Today I pay tribute to Senator Chris Evans and Attorney General Nicola Roxon who will step down from the Cabinet immediately.

I thank them both for their tireless efforts in Government since 2007 and in Opposition. They have worked in critical portfolios and leave a proud legacy of Labor reforms which have helped create a stronger, fairer modern Australia.

Their departure leaves big shoes to fill. But it paves the way for fresh talent, new ideas and new energy during the days of governing in 2013. It means a rejuvenated team who will keep building a smarter, fairer modern Australia.

Senator Evans has led Labor in the Senate since 2004 and acted as Prime Minister on several occasions. He has served as Minister in the demanding portfolios of Tertiary Education, Skills, Science and Research, Immigration and Citizenship and Workplace Relations.

He implemented substantial changes that transformed the nation’s tertiary education system. An additional 190,000 students are now studying at university – many of them the first in their families to do so.

Elected to the Senate in 1993, Senator Evans established the National Workforce Development Fund, the first employer-led training partnership that ensures we are training Australians for jobs not just for the sake of training.

As Immigration Minister, Senator Evans shaped the temporary and permanent skilled migration system to serve our economy and restored integrity to the 457 visa program. He abolished Temporary Protection Visas and detention debt and introduced Labor's detention values for the treatment of asylum seekers.

Ms Roxon was elected as the Member for Gellibrand in 1998.

As Australia’s first female Attorney General, she will be remembered for her passion for law reform. I will always be grateful for her help in establishing the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

She has fearlessly taken on big tobacco and driven Australia’s world-leading plain packaging laws, winning international recognition.

As Minister for Emergency Management, she has been at the helm of the nation’s response to natural disasters on many occasions.

As Health Minister, Ms Roxon oversaw major reforms to Australia’s public hospital, primary care and preventative health systems.
I know they will continue to work hard for their constituents in Western Australia and in the electorate of Gellibrand and wish them and their families the best for the future.

Chris Bowen will replace Senator Evans as Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Science and Research. He will also have responsibility for Small Business.

Mark Dreyfus will replace Ms Roxon as Attorney General and Minister for Emergency Management, relinquishing the role of Cabinet Secretary to Jason Clare, who retains Home Affairs and Justice.

Brendan O’Connor will become Minister for Immigration and Citizenship whilst Mark Butler takes on Housing and Homelessness.

Mike Kelly enters the Ministry as Minister for Defence Materiel.

I also welcome new Parliamentary Secretaries Yvette D’Ath (Climate Change and Energy Efficiency), Kelvin Thompson (Trade) and Melissa Parke (Mental Health, Homelessness and Social Housing) and thank Justine Elliot for her contribution in the Trade portfolio.

I will recommend to Her Excellency the Governor-General that new members of the Ministry be sworn in on Monday 4 February 2013.

A ballot for the Senate leadership position will be held at Monday’s caucus meeting.

CANBERRA

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