Ray Geitzelt, Jim Maher, Charlie Fitzgibbon, Mavis Robertson, Joe De Bruyn, Greg Sword, Susan Ryan, Gary Weavin, Martin Ferguson. Bristling with Labor identities telling what is ultimately a fantastic Labor story.

The narrative brings to life significant and telling moments along the journey. I want to read you this from page 128. Kelty wanted to tame opposition by galvanizing the unions with an industrial campaign - the \$8 a week general wage claim campaign and the 3% super claim added to it. He says we've got two campaigns going in the universe, and we know they're going to morph into one. We had to accelerate that plan and bring it a head to get the 3% for everybody.

Some unions only wanted a wage increase. For them superannuation was a lower priority. But it did not need to be an either/or choice - it could be a bit of both.

The ACTU wages committee backed the campaign Kelty wanted. Kelty went to see Keating at the Australian Government ministers offices at Treasury Place here in Melbourne, and told him he was confident of unanimous support from his colleagues.

This is Kelty speaking: Keating said, just as a matter of historical record of interest, the advice of the Treasury, it said that there had been plenty of silly ideas the officer had seen in six years. This is one of the silliest.

He added, here is the advice of the department of industrial relations: even if you had wanted to do it, you can't do it, because it's unconstitutional. As I see it that's one hurdle.

Kelty asked Keating what his response would be to such sage advice. Keating said, 'Don't worry about it. I'm supporting you. You'll learn. Once I go into bat for you, I don't care what these people say.' You know you read that and you feel tingles down your spine.

This is a wonderful story written by a really remarkable human being. As I understand it this was originally a thesis Mary wrote for her Masters of Philosophy at the University of New South Wales, and she undertook that, again, as I understand it, as a vow that she took with her husband, Michael, after surviving the illness that Marcia referred to earlier as an act of thanks, I guess, for her life, and wanting to do something that she wouldn't otherwise do.

Mary - thank you. Thank you for doing this.

Of itself, that's a wonderful idea. But what you've given us is the best record to date of this fantastic campaign for this incredible achievement. I suspect most of you are in the room today because you know Mary. Because you know what a remarkable human being she is. I've known Mary now for a number of years. I had the delight back in December of travelling with Mary from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. Mary's a person of enthusiasm, she is a person of vitality. She is a person with an absolute joy of life. All of that comes through when you read this book.

She is a person who goes about her business with grace, with dignity and with honour. Along with Marcia, in the Labor movement she is a person, in the way she conducts her business, is a model I hope to aspire to in terms of how I go about my own. She is an absolute ornament to the movement to which we all belong.

So this is a great thing because it is a book written by a wonderful person who has told a wonderful story about a wonderful achievement of a wonderful movement to which so many of us in this room are dedicated.

Enjoy this book. It is fantastic reading.