



Canberra Observed



David Denham AM
Associate Editor for Government
denham1@inet.net.au

Turnbull engineers clinical coup and a new Ministry is announced

The speed, efficiency and effectiveness of Turnbull’s coup has to be admired because, although there had been disquiet in the Liberal Party for several months about Tony Abbott’s performance, very few were prepared for what took place – particularly Mr Abbott himself. The challenge now is for Turnbull to maintain momentum before the unhappy troops re-group.

Tony Abbott was a paradox. He was a brilliant leader of the Opposition and after destroying Turnbull in 2009 he set about Rudd and Gillard in similar fashion. After being elected as Prime Minister he stopped the boats, eliminated the carbon tax and the mining tax as promised, then he appeared to grind to a halt. And that was the problem. There was no plan for the future. His attempts to reform health and education were unsuccessful, the budgetary deficit was going from bad to worse and traditional

manufacturing industries were suffering the death of a thousand cuts. It will be interesting to see how effective Malcolm Turnbull is in the next few months because if he doesn’t crash through with new directions and actions in that time he too will be vulnerable.

On 20 September 2015 Mr Turnbull announced his Ministry and in the table below (Table 1) I have shown what happened to those areas of government that are relevant to the ASEG and the geosciences.

Under Tony Abbott Ian Macfarlane was responsible for Industry and Science. It was a huge ministry and he appeared to manage it effectively. It was a logical grouping of portfolios. He has been dumped and there is now a Minister for Resources and Energy (Minister Frydenberg) and another for Industry and Science (Minister Pyne). We will have to wait and see how the old Ministry will be carved up because there is scope for duplication and turf wars. It should be

noted, however, that Minister Pyne will be supported by an Assistant Minister for Science (Karen Andrews) and an Assistant Minister for Innovation (Wyatt Roy), but, at the time of writing, their responsibilities have not been specified.

Of concern is the fact that water policy and resources is now the responsibility of the Minister for Agriculture. Water resources are also of concern to the resource industries and those of us who live in urban environments. Once again we will have to wait and see how it works.

Finally, I am not sure why ‘renewable energy technology development’ has been moved to the Environment Ministry. I would have thought that this activity would have been better off in the ‘Innovation and Science’ area. However, it may have been done to save the Australian Renewable Energy Agency and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation from destruction. Time will tell.

Table 1. Changes in ministerial responsibilities for areas of government most relevant to the geosciences after Malcolm Turnbull became Prime Minister.

Tony Abbott		Malcolm Turnbull*	
Minister for Industry and Science	Ian Macfarlane	Minister for Resources, Energy and Northern Australia:	Josh Frydenberg
Minister for Education and Training	Christopher Pyne	Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science (–renewable energy technology development)	Christopher Pyne
Minister for Agriculture	Barnaby Joyce	Minister for Education and Training:	Simon Birmingham
Minister for the Environment	Greg Hunt	Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources (+water policy and resources)	Barnaby Joyce
		Minister for the Environment (+renewable energy technology development)	Greg Hunt

*The full list of the Turnbull Ministry can be found on: <http://www.dpmc.gov.au/pmc/parliamentary-information>.