

## **Julia's just the new Kevin, only cooler - for now**

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Meet the new boss, same as the old boss. Julia Gillard has a job on her hands - trying to show she's the unKevin while proving 99 per cent of the stuff she was complicit in during his 2-year run is still a hot idea.

This is an interesting juggling act, not to mention the problem she has with making herself believe there's some sense to it.

There isn't any, but given how everybody in the Australian Labor Party and whoever's been polled in the past few months feels about Kevin, she can get away with it for the time being.

That bone she tossed to the miners on Thursday said a lot: "Today I am throwing open the government's door to the mining industry. And I ask that, in return, the mining industry throws open its mind.

In other words, she's opening the door for everybody involved to agree with her. The government won't proceed with its pro-super profits tax ad campaign and would the miners please drop their rather effective media screamers against said tax?

They agreed, but that probably hinges on how open Julia keeps the door. The miners are not to be messed with and they can easily spot a jive tune even from the cheap seats.

She's somehow got to prove she's really different from Kevin but not really too different.

That's a problem because we've seldom had a prime minister who got the boot so quickly before the rest of us had a shot at him.

As in most fair-minded democratic countries, everybody wants to be part of the lynch mob and not just let a privileged few have all the fun. 01' Julia has a limited amount of time to tell the mob to chill out (forget all that "honeymoon" stuff — this is going to be a quickie in a motel room unless she makes some real adjustments really fast).

And can we please stop the explanations of how this happened because Rudd didn't schmooze the various factions or that the news media was somehow involved in the downfall? There's truth to all that stuff, but the main reason is most people stopped liking Rudd. Seen any polls lately? When he was a winner the factions didn't care about his nerdiness except maybe to grouse and grumble about it off the record. And as for the news media, try as some of them did for a while, they couldn't get away from the fact that his popularity was about the same as Lindsay Lohan's in the back

seat of a police car.

But remember the good old days? I think it was last Monday or Tuesday. The standard logic was that Rudd would still probably squeak through an election and then maybe face a challenge from Gillard.

Then in one afternoon all our logic became not so standard when it fell apart because of dumb thinking, myself included.

Somebody doesn't fall from 70 per cent popularity to the pits in a short time without something going a little wrong.

In retrospect, it's not even sure whether Rudd could have saved himself with, say, a tweak on the super profits tax or a comeback-kid approach on the Building the Education Revolution program. He was dead meat as far as the voters go, but we kept telling ourselves, nah, look how well he did against John Howard in the last election.

The most dangerous thing about the current situation is that it's unpredictable, and politicians like things to be predictable.

You need a career path. We in the media like things to be sort of predictable - by us. But when nobody has any serious idea where it's all going, well, flying blind can be fun, too. We've had three opposition leaders and two government leaders since the last election. We're working on the stabilisers in the back, skipper.

The next round of polls should show some bounce for Gillard. If they don't, she's got real problems, but the entire history of these things is that people are so relieved to get rid of somebody that they react positively to whoever pulled the plug. Gerald Ford got immediate high ratings when he took over from Richard Nixon after Watergate. (And I by no means here equate Kevin with Nixon, who was arrogant, paranoid and a crook. Kevin was not a crook.)

Julia should be top of the pops for awhile because of the novelty factor of being a female and cooler than Kevin (not exactly the hardest job in the world), plus we're all still getting over the shock of how this happened, literally overnight.

Two of the most telling things will be how Tony Abbott handles the new situation and how Gillard does or doesn't change the resource super profits tax to the miners' satisfaction.

For Tony, it's a be-careful-what-you-wish-for game now because Julia is more of a moving target than he's been used to.

Kevin had become a piñata with a slight pulse, but Julia can dance. For Julia, saying one thing to the mining industry and not doing much else will get those anti-government ads cranked up again as quickly as a Canberra coup.