



Political Animal: The Making of Tony Abbott

David Marr

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Winner of the 2013 John Button Prize

The essential work on Tony Abbott is now an expanded, updated short book – and a crucial election-year companion.

Australians want to know: what kind of man is Tony Abbott, and how would he perform as prime minister?

In this dramatic portrait, David Marr shows that as a young Catholic warrior at university, Abbott was already a brutally effective politician. He later led the way in defeating the republic and, as the self-proclaimed “political love child” of John Howard, rose rapidly in the Liberal Party.

Marr shows that Abbott thrives on chaos and conflict. Part fighter and part charmer, he is deeply religious and deeply political. What happens, then, when his values clash with his need to win? This is the great puzzle of his career, but the closer he is to taking power, the more guarded he has become.

Political Animal's release as a Quarterly Essay in 2012, with its revelations of “the punch,” triggered intense scrutiny of Abbott's character, which culminated in Gillard's memorable speech accusing him of misogyny and, soon after, Abbott's worst ever public approval rating. This significantly expanded and updated short book gives the clearest picture yet of the man Abbott is and the prime minister he would be.

‘Since witnessing the Hewson catastrophe at first hand, Abbott has worn a mask. He has grown and changed. Life and politics have taught him a great deal. But how this has shaped the fundamental Abbott is carefully obscured. What has been abandoned? What is merely hidden on the road to power? What makes people so uneasy about Abbott is the sense that he is biding his time, that there is a very hard operator somewhere behind that mask, waiting for power.’ —David Marr, *Political Animal*

‘It's a more fair-minded and more generous assessment than many people, perhaps myself included, had expected. We have very different perspectives on the world but, to his credit, to some extent David Marr was able to step outside the standard leftist critique and appreciate that here was a more nuanced and complex character than perhaps many of the standard left-leaning critics would concede. Having said all of that, I certainly don't think all of his judgments were fair and I don't think all of his interpretations were correct.’ —Tony Abbott

David Marr has written for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Age* and the *Monthly*, been editor of the *National Times*, a reporter for *Four Corners*, presenter of ABC TV's *Media Watch* and now writes for the *Guardian*. His books include *Patrick White: A Life*, *The High Price of Heaven*, *Dark Victory* (with Marian Wilkinson) and five Quarterly Essays: *His Master's Voice*, *Power Trip*, *Political Animal*, *The Prince* and *Faction Man*.

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Kelsey Dehart:

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