



# **The Decline of Political Leadership in Australia?: Changing Recruitment and Careers of Federal Politicians**

*Jan Pakulski, Bruce Tranter*

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The authors of this book argue that changing recruitment patterns and career profiles of Australian federal MPs - analyzed in the context of trends towards factionalized patronage parties, opportunistic populism, party-bureaucratic careers and increasing fast tracking to the top - have reduced the parliamentary elite's quality, particularly since the 1990s. The declining quality of the Australian 'political class' is a major factor underlying the decline in public trust and confidence in federal parliamentarians. Major parties in Australia are weakened by voter-party dealignment, factional divisions, falling trust and declining membership. They gradually abandon the systematic recruitment and grooming of leaders, attempting instead to pick emerging leaders and vote winners: factional loyalists, media celebrities, and skillful party functionaries. This trend is aggravated by relentless media exposés that undermine the system of political recruitment by skewing it towards the selection of party bureaucrats, demagogues, celebrities and PR experts.

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