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Credlin & Co.: How The Abbott Government Destroyed Itself



Synopsis

Credlin was Abbott's enforcer, his disciplinarian, his counsellor, his brain, his mother. Her strength as a chief of staff was a sign of his weakness as a prime minister: she gave him the option of disengaging. Credlin allowed Abbott to be who he wanted to be: the good bloke, the philosopher, the weekend fire-fighter, the surfer, the orator, the man of action. If Abbott was a natural leader, it could have worked. But he lacked the most important attribute of all: judgement. Tony Abbott and his chief of staff, Peta Credlin, ran a brilliant campaign in opposition. But their approach led to disaster in government. When Abbott became prime minister, he and Credlin ruthlessly controlled ministers, backbenchers, the public service and the media. They shut out voices that questioned Abbott's way. Everything started to unravel. Credlin & Co. is the story of a relationship that determined the fate of a government. It shows in stunning detail the disastrous consequences of power abused, and the broken people left in its wake. Aaron Patrick is the print editor of the Australian Financial Review and author of *Downfall: How the Labor Party Ripped Itself Apart* (2013).

Book Information

File Size: 1512 KB

Print Length: 322 pages

Publisher: Black Inc. (February 1, 2016)

Publication Date: February 1, 2016

Sold by: Amazon Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B016PT6BFW

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #616,054 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #79

in Kindle Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > International & World Politics >

Australian & Oceanian #204 in Kindle Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government >

Specific Topics > Women in Politics #507 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Law >

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Customer Reviews

The story behind the implosion of the Abbott prime ministership has all the ingredients for a compelling book. Unfortunately, Credlin & Co. is not that book. After the missteps of the ruling Labour Government under Rudd and Gillard, the Liberal party was in a great position to establish a government that could enact meaningful reform. While the country largely escaped the impact of the Great Recession, a slow down in the Chinese economy saw Australia's national income decline. The time for decisive action was now - but Tony Abbott failed to understand that leading a ruling party is different to leading an opposition party. While the stars appeared to align in favour of Abbott, he managed to grab defeat from the jaws of victory. The book is a somewhat disjointed description of the Abbott era. It does a fair job of describing the what, when and how but does not delve into the why. For those who follow the daily goings-on in Canberra, the book may read well but for those who are more removed from the day to day dramas it is harder to follow the narrative and put events in their proper place. Underpinning the entire story, as evidenced by the title, was the role played by Peta Credlin as Abbott's Chief-of-Staff and main-minder. Clearly, she was very capable but her vision of how to manage the PM's office, to protect the PM from criticism and to promote his agenda (such as it was) was a large factor in his downfall. What gave rise to this relationship? What drove the antagonistic relationship with the cabinet and backbench? How did the personal dynamic between the two influence the business and political relationship? How did a girl from Wycheproof end up as the (de facto) most powerful person in the country? It would have been enlightening to learn more about these questions.

I live in the States, and while I still don't understand the finer points of Australian politics and governance, the book clearly explained what (I think) I needed to know to understand this story. That might be why some other reviewers found it repetitious, but as an outsider, with no awareness of the ongoing drama beyond a blurb in *The Week*, I really appreciated the background material where needed. And it seems to me a scrupulously fair and balanced book, showing a respect for the parties involved without whitewashing them. Proceeds go to a fund to train East Timor journalists in Australia in honor of Australian journalists killed in the invasion of East Timor. And it's a fascinating book!

A fascinating book. Much of the narrative had been the subject of rumour, and it was good to see the proof of happenings that the public long suspected but were never sure. The relationship

between the two main characters is probably unique in Australian political history. And it is probably not over yet.

The rise and fall of Tony Abbott was not a particularly edifying period in Australian history. The phrase "power behind the throne" comes to mind, but what a destructive and manipulative power this PM's chief of staff turned out to be. On his own, Tony Abbott seemed to be out of his depth; attack dog tactics might work well in opposition, but are singularly inappropriate for a prime minister. Peta Credlin seems to have brought out the worst in Abbott, and shielded him from any criticism, constructive or otherwise. Even allowing for exaggeration or "just one side of the story", this is a sorry tale of mismanagement, pig-headedness and, dare I say it, gross misuse of power. Let us hope that lessons have been learnt and that Australia can move on after too many recent leadership disasters.

Fascinating, but hard to read. A lot of background information, so detailed it's a very dense read.

Great insight into the Abbott period of LNP government and personalities involved.

I am not from Australia but I felt the writer provided enough background information on the main characters of the book to understand what he was saying.

Enjoyed this book immensely; it was an eye opener to read what goes on behind the scenes. I highly recommend it.

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