



**Joan: The colourful memoir of the remarkable,
ground-breaking Joan Child, the Australian Labor
Party's first woman Member of Federal
Parliament and the first woman Speaker of the
House**

Graeme Johnstone

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Joan: The colourful memoir of the remarkable, ground-breaking Joan Child, the Australian Labor Party's first woman Member of the House of Representatives and the first woman Speaker of the House and Australia's Permanent Delegate to the European Parliament. At the same time she managed to care for her frail and elderly parents who lived with her! Joan Child entered Parliament in 1974, midway through the boisterous times of the Whitlam Government - sitting in the House on the day of infamous Dismissal - and left as Paul Keating was challenging Bob Hawke for the Prime Ministership. She gained an astonishing 9% swing at her first tilt at the Liberal-held seat of Henty, missing out by a handful of votes. She then won it, lost it, and won it again, ultimately turning it into a safe ALP seat. Her empathy and understanding of the needs of her constituents endeared her to her community and her sharp political brain out manoeuvred her opposition. Tiny and soft-spoken, dogged and feisty, Joan Child was an acknowledged women's rights activist, a resolute anti-Vietnam campaigner and a staunch supporter of the 'refuseniks' - citizens blocked from seeking to leave the USSR. She met all men as equals, bowing low to none. From her early days growing up in rural Beechworth to her retirement in bayside Melbourne and dying, aged 91 in 2013, it was an eventful, roller-coaster ride; an inspirational, history-making journey. She was 'Joan'.

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