

# Perhaps it's something in the blood

When the Member for Charlton, Kelly Hoare, needs a sounding board, someone to run an idea past, she often turns to the one person in the world she knows she can trust: her dad, the former Member for Charlton, Bob Brown.

"Bob says that as a politician, you can't change the world, but you can help change some people's lives for the better," says Hoare. "He also says you shouldn't consider it a failure if you don't achieve your ideal. It's something you tried to do and that's the most important thing: You tried. And you must enjoy yourself while trying."

Kelly Hoare is one of nine members of the House of Representatives whose fathers were also Members.

They include some of the nation's most senior politicians, including the Member for Mayo, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, whose grandfather, Sir John Downer, was a Senator in the first Australian Parliament. Mr Downer's father, Alexander Russell Downer, was the Member for the South Australian seat of Angas, and served as Minister for Immigration in two Menzies' Ministries.

The Member for Richmond, Community Services Minister, Larry Anthony, is the third member of his family to hold the seat. His grandfather, Hubert Lawrence Anthony, and father, Doug Anthony, also represented Richmond.

Labor's leadership duo in the House, Opposition Leader and Member for Brand, Kim Beazley, and Deputy Leader, Shadow Treasurer and Member for Hotham, Simon Crean, both followed their fathers into the Parliament.

Kim Beazley Snr was the Member for Fremantle and Minister for Education in the Whitlam Government, and Frank Crean was the Member for Melbourne Ports and Whitlam's Treasurer.

Interestingly, Shadow Attorney-General Robert McClelland's father, former Senate President Douglas McClelland, tried to discourage his son from a life in politics. "He wanted me to focus on the law," says Robert McClelland. "He pointed to the remuneration, the demands on your time and the pressures of the lifestyle. He also reflected on what it had cost his family for him to be a politician."

All to no avail. Perhaps it's something in the blood – McClelland's grandfather was an organiser with the Australian Workers' Union and a Labor Member of the New South Wales Parliament.

Perhaps it was the talk around the McClelland dinner table about ALP principles and the work of party heroes such as John Curtin and Ben Chifley.

Whatever the cause, young Robert was infused with the Party's culture and traditions from an early age, joined the Party young and held various offices within the New South Wales branch before being preselected as ALP candidate for the seat of Barton, which he successfully contested in the 1996 election.



*Robert McClelland says his father encouraged him to talk to people openly. Portrait: Senator the Hon Douglas McClelland (1985) by Reginald Campbell (1923 - ), Historic Memorials Collection, Canberra – courtesy of the Parliament House Art Collection, Joint House Department, Canberra ACT.*

Says McClelland: "My father instilled two very important things in me: Always talk to people openly – he encouraged me to express my views. And he taught me that Australians hate fanatics. To win an argument you must have a balanced position."

Doug McClelland, who spent 25 years in the Senate, also told young Robert that regardless of which party was in power, a great number of Australians will do well but there will always be many who are underprivileged. "He said the key objective of the Labor Party was to try to even up the score for those people," says McClelland.

McClelland says that one of the major differences between his father's experience of politics and his own is the fact that, at least early in his father's career, you could be successful in the party simply by force of your personality. "These days, much more is expected," says McClelland. "If you want a position of leadership, you must have expertise in scrutinising legislation and policy, and that means some sort of formal training, preferably at a tertiary level."

McClelland points to another difference between his father's time in politics and his own: his father often invited people from opposing political parties to his room for a social drink. "He represented New South Wales, so more often than not he'd invite in a Country Party person from his State," says McClelland. "He got on very well with those people. That sort of thing doesn't happen these days."

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# Perhaps it's some

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Bob Katter says he entered the House to help restore the fortunes of North Queensland.

One of the non-Labor politicians who may have socialised with Senate President McClelland back in the 1980s was the then Member for Kennedy, Bob Katter Snr.

Interestingly, the Katter family links with Labor go back to the 1890s when Katter's great uncle Richard Arida helped fund the setting up of the fledgling Labor movement in Queensland. Later, from the 1930s through to the early 1950s, Carl Katter was ALP Branch President in Cloncurry.

The Labor Party split in the early 1950s saw many of the Party's North Queensland branches go over to the Democratic Labor Party and eventually end up in the Country Party.

*'One of the reasons I entered the Federal House was to help restore the fortunes of our region.'*

**Bob Katter, Member for Kennedy**

Bob Katter Snr held the seat of Kennedy for the Country Party, and then National Country Party, and finally the National Party of Australia, for 24 years between 1966 and 1990. The current member for Kennedy, Bob Katter Jnr, says his relationship with his father was never close. "We were ships crossing in the night," says Katter. "I knew my grandfather better than I knew my father. I was very sad not to enjoy a close relationship with my father and I've always tried with my son. I've attended nearly all the rugby league games he's played. I regard it as a sacred duty. My father only ever saw me play twice.

"It's sad and it's cruel, but the alternative is that no family men go into politics and that would skew the Parliament in a bad direction."

Bob Katter says the Katter family has always felt a strong sense of duty. "We are who we are," he says. "And it's our duty to go out and fight the good fight. If we don't do it, no one will. It's what's been expected of us always. It was expected of my grand dad, and my dad. Most certainly it was expected of me."

Bob Katter Jnr was a National Party Member in the Queensland State Parliament before entering the federal sphere to win his father's old seat in 1993.

Part of his motivation for moving to federal politics was what he saw as the destruction of many of the things that had been achieved for the people of North Queensland.

"In his maiden speech, my father said he wanted to see a great dam built at Emerald, coal mines open up in central Queensland, the wool industry return to prosperity, and Mount Isa become a great city," says Katter. "He saw all those dreams realised, but in the years since his death every one of them has been torn to pieces.

"There's been no new dams in Queensland for 20 years, the minimum price scheme for wool is gone and the wool industry shattered. Mount Isa's population has fallen dramatically in recent years. One of the reasons I entered the Federal House was to help restore the fortunes of our region."

The career of the Member for Scullin, Harry Jenkins, seems almost to mirror that of his father, Dr Harry Jenkins, who was also the Member for Scullin and Speaker of the House before he retired in 1985.

Dr Jenkins was the Deputy Speaker in the dying days of the Whitlam Government, and with the election of the Hawke Government in 1983, he was elected Speaker.

Harry Jnr had no particular interest in the Speaker's role when he entered Parliament in 1986 but was appointed to the Speaker's Panel and was Deputy Speaker by the time Labor lost the 1996 election. He is now second Deputy Speaker.

Mr Jenkins says that while there are similarities between his career and that of his father, in other ways they couldn't be more different. "Dad spent most of his political life in Opposition," he says. "My experience has been the reverse. With 10 of my 14 years as a Member in government, I'm part of a generation of Labor parliamentarians who've been able to translate some of our ideas into practice."

As for changes in political outlook between the generations, Harry Jenkins says that when his father was first elected to the House of Representatives in 1969, multinationals were considered by many in the Labor Party to be one of the main enemies of working people.

"With globalisation," says Jenkins, "we now have an understanding that those sorts of institutions are very important to ensuring that the working class people I represent have opportunities."

One of the trials for those who have followed in their fathers' political footsteps is that they must sometimes endure claims that they are the beneficiaries of nepotism.

Harry Jenkins strongly rejects the claim: "When those sorts of things are thrown at me as barbs, I think to myself 'If only it'd been that way.' But party political life is not like that," he says. "In fact, in some ways, within the machinations of the party, it counts against you if your father was a member. On the other hand, within the electorate, most of the people who mention my father do so with great affection and it's always been a big advantage for me in my representative role to have followed on from him."

One of the key lessons Jenkins learnt from his father was the idea of political cycles. "He said always keep an eye open to opportunities that the future will present," says Jenkins. "Political life is about putting yourself in the best position you can to take advantage of opportunities. He also taught me to be very careful of those you trust in political life."

Member for Charlton, Kelly Hoare, says parliamentarians are more wary of their party colleagues than they were when her father Bob Brown was first elected to the seat in 1980.

*'You can't change the world, but you can help change some people's lives for the better.'*

**Kelly Hoare, Member for Charlton**

"And there doesn't seem to be the great friendships developing between Members of Parliament these days," says Hoare. "Maybe it was the style of the Old Parliament House that allowed friendships to flourish. Maybe it's our workload. Also, there are fewer opportunities to relax out of hours these days, so you don't get much opportunity to know people socially."

Bob Brown was Minister for Land Transport and Shipping Support, with responsibilities for Australia Post in the Hawke Government. He retired at the 1998 election. Kelly Hoare won her father's old seat at that election.

The Member for Hunter, Joel Fitzgibbon, started his political work for the Labor Party at a very young age. "I did letterbox drops as a seven-year-old and got a milkshake at the end of the day as a reward," he says. "I've grown up with politics. I lived with it at the dinner table and I've got a strong memory of being much more politically aware than my peers at school."

*'Politics is not something you learn at university. It's something you learn in the university of experience.'*

**Joel Fitzgibbon, Member for Hunter**

Eric Fitzgibbon was the Member for Hunter between 1984 and the 1996 election, when Joel Fitzgibbon successfully contested the seat. "My father has not influenced my direction in politics," says Joel Fitzgibbon. "He stays out of my way and gives advice only if it's asked for."

Having been raised the son of a Member of the House of Representatives, Joel Fitzgibbon says he entered Parliament with no illusions about his status. "I went to Canberra fully conscious of my irrelevance," he says. "Some who enter Parliament think they've secured a hold on power and influence. They soon learn they're a small fish in a very big sea. I knew only too well how competitive the place was and how difficult it would be to make a mark."

One advantage for Fitzgibbon in taking over his father's old seat was that he knew the electorate well. "I knew which functions to go to," he says, "and how to manage my time given the enormous commitments the job entails."

Says Fitzgibbon: "Politics is not something you learn at university. It's something you learn in the university of experience. Having grown up with it and been exposed to it every day, it's not surprising that the children of politicians seek to follow their fathers into the 'industry'."

*Article by Peter Cotton, a freelance journalist from Canberra.*

*Having grown up with politics, it's not surprising that the children of politicians follow their fathers into 'the industry'. Pictured left to right: Joel Fitzgibbon, Harry Jenkins and Kelly Hoare.*

