

# date with kate

## THIS WEEK Kristina Keneally

**Kristina Keneally** is not only the 42nd Premier of NSW but is also the first woman and first American-born person to hold the office. **Kate Waterhouse** chats to the 42-year-old about life in the public eye, family and fashion for an insight into the private side of the politician.

You must be very busy with the flood crisis. How is NSW helping Queensland and Victoria?

We have been sending people, equipment and money north of the border. We have been able to send well over 180 people to Queensland.

What's it like being in the public eye?

There are the moments at home in the track pants and the ugg boots but it was perhaps one of the more surprising parts of the job. I had a public profile as a minister but it certainly changed when I became Premier. It's probably been the hardest on my kids. I take them to Westfield Eastgardens to get school shoes and people come up and start talking to me, which I love, and my kids are just rolling their eyes, thinking, "Can we just get our school shoes and go home?"

How does your family cope with you being on call?

Well, my boys in particular seem to give me no credit for being Premier. Just yesterday, the boys had been arguing over the television and I said, "The Governor-General is on the phone! Keep it down!" - I spoke to her about the floods. In the middle of it, my son decided to walk in and interrupt me to ask if he could have a biscuit and the other one came in looking for a pair of nail clippers and I said to them afterwards, "At what point did you think it was OK to interrupt mum while she is on the phone to the Governor-General?"

What are your hobbies?

I'm an avid bike rider. I always have been and when I was younger,



Power lunch ... Premier Kristina Keneally takes a quick break from running NSW to talk to Kate Waterhouse at Brasserie Bread. Photo: Anthony Johnson

before children, I used to do country bike rides but the diary doesn't permit that much training time any longer. But my bike ride to work each day is pretty important to me.

How do you deal with criticism? Are you an emotionally tough person?

Well, I think that I am and when I was elected to Parliament I took a view that my whole identity wasn't going to be wrapped up in being a member of parliament. My self-worth wasn't having those initials "MP" after my name and I made a promise to myself that I would never let that become the situation. Secondly, the thing that made me a stronger person was when I lost my daughter Caroline at stillbirth; that brought out a toughness in me. People now say to me, "How do you get out of bed every day doing the job you do?" You always have critics and I think there were times when I literally couldn't get out of bed and that was because of grief, loss and depression and having found the strength in me to survive, that just puts in perspective the battles I face.

Do your family think you're tough or do they see a softer side?

One of my advisers once said that she watched me glare at someone at a press conference and she said, "I think we know what Daniel and Brendan get at home now when they get in trouble." But, at the same time, I do like a laugh.

It's an exciting time, having so many women in power.

It's quite exhilarating. On the night Julia Gillard became the Prime

Minister, I went to my boys' school and some of the little year 3 girls came running up to me and said, "Miss, there are girls in charge everywhere," and I thought, "Isn't that lovely, being eight and to be able to look at the leadership of your nation and to see women in a number of different roles." What powerful imagery for them growing up.

You were a champion soccer player at university.

[Laughs] Those days are behind me! I had knee surgery and it was a result of a soccer injury when I was about 19, so I had to hang up my soccer boots and that's when I first ran for student government at my university. I loved politics but I never really had time to do it because I always had sports training.

and I definitely spent more time in soccer boots than heels and skirts and appreciation for clothing came much later in life.

Do you enjoy dressing up now?

I do. My husband bought me a book called *What Not to Wear* and he bought it as a joke because he thought it always took me forever to get ready but it was one of the most useful things he ever bought me. Trinny and Susannah probably saved the marriage in some tiny little way!

Biggest indulgence?

A hot bath and *Law & Order* reruns on television.

### bite size

**WE WENT TO** Brasserie Bread, Banksmeadow.  
**WE DRANK** Skim flat white and skim cappuccino.  
**WE ATE** Wholemeal sourdough toast with rhubarb and raspberry jam.  
**KRISTINA WORE** Leona Edmiston.



Would you say you're a bit of a tomboy?

I certainly was growing up. I wasn't a girly girl

Check out Kate's full candid interview with Kristina Keneally at <http://bit.ly/katekristina>



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