



by Sarah Lang



PRIME TIME TO TALK

Jacinda's pregnancy is great news, says one working mum – especially if it opens up discussion about the messy reality of the work/baby juggle

What was your reaction to news of the 'First Sprog'? A gasp, a fist pump, a tear? I had the warm fuzzies, too. There's nothing more beautiful than a couple in love, and who want to be parents, expecting a baby. My Facebook feed just couldn't deal. The emojis weren't up to the task of conveying all the delight and admiration, especially after realising Jacinda had led successful coalition negotiations while suffering morning sickness. "F***ing wonder woman! My first trimesters I took baths.

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That's all," one woman posted. "What can't Jacinda do?" posted another. But even as I happily pictured a glass ceiling shattering into shards, I felt an unmistakable jolt of concern (while worrying that my concern betrayed the sisterhood). Yes, as Helen Clark tweeted, "Every woman should have the choice of combining family and career". But could there be a tougher combo than prime minister and new mum, contactable for six weeks then back at work?

If anyone can make it work, it's Jacinda Ardern. I voted for Jacinda. I admire the

hell out of her. I'm not worried about the effect of her dual roles on the country. Jacinda will be brilliant at both, but trying to excel at both will take a physical and emotional toll. Because until you have a baby, you don't know how hard it will be (though you might think you do). Holly Walker, who had a baby as a Green MP, said the attempt to do both nearly broke her. "I was also really sleep deprived, really overwhelmed, really stressed, really anxious," Holly said. "I felt like I was tearing

myself in two every time I went to work in the morning." Maybe we can have it all, but can we have it all at the same time? It will certainly help to have a stay-at-home partner, enough paid help, and the ability to call Winston "maternity cover".

And yes, a male prime minister with a baby on the way would also be a thing, because both of you get woken up. Not until you're an insomniac or a parent can you understand why sleep deprivation is an established method of torture. Then again, Jacinda's partner Clarke or a nanny

could handle the night shift, while Jacinda could get some industrial-strength earmuffs. And let's support her wholeheartedly if she decides to formula feed. Trying to juggle breastfeeding and expressing milk with the top job would be logistically difficult and physically taxing.

Many of us are thinking about these things. Surely we should be able to talk about them without fear of being shut down as a traitor to feminism, or a nosyparker (come on, we're all nosy about this). Surely, rather than donning rose-coloured glasses, we can have robust conversations about the dilemma of the often-exhausted working mother, and put in place systems to counter patriarchal values in the workplace, where, for instance, after-work schmoozing often helps you up the ladder, and part-time or flexible hours are seen as slacking off. ✱



What do you think?

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