



# Quarterly Essay 60 Political Amnesia: How We Forgot How To Govern

*Laura Tingle*

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Whatever happened to good government? What are the signs of bad government? And can Malcolm Turnbull apply the lessons of the past in a very different world?

In this crisp, profound and witty essay, Laura Tingle seeks answers to these questions. She ranges from ancient Rome to the demoralised state of the once-great Australian public service, from the jingoism of the past to the tabloid scandals of the internet age. Drawing on new interviews with key figures, she shows the long-term harm that has come from undermining the public sector as a repository of ideas and experience. She tracks the damage done when responsibility is “contracted out,” and when politicians shut out or abuse their traditional sources of advice.

This essay about the art of government is part defence, part lament. In *Political Amnesia*, Laura Tingle examines what has gone wrong with our politics, and how we might put things right.

“There was plenty of speculation about whether Turnbull would repeat his mistakes as Opposition leader in the way he dealt with people. But there has not been quite so much about the more fundamental question of whether the revolving door of the prime ministership has much deeper causes than the personalities in Parliament House. Is the question whether Malcolm Turnbull – and those around him – can learn from history? Or is there a structural reason national politics has become so dysfunctional?”—Laura Tingle, *Political Amnesia*

Laura Tingle is political editor of the *Australian Financial Review*. She won the Paul Lyneham Award for Excellence in Press Gallery Journalism in 2004, and Walkley awards in 2005 and 2011. In 2010 she was shortlisted for the John Button Prize for political writing. She appears regularly on Radio National’s *Late Night Live* and ABC-TV’s *Insiders*.

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