

## **Not always morbid or drear -- Oz Political reporting**

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### **All aboard the 'people skills' wild ride**

*Oz politics reduces to a contest between two major parties vying for the 'privilege' of knee-walking in Washington! Few nations could care less which lackey leads Australia in shameless servitude to America; however, a good piece deserves broad exposure regardless of its dreary subject. In support and appreciation the Cleaves Editorial Team voted to break their policy-ban on reporting political flea fights; we are therefore pleased to offer our readership an out-of-character piece from the Oz mass media - God forbid, it actually drips with dry humour, sarcasm, and dare I say it, 'wit,' all wrapped in a style usually characteristic of the Independent Media! Better watch your step, Ms Crabb, verve and genuine reporting are better left to the Independents!*



**Tony Abbott -- new leader of conservative party**

*Notwithstanding the above, it is with unreserved editorial enthusiasm we present the following report on the change of conservative leadership in Oz politics -- by the girl with the Amazonian keyboard, Annabel Crabb:*

### **All aboard the 'People Skills' wild ride**

Snap on your Speedos. It is going to be that sort of an election.

After the most wild and disordered week imaginable in conservative politics, the Liberal Party has staggered forth, somewhat to its own surprise, having adopted Tony "People Skills" Abbott as its federal parliamentary leader.

The party has turfed Malcolm Turnbull and ignored the public's popular choice in Joe Hockey.

Having spent the past two years agonising over the best way to move on from John Howard, the Liberal Party has instead placed itself in the hands of the man who most faithfully represents Mr Howard's legacy in the land of the political living.

And Mr Abbott himself, whose last federal election campaign was a tripping, cursing, roundhouse-punch-swinging triumph of political absurdity, now finds himself in charge

of the next one.

It is great news for politics nerds.

Mr Abbott rarely minces his words; he is candid, provocative, and a proper conservative who does not adjust his views to account for what he judges to be the fancy of his audience.

His contempt for Kevin Rudd, whom he has termed a "toxic bore", will make for thrilling political combat (his crush on Julia Gillard, one trusts, will respond to shock treatments administered discreetly by Liberal HQ's highly skilled re-education squad).

Mr Abbott's popular image is well-established - a political bruiser of the right wing, a muscular hard-line Catholic with a tendency to let his religious views colour his political activities.

This will be his first problem, especially among female voters.

In truth, People Skills has changed significantly in recent years.

He entered a Trappist phase after the defeat of the Howard government; a long, dark funk from which he rarely emerged except to bemoan his new and straitened living conditions, or set forth gauntly on yet another 200km bike ride.

But he emerged from his long confinement with some fascinating new views - an enthusiastic new interest in paid maternity leave, for example, and a redoubled interest in Indigenous affairs, which for Mr Abbott means regular lengthy trips to Indigenous communities; he spent the last parliamentary break working as a teacher in Cape York.

He is far from being the single-dimensional biffer that some voters see.

The question is: How quickly can he change his public image, especially in view of the fact that his policy position on the emissions trading scheme (ETS) might well dramatically truncate the period of time he has available before the next election?

Just like anyone who is interesting in politics, People Skills has a fabulous show-reel of howlers.

His old claim to be the ideological love-child of Mr Howard and Bronwyn Bishop, for example.

His rough treatment of the dying asbestosis victim Bernie Banton during the last election campaign.

His burst of pub language around the same time: "Shit happens, Tony", he told Lateline host Tony Jones when a biography of Mr Howard exposed new criticisms from Peter Costello.

"That's bullshit, Nicola, and you know it!" he snapped at his opposite number Nicola Roxon when she reproached him for showing up late for a pre-election Press Club debate.

Mr Abbott's new partnership is with deputy leader Julie Bishop, the Zsa Zsa Gabor of Australian politics whose dazzling smile at the lectern proclaimed her utter loyalty to her third political spouse in just over a year.

Having been denied forever the leadership team of Abbott and Costello, the Australian conservative voting public at least have been thrown the bone of an Abbott and a Bishop.

The pair of them have a shared passion for exercise; both endorphin addicts, the Abbott and Bishop leadership duo does not have a spare ounce of body fat between them and - in a time of penury within the Liberal Party - might have something to offer by way of attracting corporate sponsorship.

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***Annabel Crabb***

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<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/12/01/2758645.htm>

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