

## Newsmaker: Julia Gillard



This past June, Julia Gillard became the first female Prime Minister of Australia. She is back in the news as a result of federal elections held in August and her decision to include the man she replaced, Kevin Rudd, in her government as foreign affairs minister.

Gillard, the second of two daughters, was born in Wales in September 1961. After being advised that a warmer climate would help her recover from bronchopneumonia, Gillard's family moved to Australia when she was about five. Once in

Adelaide, Gillard's parents, Moira and John, both worked in the healthcare field.

Gillard studied at the University of Adelaide. While there, her interest in politics was sparked and she moved to Melbourne to work with the Australian Union of Students (AUS). She ultimately graduated from the University of Melbourne with a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Laws; she also became President of the AUS. In 1987, Gillard went to work practicing employment law at a Melbourne firm. She became a partner in 1990.

It was in 1998 that Gillard was elected to the House of Representatives. She quickly moved up the ranks of the Labor party, which was the opposition party at the time. In 2007, the Labor Party won the federal elections and the Party's leader, Kevin Rudd, ascended to the Prime Minister's post. Gillard became Australia's first female Deputy Prime Minister.

In June 2010, Gillard requested a leadership ballot, which would determine who should be leader of the Labor Party and, thus, Prime Minister. When it became clear that Gillard would win the vote, Rudd stepped aside and Gillard was elected without opposition. Gillard was sworn in as the 27<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister of Australia on June 24, 2010.

Shortly thereafter, in July, Gillard called for elections for the House of Representatives to be held in August. Initially, Gillard was expected to emerge from the elections in a stronger position, but that has not happened. Following "post election negotiations with the Australian Greens and Independent Members of the House of Representatives, a new Government led by" Gillard emerged this month. <http://www.pm.gov.au/> (last visited Sept. 11, 2010). According to the Christian Science Monitor: "[T]his is not a coalition government. Instead, the independents have only committed themselves to supporting the minority government on finance bills and no-confidence motions. That means that Gillard . . . will have to court individual legislators every time she wants to pass legislation." <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-Pacific/2010/0907/Australia-s-Julia-Gillard-forms-new-government-on-shaky-ground> (last visited Sept. 11, 2010).

For her part, Gillard has greeted the election results with a speech promising to work diligently for the Australian people over the next three years and an understanding that her government will be held accountable. (The video is available at <http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/asiapcf/09/11/australia.cabinet/index.html?hpt=Sbin>, last visited Sept. 11, 2010).

Gillard has never married and has no children. She is reported to live with her partner of about four years, Tim Mathieson. Australia's "First Bloke" had a long-term career in hair salons, and recently switched to real estate; he has three children.

In addition to being Australia's first female Prime Minister, Gillard has attracted some attention because she is an atheist. She can also count herself as Australia's first Prime Minister to have never married, and the first in decades to have been born outside Australia or to lead a minority government.