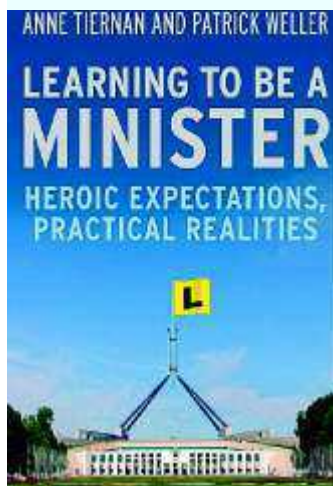




Learning to Be a Minister
 Anne Tiernan, Patrick Weller
 MUP, \$39.95.



FEDERAL governments do not change often in Australia. For all of the excitement of constant opinion polling, 24/7 political coverage and seemingly never-ending government crises, only six times in the 65 years since World War II has an Australian government been voted out of office. The upside is relative stability, but the drawback is that when governments do change, those coming into office have a fearsome amount to learn - especially if they are ministers, who typically have extremely busy schedules, vast responsibilities and almost impossible calls on their time. Any new or aspiring minister, and political punters interested in the workings of government, would be well served by reading *Learning to Be a Minister*. Based primarily on interviews with members of the Howard and Rudd Government and senior members of the public service, this work by Tiernan and Weller

reveals the web of relationships that surround a minister, different approaches to dealing with the demands of the job, how formal and informal authority interact, and how digital technology and the 24/7 news cycle have influenced the role of a Minister of the Crown.

The topic would be potentially dull for many people.

But Tiernan and Weller have made it entertaining and accessible through, in large measure, surprisingly candid opinions from ministers past and present - even though they are almost invariably anonymous.

The only regrettable feature of the book is that it talks of a Rudd Government in the present tense and of how well it works; subsequent events have rendered these elements of the book obsolete.

Martin Crotty