

Media release

23 March 2015

Xenophon, Palmer launch new book on Crossbench power in Australia

“For 27 of the last 30 years, Australian Governments have needed to engage a crossbench or convince the opposition to pass any legislation.” – Richard Denniss

A new book, *Minority Policy: Rethinking Governance When Parliament Matters*, explores the influence of marginal parliamentarians in Australian Politics. It will be launched by Senator Nick Xenophon and Clive Palmer MP at Parliament House, 12:30pm Tuesday 24 March.

Drawing on the experiences of two former policy advisers who have worked at the coalface of policy-making, as well as on examples from the last two parliaments, *Minority Policy* takes the discussion up to and beyond the introduction of the new Senate in July 2014 to take in the significant impact of the complex makeup of the Upper House.

“In both politics and academia, what stands out to me is the huge gap between what we think and what we do in our parliament. In this book we end the hype over hung parliaments and examine it for what it is: Parliament,” Brenton Prosser said.

“With pre-election polls showing the UK is expecting another minority government, the Australia setting this book explores is of relevance across Westminster systems,” Dr Prosser said.

“In political science and much of the media, it seems that this nation has not yet come to terms with the reality that minority government is the norm,” Australia Institute Executive Director, Richard Denniss said.

“From the famous independents ‘Group Hug’, to the GST Handshake, to Gillard and the Greens Carbon Tax joint press conference, crossbenches have provided some of the most memorable moments in recent Australian political history.

“Brenton and I looked at the influence of marginal parliamentarians both within the major parties and on the cross benches in the formations of contemporary public policy.”

“We found a major impact of crossbench and backbench members not only for the outcomes of public policy, but also the work of policy scholars, departmental policy makers and policy advocates.

“It’s been the reality, the new norm, for a long time now. Governments should expect to find themselves negotiating to get their legislation passed and can expect to be judged on their success as negotiators,” Dr Denniss said.

For media enquiries, please contact:

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Endorsements of *Minority Policy*:

“You can't understand contemporary Australian politics if you don't understand how the crossbench and the backbench work. Where many have tried to dismiss the role of the independents, minor parties and backbenchers, this book provides insight into how policy is really made and how politics really works.”

- Former Independent MP Tony Windsor

“This book offers a fresh approach to doing public policy, one that captures the reality of modern Australian politics where crossbenchers and backbenchers are serious players. The authors link policy studies with both political science and the real world of politics in new and thoughtful ways.”

- John Warhurst, Emeritus Professor of Political Studies, ANU

Minority Policy media launch will be held in Private Dining Room 5, Parliament House at 12:30 Tuesday 24 March.

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