Foreword to the Second Edition

This revised, highly successful monograph on caretaker conventions by Jennifer Menzies and Anne Tiernan updates their substantial review of the rules and conventions applying in the lead-up to elections across the many Australasian jurisdictions. The first edition was published by ANZSO in 2007. It pioneered research work into this area and provided a much-needed comparative assessment of conventions and protocols in caretaker periods. Their original 2007 edition was then the ninth research monograph in the ANZSO series with ANU Press; and this one appears now when the ANZSO series of research monographs numbers some 40 titles – ranging from studies of policy issues and redesign, public management, performance and implementation studies, integrity and accountability analyses, and fundamental aspects of good governance. The entire series is available under the ANZSO monograph series at http://press.anu.edu.au/titles/australia-and-new-zealand-school-of-government-anzso-2/.

As these authors suggest, observed protocols and ethical standards of behaviour at times of elections (or in the immediate wake of elections if results are unclear) are important to the fabric and integrity of our democratic system. Caretaker conventions clarify decision-making roles and responsibilities, and provide confidence in the wider political system that governments cannot inappropriately make executive decisions at the conclusion of their parliamentary term. They guard against outgoing governments improperly using executive powers to advantage their electoral prospects, and prevent them from taking partisan decisions with longer term consequences to which their main political challengers might not wish to commit. These conventions also serve to protect the apolitical and professional nature of our various public services, ensuring they are well-placed to serve whichever party wins the ensuing election, as well as ensuring that any new incoming government has maximum capacity to pursue its mandate without being unduly constrained by decisions taken immediately before the election.

Internal guidance has long been available to public servants working for Australian and New Zealand governments but such guidance has not been so widely available at the state and local government levels. This revised monograph provides a state of the art guidance on appropriate professional standards for those working at all levels of government in Australia and New Zealand.

ANZSO would like to acknowledge the involvement of the Institute of Public Administration Australia as an initial co-sponsor of this research and continues to look forward to cooperating on further monographs that promote high standards in public administration.

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