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978-0-521-70571-4 - An Introduction to Australian Public Policy: Theory and Practice

Sarah Maddison and Richard Denniss

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# AN INTRODUCTION TO AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC POLICY

## THEORY AND PRACTICE

**Sarah Maddison and Richard Denniss**

*An Introduction to Australian Public Policy: Theory and Practice* is the first book to comprehensively address both the **theoretical** and the **practical** aspects of policy making in Australia.

Written in an accessible style, this text is designed to introduce students to the real world challenges and skills involved in working in a range of policy roles. Drawing on their own experiences, the authors ground public policy theory in a number of key controversies to illustrate the contestable nature of the policy process. Key economic concepts are explained in detail using plain language, paving the way for discussion about the main roles and responsibilities of policy making.

Each chapter features case studies that outline contemporary policy issues, such as the deregulation of the financial system, 'Knowledge Nation', paid maternity leave, and the Northern Territory intervention. Including practical exercises on how to write policy briefs and media releases, this book is essential reading for anyone who needs to know how public policy is developed in Australia.

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The development of public policy has always been a combination of art and science. There is no doubt that medical researchers, sociologists and climate scientists have played an important role in highlighting the existence of policy problems and that economists, lawyers and political scientists have played an important role in developing solutions. But there is also no doubt that well organised lobby groups, well written press releases and well researched campaign slogans have had a similarly powerful effect.

The policy process in Australia, as in all developed countries, is full of grand visions, grand theories and grand gestures. It is also replete with contradictions, inherent tensions and wicked problems. It has ever been thus.

While the grand vision and the day-to-day politics may attract the most attention, the hard work of identifying emerging problems, developing innovative solutions and building support for change carries on relentlessly. Tens of thousands of public servants, academics, community groups, industry bodies and lobbyists work full time on aspects of the policy process as diverse as collecting field data to drafting new pieces of legislation. This book is aimed at those who seek a deeper understanding of the theory of policy, the practice of policy and, most importantly, the links between the two.

Like scientific knowledge, policy capacity is a scarce and valuable commodity. If Australia is to tackle the problems of the 21st century it will need to develop its policy capacity, both through increasing the number of people involved and deepening the understanding of those already there. This book should help achieve both of those goals.

Professor Allan Fels, AO

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