Acknowledgments

For an issue that so engages the attention of politicians and public servants for an intense period of about a month every couple of years, surprisingly little has been published on the topic of caretaker conventions. This monograph draws together that research, and the guidance documents developed by public service central agencies to address issues of practical concern in managing the business of government during an election campaign.

As we show in this second edition monograph, conventions are by nature, dynamic. They evolve through experience and political practice. This monograph addresses the theoretical underpinnings of the caretaker principles, traces their progressive institutionalisation in recent decades, and examines some contemporary challenges for their interpretation and observance. It is important to note however, that while our treatment of the guidance documents is currently accurate, they are ‘live’ documents that will adapt and change as experience and events dictate. It will therefore be necessary for practitioners and others with an interest in the trajectory of the caretaker conventions to monitor such changes and to consider them in the context of our arguments as laid out here.

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