

## Frank Bongiorno on party politics

When Scott Morrison called the federal election, he did so on an apologetic note: 'I get it that people are tired of politics.' This was a predictable gesture from a prime minister: his term has been marked by a series of controversies that have raised many questions about his capacity to lead on some of the country's most pressing issues, though relatively few about his skill in internal party politics.

In his cover feature for the May issue of *ABR*, Frank Bongiorno looks at the crisis of political leadership in Australia crystallised by Morrison's government. To see the crisis clearly, Bongiorno highlights the way in which our contemporary political landscape has been shaped by the concentration of power in the hands of a professional class of party functionaries. As a result, the paths into politics through the major parties have narrowed and are now gatekept by factional operatives, casting doubt on the representativeness of our choice of representatives.



### Extracts from Frank Bongiorno's article

'Morrison normalises an antipathy to politics on the part of ordinary people, celebrates their disengagement except on election day, and impugns active citizenship by anyone who does not practise politics for a living.'

'Just as with the issues of marriage equality and fairer treatment of refugees, the parties have failed to lead, instead following in the wake of a public opinion formed independently of their own efforts and often at odds with party policy.'

'With figures such as Rosie Batty, Grace Tame, and Dylan Alcott, the National Australia Day Council is effectively forging a new kind of public leadership. It is spotting talent, identifying causes that matter, and providing a platform for public influence.'



Frank Bongiorno

### About Frank Bongiorno

Frank Bongiorno is Professor of History at the Australian National University. His *Dreamers and Schemers: A political history of Australia* will be published by La Trobe University Press, an imprint of Black Inc., in November 2022.

### Interviews

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