USE OF THESES

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Partisans at the centre of government:  
The role of ministerial advisers in the  
Keating government 1991-96

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of  
The Australian National University.

Maria Maley

August 2002
I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

Maria Maley
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For Damian, Dominic and Julia
This thesis explores the role and significance of ministerial advisers in the Keating government (1991-1996). The role of ministerial advisers has changed substantially since they emerged in Australia in 1972, yet there is surprisingly little research about them. A study of the Keating period is useful as it tracks the evolution of the ministerial office over a critical period in its development: the Hawke-Keating years (1983-1996). In this period the role of adviser grew, developed in new ways and was entrenched as a permanent part of the machinery of government in Australia.

The thesis reports the results of a major qualitative research project undertaken in 1995-6, in which 64 ministers, advisers and public servants were interviewed. The thesis first maps the different elements of the role, focusing on the functions that advisers performed in government. It argues that advisers were very important in government because they could perform key roles for the executive which went beyond their traditional work of political and personal support. These roles were communication, steering policy and coordination. The study distinguishes different types of advisers based on their behaviour, and identifies what were the areas of, and causes of, variation in their work.

The thesis then explores several elements of the adviser's role in depth, touching on three key themes: how advisers engaged with departments, advisers' role in policy making, and their contribution to executive coordination.

The study reveals that advisers in the Keating years were an important part of the central machinery of government, located at the heart of decision making and policy making in Australia. Their central location, and the major development in their role, made them significant players in the structure and practice of government at this time.
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>ACTU</td>
<td>Australian Council Of Trade Unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Australian Labor Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS</td>
<td>Assistant Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASIO</td>
<td>Australian Security Intelligence Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>British Broadcasting Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DLO</td>
<td>Departmental Liaison Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>ERC</td>
<td>Expenditure Review Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAS</td>
<td>First Assistant Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FMO</td>
<td>Finance minister's office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDC</td>
<td>interdepartmental committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOP(S) Act</td>
<td>Member of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMO</td>
<td>Prime Minister's office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PM&amp;C</td>
<td>Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCAGA</td>
<td>Royal Commission on Australian Government Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>Senior Executive Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TO</td>
<td>Treasurer's office</td>
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Introduction

Australia's Parliament House is a sprawling, impressively modern building that carefully separates ministers and their staff from the public areas, the media and the offices that house backbenchers and Opposition MPs. The ministerial wing (or 'min wing' as it is known to insiders) has its own entrance, heavily guarded by security staff. Only those with passes may enter. It occupies two floors of offices which surround the Prime Minister's courtyard, a concrete square accessible only to the Prime Minister, which allows him to step directly from his office into his car without encountering anyone except his own staff.

Anyone who enters the ministerial wing would find it strangely quiet and still; wide softly-carpeted corridors absorb any noise and there is hardly anyone to be seen walking in the area. However opening the heavy door of a minister's office provides an altogether different picture. Inside is noisy, hectic and pressured. There are three or four rooms clustered around the minister's own office and an open area busy with staff. The phone rings constantly, often on several lines at once. Administrative staff walk briskly into the advisers' rooms to place more yellow sticky messages onto desks covered with sticky messages, and groaning with paper in overflowing trays. Televisions drone, constantly relaying what is happening in the House or the Senate. Advisers come and go but spend most of their time talking animatedly - on the phone or in meetings with lobby groups, public servants or other advisers. The office is stuffy and overheated, the air thick with a sense of self-importance and an energy fuelled by adrenalin, crisis and intrigue.

This is the world of the Australian ministerial adviser. What happens in this intense world, far from departments, MPs, journalists and the public, is rarely seen or written down but has become very important to the structure and practice of government in Australia.

The issue that underlies this research is the role and significance of ministerial advisers in our political system. The thesis explores the role of advisers by looking in detail at their role in the Keating government in 1995-96, and analyses the significance of advisers' work at this time. The central question which guides the research in the thesis is therefore: 'what was the role and significance of ministerial advisers in the Keating government?'
The role of ministerial advisers in Australian government has grown enormously since they emerged in 1972, and they have become increasingly important players in our political system. This has been a source of unease in some quarters, with concern expressed about what it is they do and how accountable they are for it, how powerful they are in policy making, and what impact they have on political-bureaucratic relationships. But while ministerial advisers are a topic of interest amongst the public and within academia, there is surprisingly little research about their role.

A study of the Keating period is useful for several reasons. The Labor period, comprising 13 years of government under Hawke (1983-1991) and then Keating (1991-1996), was a time of major change in political institutions in Australia. There were significant changes to the public service and to the operation of cabinet over this period (Campbell and Halligan 1992). This was also a critical period in the development of the ministerial office. The role of adviser grew, developed in new ways and was entrenched as a permanent part of the machinery of government in Australia.

The most comprehensive study of ministerial advisers in Australia (Walter 1986) was based on interviews with advisers in 1983, the first year of the Labor period. There has been insufficient research tracking how the role developed over the following 13 years. This thesis, which is based on empirical research in the final years of the Labor period (1995-96), can be set against Walter's study to chart the arc of development in the role over that period.

One minister in this study told his adviser that her job was to 'throw your body over exploding bombs'. This is a potent image of the 'bottom line' of the role - to protect the minister politically, even at the expense of your own interests. Yet while its 'bottom line' is clear, the scope and boundaries of the role are difficult to articulate. The role has traditionally encompassed political and personal support, often disparagingly called 'spin' and 'minding'. It now goes far beyond this.

The role of the ministerial adviser is difficult to capture because it is without a legislative or formal definition. The Member of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984,1 under which advisers are employed, merely states that 'an office-holder may, on behalf of the Commonwealth, employ, under an agreement in writing, a person as a member of the office-holder's staff'. This must be done 'in accordance with arrangements approved by the Prime Minister' and 'subject to

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1 Hereafter referred to as 'the MOP(S) Act'.

such conditions as are determined by the Prime Minister. What advisers are expected to do is defined individually and informally. Yet they have an organisational identity in government. At the core of their behaviour is an evolving set of expectations, practices and routines. These are understood by those who work as advisers and by those who work with them.

The role that advisers now play in government is one which is well understood by 'insiders' - ministers, advisers and public servants - but has not been articulated for those outside of government. When interviewing advisers, public servants and ministers in this study, they often expressed the view that 'what you are doing is important'. They meant two things: that advisers were important players in government; and that someone needed to research and make public what it was that advisers did. Some of the motivation for undertaking the research came from my own experience as an 'insider' - a former public servant and a former adviser - and my frustration at the gap between public or academic knowledge and the reality of the phenomenon.

**VALUE OF THE STUDY**

There are four reasons why the research is warranted. The first is that advisers have become an important part of the central machinery of government, located at the heart of decision making and policy making in Australia. An understanding of the role advisers play is vital to understanding the operation of the political executive today. It is essential to understanding the relationship between the political executive and the bureaucracy. It is also important that advisers' role be understood so that it may be evaluated. Until the role is articulated, we cannot begin to debate whether it is an appropriate one, and whether those who play it perform their duties adequately.

Secondly the evolving role of advisers in Australian government represents a major gap in political science literature. The gap is both empirical (what is it that they do?) and conceptual (how can we understand what they do?). The next chapter reviews the literature in the area. It reveals that there have been few empirical studies of the role of Australian ministerial advisers since their emergence in 1972. The most significant study was based on interviews done in 1983, at the start of the Hawke-Keating period (Walter 1986). Later studies (eg Dunn 1997, Ryan 1995) have not explored the role in its entirety. Nor do we have a conceptual framework for understanding what it is that advisers do. Apart from these empirical studies, Australian political science literature too
often ignores the work of advisers or makes assumptions about their behaviour. The research therefore can be justified in terms of its potential empirical and conceptual contribution.

A third reason for conducting this research is that there is considerable interest in international comparisons of advisory institutions but to date the Australian model of the ministerial office has not been well understood in such discussions. This is partly because of the gap in research in the area. However there are other reasons. In some cases analysis has been made without empirical investigation. For example, in a five-country comparison of executive advisory institutions Bakvis (1997) states Australia has weak political staff, who are not significantly involved in policy making. This is based on two assumptions: that they behave similarly to Canadian ministerial advisers and that a weak political staff is inevitable in Westminster systems of government. These statements lack empirical foundation.

So far Australian contributions to international debates about advisory structures have been limited. Commentary on Australia (Plowden 1987; Campbell and Wyzsomirski 1991; Peters, Rhodes and Wright 2000a) is usually limited to distinguishing types of advisory support for the Prime Minister (by the Prime Minister's office and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C)). It does not describe the evolution and role of ministerial advisers in Australian government generally. Defining the distinctive character of the Australian ministerial office, as it developed over the Labor period, will enable more informed comparative analysis. This is particularly relevant at the moment because recent changes in the UK have caused alarm and much debate about the appropriate role for ministerial advisers and about appropriate advisory structures within a Westminster-style system.

The fourth reason why this research is important is because there has been an upswing in interest over the last decade in the operation of the executive and in the development of political institutions. In 1995 Rhodes lamented the fact 'we lack basic accounts of key executive institutions and their role in the policy process' (1995:26) and called for more research on the executive 'in action' or 'at work' (1995:32). There is now a body of British literature which updates our understanding of the executive 'at work' and analyses changes to executive structures and executive capacity (Rhodes 2000a, 2000b). In exploring advisers' contribution to political control, this thesis goes to the heart of current debates about the 'hollowing out of the state' (Weller, Bakvis and Rhodes 1997) and the
loss of executive capacity for governance, which are the concerns of those writing about the executive today.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study captures the experiences and perceptions of advisers, and the views of those who worked closely with them, at a particular moment in history (1995-96). A qualitative method was chosen as most appropriate for exploring complex and variable behaviour in depth and from multiple perspectives. Qualitative methods, particularly unstructured interviewing, are effective for capturing and understanding people's world view.

A major qualitative research project was undertaken in 1995-6, involving 64 subjects. The sample group comprised ministerial advisers, ministers and public servants who had worked together. The adviser's world is thus seen from three different angles. The three perspectives provide some triangulation of views, and contribute to the complexity of the analysis. A Labor backbencher was also interviewed about how advisers interact with Caucus.

Access can be a major problem with such busy and often wary subjects. The author's personal contacts were a great advantage in establishing the trust and credibility needed to open doors. The interviews produced very rich data. The use of a large sample of in-depth interviews from three different groups provides data with depth and context rarely found in previous studies of advisers.2

The study takes an institutional and comparative approach. In recent years 'New Institutionalism' has revived interest in institutions by suggesting that institutions matter to behaviour:

> Individuals are shaped by, and in their collective enterprises act through, structures and organisations and institutions. What people want to do, and what they can do, depends importantly upon what organisational technology is available ... to them (Goodin 1996:13).

Though their roles are defined individually by the ministers who employ them, advisers have an organisational identity in government. Their behaviour is governed by an evolving set of expectations, practices and routines. The study explores the institution of the ministerial office in operation and in relationship

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2 Dunn's (1997) valuable study is the exception. He interviewed 38 subjects from the three groups; but they did not necessarily work together and were across two governments.
with other political institutions. It draws out its distinctive features by comparing it to advisory institutions in other comparable countries. The growing role of advisers can be seen as an example of institution building or institutional development. The evolution of the ministerial office during the Labor period can be seen as the development of an institutional capacity to help ministers to govern, an attempt by ministers to provide themselves with 'a structural capacity for leadership' (Moe 1993:367).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To answer the question 'what was the role and significance of advisers in the Keating government?' the thesis first maps the different elements of the role, based on the function that advisers performed in government. It argues that advisers were very important in government because they could perform key roles for the executive which went beyond their traditional work of political and personal support. These roles were communication, steering policy and coordination.

The thesis then asks: 'did all advisers play the same role?' Early studies distinguished different types of advisers based on their background and their behaviour (Forward 1975, 1977). Later studies generalise about the work of advisers, while at the same time noting that they varied in their approach to the job and worked differently in different situations (Walter 1986, Ryan 1995). This study explores whether advisers played the same role, distinguishes different types of advisers based on their behaviour, and identifies what were the areas of, and causes of, variation in their work. The thesis describes the boundaries of the role in general, but also identifies variations in behaviour within the general scope of the role.

The thesis then explores several elements of the adviser's role in depth, touching on three key themes: the impact of advisers on political-bureaucratic relations; advisers' role in policy making; and their role in executive coordination.

The relationship between ministerial advisers and departments has become very important in Australian government. Their interaction represents the meeting of political and administrative forces on the terrain of policy. The thesis aims to delve deeply into the relationship between advisers and senior public servants. In contrast to other studies which have largely focused on the views of senior advisers and departmental secretaries, the subjects chosen in
this study were people at the 'coalface' of political-bureaucratic relations - advisers at all levels and public servants at the First Assistant Secretary and Assistant Secretary level. This permits a 'ground level' view of the daily pull and tug between advisers and public servants in portfolios, rather than a view from above. Many writers stress the complementary and cooperative nature of relationships between advisers and public servants (Hollway 1996, Dunn 1997); the 'ground level' view reveals a different type of relationship, much tension and many negative experiences.

The thesis explores the roles advisers played in policy making in the Keating years. Ministerial advisers increasingly appear as crucial players in accounts of policy making during the Hawke and Keating period. For example, in his memoirs former minister John Button recalls the key role of three of his staff in restructuring the car industry:

> The four of us talked for hours about the industry, exchanging information, sifting ideas, testing theories. ... I doubt if four people had ever given so much concentrated thought to the problems of a particular Australian industry. It became like a giant crossword puzzle. We tried to respond to every clue. If we didn't have answers we sought outside help (Button 1998:296-7).

Former senior public servant Meredith Edwards' (2001) accounts of major policy reform in the Labor years reveal the critical roles played by some advisers in the development of income support for young people; the child support scheme; the higher education contribution scheme; and long term unemployment policy (2001:42, 54, 187). Ministerial advisers have also been reported to have been important players in national competition policy (Harman 1996); foreign affairs policy (Gyngell and Wesley 2000:225) and economic policy (Goldfinch 1999) in this period. Yet what advisers do in the policy process remains elusive. Their policy roles have not yet been explored fully. The thesis asks: 'how did advisers engage in policy making in the Keating period?' It identifies some distinctive policy roles played by very active advisers at this time.

The thesis also explores in detail the coordinating work advisers did within the ministry. Dunn (1997) described this as a possible new development in the adviser's role (since it did not appear in Walter's 1986 study), and as one of their key responsibilities. For the first time, the thesis explores in depth the informal relationships between advisers and their implicit understandings of how they

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3 Though interestingly they are at times misidentified as public servants in analysis (eg Goldfinch 1999, C Howard 2001:60).
should work collectively. It analyses why these relationships have become so important to the ministry. The thesis asks: 'what was the role of advisers’ informal networks in executive coordination?'; and 'what were the roles of the Prime Minister's office and other key advisers in this coordination work?' It examines a dramatic case of a breakdown in coordination between ministers to consider the implications of advisers undertaking this work.

Finally, the thesis examines the implications of its findings for wider questions of governance. It asks: 'what was the significance of the role of ministerial advisers in the Keating government?' It considers the significance of the role for political-bureaucratic relations in Australia; for the development of Australian political institutions; and for the capacity of the executive. It identifies the distinctive features of the Australian model of the ministerial office.

There is considerable debate about the accountability of ministerial advisers amongst academics, practitioners, parliamentarians and the media (Hollway 1996; Waterford 1996; Dunn 1997; McMahon 1991; Senate Select Committee on a Certain Maritime Incident 2002; Maley 2002b; Holland 2002). The question of how accountable advisers are or should be is a complex one, and to explore it adequately would involve lengthy analysis. Lack of space puts the issue of accountability outside the scope of the thesis. However by documenting the role of advisers at this time the thesis provides important material that can inform this debate as it takes place in academic and political forums.

**FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY**

The thesis has three parts. The first consists of three chapters that provide a background to the study and outline its methodology. The second - the main body of the thesis - comprises six chapters that report the research and analysis. The final chapter and third part of the thesis presents conclusions drawn from the research.

*Chapter One* provides a brief background to the study. *Chapter Two* reviews the literature relevant to the topic and develops specific research questions. *Chapter Three* outlines the methodology used in the research.

*Chapter Four* provides a conceptual framework for analysing the role played by ministerial advisers in the Keating government. It argues that advisers performed three key roles for ministers in addition to the traditional roles of personal and political support. These were communication, steering policy and
coordination. The steering policy role had two elements: engaging with the department; and engaging in policy making.

*Chapter Five* describes how advisers' behaviour varied, and identifies three different types of advisers. It explores four factors which shaped this variation.

*Chapters Six, Seven, Eight and Nine* explore aspects of the role in detail, looking at *how* advisers operated. *Chapters Six and Seven* examine advisers' steering policy role. Chapter Six explores how advisers engaged with departments. Chapter Seven investigates how advisers engaged in policy making. *Chapters Eight and Nine* explore advisers' coordination role. Chapter Eight examines the informal networks between advisers which underlay their coordination work. Chapter Nine looks at how these networks were used to coordinate within the ministry, focusing on the special role of advisers in the three central ministerial offices (the Prime Minister's office, Treasurer's office and Finance Minister's office).

*The Conclusion* to the thesis discusses the significance of the findings of the research.

This chapter discussed why the study is warranted and outlined the research methods and the questions which guided the research. The next chapter provides some background needed to understand the behaviour of advisers in the Keating years.
One

Background to the study

This chapter provides a brief background to the study. It describes the number of advisers in the Keating period and the characteristics of advisers in the study. It outlines developments in the ministerial office in the Hawke-Keating period (1983-1996). It sketches key features of the Keating period which affected the roles advisers needed to play, and were able to play, at this time. Finally it describes some aspects of the adviser’s job, which provide an important context to understanding their behaviour.

ADVISERS IN THE KEATING PERIOD

In October 1995 there were 338 ministerial staff to the 30 Keating ministers, 172 of whom performed advisory functions and thus could be classified as ministerial advisers. Keating ministers had on average 11.3 ministerial staff, 5.7 of whom were advisers. This represented an average of 7 advisers for cabinet ministers and 3.5 advisers for non-cabinet ministers (Maley 2000b). The number and levels of staff were approved by the Prime Minister, based on a standard formula for senior and junior ministers. Ministers could apply to vary the formula due to special needs. Table 1.1 shows some examples of typical ministerial office structures in the Keating period:

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1 Ministerial Directory, October 1995. The figures include ministerial consultants, principal advisers, senior advisers, advisers and assistant advisers. They exclude the staff excluded by Walter (1986). These were media staff (journalists, press secretaries and media advisers); clerical staff (personal secretaries, assistant personal secretaries, steno-secretaries, typists, telephonists); departmental liaison officers and electorate staff (electorate secretaries and electorate assistants). They also exclude staff of parliamentary secretaries.
Table 1.1: Typical staff allocations April 1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>senior minister</th>
<th>junior minister</th>
<th>parliamentary secretary</th>
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<tr>
<td>Minister</td>
<td>Minister for Social Security (Baldwin)</td>
<td>Minister for Consumer Affairs (McHugh)</td>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Primary Industries &amp; Energy (Sherry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministerial advisers</td>
<td>Senior Adviser</td>
<td>Senior Adviser</td>
<td>Assistant Adviser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adviser</td>
<td>Adviser</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adviser</td>
<td>Adviser</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assistant Adviser</td>
<td>Assistant Adviser</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consultant</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff not counted as</td>
<td>DLO</td>
<td>DLO</td>
<td>DLO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ministerial advisers in</td>
<td>Media Adviser</td>
<td>Media Adviser</td>
<td>Personal secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>this study</td>
<td>Personal secretary</td>
<td>Personal secretary</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DLO = Departmental liaison officer

A senior adviser headed each office. Some senior advisers were very close and long-standing political allies of their ministers; others were more managerial types. The senior adviser's job was to orchestrate the work of the advisers, to manage all the demands on the minister and help to set priorities amongst the issues in a portfolio. They were often a sounding board for the advisers and managed the overall relationship with the department. Relationships within a ministerial office could be very competitive, despite advisers often being close friends. They were always competing for the minister's time and attention. One adviser described it as a lonely job, because responsibilities were usually divided up amongst staff without any overlap or shared responsibilities. Each person often reported directly to the minister.

The sample of Keating ministerial advisers in this study were mostly male (71%), in their 30s and 40s (90%), and highly educated. Their average age was 38 years and four months. Most were current or former Labor party members (62.5%). Similar to the pattern in earlier studies, around half were currently public servants (56%) (Forward 1975, 1977; Walter 1986). The Keating advisers had a wide range of backgrounds and included academics, activists, community workers and private sector lawyers and economists. However a substantial majority had a public service background (70%). In a strong

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2 Three office heads were known as 'principal adviser'. These advisers headed the offices of the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer.
3 The following description of the sample group of advisers in this study can be found in more detail, with tables, in Appendix 3.
indication of how experienced the group was, just under half of the sample had previously worked as an adviser to a state or federal minister (46%).

Women comprised 39% of all staff in April 1995. Comparing to Walter's (1986) figures, the proportion of female advisers had doubled over the Hawke-Keating period, but women remained under-represented in the most senior advisory positions.

There was a core of relatively very experienced advisers within ministers' offices at the time of the interviews. Fifteen of the sample group (37%) were classed as 'long term' advisers, defined as having worked as an adviser for four or more years. Some individuals had worked as advisers continuously for over ten years, while others had moved in and out of adviser jobs over a long period. However around half of the sample group had been advisers for two years or less. For most, the job was a short term excursion outside their main careers, to which they then returned. Burn-out reportedly began after two or three years. Ministers and portfolios changed frequently and some ministers preferred changing staff often. One senior minister with 13 years' experience said:

Optimally you have a turn-over every two or three years ... because there is a burn-out factor and you need a freshness and vitality ... and you can't afford to become entrenched in your way.5

The ministerial office in the Hawke-Keating period

The ministerial office in the Keating period must be seen as the product of a process of institutional development which began in 1972 when the Whitlam Labor government came to power. Since the history of its development has been discussed elsewhere (Walter 1986; Dunn 1997; Campbell and Halligan 1992; Halligan and Power 1992; Maley 2002a), this section outlines only developments in the Hawke-Keating period.

When the Hawke government was elected in 1983 it made clear from the start that it saw advisers as important tool to help ministers gain political control over the bureaucracy (Commonwealth of Australia 1983:21-23). In an

4 The average length of service in a portfolio by Hawke and Keating cabinet ministers was less than three years (Dunn 1997:134-5).
5 There were several other reasons why so many had two or less years' experience. When interviews began, in April 1995, the second Keating government was exactly two years old. After the March 1993 election, one-third of ministers had retired or resigned and there had been many portfolio changes. There was also reportedly a push at that time from party headquarters and the Prime Minister's office to bring in 'fresh blood' and to get rid of staff who were seen as not performing.
important trade-off which established the structure of government which would continue to this day, the Hawke government decided not to proceed with an election commitment to create a political tier within the public service (by politicising departmental heads and 5% of the second division), but instead to greatly increase the number of ministerial advisers (Halligan 1997:51). It introduced a new type of adviser (the ministerial consultant) in 1984 and established a legislative basis for the employment of advisers - the MOP(S) Act - which clarified the rights of public servants who worked in ministerial offices.6

This was an important moment in the history of political-bureaucratic relations in Australia and in the development of Australia's political institutions. It confirmed the institutional components of a non-partisan public service with a strongly partisan, more extensive ministerial office structure. This crucial choice defined the way that governments would pursue political control in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s.

This represented a turning point for the institution of the ministerial office, leading to greater acceptance of ministerial advisers by the public service. Some senior public servants commented that the partisan advisers had 'saved' the service, by preserving its neutrality (Bailey 1989: 232; Butler 1989:219; Beale 1989:149). This was an important step in legitimising partisan advisers as an institution within the political system. It confirmed and made explicit the partisan character of the ministerial office, and made clearer its role in government. Rather than providing the minister with administrative support and liaising with the department (traditional roles to which many of the Fraser staffers had reverted) advisers now had an explicit role in policy making and political control. Walter's (1986) study shows that advisers displayed strong partisanship and a strong policy focus from the beginning of the Hawke period. Thus the partisan policy role that had been so controversial and fiercely resisted in the Whitlam period was asserted and legitimised from the outset of the Hawke Labor period.

There were two other developments in the ministerial office over the Labor period (1983-1996). First, the number of ministerial advisers grew strongly, by 63 per cent proportionally (Maley 2000b). Second, the role became entrenched within the machinery of government in Australia. There is evidence of a

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6 Under the MOP(S) Act ministerial consultants were engaged differently from other staff - under an agreement in writing which stated that the consultant was engaged to perform, under the supervision of the minister, such tasks as were specified in the agreement or as were from time to time specified by the minister (section 4). These tasks had to be tabled in a report to Parliament each year.
normative shift to acceptance of advisers as part of executive government, by both major parties and by the highest public servants (eg Valder 1983; Short 1993; McPhee 1993; Chaney 1996; L'Estrange 1996; Ryan 1993; McMullan 1993; Button 1993; Kerin 1996; Volker 1993; Woodward 1993; Cole 1993; Hollway 1993, 1996). 7

At a seminar in the early Keating years about sources of advice to government, several senior public servants expressed their views about ministerial advisers. While they did not deny the difficulties involved in working with them, they stressed the legitimacy of advisers' role and the necessity of adjusting to their presence (Volker 1993; Woodward 1993; Hollway 1993). One Secretary stated: 'There is in my view a clear need for both departments and ministers' offices in the advisory process', with some advisers assuming 'crucial roles' (Woodward 1993:113-115). Another said that the relationship between public servants and advisers could be 'an extraordinarily creative, personally satisfying and rewarding blend of different talents and roles - which, at its best, serves Australian government very well' (Hollway 1993:118).

In 1995 Michael Keating, then the head of PM&C, described the role of advisers as 'reinforcing the authority and capacity of elected government to determine policy' (1995:3). He believed they had a responsibility to counter the influence of the public service over the frame of reference for policy advice and the questions to be answered. They had an important role in enabling ministers to 'put their stamp on policy' (1995:3). Thus the most senior public servant in the Keating years acknowledged the legitimacy of advisers' role in contesting departmental advice and in reinforcing the authority and capacity of ministers to direct government.

The developing role of advisers during this period must be seen as part of critical shifts in the roles and relationships between ministers, advisers and public servants, associated with major reforms in the Hawke years and long term government (Campbell and Halligan 1992; Halligan and Power 1992). The growth and entrenchment of the role of adviser is linked to major changes that occurred to the public service and to the operation of cabinet at this time.

Labor made major administrative changes in the 1980s which forced the public service to be more responsive to government and, some have suggested, resulted in a weakening of the bureaucracy and a shift in power towards ministers and ministerial offices (Campbell and Halligan 1992, Halligan and 7 One important exception is Fitzgerald (1996) a former departmental secretary. 14
According to Campbell and Halligan (1992) administrative reform occurred in two phases: the first phase (1983-1987) laid the foundations of managerialism, while the second (1987-1991) institutionalised the changes. The second phase involved a radical reorientation of the bureaucracy towards a more managerial and politically responsive culture (1992:183). In 1987 departments were restructured into mega portfolios, with a senior and junior minister structure. This was aimed at strengthening cabinet and ministerial control (Halligan 1997:54). At this time there was a large cut in the number of SES officers. In effect, according to Campbell and Halligan (1992), the restructuring forced out those senior public servants who were resistant to the new 'can-do' managerialist culture and promoted those who were prepared to work within it. Other important changes included altering the tenure of senior public servants, increasing opportunities for external entry to the public service, reducing the autonomy of senior public servants and increasing their managerial work (Halligan 1997:52). These changes created opportunities for advisers to increase the scope of their role and developed a culture of responsiveness amongst senior public servants. It is interesting that those who judged Whitlam's use of advisers as largely unsuccessful (Smith 1976; Wilenski 1979) felt that ministerial staff were only part of the mechanism needed to deliver political control and that they would be ineffective until the public service itself was reformed.

There were also shifts in roles and relationships within the executive in the Hawke period because of major changes to the way cabinet operated. These reforms, aimed at increasing the effectiveness of cabinet, reduced the amount of cabinet business and enabled more decisions to be made outside of cabinet. These changes created an important role for ministerial advisers (as will be seen in Chapters Eight and Nine). These changes to the way elements of the executive operated and related to each other created expectations and opportunities for advisers to play important roles in the Keating years.

Another important factor in the growth and entrenchment of the adviser role over the Labor period was long term government. This provided time for expectations to be reinforced and for players to become acculturated to new ways of operating. By the time the Keating government came to power, the major administrative reforms were completed and there was a degree of stability in the public service and in political-bureaucratic relations. Senior public servants had accommodated or become acculturated to the changes in the scope of the role played by advisers at this time.
THE KEATING YEARS 1991-1996

Paul Keating became Prime Minister on 20 December 1991 and led his party to victory at the federal election on 13 March 1993. The second Keating government lasted from this time until its election loss on 11 March 1996.

When Keating became Prime Minister in 1991 Labor had been in power for eight years and was seen as having lost much of its energy as a government. By contrast the Opposition had released a very detailed series of policy plans called *Fightback!*. The ministry had been riven by a long running and very bitter leadership struggle. The government was barely a year away from an election.

The Keating government was beset by major economic problems - a recession and, when recovery began, high unemployment figures. The government's approach was to pursue 'growth with social justice', tying together the themes of economic progress and a social safety net (Edwards 1996:516-7; Kelly 1994:xxi). The problem of long term unemployment was tackled in a major cross-portfolio policy initiative entitled *Working Nation* released in 1994. Meredith Edwards' account of the development of the package reveals the important role played by advisers, particularly advisers to the Prime Minister (2001:137-176).

Over the two Keating terms there was much policy activity. This was partly to do with Keating's own style. He was described by one of his advisers in this study as 'like a shark - he had to move to live'. ACTU Secretary Bill Kelty described him as someone who liked to 'grab the policy tree and shake it' (in Gordon 1996:204). Keating described the period as one of 'feverish policy change' (in Gruen and Grattan 1993:xxiii).

There were a series of major cross-portfolio and portfolio policy statements, aimed at promoting a positive policy agenda and countering the image of a tired government. These included *One Nation* (1992); *Australia’s Environment* (1992); *Investing in the Nation* (1993); *Working Nation* (1994); *Creative Nation* (1994); *An Agenda for Families* (1995); *Innovate Australia* (1995); *Community and Nation* (1995); *Our Nation* (1996) and *Our Land* (1996) (Walsh 1995:291; Cockfield and Prasser 1997). The number of these statements indicates the sophistication of the processes for dealing with interdepartmental policy development at this time, which used Expenditure Review Committee (ERC) structures and protocols. Departments, ministerial staff and ministers were able to work effectively together to produce complex cross-portfolio policy documents.
Finally while ministers in the Keating government varied, some were remarkably experienced. There was a core of ministers who had been in cabinet for many years. In 1991 when Keating became Prime Minister there were five ministers from the original 1983 cabinet (Keating, Willis, Dawkins, Evans and Button). Keating was one of three ministers who had been continuously a member of ERC for eight years. Two others had been in ERC for seven years. These experienced ministers had an understanding of government processes and expectations about how the ministry would operate. The stability of long term government meant that ministers, public servants and advisers were operating within well-established routines and structures.

THE ADVISER'S JOB

The only profession that I am aware of that is more demented than that of a politician is that of a politician's staff. ... The staffers work the same hours that politicians work but all they get is kicked in the arse all the time and they get very few pats on the back. They get no public recognition for what they do ... but they work the same hours and the same sorts of pressures are on them.

Bob Collins, Minister for Transport and Communications, during the Senate Inquiry Into Matters Arising From Pay TV Tendering Processes (1993)

Some aspects of the job of adviser need to be understood as they provide an important context to analysing advisers' behaviour. First, the job of adviser could be extraordinarily demanding. Advisers in the study routinely worked very long hours, and most worked six days per week. In some offices advisers regularly worked to midnight. In other offices, they left around 7pm, taking paperwork home to be looked at after they had seen their families. Often there were meetings scheduled at night as it was the only time it was possible to catch the minister or other advisers. Many spent Saturdays in the office reading reports and more complex material, and writing speeches - tasks which required some time and careful thought. They relished the fact they could work without the constant interruptions of phone calls and urgent meetings.

Advisers were 'on call' for the minister at all times. Everything else was accepted as secondary. An adviser employed by a 'workaholic' minister, who even rang her on Christmas day to talk about work, said 'I lost a lot of my

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8 Except for 6 months when he was on the backbench in 1991, following his second unsuccessful leadership challenge. The other two were Willis and Dawkins.
9 They were Howe and Evans.
personal life'. The consequences of the long hours and unrelenting demands could be seen in the stories told of sickness, miscarriage, suicide and marriage break-up. It was not a healthy environment to work in. After the election loss one adviser in the study, who had worked for ministers for eight years, was told by his doctor he was experiencing withdrawal from a physical addiction to adrenalin.

The volume of paperwork, while it varied, could be immense. An adviser in the education portfolio received around 40 departmental minutes each week. An adviser in the health portfolio said she sometimes received 20-25 minutes in a day. She sorted the minutes into piles marked 'extremely urgent', 'very urgent' and 'urgent'. Each day she would deal with the 'extremely urgent' ones and scan and re-sort the others as they progressively moved to higher levels of urgency. Paperwork was often not easily dispatched. Each minute might generate a series of questions or require conversations with others. The job required a great deal of energy. One adviser said her energy had two sources: fear and anger. Many advisers were propelled forward by impossible workloads, urgencies, and problems which multiplied by neglect.

Ministers often had very high expectations of their staff. One young adviser felt that:

> With my minister it was a blank slate. The more that you could do the more he would give you to do. They just load you up. The expectations I felt from the minister are more than I've ever felt working for an employer anywhere. More than parents.

Some ministers were rewarding to work for because their advisers felt they won their respect with their efforts. Others could be harsh and extraordinarily demanding, of both the staff and the department. An adviser who had more than seven years' experience in ministers' offices, complained about her senior minister: 'You are only as good as the last job you did. You are proving yourself to him, every rotten day. It is very, very wearing.' Nor was there room for error. One highly respected adviser said she was damned by her minister, for a single mistake in a complex document she had stayed up all night drafting. But while the job was demanding, it was compensated by the heady excitement of politics at close hand. These extremes of excitement and effort were captured by one adviser who simply stated: 'I love my job. But it's killing me.'

Throughout the thesis advisers are seen assiduously working to pursue their minister's objectives. Advisers were acutely aware of their minister's objectives
at any time. In assessing government action too often commentators ascribe major decisions to the drive to maintain popularity or to win the next election (eg Singleton 1997b; Adams 1997; Cockfield and Prasser 1997). While these are undoubtedly overarching political objectives and critical at some times, such a view oversimplifies the reasons for ministers' behaviour. It denies the fact that many in public life desire to 'make something of the mandate' (which is how one minister described what propelled him in government). Ministers' objectives were always more complex than simply winning office, but were not always particularly noble. They could be strategic personal aims, such as to build a strong alliance with the senior minister in the hope of cementing a power base in the ministry; or to 'keep one's head down' to rebuild a reputation after a previous political scandal; or to impress senior colleagues as a team player, perhaps by delivering cuts to the portfolio, in the hope of advancement to senior minister status in the future. At times an objective might be to keep certain policy areas 'quiet' to assist in the pursuit of other major policy goals. Throughout this thesis ministers and advisers are seen engaged in 'puzzling' about policy with a variety of motives and objectives; quite often only indirectly influenced by electoral considerations.

This chapter provided some background needed to understand the behaviour of advisers in the Keating years. The next chapter reviews the literature relevant to the study, from which the research questions were developed.
Two

Literature review

There is a significant body of literature relevant to the topic of ministerial advisers, with a variety of perspectives. However there are a limited number of studies which view advisers as subjects in their own right. The first part of this chapter surveys the literature and the second part discusses how it addresses five themes: the role and function of advisers; role variations; advisers' work with departments; advisers' policy roles; and advisers' coordination roles. The third part of the chapter places the thesis in an international context by describing the development of ministerial office in Canada, the UK and France.

SURVEY OF LITERATURE ABOUT MINISTERIAL ADVISERS

The Australian literature on ministerial advisers falls into five groups. The first and most significant group is a series of empirical studies of Australian ministerial advisers, based on interviews and quantitative surveys, beginning in the 1970s.

Several studies in the 1970s examined advisers to the Whitlam and Fraser governments (Forward 1975, 1977; Smith 1977). They focused on the social backgrounds of advisers and what tasks they performed in government. In 1986 Walter published his seminal work on the role of ministerial advisers, The Ministers' Minders, which built on the earlier studies by comparing advisers to the first Hawke government to the Whitlam and Fraser staffs. As well as investigating the social background, work and careers of advisers, he studied the evolution of the ministerial office in Australia, taking an historical and sociological approach.

Over the entire Hawke-Keating period there have been only two other empirical studies. One is a small piece of research on advisers' policy roles by Ryan (1995). The other is a study of how advisers, ministers and departmental secretaries worked together in the Keating and first Howard governments (Dunn 1997). This is a significant study which explores the work of advisers and their relationships with public servants. Dunn views advisers as part of a distinctive structuring of partisan and non partisan advice to government in the
Australian political system. He assesses its effectiveness, drawing out 'lessons' for the US.

The second body of literature on Australian ministerial advisers is from the 1970s and is focused on the Whitlam government's use of advisers. It debates the rationale for and merits of the new arrangements (RCAGA 1976; Briot and Lloyd 1976; Roberts 1976; Hughes 1976; Smith 1977) and assesses how successful Whitlam's 'experiment' was in terms of its aims (Smith 1977; Hawker et al 1979; Wilenski 1979; Lloyd and Reid 1974).

The third body of literature is a series of articles spanning the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s which is essentially commentary on the adviser's role, often normative and based on experiences of working with or as advisers (Anthony 1975; Farran 1975; White 1988; Kennett 1989; McMahon 1991; Rudd 1992; Moore 1993; Fitzgerald 1996; Hollway 1993, 1996; Warn 1996; McCarrey 1987; Waterford 1996; Woodward 1993; Volker 1993). While the changing normative values in these articles are interesting they generally do not warrant detailed analysis.

A fourth group of writers analyses the role of ministerial advisers as part of studies of political-bureaucratic relationships in the 1980s and 1990s (Campbell and Halligan 1992; Halligan and Power 1992; Weller 2001). These studies, mainly based on interviews with senior public servants, consider the impact of advisers on the public service. They view the ministerial office as part of attempts by the political executive at this time to dominate the bureaucracy and increase its responsiveness to government. Related to this is a study of the executive leadership style of the Hawke and Keating governments in a comparative context (Campbell 1998). However, while it explores Labor's engagement of the bureaucracy and coordination within the ministry, it pays little attention to its use of advisers.

The final group comprises accounts of the Hawke and Keating periods (Gruen and Grattan 1992; Gordon 1996; Kelly 1994; Singleton 1997); a range of memoirs and biographies of Hawke and Keating ministers (Walsh 1995; Richardson 1994; Button 1998; Blewett 1999; Hawke 1996; Edwards 1996; Watson 2002); and some studies of particular policy changes during this period (Edwards 2001; Harman 1996; Gyngell and Wesley 2000; Goldfinch 1999; C Howard 2001). Advisers are glimpsed 'at work' in this literature but their role is generally not analysed in any depth.

In addition to this Australian literature about ministerial advisers, there is a body of international literature about executive advisory structures. Much of
this is descriptive, and tracks the development of advisory units in different countries with limited comparative analysis (Plowden 1987; Campbell and Wyszomirski 1991; Peters, Rhodes and Wright 2000a). The Australian contribution to these volumes is usually limited to discussing advisory support for the Prime Minister (by the Prime Minister’s office and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet) (Weller 1987; Weller 1991; Weller 2000). It does not describe the evolution and role of ministerial advisers in Australian government generally. There are few detailed studies of advisers in Canada, UK and France. Most of the literature is article- or chapter-length commentary. This material will be discussed later in the chapter, in describing the international context for developments in Australia.

There have been several attempts at comparative analysis of executive advisory institutions (Campbell 1983; Bakvis 1997; Peters, Rhodes and Wright 2000b). Bakvis (1997) compares a range of executive advisory mechanisms (of which partisan advisers are but one) in Australia, Britain, Canada, Germany and the Netherlands, and assesses their relative strengths in performing a number of functions for the executive. Bakvis claims Australia has weak political staff, who are not significantly involved in policy making. This is based on two assumptions: that they behave similarly to Canadian ministerial advisers and that a weak political staff is inevitable in Westminster systems of government. These statements lack empirical foundation. He judges political staff generally to be useful in meeting the needs of executives in five ways: mobilising the bureaucracy in the transition phase of a new government; performing partisan tasks; evaluating bureaucratic advice; and providing legitimation and mobilisation to ministers who attempt to innovate (1997:118).

The chapter by Peters, Rhodes and Wright (2000b) is unique in its attempt at a comparative and conceptual analysis of advisory structures to chief executives in eight countries. It conceptualises the functions of the staff of executive leaders, compares different institutional responses, and analyses the factors which structure the influence of advisory staff.

Looking across eight countries, Peters, Rhodes and Wright make three conclusions. First, and most importantly, there is an 'apparently paradoxical phenomenon: the general erosion of the policy making capacity of the state has been accompanied by a strengthening of its core executive' (2000b:7). While there has been a reduction in the scope of central political authority, there has been a 'centralisation of political authority towards and within the executive' (2000b:21). This centralisation (that is, the emergence of presidential or prime
ministerial government) has resulted in a growth in staff to the core executive, and especially its political leader (2000b:21). Their second conclusion is that the staff of executive leaders have common tasks but the weight attached to each task varies from country to country. Third, national distinctiveness, rather than convergence, characterises the institutional response of different countries (2000b:6).

While staff in all countries exhibit similar trends - growth, institutionalisation, politicisation and hybridisation - they also have differences in structure, size, composition and internal organisation and culture (2000b:15). Peters, Rhodes and Wright suggest that to explore the influence of staff one must pay attention to three types of opportunity structure: political, administrative, and institutional (2000b:18-21). Unfortunately these points are not developed in great detail in what is essentially a broad overview chapter.

Peters, Rhodes and Wright's focus on staff to chief executive leaders (Presidents and Prime Ministers) is limited - it does not explore the structure and function of advisory staff to the executive as a whole. In the case of Australia, a focus on the Prime Minister's staff alone obscures important developments in the structure of ministerial offices generally, in their relationships with each other and in their relationships with departments. Much of the political-bureaucratic struggle occurs between portfolio ministers and their departments. Focusing solely on the Prime Minister's staff also neglects the dynamics between offices, which are important in understanding the work advisers do in coordination. It also ignores the pivotal role of the Finance minister's office and Treasurer's office.

Finally, there is a related body of literature which examines the work of ministers. Several studies from the 1970s and 1980s describe the work of ministers and attempt to distinguish between them (Headey 1974; Weller and Grattan 1981; Rose 1987; and Theakston 1987). These studies are somewhat pessimistic about the ability of ministers to have input to policy making and generally stress the limited nature of their power. They emphasise either ministers' lack of interest in policy making or obstacles which prevent their involvement, such as overload or lack of training and expertise (Beckett 1998). However recent studies from the UK (Campbell and Wilson 1995; Norton 2000; Smith et al 2000; Marsh et al 2000) have challenged this image and portray ministers as increasingly knowledgeable and engaged. They assert that ministers are involved in formulating policy, and have the capacity to impact
on the work and culture of departments. In their study of British ministers Smith et al (2000) found that:

all ministers have a policy role and this policy role has cumulatively increased in the last three decades. ... Ministers now have more concern with formulating effective policy and making a difference (2000:153).

They identified ministers who did more than initiate policy; these 'agenda innovators' and 'institutionalisers' actually shifted the policy bias of the department (2000:154). Campbell and Wilson ascribe the changing role of British ministers to two developments: the rise of the career politician and the greater ideological commitment of ministers (1995:56-59). They argue this means ministers are more likely to have clear objectives, the confidence to overrule objections and a desire to prevail over the department (1995:306-308). In other words, they are more likely to be interested in policy making, and to be determined to overcome the obstacles they face. Senior public servants in a recent Australian study have also expressed the view that ministers are better educated, more interested and more assertive than in the past (Weller 2001:2,97,100). This literature counters the approach which suggests that few ministers intend to, or are able to, pursue active policy agendas. It confirms the need to bring policy-interested ministers and their activities to centre stage in studies of political-bureaucratic relationships.

This part of the chapter has surveyed the various bodies of literature relevant to ministerial advisers. The next part of this chapter analyses the literature in relation to five themes: the role and function of advisers; role variations; advisers' work with departments; advisers' policy roles; and advisers' coordination roles.

THEMES IN THE LITERATURE

Literature on the role and function of ministerial advisers

Many writers describe the role of advisers by listing their tasks. Smith (1977) lists a wide range of activities that advisers undertook in the Whitlam years: research; policy advice; information gathering; working with the department; helping ministers with parliamentary work; problem solving; and liaising with the party, interest groups, the media and people and organisations outside of government (1977:145-7).
Forward (1975) used quantitative surveys to weight different aspects of the job, by asking Whitlam advisers to choose three of a list of nine predetermined roles as their 'main roles'. Aggregating the results he found liaison with the public service was rated highest, followed by general office administration; advising the minister on policy; general trouble shooting; personally assisting the minister; dealing with the press; speech writing; political party work; and handling electorate matters (1975:144-5). He repeated the survey with Fraser advisers (1977).

Walter replicated the survey in his study of Hawke advisers, who rated the roles in a slightly different order, the main difference being a major accentuation of the advising the minister on policy role, and the general trouble shooting role, and a de-emphasising of the role of personally assisting the minister (1986:133). These surveys reveal the far lesser importance to staff of the roles of 'spin' and 'minding' (electorate, party and media work; and personally assisting the minister) compared to their tasks of policy advice, trouble shooting, working with the public service and office administration. They show an increasing policy orientation. However the aggregation of answers masks some important differences between different types of staff; and quantitative surveys are a limited tool for capturing the nature of advisers' work and exploring their role in government fully.

In analysing advisers' role, writers use different ways of sorting their tasks. Walter describes different types of tasks. He sees advisers' primary role as supporting a political master, through a range of personal, technical and political tasks (1986:130-132). He is most interested in advisers' role in the policy process. But while he lists a range of policy roles for advisers he does not conceptualise them. His discussion of advisers' work also lacks a context of political-bureaucratic relationships, despite the fact this is an important part of his discussion of the emergence of advisers in Australia. In discussing advisers' work, he does not examine how they function to promote political control, or their interactions with public servants. Ministers and public servants have no voice in the book.

While Walter's study is impressive and seminal, it represents only a beginning to the exploration of the work of advisers. It is also dated in an important aspect. Major changes to political-bureaucratic relationships and to cabinet have occurred in Australia since it was written. These changes, which occurred in the Hawke period, altered the context in which advisers operate, and in which their role and significance must be viewed.
Dunn (1997) provides more recent empirical evidence of the role of ministerial advisers. The study is based on interviews with ministers, advisers and departmental secretaries in the Keating and Howard governments (done in 1992 and 1996). Dunn's focus is on what advisers do and on how they assist ministers in achieving political direction of departments. He distinguishes between the different arenas in which advisers work. These are: working with the department; working with other ministers; working with parliament; and personal services to the minister. He is most interested in the roles advisers play in relation to departments: he found that advisers evaluate the department's work, assist the minister to direct the department, and facilitate department-minister interaction by communicating with the department.

Comparing his findings to that of Walter, Dunn suggests that the role advisers play in policy making has extended in recent years into oversight of implementation of policy. Another new development was an important role not played within the minister-department relationship. This was advisers' work in brokering agreements with other ministerial offices before cabinet; and coordinating within portfolios (1997:107-8).

There are several important features of Dunn's study. First, advisers are not the main subject of his study; it is the political-bureaucratic relationship. Therefore he interviewed a small number of advisers (13) across two governments and did not explore differences in their behaviour. Second, advisers' work is viewed mainly within the minister-department relationship. The 'brokering' and coordination roles he detected are seen as another part of ministers' political direction of departments (1997:93). Yet they suggest the role of advisers was more extensive than their work within the minister-department relationship.

The distinctions made by Walter (1986) and Dunn (1997) point to the complexity of the job: advisers performed a range of types of work (Walter 1986) across a number of arenas (Dunn 1997). They also point to the difficulty of analysing the role. How can we move beyond listing a range of tasks to conceptualising the role of advisers, in a way which helps to explain their increasing importance in government? This thesis argues that the role of the adviser must be analysed in terms of the function that advisers perform for ministers. Focusing on function directs our attention to the significance of advisers' work for the executive, and therefore helps us to understand why they have become so important in government.
The function of ministerial advisers: political control

The literature on Australian ministerial advisers is clear in seeing their core function as to increase political control for the executive. This has two aspects. The first can be seen as an indirect contribution to political control: to help ministers to perform their jobs. The second is a more direct contribution: to help ministers to steer and control the work of departments.

Helping ministers to perform their jobs

The most limited view of advisers' function is to help ministers perform their jobs through personal support and political support.

In the 1970s advisers were justified as attempts to increase the capacity of ministers, and thus as a way of bolstering existing structures to cope with pressures from a changing political and social environment (Whitlam 1974; Fraser 1978; RCAGA 1976). There was a recognition that ministers were becoming overloaded, and needed more resources to be able to perform their roles adequately (Weller and Grattan 1981; Hughes 1976:61; Briot and Lloyd 1976:10). The overloading of ministers was seen as threatening the concept of ministerial responsibility (RCAGA 1976). There was a view that some jobs should be delegated to allow ministers to concentrate on their most important work - policy making and deciding the overall policy framework (Hughes 1976:72) - but that such jobs could not be delegated to the department due to the principle of ministerial responsibility (Fraser 1978:5). There was thus a need for appropriate surrogates to whom ministers could delegate some of their work.

There was also a recognition that government was becoming more complex and that ministers needed help to cope with the challenges of office. Whitlam noted the 'exceptionally high expectations' of government and the need 'to have available machinery and advice to plan for the inevitable and accelerating change now occurring in all modern communities' (1974:4-5). There was a need for 'the extension and deepening' of support because:

As the tempo of the business of government grows faster and the range of political involvement of the people extends, Ministers must necessarily look to more help from their own immediate offices (1974:14).

There was an increasing demand by the community to participate in decision making. Ministers needed help to evaluate competing demands from a range of different sources (RCAGA 1976:105). Advisers could help ministers to
function in a new policy making environment by managing a diversity of input to government.

The second reason given for the introduction of ministerial advisers was so that they could perform partisan functions. Ministers needed help to cope with the political aspects of their jobs, and this was work which departments could not do (Briot and Lloyd 1976). Enabling ministers to perform these functions within their own office strengthened the concept of the political neutrality of the public service. It was in terms of the separation of partisan and non-partisan work that both Whitlam and Fraser justified their use of advisers; they 'relieved departments of involvement in party-political matters' (Whitlam 1974:14; Fraser 1976). It was also in these terms that senior public servants found themselves able to support the initiative (eg Tange in Roberts 1976:12).

Thus advisers' function has been seen as to help ministers cope with the demands of their jobs by providing personal and political support. They provided the extra resources ministers needed to be able to govern effectively in a changing political and social environment. They were also seen as strengthening two fundamental aspects of the political system which were threatened by the changes to society and governance: the concept of ministerial responsibility and the concept of the political neutrality of the public service.

Helping ministers to direct and control the work of departments

The second aspect of advisers' political control function involves helping ministers to direct and control the work of departments. This is the main way that Australian writers have conceived of the role and function of advisers.

Australian governments in the 1970s and 1980s clearly desired political control and saw advisers as a mechanism for pursuing it. In 1974 Whitlam commented that: 'There have been notable cases in Australia in the past of a remarkable lack of ministerial control over departments and over policy. The lack of competent ministerial staff undoubtedly contributed to this' (1974:15). He saw ministerial control as an essential part of the doctrine of ministerial responsibility:

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1 This was understood as explicitly party political work, involving media management, speech writing, liaison with party units and local electorates and so on.
Central to [the Westminster] system is the principle that ministers as individuals and the cabinet as a whole must exercise real control over the public service and accept full responsibility for policy. ... To the extent that the appointment of a competent personal staff assists ministers to exercise their proper constitutional authority we are enhancing the basic Westminster tradition (1974:15).

Fraser too emphasised the importance of political control. He said that one of the two fundamental requirements for responsibility in government was that:

  the ministers and government must themselves be in control of public policy. ...
To the extent that responsibility is diffused beyond the elected government ... to that extent is effective, popular control diminished (1978:2).

In 1983 the Hawke government made it clear that a desire to strengthen ministerial control drove its plan to employ more ministerial advisers:

  The balance of power and influence has tipped too far in favour of permanent rather than elected office holders. ... Ministerial - that is democratic - control will be bolstered only if large numbers of politically committed people can have a close involvement in the development and implementation of policy (Commonwealth of Australia 1983:21-23).

The Liberal Party shared these views, stating in 1983:

  The task of any incoming government in giving direction to the modern public service, and remaining through its term of office in effective political control of the public service, has placed almost impossible burdens on ministers (Report of the Liberal Party Committee of Review in Commonwealth of Australia 1983:21-22).

Prime Minister Keating (1993) expressed this as a desire 'to ensure the government of the country belonged to the elected politicians' and to put ministers 'in the driving seat'.

Underlying these statements is a Weberian concept of political control. Weber observed the rise of both professional politicians and the bureaucracy. He saw that bureaucrats, with their superior knowledge and experience, would tend to dominate the politicians. The challenge for political leadership was to control the bureaucracy (Weber in Gerth and Mills 1958).

The problem of political control has been perceived as two-fold: that ministers were too dependent on the bureaucracy; and that the bureaucracy was not sufficiently responsive to the ministry (RCAGA 1976). Advisers were seen as 'a solution to the problem of bureaucratic power' (McMahon 1991:148) in two ways. They could provide or procure independent advice for the minister and
help the minister to evaluate the advice received from the department, reducing the minister's dependence. They could also increase the minister's ability to direct the department and monitor its behaviour, thereby forcing greater responsiveness.

Halligan and Power (1992) see the drive for greater political control as the motive force behind the growth of ministerial advisers in Australia. They describe the 1970s and 1980s as a period in which 'profound systemic changes' occurred within executive branches in many Western democratic countries; and in Australia this period 'usher[ed] in the most fundamental executive branch transformations since ... the turn of the century' (1992:23). These changes were attempts to redistribute power within the executive, resulting in the resurgence and ascendancy of the 'the political executive and its retinue of advisers vis a vis appointed officials' (1992:2).

In their studies of political-bureaucratic relations in Australia in the Labor years, both Halligan and Power (1992) and Campbell and Halligan (1992) claim the Australian political executive used ministerial advisers to increase its power by extending the scope of influence of the ministerial office. This enlarged the partisan element within the executive. Advisers appear as important players in these studies, increasingly relied upon by ministers as a means of exerting influence on the bureaucracy (Campbell and Halligan 1992:60). Advisers are also seen as displacing bureaucratic roles and weakening departmental power through their interactions with interest groups (Campbell and Halligan 1992: 62, 68, 83, 203-205).

Also fundamental to the shift of power within government at this time were the major administrative reforms of the 1980s, which weakened the public service and put it under great pressure to be more responsive to ministers (Campbell and Halligan 1992; Halligan and Power 1992). The growth in the role of the ministerial office and the administrative changes worked together to increase the responsiveness of the bureaucracy and to deliver political control.

Campbell and Halligan believe that 'firm political control' was achieved during the Hawke period, though this is disputed by others who stress bureaucratic influence (Pusey 1991; Walter 1992; Jones 1993). The limitation of this research is that it is based almost entirely on the views of senior public servants. Advisers were not the main focus of the study and their role is asserted rather than being explored.

Underlying Dunn's (1997) book, too, is the idea that advisers' main function is to increase political control by their work within the minister-department.
relationship. Dunn's study saw advisers as enhancing political control by extending the influence of ministers and increasing the political responsiveness of the bureaucracy (1997:107). They provided 'strong assistance to the elected executive for exercising political direction of departments' (1997:108). They are also seen as playing an important role in facilitating the meshing of the inputs that bureaucrats and politicians bring to policy making. Dunn sees their work within the minister-department relationship as enabling the optimum blending of responsive and neutral competence in policy making (1997:108,145,149). This can be expressed as effectively engaging the bureaucracy.

Yet Dunn understands political control in a broader sense than simply directing departments. He sees political control as also involving coordination amongst ministers (1997:93).

If political control is understood as being able to effectively steer government, then it requires not only control over the bureaucracy, but also an ability to prioritise and coordinate amongst ministers; management of political relationships; and an ability to devise and develop partisan policy goals. This thesis argues that advisers' contribution to political control goes beyond helping ministers to manage their jobs and to direct the bureaucracy. There is a need to explore the full breadth of the role advisers played in the Keating years in helping ministers to effectively steer government.

**A wider range of help for ministers**

A wider concept of political control is evident in the body of literature about the problems of modern governance and executive leadership (eg Weller, Bakvis and Rhodes 1997; Smith 1999; Campbell 1998).

Campbell (1998) argues there is a crisis in executive leadership in advanced liberal democracies. In his study of executive leadership in the US, UK, Canada and Australia, he found all leaders faced difficulties in governing and that 'our systems have encountered considerable slippage in the capacity of leaders to deliver' (1998:220). He sees engaging the bureaucracy as only one of the two 'gearboxes' governments must effectively manage if they are to steer government. Thus, for Campbell, political control has two elements: effective engagement of the bureaucracy (gearbox I); and effective management of relationships between the Prime Minister, ministers and advisers within the political executive (gearbox II).
He identifies two negative trends in relation to these gearboxes. The first is an emphasis by executives on responsive competence rather than policy competence - in other words, a failure to properly engage the bureaucracy in policy making (gearbox I). The second is a 'de-institutionalisation' of cabinet systems, which has reduced collective decision making and made coherence and coordination within the executive difficult to achieve (gearbox II). Thus Campbell argues executives in advanced liberal democracies experience difficulty in both engaging the bureaucracy and coordinating within the executive. In his analysis of the Labor years, he praises the Hawke government's record in this regard, arguing it was 'good at gearboxes' (1998:197). However he does not adequately explore the role of ministerial offices as a tool for achieving Labor's successful management of both 'gearboxes'.

The concept of political control can be widened further by examining the literature which sees the problem of modern leadership as a loss of capacity and coordination at the centre of government, referred to as 'hollowing out of the state', and a 'weakness at the centre' (Weller, Bakvis and Rhodes 1997; Rhodes 1997; Smith 1999). This view sees the executive as ill-equipped to deal with modern government, which is characterised by overlapping networks, fragmented policy structures and multiple policy actors. The trends of internal fragmentation, external dependence and 'institutional differentiation and pluralisation' (Rhodes 1997:200) erode the capacity of the executive to steer and achieve policy coherence. Thus the problem of political control or steering government can be seen to include not only engaging the bureaucracy and coordinating within the executive, but also managing multiple political relationships inside and outside of government, and in engaging in complex, multiplayer policy processes. However this literature does not adequately analyse how ministerial staff may help the executive to address these problems.

If, as this thesis argues, advisers' key function in government is to assist the executive to pursue political control, then their role must be understood as wider than personal and political support or helping to direct departments. It will be argued in Chapter Four that the role advisers played in the Keating years had five elements which were directly related to the problems of political control faced by modern executives. Thus the role of advisers grew over the Labor period to encompass work directly related to the problems of steering modern government. This explains why advisers became so important in government at this time, and provides a rationale for the growth in their role.
This section has argued that to understand the role of advisers it must be analysed in terms of the function that advisers perform for ministers. The literature on Australian ministerial advisers is clear in seeing advisers' function as to help the executive pursue political control, but this has not been understood widely enough. If political control is understood as being able to effectively steer government, then it requires not only control over the bureaucracy, but also an ability to prioritise and coordinate amongst ministers; management of political relationships; and an ability to devise and develop partisan policy goals. There is a need to explore the full breadth of the role advisers played in the Keating years in helping ministers to effectively steer government.

**Literature on role variations**

Studies of Australian ministerial advisers have consistently noted much variation in their behaviour, and this has underscored the difficulty of defining and analysing their role (Forward 1975, 1977, Smith 1977, Ryan 1995, Walter 1986). So far the variation in advisers' roles has not been adequately captured or explained.

Forward (1975, 1977) and Walter (1986) identified four different types of advisers in their studies of Whitlam, Fraser and Hawke advisers. However these types were mainly based on career background and attitude, and only partly linked to behaviour. Forward's typology had two axes: whether the adviser was a member of the public service or not; and whether he or she had a 'political' orientation (this was assessed on the basis of party membership, reasons for joining a minister's staff and/or engagement in 'political party' work in the office). Thus four types were identified: political public servants; non-political public servants; political non-public servants and non-political non-public servants. These types touch on what was controversial in the 1970s - the influx of partisans from outside of the public service into ministerial offices.

In his 1995 study Ryan stressed the diversity of policy roles that advisers assumed in different portfolios and under different ministers (1995:147, 150, 155). He distinguished their behaviour by asking ministers and advisers to name which of a predetermined list of five policy roles best described the role played by the ministerial office in a series of policy decisions. The five roles
were: arbitrator between parties; proactive initiator; cautious 'minder'; manager of the policy process; and administrator (1995:160).

The factors mediating advisers' behaviour have also proved difficult to identify. In 1977 Smith noted that the work patterns of advisers varied according to:

- the minister - his position, portfolio, personality - and the way he saw his role;
- his department, its scope, and its reaction to his approach; the work of related departments and institutions; other ministers and their staffs; the minister's relations with caucus, caucus committees and government backbenchers particularly interested in his portfolio; and finally the extent to which the extraparliamentary party, trade unions and interest groups had claims on the minister's time and authority (1977:145).

Ryan's small study suggested it was the portfolio and the disposition of the minister which most affected the roles played by advisers in policy making (1995:150).

Advisers do not all act in the same way and, in describing their behaviour, differences must be identified. Understanding how advisers differ in performing their role is important to assessing the impact and the significance of their work. As yet the literature has not provided a way of capturing the variation in their behaviour and the factors associated with this variation.

**Literature on advisers' relationships with departments**

As discussed earlier, ministerial advisers have generally been seen as playing important roles in helping ministers to exert control over departments. The impact of their work on political-bureaucratic relationships has been the focus of several studies (Dunn 1997, Ryan 1995). Yet how advisers work with senior public servants needs further examination.

Dunn (1997) provides the most comprehensive account of how advisers, ministers and departments worked together in the 1990s. As well as directing, monitoring and evaluating the work of departments, he sees a broader role for advisers in helping ministers to engage with the bureaucracy. This broader role is helping ministers to effectively blend partisan and neutral competence in policy making. Campbell (1998) too sees effective engagement with the bureaucracy as involving a balance between responsive and neutral competence in policy making - achieving what he terms 'policy competence'. He sees this as the most effective executive leadership style. He is critical of governments in advanced liberal democracies for not achieving 'policy
competence' because of the dominance of responsive over neutral competence. He claims the Hawke Labor government exhibited considerable 'policy competence' compared to other governments he studied. Yet he underplays the work of ministers in achieving this (he describes a symbiosis which 'arose' between ministers and senior public servants largely due to generational change) and generally does not explore the role of the ministerial office in helping ministers to effectively engage the bureaucracy.

There are mixed views about the nature of the relationships between Australian ministerial advisers and senior public servants. In the 1970s, Smith (1977) found there was considerable friction between advisers and departments. This was because advisers disrupted 'accepted patterns of bureaucratic influence' and were structurally 'anomalous' (1977:149-153). RCAGA saw a need to define the roles of advisers and of departments 'to avoid misunderstanding, overlap and clash' (1974:9). Forward (1977) found that Whitlam staffers tended to report worse relationships with departments than did Fraser advisers, and he linked this to their less traditional roles.

By contrast Dunn (1997) portrays political-bureaucratic relationships in Australia as distinctive because of a generally harmonious, fundamentally complementary relationship between the work of advisers and departments. He found relationships were mostly cooperative and symbiotic, because of an underlying belief in a politics-administration dichotomy in which there was an understood division of labour between advisers and public servants (1997: 92-3, 108). This echoes Davis' (1995) description of an 'emerging Australian model' in which ministerial and bureaucratic functions are distinct and complementary, as well as some normative comment by practitioners (Hollway 1996). However the harmonious, complementary relationships described by Dunn conflict with the disquiet and resentment expressed by public servants in Campbell and Halligan's 1992 study and some other commentary by former public servants (Fitzgerald 1996), which suggest advisers were competitors and had taken over some of the work of senior public servants.

Ryan's (1995) small study identified two types of harmonious and cooperative relationships between advisers and departments (where advisers played active policy roles and where they played more administrative roles); and two types of conflictual relationships (where there was agenda conflict and where advisers demanded powerful roles).

This is an area needing more research. We need to explore how ministerial advisers work with public servants in helping ministers to engage effectively
with departments. We also need to better understand the relationship between advisers and public servants - is it fundamentally harmonious and complementary, or conflictual and competitive? Both these issues are important in understanding the impact of the work of advisers on political-bureaucratic relations in Australia in the Keating years.

**Literature on advisers' policy roles**

Apart from the work of Walter (1986), Dunn (1997) and Ryan (1995), there are very few studies of the policy roles of Australian ministerial advisers. Some textbooks about policy making in Australia do not acknowledge them as important policy actors at all, seeing them as confined to the 'political' rather than 'policy' domain, in roles which do not extend beyond 'casting an electoral eye' over the department's work (e.g. Bridgman and Davis 1998; Davis 1995). Where advisers are acknowledged as significant policy actors writers often find their role hard to define and capture (e.g. Colebatch 1998; Considine 1994).

Others describe an important but limited policy role. For example Rudd (1992) describes the adviser's policy role (in the Queensland Goss government) as assessing the department's proposals according to three criteria: the political impact of the proposal; its compatibility with the proposals of other ministers; and its compatibility with the long term strategic priorities of the government as a whole.²

Walter (1986) describes a wider range of policy roles for advisers - such as policy development, articulation, raising alternative policy options and 'paying attention' to the policy agenda. He sees the modern political executive as 'the core of a small work group', comprising both ministers and partisan advisers (1986:161). Thus a group is the basic unit on the political side of the policy making equation (1986:58) and policy making at the top is 'the outcome of shifting coalitions around political executives' (1986:29). The emergence of partisan advisers in Australia is thus an important change in the operation of the policy making elite (1986:59). Walter's discussion of policy roles is limited by his notion of advisers as members of a group enterprise; he finds their contributions difficult to trace (1986:161). He is ambivalent about the importance of advisers in policy making, suggesting the adviser is 'for the most

² The rest of his paper is normative - arguing that ministerial advisers have a legitimate role in the policy process, one that should be kept separate from the role of the department. This normative approach is typical of much of the practitioner commentary on advisers' policy roles.
part a bit-player in a group enterprise' (1986:160), the effects of whose work are 'indeterminate' (1986:159). However, he argues they can be influential and are a third force in policy making alongside bureaucrats and politicians (1986:5,187).

Dunn (1997) is most interested in the policy roles advisers play in relation to departments: evaluating the department's work; assisting the minister to direct the department; facilitating department-minister interaction by communicating with the department; and oversight of implementation of policy. However he also identifies an important policy role not played within the minister-department relationship - that of brokering positions with other ministerial offices before cabinet; and coordinating within portfolios.

Ryan (1995) studied the policy roles of ministerial advisers in a series of policy decisions made by the Hawke and Keating governments, using a quantitative survey of ministers, advisers and public servants. He aimed to identify the influence of advisers on two aspects of the policy process: decision making and agenda setting. Very low response rates and a hostile reaction to the survey amongst advisers indicate that quantitative surveying was not an appropriate methodology. Further it is difficult to interpret the meaning of the responses Ryan received beyond the obvious (eg that ministers were considered to be the dominant influence on the final decision (1995:145) or that the influence of advisers was significant (1995:146)).

Ryan asked respondents to nominate one of five possible policy roles for advisers in the decisions (arbitrator between parties; proactive initiator; cautious 'minder'; manager of the policy process; and administrator) and found that the role advisers played varied (1995:149-150). A key finding of his study was that advisers had an important role in agenda setting (1995:155). However the complexity of advisers' policy roles and how they participated in policy making was not revealed in Ryan's simple survey questions.

Ryan concluded that 'ministerial staff exert enough power and influence over the policy process to be considered formidable actors for the purpose of public policy analysis' (1995:156). Yet his focus on power and influence, rather than policy roles, limits his analysis.

Advisers must be recognised as policy actors and their policy roles need to be fully explored. These must be seen not only within the minister-department

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3 Ryan received survey responses from 3 ministers, 8 advisers and 2 public servants, despite sending out over 100 questionnaires. He excluded the public servants and conducted 13 supplementary interviews.
relationship, but also as extending outside of it, as the agenda setting and brokering work glimpsed in the studies by Ryan (1995) and Dunn (1997) indicate. Some writers argue that policy making has become more difficult, as 'policies and interrelationships become more complex, and as the electorate fractures along multiple fault-lines' (Davis 2000:241-2). Linking back to advisers' function in government, there is a need to explore how advisers help ministers to devise, develop and realise policy goals. How do they help ministers to steer government by enabling partisan engagement in modern complex policy making?

Literature on advisers' coordination roles

There is a large body of literature about coordination within the executive, but little of it focuses on the use of ministerial advisers as a coordination mechanism.

The relationships amongst the Prime Minister, ministers and their advisers is seen by Campbell as one of the two 'gearboxes' which a government needs to engage effectively if it is to have the capacity to govern (Campbell 1998). The political executive needs to achieve 'coherence through collective deliberation' (1998:228). A strong drive towards coordination and priority setting within the executive is seen as a particular feature of Westminster-style governments (Davis 1997). This is usually seen as the function of cabinet.

Executive coordination is seen in the literature as not only important, but as increasingly difficult to achieve. British studies of the core executive emphasise political and administrative fragmentation and the increasing complexity of policy making as creating a greater need for coordination, while 'sapping' the executive's ability to coordinate (Rhodes 2000d:257-9). Kavanagh and Seldon (2000) see the increase in resources to the British Prime Minister as 'a reaction to a felt weakness, a frustration with the inability to pull effective levers' (2000:74-5). This has been termed a 'weakness at the centre' (Rhodes 1997).

There are two views about the changing role of cabinet. One is that there is a disturbing trend towards a de-institutionalisation of cabinet systems (Campbell 1998). This is seen in a reduction in formal collective decision making and a 'presidentialisation' of government. The other view sees the reduction in formal cabinet business in a more positive light, as part of a series of reforms to strengthen the collective role of cabinet and enable it to cope with the pressures on it (Keating and Weller 2000). However the role of ministerial staff in
reducing cabinet business by enabling the resolution of matters outside of cabinet is rarely discussed in any detail (eg Keating and Weller 2000).

Related to this debate is a difference of views about how significant the Prime Minister is in coordination within the executive, as opposed to cabinet. One group of writers celebrate the Prime Minister as the only individual who 'can see the totality of the picture' (Davis et al 1999:40) and that 'consequently there is a growing emphasis on developing support for the Prime Minister' (Keating and Weller 2000:61). These writers tend to emphasise the growth in the Prime Minister's office and neglect the growth in resources to other ministers. In fact the growth in the Prime Minister's office in Australia is relatively modest: in April 1995, Prime Minister Keating had only ten advisers who provided political and policy advice, while senior ministers had on average seven.4 These writers also neglect the important coordinating role of, and 'total picture' seen by, the Finance minister and Treasurer in Australia.

In contrast to this emphasis on the Prime Minister as the key individual in executive coordination, Smith et al (2000) stress the power of portfolio ministers in Britain:

It is ministers and departments who develop policy proposals and if they have the support from cabinet colleagues, and/or the Prime Minister, they can usually succeed in securing the safe passage of their policy. Therefore, for the majority of policy, the impact of the Prime Minister is limited to a veto power (2000:161).

This thesis argues that while the Prime Minister and Prime Minister's office are undoubtedly important in executive coordination, executive decision making is more complex and collective than many writers suggest. Rather than taking an individualised focus on the Prime Minister, executive coordination should be seen as a process occurring amongst ministers and ministerial offices through a set of structures, relationships and practices.

Davis (1995, 1997) is the only writer who studies ministerial advisers as an executive coordination mechanism. He identifies three 'domains' in which routines and structures operate as mechanisms for executive coordination. These are the political, policy and administration domains. He locates

4 Staff providing political and policy advice were defined as those who were not media or administrative staff, so did not include media advisers, Departmental Liaison Officers and secretaries and receptionists. As well as these ten political and policy advisers, the Prime Minister also had three advisers who managed cabinet and parliamentary procedures and appointments, which other ministers did not have (Ministerial Directory April 1995). The staffing structure in the Prime Minister’s office is described in Appendix 2.
ministerial staff solely in the political domain, and does not see a role for them in policy coordination. This is mainly because he defines their role as purely involving media and electoral considerations. Thus his analysis of advisers' role in executive coordination is limited to their work in political coordination.

Yet Australian empirical studies have indicated that advisers do play a role in policy coordination. Dunn (1997) detected important roles played by advisers in brokering positions with other ministerial offices before cabinet; and in coordinating within portfolios (1997:93-99). Gyngell and Wesley note the importance of informal networks of advisers in coordinating international policy in Australia (2000:225). In his study of the Hawke and Keating governments Campbell comments that ministerial offices 'created highly versatile networks which allowed cabinet ministers to coordinate their policies with a degree of independence from standing bureaucratic departments' (1998:192). Senior public servants in Campbell and Halligan's study assert the importance of the linkages between ministerial advisers in determining policy (1992:68).

Campbell (1998) praises the Hawke government for being 'good' at executive coordination (the second gearbox), mainly through its use of the Expenditure Review Committee (ERC) as the 'engine room' of the government. However while he acknowledges that Hawke 'worked intensely at the team work side of cabinet government' (1998:201), he suggests Hawke 'enjoyed a cabinet with a high degree of ideological consensus' (1998:222-223). This is not borne out in accounts of the period, which indicate strong ideological conflicts within the ministry, exemplified in the following anecdote:

Science minister Barry Jones asked Communications minister Michael Duffy ... after an economic policy announcement following a meeting of the full ministry: 'How did that happen?' 'It's purely a matter of numbers,' Duffy replied. 'There's four of them and only 23 of us' (Steketee 2001:140-142).

It appears that in the Labor period the government used strong and effective mechanisms to enforce consensus within the ministry; and that ministerial advisers were used as an important coordination mechanism. However their role in executive coordination at this time has not yet been fully explored.

This part of the chapter examined the literature on ministerial advisers as it relates to five themes: the role and function of advisers; role variations; advisers' work with departments; advisers' policy roles; and advisers' coordination roles. It argued that it is difficult to analyse the role of advisers since it is wide-ranging and performed differently by different advisers. It
argued that to understand how and why the role grew over the Labor period advisers' work must be linked to their function in government, which is generally understood as to promote political control. This is defined as increasing the ability of ministers to steer government. Focusing on function directs our attention to the significance of advisers' work for the executive, and helps to explain why they have become so important in government.

The final part of the chapter places the thesis in an international context by examining the literature on the development of the ministerial office in Canada, UK and France.

**INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE ON MINISTERIAL STAFF**

There is a body of literature about the development of advisory structures within the three countries most relevant to Australian experience: Canada, the UK and France. This section briefly describes ministerial staff structures in these countries as a backdrop to the exploration of the features of the Australian model as it developed over the Labor period. This material is revisited in the conclusion, where the distinctive features of the Australian model are identified.

**Canada**

Ministerial offices have not developed as strongly in Canada as they did in Australia in the Labor period. There is a large body of literature on Canadian ministerial offices (Axworthy 1988; Deutsch 1973; Aucoin 1986, 1991; Savoie 1983; Campbell 1983; Jackson 1989; Bakvis 1997, 2000; Peters and Savoie 2000), though there is a scarcity of recent work.

In Canada ministerial offices are highly partisan, but do not appear to be substantially involved in policy making. Canadian ministerial advisers have traditionally had a limited policy role. Bakvis claims that as sources of policy advice political staff in Canada rank amongst the weakest, with a typical

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5 While there is an extensive literature in the US on White House staff (eg Kessel 1984, Hart 1995, Rockman 2000), and Congressional aides (eg Malbin 1980; Fox and Webb Hammond 1977; Webb Hammond 1985) it does not provide a useful comparison to Australian ministerial advisers, because of the difference in the way the executive is structured and operates in our political systems. However in some ways the interaction of partisan appointees and career public servants within the US federal bureaucracy is comparable to that of Australian ministerial advisers and senior public servants (see Heclo 1977, Dunn 1997 referred to in Chapter Six).
minister's office tending to be unduly preoccupied with 'picayune political matters' (1997:114). Campbell explains that:

Canadian Prime Ministers have generally observed a taboo against extensive use of political appointees either in the Prime Minister's office or ministers' personal staffs... Few Prime Ministers have even attempted to avail themselves of this approach. And those who have failed pretty abysmally (1998:148).

Liberal governments (1968-1979; 1980-1984; 1993-present) are seen as having a strong symbiosis with the bureaucracy. Therefore there was not a spur for the development of a counter staff within ministerial offices during their long periods in government (Campbell 1998). Long standing Liberal Prime Minister Trudeau stressed the importance of bureaucratic central agencies as policy advisers and coordinators within the government (Aucoin 1986:17).

However Progressive-Conservative governments (1984-1993) did feel a need for developing partisan ministerial offices. When it came to power the Mulroney government intended that ministerial offices would play an important policy advising role, but it appears this did not occur (Bakvis 1997; Aucoin 1991). In 1984 ministerial offices were expanded and upgraded and the role of the policy adviser in each office was strengthened. The changes were not successful partly because of 'the inadequacies of the persons appointed, who, with precious few exceptions, lacked the requisite governmental experience' (Aucoin 1991:155). Mulroney intended that the chief of staff of each office would be from outside the bureaucracy and have substantive policy expertise, but few of those hired as chiefs of staff were experts (Bakvis 1997). The Prime Minister's office extended its sphere of interest to a wide range of policy areas, but it was also seen as overloaded, and having little policy capacity (Bakvis 1997:88; Hockin 1991). Only a handful of advisers were engaged in substantive advisory roles and the office only occasionally acted as a mechanism for providing comprehensive policy advice (Hockin 1991:165). Despite his intentions, Mulroney's closest adviser proved to be the clerk of the Privy Council Office (Bakvis 1997:120).

The current Chretien Liberal government (elected in 1993) severely restricted the number and pay of ministerial staff, promising it would rely more explicitly on public servants rather than on political staff for policy advice (Bakvis 1997, 2000). Ministerial offices were reduced from an average of 40 staff for each minister to a maximum of 13, and there was also a reduction of staff in the Prime Minister's office (Campbell 1998:175). While some political staff, especially in the Prime Minister's office, are seen as having a strong influence in
government (Campbell 1998:177), generally the Privy Council Office is the primary agency supporting the policy deliberations of the Canadian cabinet (Bakvis 1997:88).

Thus in Canada there has not been the drive to develop a system of partisan policy advice within minister's offices as occurred in Australia over the Labor years. An historical 'symbiosis' between the Liberal party and the bureaucracy enabled them to effectively engage the state apparatus without the need for large partisan staffs to act as a 'counterbureaucracy'. Mulroney's attempt to expand and develop the role of ministerial offices was not successful because of a generally ad hoc, brokerage style of government; an inability to effectively engage the state apparatus; and because of the type of people employed as ministerial staff (Campbell 1998, Bakvis 1997). Another factor in the lack of development of partisan advisory structures in Canada is the traditional strength and role of the Privy Council Office, and the extensive involvement of higher level public servants in 'executive-bureaucratic gamesmanship' (Campbell 1998:148-150). Yet some argue this is a problem in Canada, as the lack of a strong tradition of 'party-political policy advice' to ministers has made it difficult for Canadian governments to achieve partisan responsiveness (Campbell 1998:150; Bakvis 2000:97).

**United Kingdom**

There has been an upsurge in interest in the structures of executive advice in the UK, with several recent publications (eg Lee et al 1998; Kavanagh and Seldon 2000; Clifford 2000) which add to an earlier body of literature (Plowden 1991; Jones 1987; Shepherd 1983; Bulmer 1988; Young and Sloman 1982). These studies focus almost exclusively on advisers to the Prime Minister (the institution of 'No 10') and track developments that occurred over the Thatcher, Major and Blair governments.

Traditionally British ministerial offices have been mainly composed of civil servants who are on secondment from the department, are rarely chosen by the minister and maintain dual loyalties to the minister and the department (Page 1992:129, Headey 1974:130; James 1992:16-17). The partisan element in ministerial offices, though increasing under Blair, is still relatively small and distinct; and still considered to be controversial and needing to be justified.

Perhaps because of their small numbers, partisan advisers in the UK have traditionally occupied a relatively marginal place within ministries (Page
1992:129) and have played a surprisingly small part in the processes of making policy (Plowden 1991:238). Ministers have tended to use advisers to help present policies to public and party audiences rather than actually to help formulate them (Young and Sloman 1982:91). The distinction between partisan work and policy work is still normatively strong and much anxiety has been expressed recently about the involvement of partisan (or 'special') advisers in policy work. Recent inquiries by the House of Commons have been very concerned with finding out whether the influx of special advisers under Blair are 'political' or 'technical' advisers (House of Commons Select Committee on Public Administration Sixth Report (1998), Fourth Report (2001), Seventh Report (2001)).

A crucial feature of the UK advisory institutions is the requirement that civil servants in ministerial offices do not play explicitly partisan roles. Civil servants cannot be 'special advisers'.

Recent, and much discussed, trends under Blair include a marked increase in the size of the Prime Minister's support staff; a stronger political element within No 10; and some blurring of previously 'rigid demarcation lines' between partisan and non partisan staff who support the Prime Minister (Kavanagh and Seldon 2000, Lee et al 1998:254). However the civil service continues to exercise most influence within No 10 (Kavanagh and Seldon 2000:74). There has also been much concern about the 'damaging' impact of partisan advisers - particularly media advisers - on the work of the civil service, with a number of high profile controversies. A parliamentary inquiry was recently launched to examine the relationship between ministers, special advisers and the civil service (BBC 2002, Mulligan 2002).

Thus the partisan element of British ministerial offices remains relatively small and distinct, except in the Prime Minister's office. However there is remarkably little research or analysis of advisers working for ministers other than the Prime Minister.

**France**

France has the most clearly elaborated and deep rooted institution of partisan ministerial staff - called *cabinets ministeriels* - which has a very long history and
tradition. The features of the French model have remained relatively constant over the last 30 years (Elgie 2000). There are a number of studies of French ministerial staff, though there is little recent work in English (Suleiman 1974; Wright 1989; Gaborit and Mounier 1987; Gaffney 1991; Siwek-Pouydesseu 1975; Searls 1981; Elgie 2000). British commentators have often seen the French model as representing an extreme, even dangerous, example of highly developed ministerial staff resources. The French model provides an interesting comparison with Australian ministerial offices in the Keating years.

Like many of the Australian advisers in this study, French ministerial advisers can be seen to combine partisanship, policy focus and policy competence. *Cabinets ministériels* are highly partisan. Similar to the Keating offices in this study there is usually a mix of public servants with policy expertise and party people (Elgie 2000). Yet the vast majority of cabinet members are public servants or have a background in the public service (Gaborit and Mounier 1987:104; Elgie 2000). There is a high level of interchange between the upper public service and the cabinets. This led Suleiman to include cabinet members in his study of the higher public service and to refer to them as an element of the French bureaucracy (Suleiman 1974:6).

Both the President and Prime Minister have policy advisers, though their staff numbers have remained relatively 'light' (Elgie 2000). The Prime Minister has around 40 policy advisers and the President around 27 (Elgie 2000).

Presidential, Prime Ministerial and ministerial cabinets play a central role amongst French political institutions. They are 'the central locations of decision making' (Gaborit and Mounier 1987:104). They are significant sites of policy elaboration and play a crucial role in the policy process (Gaffney 1991). They perform important coordination work in frequent interministerial meetings chaired by the Prime Minister's advisers (Thiebault 1994:142). They are essential channels of information within French government:

> As political information moves up towards the Prime Minister and the President and back down again, moves across to Parliament or down to the services of the bureaucracy, the ministerial cabinets are constantly involved, fashioning, interpreting, drawing up, rewriting, proposing and pursuing with varying degrees of emphasis virtually all textual and other manifestations of political information (Gaffney 1991:8).

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6 They were formed as we know them today at the beginning of the Third Republic in 1870. A 1911 law and a 1912 decree laid down rules for them (Siwek-Pouydesseu 1975:197).
However their most important role is to ensure political control over the bureaucracy: 'The essential function of the cabinets ... is to short circuit ... the procedural inertia of the bureaucracy' (Gaffney 1991:6). Studies have revealed significant levels of conflict between ministerial staff and higher public servants (Suleiman 1974).

The reason why this institution developed so strongly in France can be found in its history of weak executives and strong bureaucratic control of policy. The centralisation of French government and the particular strength, closure and status of the French bureaucracy (arising from its elite training and corps structure) requires a robust and competent counterstaff institution to effectively oppose and control it. This may be one reason why emphasis is placed on policy capacity, as well as partisanship, in recruitment of cabinet members.

There are several reasons suggested for the preponderance of public servants in cabinets. First the allocation of payment for the cabinet is very limited, which means that its members must be paid from outside. Very few professions apart from the public service have a facility for continuing to draw their salary while working in a cabinet, whereas public servants may relinquish a position for an undetermined period of time and be reintegrated back into the public service at the end of their employment with the minister (Siwek-Pouydesseau 1975:200). Second, public servants in France who have attended the elite training colleges constitute an 'intellectual caste'; they are high fliers who are highly trained and well suited to this type of work (Gaffney 1991:9).

Third, ministers believe that the knowledge and experience public servants bring strengthens their ability to oppose and control the department. The strength of the informal networks within the upper levels of the French bureaucracy, arising from the corps structure, mean it is important to appoint public servants to the cabinet if a minister hopes to influence policy making. Suleiman claims that in appointing outsiders to their cabinets ministers would be acting against their own interests. By not playing according to the rules of the game they and the ministry would carry less weight in interministerial battles and within the technostructure that 'makes all decisions' (1974:264-265). Because of the strength of these networks and relationships, 'were it not for the ministerial cabinet the minister might conceivably [be] entirely left out of the decision making process' (1974:265). Fourth, Elgie (2000) argues that the preponderance of public servants is a general feature of the French political system, in which a highly trained administrative elite can be found not only in
ministerial offices, but also in the public service, political parties and public and private sector businesses.

Thus the French system of ministerial staff represents a powerful political institution providing partisan policy advice to ministers. It has some interesting similarities to Australian ministerial offices in the Keating period.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined the literature relevant to a study of the role of ministerial advisers in the Keating period. It revealed there are very few studies focused on Australian ministerial advisers as subjects. The most significant study of advisers is dated, as it surveyed ministerial advisers at the beginning of the Hawke-Keating period (Walter 1986). Later studies (Dunn 1997; Ryan 1995) have not explored advisers' role in its entirety. It argued there is a gap in our conceptual understanding of adviser's role, which needs to be linked to advisers' function within government. There are also important gaps in our understanding of the variations in the behaviour of advisers; the work advisers do with departments; their policy roles and coordination roles. The chapter also described developments in ministerial offices in Canada, UK and France as a backdrop to identifying the distinctive features of the Australian ministerial office at this time. These features are discussed in the conclusion to the thesis. The next chapter outlines the methodology of the study.
Three
Methodology

There are a number of difficulties in researching political elites, such as getting access, lack of time for interviews, lack of supporting documentary material and the secretive attitude of 'political insiders'. There is also the problem of how to capture variations in behaviour and meaningful data in short structured interview situations. These problems are particularly apparent in studying ministerial advisers.

This chapter first describes the method used in the study. It then outlines why a qualitative method was chosen as most appropriate. It discusses two key issues in qualitative research - sampling and validity - and how each was dealt with in the design of the research project. It then describes the distinctive features of this study compared to other studies of advisers.

HOW THE STUDY WAS CONDUCTED

The method used in this study was qualitative research. Forty-one Labor ministerial advisers were interviewed between April 1995 and April 1996. Most interviews were conducted before the March 1996 election (which Labor lost). Some interviews which had not been able to be completed before the election occurred were conducted after the election. Interviews were conducted with 13 ministers who had worked with these advisers; and with 10 public servants who had worked with these clusters of ministers and advisers. One leading Caucus member was also interviewed about advisers' relationships with Caucus.

Advisers of four different classifications were interviewed. These were assistant adviser; adviser; senior or principal adviser; and consultant. Media advisers were excluded from the study, as their work tends to be distinct from that of other advisers and they may not have much involvement with the department or with policy issues. Walter (1986) and Dunn (1997) did not study media advisers, though they were included in Forward's studies (1975, 1977).

1 While 43 interviews were completed, two subjects were excluded from the study for various reasons, leaving 41 usable interviews.
Along with previous studies, all administrative staff such as personal secretaries, secretaries and departmental liaison officers were also excluded, as were electorate officers.²

Pre-study interviews were conducted with two advisers and one minister known to the author. They provided valuable feedback on how to refine the interview schedule. Interviews with advisers ranged from 45 minutes to three hours, and were conducted mainly in ministerial offices, but also in cafes, at the homes of some advisers and at the university.

Most of the advisers were very open, candid and keen to talk about their experiences. Many were fascinated by the processes of policy making and interested in thinking and talking about how things happen in government. Some relished the opportunity to talk about what they did and what they had observed, and what its significance was. Interviews were conducted close to an election they felt they were likely to lose, and this motivated some to talk about their experiences over the years and to think broadly about what they had seen. Some interviews had a confessional aspect.³ Some advisers were very generous with their time. For example, two advisers were interviewed twice because they felt they had more to say when their allocated time had run out. Some advisers were driven to impart their experiences by a view that their work is not well understood by 'outsiders', particularly researchers.

Interviews were arranged by a combination of methods. First, snowball sampling was used, in which a few advisers were contacted personally and interviewed and they referred me to other people in their networks, who then referred me to further contacts. Snowball sampling is one of the two most common sampling techniques in qualitative research (Minichiello et al 1995:161). It is particularly suited to studying groups where access can be a problem. Almost three-quarters of the interviews were obtained through this gradual building of the sample. This was a successful way of gaining access to a very busy and wary target group. Being referred by someone they trusted was important as it is fundamental to the way advisers operate (through trusted networks). Only one

² Electorate officers perform distinct roles associated with the minister's local electorates, do not deal with the department or with policy matters and are not located in the Canberra ministerial office. Walter and Dunn did not include departmental liaison officers (DLOs) in their studies but Forward did. Forward's inclusion of DLOs and media advisers in his sample complicates his analysis and tends to mask the distinctive features of policy advisers.

³ It is useful to compare the television series 'Labor in Power' which was taped just prior to the 1993 election. Several of the interviews with advisers that lasted for around three hours were almost like a 'debrief' of some of their experiences, with someone familiar with the situation.
person contacted in this way refused to be interviewed. Of 30 verbal requests, 29 interviews were obtained.

The second stage involved contacting advisers by letter in the offices that had not been reached through the snowball sampling. Of 41 letters written to advisers and followed up with phone calls, 14 interviews were obtained. A comparison of response rates shows that snowball sampling was an effective way of reaching the target group.4

Ministers and public servants were all contacted by letter. While all public servants contacted agreed to be interviewed, the response rate for ministers was much lower (the busy pre-election period meant many were not available). Six of the ministers interviewed were senior (or cabinet) ministers; seven were junior (or non cabinet) ministers.

The senior public servants selected were at the First Assistant Secretary and Assistant Secretary level. They were from eight departments. Like the advisers, they were interested and keen to talk about their experiences. They provided candid and at times colourful assessments of individuals. Most interviews lasted for a little over one hour. The interviews with ministers ranged from 45 minutes to 1.5 hours.

The interviews with advisers were semi-structured in the sense I began with a list of topics to be covered, but allowed the interview to take its course by following the lead of the person being interviewed (an important technique in qualitative research). The interviews with ministers and public servants were also based on a list of topics to be covered but were more structured because they were asked about their experiences of specific individuals and to comment on advisers' accounts of what had occurred in particular cases.

Interviews were either taped or detailed notes were taken which were immediately written up into a transcript. Many advisers opted for notes rather than tape recording. The tape recorder could constrain some interviewees (on several occasions the tape had to be turned off at crucial moments in recounting events).

Interviews were conducted on a confidential basis. This was important in obtaining consent. Subjects are therefore not referred to by name, and quotes

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4 One person declined to be interviewed and seven who agreed to be interviewed after the election were then unavailable or untraceable because they left Canberra. Nineteen people did not respond at all to the letters and phone calls. However it should be noted that second stage interviews were sought in the extremely busy pre-election period that began around December 1995, which took many advisers out of Canberra for extensive periods.
and examples have been stripped of identifying program references. Advisers are referred to as Adviser 1, Adviser 2, Adviser 3 and so on, abbreviated as A01, A02, A03 where necessary. The 13 ministers are each named with a colour, such as Minister Blue or Minister Yellow. Public servants are referred to by numbers, for example Public Servant 1, Public Servant 2 and so on, abbreviated as P01 or P02 where necessary. Ministers and advisers who were referred to by respondents but not interviewed in the study were also assigned colours and numbers. This reference system is detailed in Appendix 1.

During each interview with advisers, demographic data was collected. This included the length of time they had worked as an adviser; the number of ministers they had worked for; the number of portfolios they had worked in; whether they were currently a party member; whether they were from the public service; their career background; and their gender, age and education. This information is summarised in Appendix 3.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

A qualitative method was chosen for several reasons. The research question ('what was the role of ministerial advisers in the Keating government?'), in its exploration of the experiences and perceptions of individuals, and variations in behaviour, called for a qualitative rather than quantitative approach. The study aimed to reveal the reality of the phenomenon in some depth and detail, based on the experiences of participants. Qualitative methods, particularly ethnographic, unstructured interviewing, permit one to 'understand and capture the points of view of other people without predetermining those points of view through prior selection of questionnaire categories' (Patton 1990:24).

Quantitative research cannot capture the complexity and contingency of advisers' work. For example, there is a limit to how meaningful Forward and Walter's data is when it asks advisers 'what in practice are your main roles?' and gives nine predetermined roles from which they must choose three. A quantitative method does not reveal much about how the role is performed. Nor does it provide the context or depth to understand what advisers' responses mean.

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5 Anonymity was also a feature of Forward (1975, 1977), Walter (1986) and Dunn's (1997) studies and I believe it is unavoidable in researching advisers.

6 The level of non-response to this question may indicate the inappropriateness of the predetermined categories (Forward 1975:145).
Ryan's (1995) study shows the difficulty of trying to get quantitative data from advisers, ministers and public servants about complex policy processes; and the difficulty of making sense out of the data that is obtained. From over one hundred questionnaires sent out, he received only 13 responses. Finding the answer to the question 'what was the influence of advisers on the decisions?' to be 'very important' and 'important' does not reveal much about the role of advisers in decision making or how they behave and exert influence.

Quantitative studies (such as those by Forward (1975, 1977) and Walter (1986)) have proved inadequate for exploring differences between advisers. Forward's four 'types' of advisers - based on whether they were public servants or not, and classed as 'political' or not (discussed in Chapter Two) - cannot be taken very far as they are not meaningfully linked to behaviour. Quantitative classifications can also be rigid and arbitrary. For example to be classified as 'political' in Forward's typology an adviser had to meet three, four or five criteria as 'political' (based on their answers to five of the survey questions). Those who met two, one or none of the criteria were judged as 'non-political'. However this resulted in 26-50% of those classed as 'non-political non-public servants' in 1975 being members of the ALP (Forward 1975:149).

An important aim of this study was to capture a range of different types of advisers and to distinguish their behaviour. A qualitative approach is effective for highly individualised situations and suited to capturing and understanding variations in behaviour (Patton 1990:17). It is also a methodology suited to incorporating multiple perspectives (Strauss and Corbin 1994:280).

There are two issues which relate to the credibility of qualitative studies and which must be addressed in designing a qualitative research project. These are sampling and validity.

**Sampling**

In qualitative research, it is important to assess the adequacy of the sample and its representativeness to ensure that the study's findings are meaningful. The aim of qualitative research is to elicit adequate data to reveal the variation and complexity of the phenomenon.

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7 The fact that a letter was circulated amongst advisers urging them not to respond to the survey also indicates the inappropriateness of his method (Ryan 1995:145).
8 Classification as 'political' was partly based on engagement in 'political party' work in the office (Forward 1975). This was not defined and was changed to 'political-policy' work by Walter (1986).
The number of interviews in this study (64) compares favourably with the size of earlier studies. Forward's work was based on 40 interviews (1975) and 56 interviews (1977) with advisers; Walter's book (1986) was based on 23 interviews with advisers; and Dunn's book (1997) was based on 38 subjects (12 cabinet ministers, 13 department heads and 13 advisers), seven of whom were interviewed twice. Ryan's (1995) article was based on 13 interviews (one minister, seven ministerial advisers, three senior public servants and two journalists).9

The variation among advisers means that small samples may skew the analysis by covering only some of the types of advisers or behaviours involved. To ensure there is adequate data, qualitative researchers keep interviewing until responses begin to be repetitive (termed 'saturation'). Sampling ends when no new information emerges from interviews. This study planned to interview more than 41 advisers, but there began to be considerable repetition in interviews and this indicated that further interviews were not necessary. It signified an adequate sample group for a qualitative study. Minichiello et al explain that in qualitative research:

Sampling is guided by the search for contrasts which are needed to clarify the analysis and achieve the saturation of emergent categories.... This sampling strategy allows the researcher to study the range of types rather than determine their distribution or frequency (1995:13-14, [italics in original]).

In this sense qualitative research does not produce statistically representative samples. However samples are representative in other ways, for example in their coverage of all types or aspects of a phenomenon. Because sampling was not random, the sample group is not statistically representative. (The data was not collected randomly and all possible subjects did not have the opportunity to participate in the study). This is common in qualitative research and elite interviewing.

How representative the sample group of advisers is compared to the total population of eligible advisers can be assessed using the only two measures publicly available for the total group: rank and gender.10 Table 3.1 and Table 3.2 show that the sample group over-represents the higher ranks and males.

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9 Forward, Walter and Ryan combined interviews with quantitative surveys.
10 These are found in the Ministerial Directories. How the total sample group was defined is explained in Chapter One, page 10.
Table 3.1: Comparison of respondents with total sample: rank

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>assistant adviser</th>
<th>adviser</th>
<th>senior/principal adviser</th>
<th>consultant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>study sample</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total sample(^a)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) at April 1995 (advisory staff to ministers only)

Table 3.2: Comparison of respondents with total sample: gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>male</th>
<th>female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>study sample</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total sample(^a)</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) at April 1995 (advisory staff to ministers only)

However the sample is still a significant advance on previous studies, such as those by Walter and Dunn, where the assistant adviser and adviser group (which comprised 56% of the advisory group in April 1995) were virtually not represented at all.\(^{11}\) The over-representation of senior advisers and consultants in the study sample may suggest that those interviewed were slightly more experienced than the advisory group generally.\(^{12}\)

The breadth of coverage of the study sample is very good. The sample includes advisers from 20 of the 30 offices that existed in April 1995. Between them the advisers interviewed had worked for 31 ministers. These ministers were from all factions (8 Left; 8 Centre; 13 Right; 2 Non aligned) and were both senior and junior. Eighty-five per cent of advisers had worked for senior ministers and 39 per cent had worked for junior ministers.\(^{13}\) The fact that 39% of the sample had worked for junior ministers indicates the sample is broadly representative compared to other studies. During the Keating years there were 17 senior

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\(^{11}\) While they account for 39% of the sample in this study, only three of the thirteen advisers Dunn (1997) interviewed were not senior advisers and 'most' of Walter's interviewees were at the senior private secretary level (equivalent to senior adviser) (1986:115). While Forward claims his 1974 and 1976 samples closely represent the canvassed group on the criteria of sex and rank, Walter (1986) makes no such claims and it is unclear whether his respondents resembled the total sample. Because Dunn interviewed subjects from two different governments, he does not argue its representativeness.

\(^{12}\) However, the differences may not be great. On average, senior advisers in the study sample had 4 years 4 months' experience and consultants 3 years 6 months; while advisers had 3 years 3 months and assistant advisers 2 years 3 months' experience.

\(^{13}\) This exceeds 100% because those who had worked for both represented 24% of the sample.
ministers and 13 junior ministers. By comparison Dunn interviewed only senior cabinet ministers and advisers working for cabinet ministers.\textsuperscript{14}

The portfolio coverage of the sample is also very good. The subjects interviewed had worked as advisers in 28 different portfolios. There were only five portfolios in which no subjects had experience.\textsuperscript{15} All five were elements of larger portfolios that were covered by advisers in the study.

Thus the sample is adequate and the breadth of coverage of advisers is very good. Indeed it represents an advance on samples used by other writers in its coverage of a more diverse range of advisers as interview subjects (eg Dunn 1997, Walter 1986).

Validity

How valid the findings of a study are depend on the credibility of both the data collection and the interpretation of the data. The search for validity is approached differently in qualitative research from quantitative research. Minichiello et al suggest that ensuring validity in in-depth interviewing involves staying 'close to the empirical world in order to ensure a close fit between the data and what people actually say and do' and 'being concerned with the ... correctness of one's understanding of the informant's perceptions, view, attitudes and behaviours' (1995:176). There are several ways of checking the validity of qualitative research. These include triangulation and crosschecking.

Triangulation

In qualitative research, triangulation involves the use of more than one method or more than one source of data.\textsuperscript{16} The term 'triangulation' is taken from land surveying. Patton comments that: 'knowing a single landmark only locates you somewhere along a line in a direction from the landmark, whereas with two landmarks you can take bearings in two directions and locate yourself at their intersection' (1990:187). In this case, the study was designed so that three sources of data would be used to test the consistency of the material provided

\textsuperscript{14} A two-tiered ministry was not in existence when Walter did his study (1983).

\textsuperscript{15} These were Administrative Services; Small Business and Customs; Resources; Trade; and Schools, Vocational Education and Training.

\textsuperscript{16} It may also involve the use of more than one theory or more than one researcher (Patton 1990:187).
in interviews (ministers, advisers and public servants). This enhanced validity in two ways. First, the interviews with ministers and public servants who had worked with many of the advisers studied provided some confirmation or lack of confirmation of the views expressed by the advisers and their accounts of events. In particular these views were used to confirm the categorisation of advisers as 'active', 'very active' or 'passive/reactive', based on their reported behaviour (to be discussed in Chapter Five).

Secondly ministers, advisers and public servants provided three points of view of the same phenomenon. Multiple perspectives increase the depth and complexity of the analysis. There is no single objective reality, but rather, all views are 'situated'.\textsuperscript{17} Incorporating three views added to the richness of the data, and produced a more complete picture of the phenomenon.

Patton notes that triangulation seldom produces a single, totally consistent picture (1990:467). An interesting aspect of the triangulation in this study was that in general, the accounts of advisers and public servants were very similar. If there was a discrepancy of view it tended to be the ministers who differed from the advisers and public servants. For example one minister described herself as closely involved in directing the department on a day to day basis. Yet both her advisers and the public servants involved claimed she was distant from the department and delegated most of the relationship to her advisers. Another minister denied that his advisers had any role in negotiating a major policy change on his behalf, though both his adviser and the public servant involved stated that the adviser did most of the negotiations.

Such discrepancies were not common, but where they occurred, had several explanations. One is that interviews with ministers were rarely informal; unlike other participants they often maintained an 'official' stance in interviews. This is understandable as, even with assurances of anonymity, ministers always expect that their utterances may be publicly cited. They also had an incentive, as the public figures associated with the period, to have history recorded as they would like it to be (compared to advisers and public servants who are rarely public figures).\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{17} Silverman suggests the researcher's role 'is not to adjudicate between participants' competing versions but to understand the situated work that they do' (in Minichiello et al 1995:188).

\textsuperscript{18} Others have commented on the issues associated with interviewing ministers. For example Seldon commented that in his study 'ministers were, for the most part, poor interviewees. ... The author frequently had reason to wonder whether some former ministers had served in the same administration, so at variance were their accounts of the way that coordination took place at the heart of Whitehall' (1995:126).
Secondly, ministers experience the world very differently to advisers and public servants. Ministers are at the centre of all decisions and actions in their work world. Much of the 'leg work' is done by others and is not seen by them. Their own activities are far weightier and therefore often form the basis of their descriptions of events.

Thirdly ministers see advisers as extensions of their own identity since they act as delegates. In other words a minister may recall that 'I negotiated with Minister X to achieve this result' even though it was an adviser who actually undertook the negotiation. The minister perceived it as his or her own action, as the advisers were acting as him or her. This is a valid interpretation of events. Ultimately ministers are the actors of significance, and advisers are their agents. In this way, some ministers used the term 'I' to broadly embrace the work of the whole team in the ministerial office.

Crosschecking

Another way of testing the validity of qualitative research is to check findings against other sources and perspectives, termed crosschecking. In September 1999, I presented a seminar to approximately 50 public servants from the Department of Transport and Regional Development which outlined the different aspects of the role of the adviser. They were asked to assess how well the analysis matched their own experiences. The public servants suggested the analysis had captured well their experience of advisers. They were very positive about the interpretation of the data (with some saying 'you have it exactly right'). Some of the analysis was also sent to one of the ministers interviewed for the study. He provided positive feedback on the interpretation of the data.

Insider/outsider status

It is worth considering the 'insider/outsider' status of the researcher in this study. There are two sides to this debate. On the one hand 'insiders' can claim to have special knowledge of their own group which means they bring special insight and discernment to the tasks of interviewing and interpreting data. They may see different problems and pose different questions to 'outsiders' and have insight into nuances of behaviour not understood by others. On the other hand there are claims that 'insiders' may be biased in researching a group known to them (Minichiello et al 1995: 82-186). This latter view does not
acknowledge that 'outsiders' also bring value-laden assumptions to the task of research, and cannot be said to be 'objective'.

My experience as an adviser had several advantages in this project. It facilitated access to advisers, by providing known individuals with whom to begin the snowball sampling. It increased my understanding of how to approach advisers and adjust my methods to their working conditions. It helped in decoding the meanings of what advisers said and in understanding the context of their behaviour. It alerted me to the complexity of the situation. It also enabled me to have a good rapport with advisers when interviewing. Good rapport is critical in eliciting rich and meaningful data in qualitative research, as Fontana and Frey suggest: 'Close rapport with respondents opens doors to more informed research' (1994:367). Advisers who were aware I had worked as an adviser often seemed to relax and open up much more as they felt I understood the situations they were describing.

I believe my own experience enabled me to obtain richer, more complex data and to interpret it in the light of an intimate understanding of the processes of executive government. I also brought to the research some years' experience as a public servant, and experience of working as a public servant with advisers, as well as current status as academic researcher. Patton suggests that: 'Closeness does not make bias and loss of perspective inevitable; distance is no guarantee of objectivity' (1990: 48). Rather than detachment and distance, what guarantees valid research is neutrality. He refers to the concept of empathic neutrality: 'Empathy ... is a stance toward the people one encounters, while neutrality is a stance toward the findings' (1990:58). I aimed to take a stance of empathic neutrality throughout this research.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF THIS STUDY

There are several features which distinguish the study from previous research on ministerial advisers.

First the range of respondents is more comprehensive than has been studied before and the views captured are more diverse. Advisers of all levels were interviewed and from both senior and junior ministers' offices. This is different to most previous studies where mainly senior advisers to senior ministers were
interviewed (Walter 1986; Dunn 1997). This was a deliberate part of the study design. Senior advisers made up only 25% of advisers in April 1995; they cannot represent advisers as a group. Interviewing a range of advisers is important in distinguishing between different types of advisers and exploring the impact of advisers' work.

The ministers and public servants were also selected differently to previous studies. Both senior and junior ministers were interviewed. The public servants in the study were all at the Assistant Secretary (AS) and First Assistant Secretary (FAS) level. Previous studies have mainly interviewed cabinet ministers, senior advisers and departmental secretaries, which has resulted in a partial view of adviser behaviour and political-bureaucratic relationships (Walter 1986, Dunn 1997). Senior advisers can be more distant from the day to day policy work and interaction with the department which is carried out by advisers with specific policy responsibilities. Secretaries have fewer dealings with advisers than public servants at the AS and FAS level, who often interact daily with them and who do not have their own access to the minister or their own authority as secretaries do. The study aimed to move away from the views of the heads of offices and departments, as they are not involved in much of what occurs between advisers and officials.

Second, the study captures three perspectives on the role and work of advisers: that of advisers themselves, their ministers and the public servants who worked with them. Walter's (1986) work lacks the balancing views of ministers and public servants. His advisers appear to operate in a vacuum, rather than being immersed in close relationships with ministers and public servants. Dunn's (1997) study covers all three perspectives but with more limited numbers, and across two governments. His subjects were not necessarily known to each other. Ryan's small study is mainly based on survey responses from ministers and advisers.

Finally, the use of a large sample of in-depth interviews provides an analysis with considerable depth and context. It is a serious attempt to capture the experiences and perceptions of advisers, and the views of those who work closely with them, at a particular moment in history (1995-96).

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19 The exception is Forward's 1977 study which surveyed almost all advisers (92%) working at the time.
In summary the research is distinctive in using a broader, more diverse sample than is usually studied; using multiple perspectives; and studying the phenomenon in considerable depth using qualitative methods.

This chapter has discussed the methodology used in the study. The thesis now turns to an exploration of the findings of the research. The next chapter addresses the question: 'what was the role of ministerial advisers in the Keating government?'
More than 'spin' and 'minding':
The role of ministerial advisers

The thesis now turns to the main research question: 'what was the role of ministerial advisers in the Keating government?' It describes the role played by advisers which emerged in interviews with ministers, advisers and public servants. It also constructs a conceptual framework for analysing the role advisers played at this time. It argues that the role of the adviser must be analysed in terms of the function that advisers perform for ministers. As discussed in Chapter Two, the core function of advisers is to help ministers to pursue political control over the apparatus of government. This chapter argues that the role played by advisers developed over the Labor period to include important work directed at increasing political control for ministers. This work went beyond their traditional roles of political and personal support. The chapter briefly describes the five elements of the role played by advisers in the Keating years.

THE ROLE OF ADVISERS

At the outset it is important to note that a great range of tasks was performed by advisers, and that individuals varied in the work they did and in their approach to the job. This was a feature of the role: that an adviser could range across a wide variety of work at any one time, and that individuals could specialise in aspects of the role. The description of the work of advisers which follows tries to capture the scope of the role in this period, rather than any one individual performance of it. It sketches the boundaries of the role of the adviser, acknowledging that not all advisers performed the role in this way and that there were more limited versions of it. (Chapter Five explores this variation in detail.)

The review of the literature in Chapter Two showed that while it is possible to list the range of tasks performed by ministerial advisers, analysing the boundaries and deeper function of the adviser's role has proved more difficult.
The role has traditionally involved political and personal support, often disparagingly called 'spin' and 'minding'. It now goes far beyond this.

Table 4.1 shows how Walter (1986) and Dunn (1997) analysed the role of ministerial advisers. Walter divides advisers' work into personal, technical and political tasks. Dunn distinguishes between the different arenas in which advisers work (working with the department; working with other ministers; working with parliament; and personal services to the minister). This points to the complexity of the job: advisers performed a range of types of work in a number of arenas. These frameworks provide ways of organising advisers' tasks, but do not conceptualise the function that advisers perform with their work. Focusing on function directs our attention to the significance of advisers' work for the executive, and therefore helps to explain why they became so important in government. Dunn saw the overall function of advisers as to help ministers to achieve political direction of departments and to enhance the responsiveness of the bureaucracy (1997:89, 93).

**Table 4.1: Frameworks for analysing the role of advisers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Walter (1986): Types of work</th>
<th>Dunn (1997): Arenas in which advisers work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>personal</strong></td>
<td><strong>working with the department</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- administration of the office</td>
<td>- evaluate department’s work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- emotional support</td>
<td>- direct the department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- sounding board/confidante</td>
<td>- facilitate department-minister interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- surrogate</td>
<td><strong>working with other ministers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- eyes and ears</td>
<td>- broker policy positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>technical</strong></td>
<td>- coordinate portfolios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- evaluate policy ideas</td>
<td><strong>working with Parliament</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- seek outside ideas</td>
<td><strong>personal services for the minister</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- write speeches and briefs</td>
<td>- manage minister’s time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>political</strong></td>
<td>- eyes and ears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- attend to the politics of the electorate, the party, the ministry, parliament and the bureaucracy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In their comparative work on advisers, both Bakvis (1997) and Peters, Rhodes and Wright (2000b) provide frameworks based on function (Table 4.2). Bakvis (1997) compares a range of executive advisory mechanisms in five countries, and assesses their relative strengths in performing a number of functions for the executive.
Bakvis (1997): Needs fulfilled by political staff [strengths and weaknesses]

- develop mandate in Opposition [weak]
- mobilise bureaucracy in transition phase [strong]
- partisan tasks [strong]
- provide countervailing advice [moderate]
- legitimation (ie mobilise support for policy innovation) [strong]
- reflection/rejuvenation [weak]

Peters, Rhodes and Wright (2000b): Functions of staff to executive leaders

- policy coordination
- policy advice
- political management (relations with parliament, parties, pressure groups, the media)
- systemic management*
- ensuring 'good government'*
- managing the state apparatus*

*performed by the public service in Australia

Bakvis judges political staff generally to be useful in meeting the needs of executives in four ways: mobilising the bureaucracy in the transition phase of a new government; performing partisan tasks; evaluating bureaucratic advice; and providing legitimation and mobilisation to ministers who attempt to innovate (1997:118). In addition to these four functions political staff act as a primary node in a network of contacts, 'channelling critical information to the key decision maker, the minister' (1997:118).

Looking across eight countries, Peters, Rhodes and Wright (2000b) conceptualise six functions of staff to chief executives, only some of which are performed by ministerial advisers in Australia. These are policy coordination, policy advice and political management (2000b:11-13). The other three roles are undertaken by public service central agencies in Australia. These are systemic management (oversight of the international or intergovernmental interests of a country); ensuring 'good government' (through procedural tasks); and managing the state apparatus (through personnel management and appointments) (2000b:11-13). The task of engaging the bureaucracy is absent from this list.

Dror (1987) also conceptualised the function of advisers to 'rulers'. He saw advisers' function as to improve the performance of rulers by helping them to overcome the inherent 'defects' of rulership (1987:185-193). These defects included quantitative and qualitative work overload; stress; court politics; too much positive feedback; and option manipulation.
This thesis suggests a way of conceptualising the role of advisers which emphasises its new and increasingly important elements, that now constitute significant functions within government. It argues that advisers' contribution to political control in the Keating period went beyond helping ministers to manage their jobs and to direct the bureaucracy. If political control is understood as being able to effectively steer government, then it involves not only engaging the bureaucracy, but also coordinating within the executive, managing multiple political relationships inside and outside of government, and engaging in complex, multiplayer policy processes. The thesis argues that over the Labor period the role played by advisers grew to address these challenges faced by ministers. The role of ministerial advisers in the Keating period can be understood as encompassing five elements: personal support, political support, communication, steering policy and coordination. Table 4.3 shows this conceptual framework in more detail.
Table 4.3: Conceptual framework for understanding the role of ministerial advisers in 1995-96

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>role</th>
<th>aspects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>personal support</td>
<td>- managing time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 'corridor' work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- emotional support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- intellectual support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>political support</td>
<td>- parliamentary work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- working with the party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- issue management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communication</td>
<td>- articulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- speech writing, positioning, presentation, media management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- channelling information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- managing the minister’s relationships with Caucus, interest groups, other ministers etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>steering policy</td>
<td>- engaging the department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- supervising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- orienting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- mobilising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- alternative source of advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- engaging in policy making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- vertical: shared with departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- generating ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- policy development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- policy implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- horizontal: independent roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- agenda setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- linking ideas, interests and opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- mobilising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- bargaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- delivering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coordination</td>
<td>- policy coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- facilitating cabinet decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- resolving conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- pulling together new policy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Advisers continued to provide the traditional personal and political support leaders required, and for some individuals this was the core of their work (for example those termed 'politicos' or 'political warriors'). However many advisers played other important roles in contributing to political control, and to ministers' capacity to govern.

The aspects of the role termed 'communication' and 'coordination' became fundamental elements of the adviser's role over the Labor period. Ministers and public servants clearly expected that advisers would do this work, and saw it as an important part of the 'value' they added. While communication as 'articulation' has always been a part of the staff role, the 'linkage' element is new. It became increasingly important in the Keating period and was an key source of influence for advisers. While political coordination has always been a part of the staff role, the role that advisers played in policy coordination became vitally important to the executive. The 'communication' and 'coordination' elements of the role of adviser were thus elaborated over the Labor period, and came to be seen as core elements of the role. They became key functions that advisers played for the executive and contributed in important ways to political control.

The aspect of the role termed 'steering policy' encompasses the traditional idea of advisers working closely with departments to promote partisan agendas. However the study also identified an independent capacity for steering policy through a range of policy roles particular to advisers themselves. These roles have not been articulated before and represent a potentially very significant function for advisers in policy making and in helping the executive to steer policy. The 'steering policy' function was more contested and controversial than the other aspects of the advisers' role and there was great variation in how advisers performed this work. Some of those interviewed in the study did not see all aspects of this work as appropriate.

The primacy of location: 'where everything comes together'

These roles can be seen to grow out of advisers' location in government. The traditional personal and political support work derives from proximity to the minister. The increasingly important roles that advisers played in linking and coordinating arise from their location in the ministerial office - a place where the political and administrative worlds meet, at the confluence of the many

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1 See Appendix 3.
forces that desire input to government. Minister Orange described the ministerial office as 'the place where everything comes together'. The active roles that some advisers played in policy making were only possible because they could move amongst the many stakeholders located inside and outside of government, able to reach into the bureaucracy, the ministry, policy networks and out into the wider community. The ministerial office is a crucial locus of political authority and also a key site of communication and negotiation in government. This central location made possible the expansion and elaboration of advisers' role at this time.

The next part of the chapter briefly describes the work performed by ministerial advisers in their roles of personal and political support, communication, steering policy and coordination. Chapters Six, Seven, Eight and Nine explore two of these roles (steering policy and coordination) in more detail, using interview material and examples.

**Personal support**

Advisers had some important tasks that related to the personal needs of ministers. Ministers in the study put a strong emphasis on this aspect of advisers' work. Dunn (1997) listed two tasks in this category: managing the minister's time; and providing information about informal activities within Parliament. Both emerged strongly in this study, but so did two other tasks: providing emotional support; and providing intellectual support.

**Avalanches and kaleidoscopes: managing the minister's time**

Managing the minister's time was a very important aspect of advisers' work and many of the ministers interviewed listed it first when outlining the adviser's job. This involved running the minister's diary and making decisions about how time was allocated. It also involved *making* time. Adviser 26 described this as the key to his work: 'My job is to buy him time. That's the adviser's ultimate job, to make time for very busy people.' This had several aspects. Firstly advisers needed to run an efficient office so that information could be retrieved when needed and they could ensure that the minister was at the right place at the right time with the right papers. One very experienced senior minister, Minister Blue, stated that the 'number one' part of the adviser's role was:
to manage the paper flow with impeccable organisational effectiveness ensuring that nothing that’s urgent gets neglected on the way in and nothing ... gets neglected or falls between cracks on the way out. The paper load is vast. ... Managing that system, making it work and knowing where every bit of paper was at any given point in time and being able to respond accordingly - that was criteria number one. ... You need to do that in order to have a clear head, an unmuddled head, an unhurried head, ... to deal with the complex issues as they come on.

Ministers have a crippling workload, involving what one former adviser referred to as 'an avalanche of paper' and 'a kaleidoscope of issues and pressures'. More than simply managing paper flow, advisers acted as a buffer, shielding ministers from the barrage of demands on them and selecting what received the minister’s attention at any time. This filtering role enabled ministers to prioritise their time and to focus on what was important and urgent. This was described by ministers as 'operating as a filtering mechanism of the massive amount of stuff which comes to a minister' (Black), and 'dealing with the welter of people and paper that was coming in that needed to be dealt with' (Brown). To do this required an understanding of the totality of the demands the minister faced at any time and a clear sense of the minister’s objectives and priorities. It involved the exercise of political judgement, as Minister Blue stressed:

It's political antennae. An ability to instantly understand what's important and what's less important in terms of time prioritising and in terms of attention prioritising. ... It's more than a mechanical function, it's a sense of what's important and what's not. And individual staffers who can't get that right are just the most useless people around even if they are intellectually very bright.

'Corridor' work

The second personal support task was keeping the minister informed about what was happening within Parliament House. Often described as being the 'eyes and ears' of the minister, it involved watching out for his or her interests amongst the political machinations that occurred within the building. Minister White, a junior minister, referred to this as 'corridor work', which involved 'walking around, having a cup of coffee with someone, seeing who was coming in and out of various offices, finding out who's talking to whom and who's not talking to whom ... a sort of ASIO-type role ... a spying role'. Good political skills were needed to analyse the information that circulated.

Supporting, tolerating and curbing emotions

The third aspect of the personal support that advisers provided for ministers was emotional support. Walter (1986) described this as being a 'confidante, a comrade on the leader's side in battles with political peers and bureaucrats, perhaps a participant in inside jokes that relieve the pressure of the daily confrontations which elsewhere the politician must represent as serious' (1986:130). This could be important to ministers, that there was someone with whom they could be themselves in a job in which they were constantly under scrutiny. In supporting ministers emotionally, staff could become 'part of the family' for a minister. Minister Blue explained:

While you want your staff to be objective and beady eyed and not have you living with a false sense of euphoria if everybody else is stabbing you, equally it's very important that your staff give you psychological and emotional support at times of stress. There's got to be someone somewhere that's saying 'There, there, it's all right. Yeah, well we may be in a little bit of strife about this but think positive - this is the way out of it'. When you have staff who just go around in a pall of gloom and say things to you like 'well that was disastrous or you've really fucked that up haven’t you?' ... That may be objectively absolutely right but it's not what you need in that situation.

The high pressure environment that ministers operated in meant that sometimes, as part of this role, advisers had to tolerate the minister's emotional excesses, and even try to curb them. One junior minister, Minister Purple, admitted she could be 'a real prize bugger at times':

Ministers are awful people. Every bad characteristic of your character will get forced out in the ministry. Because when you're under stress or you're tired - those poor devils will cop it. One of the things I used to say to staff was if I ever pushed them to the point where they couldn't bear it they had to turn around and tell me to pull my head in. I wanted that. I needed a relationship with people who could say 'hey, hey, hey!' [One department] used to drive me grey. I used to go spare. If my staff didn't follow things up or drive [the department] mad with trying to get things for me if I wanted it, they would cop it a bit I'm afraid.3

Adviser 26 worked for a senior minister with an explosive temper. He had worked for him for three years. He recalled male and female advisers running to the bathroom to cry and other things 'which I won’t repeat because I'm sure they border on the criminal'. He felt the minister subconsciously tested people out, judging that 'if the person breaks down in tears before him then they're

3 An adviser who worked for an often bad-tempered minister reported that for Christmas one year, he gave each of his staff a small cactus, 'to remind you of what a prick I am'.
vulnerable ... whereas if they take it laconically and stoically and lift their game, he says "OK that person can take the pressure". He felt the reason he could handle the aggression was because he came from a 'tough' background and had spent seven years in the Army reserve. He tolerated the behaviour because he understood the minister was 'highly strung', had high standards, and was 'delivering results':

It's always like 'I'm doing this task, why the hell are you fucking it up, why the hell haven't you done what I asked you to do?' ... The thing then comes off because it's so perfectly planned and he's done his homework, then he's happy and then he'll share a drink and a smile with someone who he's been berating only an hour ago. But the irony is he won't remember it. So you've got to discount it.4

(By contrast some ministers were wonderfully placid. One adviser told of how he made a grave error when a journalist reported his 'off the record' comments criticising a powerful cabinet minister; yet when his (junior) minister found out, he just laughed.)

Another aspect of emotional support involved protecting ministers from their own emotional excesses. One adviser told of how on her first day in the job she went with the adviser she was replacing to talk to the minister about what he wanted to do about a conflict situation with a state minister. (There were two days of 'handover' between the two advisers.) The minister was angry. He raved at length about who she should ring and what she should say, what to write in the letter to the state minister and so on, and the new adviser took careful notes. When they came back to her desk, the (outgoing) adviser leaned over, tore off the pages of her notebook and tossed them in the bin, saying, 'the first thing is, we're not going to do any of that!!!' The new adviser quickly learnt her job was to protect the minister from his excesses and to do what was in his best interests - in this case, to take a more diplomatic and strategic approach to solving the problem.

'Intellectual jousting'

The fourth aspect of the personal support role of advisers was intellectual support. This emerged frequently in interviews with ministers. It ranged from being a sounding board, someone to bounce ideas off, to 'intellectual jousting' (Brown). It appeared to be important to ministers to have people who could disagree with them and 'argue it out standing up if necessary'. Perhaps this

4 He said if the junior minister behaved this way he'd 'deck him' and tell him to 'go shove it up your arse' because he did not see him as 'delivering'.

70
was because of the deference shown by others who sought to advise the minister. It was important to some ministers that they had someone who they could have 'knock down' arguments with, and yet respect each other. Minister Silver saw it as important that advisers not be deferential:

The job of the adviser is to assess all the factors and then be prepared to take his minister to the wall, pointing out the errors of judgement or difficulties he might be creating for himself. If the minister rejects that position then he has discharged his obligation to his minister. Having someone who says 'yes minister' and then goes out and says 'he's really going to get himself in trouble on this one' is no bloody good to you.

The minister-adviser relationship

To be able to provide emotional and intellectual support to a minister required a close relationship between the adviser and the minister. The quality of the relationship was critical. Where it was poor or distant, advisers could have great difficulty performing their work, as the basis of their role was having ready access to the minister and knowing the minister's thinking.

The nature of the relationship between ministers and advisers varied greatly: some were close friends and colleagues of long-standing whose relationship dealt with matters that went way beyond the portfolio; another good relationship could be purely at the portfolio level, it did not need to go further than that. Some relationships were extremely close. Minister White described his relationship with his senior adviser as like a marriage. He told the adviser: 'I want to be able to say things to you that I can only say to my wife. I want to say the same things to you in a political and ministerial sense'.

The basis of a good relationship was loyalty, trust and confidence. Without this, relationships could quickly become dysfunctional. The slightest doubt about loyalty was enough to damage the relationship, as Minister Red explained: 'Any hint, any whiff of any dis-ease or unhappiness ... was very difficult. The minute that happened then a whole lot of things fell out of place.'

Loyalty was not always mutual. Most advisers were only too aware of their expendability: no matter how well they had served, once they were no longer useful they would go. This insecurity added a certain edge to what were often close and mutually dependent relationships. Minister Orange stressed the incredible insecurity of the adviser's position:
In the end if they don't perform they're out. If they cause their minister to be embarrassed or any problem, they're out - no ifs and buts. There's no nice little appeal mechanisms or cosy little retreats that can be found. It's on the knife edge all the time.

Ministers could 'move against you pretty fast' (A26). Minister Purple declared:

I'm very firmly of the view that if an adviser isn't giving you the sort of advice you want, or you've got concerns about their capacity to hear what is happening or to understand it ... then you have to say 'Go! QUICK!'

Minister Blue, who admitted he was 'always famously demanding', hammered the table with his finger when he said: 'A high level of expertise and professionalism and competence was demanded. And everyone knew they had to shape up or ship out!' Yet not all ministers had this attitude. One long time adviser, Adviser 37, said that while some ministers were 'brutally dismissive and treated their staff with savage contempt', others were 'absurdly protective' of staff who were 'donkeys'.

Political support

The second aspect of the role of the adviser in the Keating period was to provide political support. This had three main aspects: parliamentary work; working with the party; and issue management. (Advisers' work with Caucus will be discussed under the category of 'communication'.)

Parliamentary work

Public servants in the study saw advisers' parliamentary work as one of their most valuable contributions. After the 1993 election the Labor party did not control the numbers in the Senate, and needed the votes of nine of the ten independent or minor party senators to win a majority vote (Kelly 1994:xvi). In 1993 the minor parties and independent Senator Harradine not only extracted Budget concessions, but demanded consultation processes for dealing with all government legislation. This dynamic, of having to negotiate extensively with the minor party senators on legislation, created an important role for advisers.

Depending on the nature of the policy area, some advisers were more likely to be involved in these negotiations. Some had no involvement at all. It was the type of activity departments could not do. Some advisers found the responsibility for these negotiations to be theirs alone. Adviser 14, a long time
adviser whose minister delegated responsibility for a policy area almost entirely to her, said:

My negotiations with the Opposition and the Greens and Democrats are crucial and time consuming and delicate but the minister wouldn’t even know about a lot of what I do - he just lets it happen. His view is that you get on with it. He doesn’t want to know about it unless there’s a problem.

Another important part of advisers’ parliamentary work was preparing the minister for question time. A sub-group of advisers were the ‘question time team’ and devised question time strategies for the government. This was a very important role, as ministers usually did not have time to meet and discuss strategies. Other advisers had a responsibility to identify questions that could be asked of their minister in Parliament and to ask the department to prepare answers, which had to be checked and often rewritten to inject political rhetoric. This was a very important role which often took a considerable part of each question time day. Advisers were also rostered on to be present while ever Parliament was sitting, to assist the minister with any matters that may arise. This could be onerous and entail long hours.

Working with the party

It was surprising how little contact many advisers had with the party organisation. A subgroup of advisers had important responsibilities for working with the party, a group termed ‘political warriors’.5 Nine of the 41 advisers were in this group. They were often long time party apparatchiks or long time advisers who were close to ministers.

Some advisers worked on local electorate matters, particularly those whose minister had a marginal seat, or those who had worked locally with the minister before joining the advisory staff. They kept contact with branches, individual members, and other party units in the electorate.

Party work at a state and national level for some advisers was nearly non-existent. There were surprisingly few links between many advisers and the national party headquarters. However a minority had strong links and worked closely with party officials. Their work ranged from talking tactics with the party secretary to intense factional manoeuvrings at a state or national level. Often one person in the office was responsible for party liaison. For most other advisers their contact with the party was limited to attending party policy

5 See Appendix 3.
committees with the minister to discuss policy changes, and distributing information about programs and policies to party branches where it was seen as important to keep them informed.

However there was one area where advisers who were policy-oriented could play an important role. This was being involved in changing the party platform. Ministers were asked to submit proposed changes to the platform before Labor's National Conference. These requests came to advisers who could draft changes to the platform either to bring it up to date with policy in the area or to propose new developments. In this sense advisers operated as policy experts within the party. A few advisers reported significant involvement in drafting and promoting platform changes, including attending the conference and lobbying delegates to support changes. Adviser 1, a party member from the public service, listed one of her biggest achievements as successfully rewriting part of the party's platform and having this accepted by National Conference. This process involved extensive negotiations with the Prime Minister's office. Another adviser (also a party member from the public service) was active in resisting a move to put university fees into the party platform. It was something she and her minister felt strongly about. She helped people in the unions to draft their motions and worked with the students and the factions to ensure it got through. But she stressed how important it was that her role remain secret:

No one knows how much I did behind the scenes because it was important that I wasn't seen to be active in the change. I don't think even the minister knows how much I did.

A very significant part of advisers' work for the party was to develop new policies which could be presented to the electorate during election campaigns. This was work that could not be done by departments and it was creative - advisers often relished the fact they could write and cost new policy 'on the back of an envelope' (A34). The year or so before an election was a particularly active time as the party prepared for the election. This involved promoting what the government had done, often through organising events and speeches for local members, as well as articulating government philosophies and plans for the future. It involved developing arguments that could be used to attack Opposition policies. It also involved positioning - working with interest groups and with the media to gain support for the government.
Issue management

The final aspect of the political support role played by advisers is the work advisers did in helping ministers with political management. This is a core function for partisans within the political executive, yet it can be difficult to articulate and analyse in any depth. Some advisers in the study referred to it as 'issue management'. Rose (2000) recounts the story of when British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan was asked what he feared most; his answer was 'events, events' (2000:59). Ministers spend much of their time reacting to action-forcing events, which they must 'play' in ways that advance their goals and enhance their reputations (Rose 2000:59). This dynamic emerges strongly in memoirs, such as Watson's (2002) account of his time working for Keating. Advisers played important roles in helping ministers to develop strategic responses to events and to manage politically the many controversial issues they were faced with.

Communication

The third aspect of the role of advisers in this study was communication. There are two elements to the communication role that advisers played for ministers: articulation and linkage.

Articulation

Articulation is a function that is traditionally associated with advisers to ministers and with courtiers generally (Walter 1986). Even before the development of the modern ministerial office in Australia (around 1972) ministers had employed press secretaries in their offices to perform this role. It includes helping ministers clarify or put into words their ideas and objectives. It involves the use of language to persuade and communicate with the electorate, through speech writing and helping ministers to develop 'lines' to use in talking to the media. It also involves working on the presentation and packaging of policy initiatives and decisions.

In modern politics, with an active media and the fast pace of political debate, this type of political communication is essential to the management of government. It involves positioning and repositioning, and reasserting the central themes of the government. Through it ministers express the rationale for decisions and policies, outline future directions and link action to broader
philosophies or narratives. It is about defining the public agenda. Ministers valued this work highly. Senior Minister Yellow described the role as:

competent day to day expression of the government's existing policy, and defending it against unreasonable attack ... making sure that the right notes are being struck and the right issues being addressed.

Other ministers described it as 'telling the story on behalf of the government and the minister' (Red), and 'helping you shape what you say to the world' (Brown). Advisers called it 'wordsmithing'.

This is a partisan function, not appropriate for the public service. Material provided by the public service was often reworked to add some 'risk and excitement' and partisan positioning. It required a close understanding of the minister's thinking and of the party's values and philosophy; and a willingness to engage in political debate from a partisan standpoint. There was also a need for proximity to the minister, as major speeches often involved resolving policy issues and taking risks which could only be done with the minister's authority (see Mills 1996:169; Watson 2002).

Media management is also an important part of the adviser's communication role, but while some advisers were deeply involved in this, usually this was the role of the media adviser in the office. As media advisers were not subjects in the study, it will not be discussed here.

Linkage

Advisers' second communication role can be termed linkage. It has two elements: information and relationships. Advisers were conduits for information flowing inside and outside of the executive. In their role as the point of access for those wanting to contact the minister, advisers were also centrally involved in the minister's relationships with other players: the department, other ministers, other governments, Caucus, interest groups, the media, the party, and parliament.

Advisers were essential channels of information within the Keating government. Their role was similar to Gaffney's description of French ministerial staff, as 'constantly involved, fashioning, interpreting, drawing up, rewriting, proposing and pursuing with varying degrees of emphasis virtually all textual and other manifestations of political information' (Gaffney 1991:8). The role of the ministerial office as a centre of information networks has grown, reflecting the needs of a media-driven political environment; increasing
demands for community input to government; and the growing complexity of policy making, with its overlapping networks, fragmented policy structures and multiple policy actors (Rhodes 1997). Most ministers set a high value on advisers' linkage role. Minister Yellow described the role in this way:

One of the things they've got to do is to act as a conduit for community input. ... In an area like [—] you are going to have a large number of organisations all wanting to have a say on various matters ... and the advisers are often the most immediate port of call for those connections. So there's that very important kind of link role which the minister can't perform on a daily basis.

Yet advisers were more than conduits, and the ministerial office was more than a 'switchboard'; it was a place where connections were made which generated powerful energies in government.⁶ In their 1992 study of political-bureaucratic relations Halligan and Power refer to advisers 'managing networks of political interaction' (1992:83). Advisers had a crucial role in managing the minister's relationships with other players. Two of the most important relationships were with Caucus and with interest groups. The next section briefly discusses how advisers worked to manage these relationships.⁷

**Communicating with Caucus**

Working with Caucus could be a very important part of the adviser's job. Not all ministers set high value on their relations with Caucus, but those who did delegated much of this work to their advisers. Advisers to such ministers were expected to be available to Caucus and to serve members by prioritising their queries, handling their funding requests and identifying ways to promote them locally through the department's programs and policies. This could take a great deal of time and effort.

As well as engaging with their local and constituent issues, advisers also dealt with Caucus on policy issues. This could involve attending Caucus policy committee meetings and briefing them when the minister was unavailable; and responding to Caucus members who disagreed with government policy. It was important that conflicts were soothed and that backbenchers felt their views were being heard by the minister. Minister Blue commented:

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⁶ The 'switchboard' image was used by Campbell (1983) to describe the role of the Canadian Prime Minister's office. Hollway (1996) used the image of a 'powerpoint' to describe the role of the minister's office.

⁷ Also vitally important were relationships with other ministerial offices. However this is described under the role of 'coordination'.
I always regarded it as a very important part of the [adviser’s] job to service Caucus members and absolutely not piss off anybody or brush anybody off ... even if they were neurotic, as they often were about particular aspects of [my portfolio], ... but try and calm them and soothe them and talk to them.

Caucus could be a powerful force to deal with. It had the role of approving all legislation, with Caucus committees undertaking detailed scrutiny of bills (Steketee 2001:148). Former minister Neal Blewett’s descriptions of Caucus meetings in 1992-3 paint a picture of ministers fending off attacks, 'in strife', or facing tough questioning from sometimes 'irascible' or 'pugnacious' Caucus members, as well as Caucus deferring bills and condemning policy decisions (1999: 55, 257, 263, 271). Indeed, there was a full scale Caucus revolt over the 1993 post-election Budget, and Treasurer Dawkins was forced to make changes to it (Steketee 2001:153-5).

Part of the adviser’s job was to 'educate' Caucus through policy development processes so that opposition would be minimised when final decisions were made. It was crucial to 'bring Caucus along' with reforms. Advisers could also alert Caucus members to threatened changes and ask them to lobby more powerful ministers on their minister's behalf. Junior Minister Red commented that one of her adviser’s jobs was 'to round up support for our programs within the Labor Caucus so that we could have the numbers anytime anybody in the ... executive government was minded not to proceed with what they had faithfully promised to do.'

In the Labor Party ministers are elected by Caucus, with each faction usually electing its own nominees for vacancies.8 Thus for a minister to be secure, particularly a junior minister or one without a strong power base, it could be an advantage to be seen to be an active, responsive minister, 'looking after' Caucus. It was at least important to show you recognised that 'you are there at the behest of their vote' (Purple). Junior Minister Orange, who was not in a strong position factionally, expected his staff to put an enormous effort into servicing the needs of Caucus members. His portfolio suited this approach because it involved many funding grants and openings of local facilities. He consequently enjoyed great popularity within Caucus. He felt advisers had to be very astute at playing politics with Caucus:

8 Though this was overturned to some degree by Keating after the 1993 election when he refused to accept all of the left's nominees. Hawke recounts negotiating with the factions over the selection of ministers (1996:417-420).
Caucus is pretty uppity about the way in which they are treated and if they're not given information and support, treated as if they are inferior or they don't matter then they get very shirty and they express that in a number of ways. By mumbling between a couple of them. The way in which they ask pretty pointed questions in Caucus [meetings]. The way in which a staff member responds to the needs of Caucus members is very very important for the harmony of government and for the success of a minister.

Some staff felt very strongly that Caucus should be central to the work of an adviser. Adviser 1, a young party member from the public service, went as far as to put Caucus on a par with her minister:

Caucus to me is such a powerful and important group in an adviser's life and I think it's the responsibility of an adviser to be very close to Caucus and to understand that Caucus is the government and you are equally working for Caucus as you are your portfolio minister.

She felt her connections with Caucus helped protect her from cooption by the bureaucracy:

The balance of power in Parliament House really is so easily skewed to the bureaucracy and Caucus will protect you from that. Because Caucus has a totally different perspective from the bureaucracy on policy and politics - they're out there, living in the real world. I think it's important for the balance of policy power that Caucus are an equal partner in all the processes. Now the minister obviously can't get around and meet those people and the advisers have to do that. That means the advisers have to be connected to the two hundred or so people - its enormous, an enormous amount of work.

Her ideological stance was echoed by Adviser 2, who saw his relationships with backbenchers as 'critical':

In all the competing demands I have, I put Caucus first. They are at the pointy end of it - they must be a conduit into the main line of government. They listen to what people are saying and pick up issues that are developing. You have to treat them with respect as they have stood for office and been elected. Advisers have a subsidiary role to theirs, even though we may be more powerful.

Not all advisers were as assiduous in their work with Caucus. Some were notorious for not returning backbenchers' phone calls. Dissatisfaction was expressed by some ministers after their return to the backbench; Minister Silver said:
There are some advisers who think they are running the bloody world - some usually younger advisers who try and bounce you. You say 'Please yourself. I don't regard your response as satisfactory'. Then you threaten to go and see their boss. The last thing a minister wants is open public criticism of his office. It's an unwise adviser who believes you are incapable of tipping a bucket or won't do it.

Caucus members could make life difficult for advisers, and their ministers, if they did not think they were being treated properly. Minister Purple explained:

There's nothing quite like a group of pollies sitting around ripping to hell the staff in the minister's office. It happens and it is absolutely damaging for that minister. You blame the minister, because if they don't have the nous to (1) employ the right people and (2) to know if something's gone wrong and deal with it, then the minister cops it. ... If you find someone in a minister's office who is sharp and snaky and uppity then it's in no-one's interest.

The perils of getting Caucus off-side are evident in this leading Caucus member's account of his dealings with two advisers. He 'went ballistic' about the first, and shafted the second:

I went ballistic about an adviser once. ... She was not receptive to any ideas outside what the department was doing. We had a huge fight and it was terrible and it left a black mark against that adviser in my mind. She was not up to scratch in my view. Once I complained to a minister about his senior adviser. I had had a lot to do with him. I said he is psycho, unstable, paranoid, with delusions, he is unable to deal with people and he is hurting you in regard to perceptions in Caucus and amongst other ministers. I said the best thing for you to do is sack him or shoot him. It was not received well, as he was extremely close to the minister - he had shielded [the minister] from many things. But within two months he was gone as others were also commenting.9

He admitted that tension between Caucus and advisers was probably inevitable as 'Caucus is wanting something and advisers can say yes or no to it. And they are the source of advice to the minister so if you don't like the policy you blame them for that.'

The relationship between advisers and Caucus is important as it involves bringing the party and the electorate into contact with government. As filters of Caucus input, how advisers responded was important. If operating well, this connection could ensure that the bureaucratic agenda did not dominate, and that party interests were served by government decisions. The responsiveness of advisers to Caucus was also crucial to the harmony of the government.

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9 This Caucus member was interviewed originally as a part of the adviser sample as he had previously worked as an adviser. However he preferred to speak mainly in relation to his position as a Caucus member and therefore was excluded from the adviser sample group.
Communicating with interest groups

The work that ministerial advisers do with interest groups has become increasingly important in government. The demand by interest groups for contact and consultation with government is growing; yet ministers are busier than ever. The growth of the ministerial office has provided increased access to the political realm for interest groups. It is with advisers, rather than ministers, that interest groups had direct and frequent contact. Managing relationships with interest groups was an important part of the evolving role of the ministerial adviser.

How important this was in an adviser's job varied according to the portfolio and the minister's approach. Some portfolios had very few client or industry groups associated with them or those that existed were in agreement; whereas other portfolios had a multitude of differing interests involved in the portfolio, often completely opposed, at a state and federal level. Groups which might have little public profile could be very influential within the policy sector and the government could be highly dependent on them to implement policy effectively.

Ministers expected their advisers to build positive relationships with interest groups and the key individuals within them, as Minister Orange stressed:

In those roles in particular, in relationships with consumers and the industry side, staff were very important. They are the ones on the phone talking to people all the time, building up the contacts, building up the trust and credibility.

Trust was important as these relationships often involved the trading of confidential information that, if made public, could be damaging to either party. The passing of information between lobby groups and advisers had the potential for manipulation, though few advisers wished to speak openly about this. Advisers could leak information about proposed changes the minister opposed, and use lobby groups to direct political pressure against other ministers to soften their positions. Adviser 1 said:

There are certain people who want the government to do well and they are outside of the government. It's OK to work with those people and there are certain trusted individuals that you work with all the time. ... You trust their political judgement.

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10 This was often justified as making the minister more aware of the possible political ramifications of decisions.
A very important resource for ministers was an adviser's knowledge of the interest groups in the sector and of individuals within them. Experienced activists were often recruited as advisers because they brought such knowledge (as well as their own relationships and credibility) with them. Junior Minister Green stressed the importance of his staff understanding the personalities of key lobbyists:

At any time if I wanted advice about individuals, about organisations ... then I expected my senior adviser to know. If he says to me 'You'll be meeting with so and so from such and such an organisation this afternoon, you might recall you met him a couple of months ago and you undertook to follow something up. Now we've had advice on it, it's not something that we can possibly agree with.' I would expect him to suggest to me, 'This fellow expects you to be blunt, no bullshit, you tell him now what the position is and he might not be happy with it but he will respect it'. If it's someone else with whom you need to tread more cautiously he might say 'There is no way in which we can possibly assist this person or help him to pursue his purposes. But there are still some options left that we could perhaps try.' You expect a senior adviser to know those people so well and to have that level of human understanding - understanding people, understanding what makes them tick, understanding how they would respond.

Advisers helped ministers to manage politically the involvement of interest groups in policy making. Interest groups could help the minister to identify issues within the portfolio needing attention and provide feedback about how programs were operating on the ground. Ministers could use this to challenge the department's assessment of programs or to request information from the department. The very existence of good relationships with interest groups could ensure the department was more forthcoming as they knew the adviser had his or her own sources of information. This could be particularly important in Commonwealth-State programs where the minister was even further removed from the administration of the program (as it was administered by the state bureaucracy).

Contact with interest groups could also provide ideas for new policy directions. Trusting relationships with key individuals could enable an adviser to test out policy ideas on a confidential basis. Minister Orange described his advisers as having 'an essential role in being hooked into industry and consumer networks and feeding in ideas for new policies and new directions'.

Advisers' relationships with interest groups were also important in negotiating policy change and achieving the implementation of policy change. This was expressed as 'bedding down' policy changes or 'bringing them along with where you want to go and helping them to better understand the reason for
change' (Orange). Long time Adviser 14 explained how she used her relationships with lobby groups to achieve policy change:

I talked to all the relevant lobby groups and parties to get them to agree to sign up to the package we were proposing so that when it came out they wouldn't criticise us. ... I've managed to build up a good relationship with the lobby groups over the years and I've been able to establish credibility with them and that's enabled us to get a lot of incremental change through.

Ministers could also bring certain interest groups into the process of government, with the aim of promoting their influence within a policy community. For example ministers often established ministerial advisory committees which met regularly with the minister. This could be a way of subtly coopting key individuals through the patronage of regular personal contact with the minister and ready access to the minister's staff. Minister Red described how her adviser selectively engaged key individuals, by finding out which ones were 'thoughtful' and 'open to persuasion' and then setting up 'ways in which we could consult with and incorporate those people'.

Communicating with interest groups is an important part of the evolving role of the ministerial adviser. In the Keating period advisers became increasingly important interlocutors in the dialogue between ministers and interest groups. This is not one of the aspects of the role which the thesis explores in detail, though it appears in the discussion of advisers' policy roles in Chapter Seven. There is clearly scope for more detailed research into this aspect of advisers' work.11

Steering policy

The fourth element of the adviser's role in the Keating years was steering policy. It had two aspects: advisers' work with departments and their work in policy making. This is because the executive's ability to steer government involves direction and control of the bureaucracy and also partisan input to policy making. Steering policy was the most controversial and contested aspect of the role amongst interviewees. It was also the area of most variation in advisers' behaviour. The following section describes the boundaries of the role; its most 'active' version.

11 This could include the impact on the public service of the growth in advisers' work with interest groups. Campbell and Halligan (1992) suggest that it has diminished the scope of relationships between senior public servants and interest groups, which are now 'more circumscribed, partly taken up and/or mediated by ministerial advisers' (1992:206).
Engaging the department

Advisers played a vital role in helping ministers to engage departments. There were two aspects to this work which contributed to partisan steering. By working closely with the department, advisers greatly expanded the minister's resources and authority within the portfolio. By providing an alternative source of advice to the department, advisers reduced the minister's reliance on the bureaucracy.

Ministerial staff in this study spent a great deal of their time and energy working closely with public servants. For many this was the focus of most of their attention and the site of their most important struggles. Performing this role effectively could be difficult, as many ministers saw advisers as responsible for both the quality of the relationship with the department and for its productivity. One young adviser commented that 'if the department's not delivering, the minister will rightfully ask the adviser to explain' (A01).

The usual arrangement in ministerial offices in the Keating period was that the program areas of the department were divided amongst the advisers in the office, so that each program area was the responsibility of a particular adviser. Often the senior adviser would take an overview role but could also have program responsibilities. Advisers then had responsibility for dealing with the department in these areas. They were the conduit for information flowing from the department to the minister; and for feedback and direction from the minister to the department. Advisers' day to day work with departments involved supervising, orienting and mobilising the department.

Advisers had gained significant administrative authority in their role of supervising the department's work. This involved scrutiny of documents going to the minister for approval, and ongoing dialogue with public servants about issues in the portfolio. They had considerable leverage in their dealings with public servants because of their power as gatekeepers, controlling the flow of documents to the minister.

Another important part of the adviser's role was orienting the department to focus on and work towards the minister's or government's agenda. It involved directing the department on the minister's behalf; clarifying the minister's preferences and priorities; and interpreting the minister's agenda for the department. It could also involve taking minor decisions on the minister's behalf. Fundamental to this work was the adviser's capacity to act as the
surrogate of the minister. This work greatly expanded the minister's authority within the department. As the surrogate of the minister, the adviser could invoke the minister's authority in a wide range of departmental activities, and thus shape them towards the ministers' objectives.

Adviser's work with departments also involved mobilising the department to work on the minister's key projects or to deliver policy change. This was a crucial part of directing government and delivering a partisan agenda. While ministers were critical in inspiring or driving a department to deliver that agenda, advisers had an important role in day to day mobilisation. In their interaction with officials, this could involve enthusing them about the agenda; providing energy or momentum to push the agenda forward; pushing progress by setting dates for the department to have achieved key milestones; and checking and chasing the department. Advisers called this 'pushing' or 'driving' the department. It could involve persuading key individuals to embrace the agenda and neutralising those who might oppose it. Advisers needed an ability to push public servants to achieve things, often in unrealistic timeframes, without alienating them too much. Often departments responded readily and effectively to a minister's agenda; however it was a critical role where the minister needed to push against resistance in a department. The minister's own inspiration, drive, and authority had to be reinforced on a daily basis.

One of the most powerful roles of the adviser was to provide ministers with independent knowledge resources. By providing an alternative source of advice to the department, advisers reduced the minister's reliance on the bureaucracy. Ministers said it was not necessary that advisers themselves be experts, but that they could bring a native intelligence and questioning approach to the department's work. Most importantly they were not imbued with the department's agenda, and had an ability to recognise where it deviated from the minister's. If they were not experts, advisers needed to be able to obtain expert advice from outside the bureaucracy when required. One very experienced senior minister, Minister Brown, saw this role as critical to political control:
[You need] people who can bring another point of view to bear on the department's advice whose values you appreciate and respect and are reasonably close to your values you hope and whose capacities you have confidence in. Then you've got a sounding board which is not just the department. I was looking for two key values. That they had a political perspective that was not radically different to my own and a capacity to intellectually joust with department and with me! It's just a sensible precaution if you don't want to be a tool of the department.

Advisers who were themselves experts were extremely useful to ministers. Three of the academics in the study had technical expertise which rivalled that of the experts in the departments they worked with (Adviser 16, Adviser 21, Adviser 39). They were able to re-interpret the data the department provided, critique the models or assumptions underlying it and do their own calculations and analyses for ministers. Adviser 16 recounted not only picking up mistakes in the figures the department provided, but also identifying 'major technical problems' and 'inbuilt biases' in the analytical frameworks the department used. During a major debate about interest rates within the ministry, Adviser 39 'didn't agree with the whole model Treasury were using' and was able to do his own research and calculations to promote a different position. These independent experts were extremely valuable to ministers as they could not only challenge how departments calculated data but also their interpretations of what the data meant.

Adviser 21 was an academic who for ten years provided independent economic comment to Labor ministers. He felt the Treasurer and Finance minister had a particular need for independent expert opinion as most of their advisers came from Treasury and Finance: 'You need someone whose understanding of economic affairs you trust and who can ride shot gun on what the department is telling you and whose career prospects lie not within the public service.' He recounted some classic battles with Treasury, fights which few advisers had the ability to win:

Senior people in Treasury ... can put a logical argument very well, but they can also put an illogical argument very well, with great sophistry. Arguing against them requires a lot of effort. Most who try to argue against them fall because they don't marshal strong enough arguments on their own ground. Adviser 54 could fight them and win; and so can I.14

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12 They were all employed as ministerial consultants. There were five academics in the sample of 41 advisers. See Appendix 3.
13 His position won the day and he claimed that later 'it was seen that I had got it right' (A39).
14 Adviser 54 was another academic economist.
His minister also asked him to 'keep an eye on' the other three advisers in the office, who all came from Treasury:

They were like the Wermacht and I was Waffen SS. They were the respectable officers and gentlemen and I was the party man in black uniform and arm band! ...
Two ... were completely trustworthy - the other one left after a while.

Thus advisers could help ministers to engage departments by supervising, orienting and mobilising; and by providing an alternative source of advice. How advisers worked with departments is explored in more detail in Chapter Six.

**Engaging in policy making**

The second way that advisers helped ministers to steer policy was by engaging in policy making.

Traditional accounts of policy making which describe policy ideas as being framed in the bureaucracy, receiving approval of the minister and going to cabinet for endorsement, before being transmitted to officials for implementation, have been challenged by the large body of writing about the horizontal linkages between policy actors, who interact in complex ways to shape policy outcomes. In his description of the policy process, Colebatch (1998) identifies two dimensions to policy - a 'vertical' and a 'horizontal' dimension. The 'vertical' dimension refers to the interaction of authorised decision makers and officials, encompassing the processes of ministers and departments working together in policy making, as well as hierarchical decision making in the minister's office and the cabinet (1998:37-39). The 'horizontal' dimension involves policy activity across organisational boundaries, with relationships among policy players in different organisations (1998:39). Advisers in the study participated in both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of policy activity.

Advisers in the study could be deeply involved in three areas of policy making traditionally conducted between ministers and departments (the 'vertical' dimension). These were *generating ideas; policy development; and policy implementation*. In these areas advisers often worked closely with departments; and some saw these as shared roles. However the legitimacy of advisers' work could also be contested. There could be tension and competition between officials and advisers. How advisers performed these roles is explored in detail in Chapter Seven.
Some advisers also engaged in policy work in the 'horizontal' dimension, which involves ministers interacting with other policy actors in a complex set of relationships involving interest groups, cabinet colleagues, senior public servants, backbenchers and other political parties. There were five types of this policy work: agenda setting; linking ideas, interests and opportunities; mobilising; bargaining; and delivering. In this work partisans could have significant input to policy making. These roles could be critical in steering policy because they enabled ministers to develop partisan agendas; manage the political environment; and steer policy proposals through complex, often tortuous, political processes. This is a new way of understanding the policy making role of advisers, and is explored in more detail, using cases and examples, in Chapter Seven.

Coordination

The fifth and final element of the role of advisers in the Keating years was executive coordination. Advisers were crucial in coordinating within government at two levels: within a portfolio (between senior and junior ministers); and within the ministry (between ministerial offices). This work ranged from keeping channels of communication open and information flowing within the ministry, to negotiation and even de facto decision making. This work is vital to political control because 'a government's ability to determine political direction and priorities depends on its capacity to function collectively' (Campbell and Halligan 1992:17).

In his study of Keating and Howard advisers Dunn (1997:94-97) detected the importance of the work advisers did together in coordination, particularly in brokering policy agreements between ministerial offices before cabinet meetings. He saw this as a key responsibility of staff in his study, and suggested it could be a new function that had grown over the Hawke-Keating period, since it was not found by Walter (1986).

While this function may have previously existed to some extent, it represents a major development in the role of advisers within government over the Labor years. This role grew because of changes to the way cabinet operated in this period. As cabinet acted to reduce its workload and prioritise the matters ministers decided formally, an increasing amount of business had to be decided outside of cabinet, in informal interactions between ministers. Yet ministers

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15 Forward found some networking amongst advisers in his earlier studies (1975, 1977).
were busier than ever. By using advisers for much of the preliminary and detailed discussions, it was possible to delegate much of this work to partisan actors who carried the authority of ministers. Thus the informal interactions between advisers became an important adjunct to the cabinet system at this time, enabling cabinet to operate efficiently and creating an alternative mechanism for coordination within the executive. This mechanism became essential to the effective operation of the executive.

Both ministers and public servants in the study saw this work as an important part of what advisers contributed to government, and expected that advisers would perform this role. Minister Orange saw it as a fundamental part of the way the ministry operated: 'It's part of the bread and butter of this place really, very much. ... Advisers are essential in negotiating policy - offices talk with authorisation and move it along, towards agreement.' One minister stated that 'the networking advisers do for you is crucial' (Purple); another felt that interoffice relationships were 'exceptionally important' (Black). Negotiations between advisers were seen as 'extraordinarily important' in the Budget process (White). Public servants were positive about this role and described it as useful, part of the 'value' added by advisers to their work.

Fundamental to this function was the role of advisers in the three central offices (Prime Minister's office, the Treasurer's office and the Finance minister's office), as well as a clear power structure amongst advisers and unwritten rules of appropriate behaviour. These dynamics within the network of relationships between advisers are explored in detail in Chapters Eight and Nine.

The coordination role played by advisers encompassed both policy and political coordination. Advisers' role in policy coordination had three elements: facilitating cabinet decision making; resolving policy conflict; and pulling together new policy.

Policy coordination

Facilitating cabinet decision making

Advisers facilitated the operation of cabinet by doing preliminary work on matters which were scheduled to come to cabinet for decision. Their discussions clarified and refined the issues to be discussed and identified areas of disagreement. This made cabinet's discussions more focused. Advisers also did important work in preparing cabinet members for cabinet meetings. Advisers read all incoming cabinet documents, selected those which the
minister would be most likely to have an interest in, researched those proposals by speaking to others and advised the minister whether support was warranted. This was a service line departments did not provide for ministers. Minister Brown, a very senior minister, said: 'Your office is crucial in enabling you to play an effective role in cabinet.' Advisers also did important work in the decision making that occurred outside of cabinet. They could negotiate matters with other advisers; or do the preliminary work necessary for ministers to decide matters informally.

**Resolving conflict, developing consensus**

Advisers did important work in developing consensus on issues which fell between or across a range of portfolios and where there were conflicting views within the executive. Resolving the government's position on complex, multi-player policy issues could be very time consuming and was often done informally, through dialogue and negotiation between advisers. Sometimes on difficult issues consensus was ground out through meetings of groups of advisers, chaired by someone from the Prime Minister's office. This process was critical in forcing ministers to take a whole of government perspective and in managing conflict within the executive.

**Pulling together new policy**

The other area of coordination that was significant was where packages of new policy were being developed that crossed portfolios or involved a number of portfolios. This involved forcing consensus and a whole of government approach and also shaping a coherent policy outcome which met the government's objectives and could be presented beneficially. In such cases groups of advisers could work together to develop policy and to negotiate the detail and shape of packages. The Keating government was remarkable for the large number of cross-portfolio and portfolio policy statements it released (Walsh 1995:291; Cockfield and Prasser 1997). This indicates the sophistication of the processes for dealing with interdepartmental policy development at this time, which used ERC structures and protocols. The importance of relationships between advisers in coordinating such policy exercises is seen in Chapters Eight and Nine.

**Political coordination**

The second aspect of advisers' role in executive coordination was political coordination. This occurred at two levels. First, advisers reported that there
was a distinct inner circle of advisers which had responsibility for day to day political management and political coordination. Second, the Prime Minister's office played a special role in political coordination. Amongst advisers they had a role in disciplining or controlling renegade offices. Amongst the ministry generally their job was 'to monitor what ministers are doing and to bring them back into line, drawing attention to stupidity that some minister is involved in and suggesting what to do about it or not to do anything' (Brown).

CONCLUSION

This chapter addressed the main research question: 'what was the role of ministerial advisers in the Keating government?' It proposed a new conceptual framework for analysing the role advisers played at this time, arguing that the role must be analysed in terms of the function that advisers perform for ministers. As discussed in Chapter Two, the core function of advisers is to help ministers' to pursue political control over the apparatus of government. The chapter argued that the role played by advisers grew over the Labor period to include important work directed at increasing political control for ministers.

The chapter described the five roles played by advisers in the Keating government. The first two were the traditional roles of personal support and political support (often referred to as 'spin' and 'minding'). This work was crucial in helping ministers to manage their jobs. The other three roles advisers played were communication, steering policy and coordination.

As well as their well-understood 'articulation' work, this study suggests there is now an important 'linkage' element to advisers' communication role. While it is generally understood that advisers are an important tool in steering policy, this is generally seen in terms of their supervision of departments and their provision of alternative policy advice. This study argues that the work advisers did in policy making at this time was also important in helping ministers to steer government. Advisers in the Keating years saw many policy roles as shared with departments. They also developed new policy roles which grew out of their location, their access to information and their linkages with other key players. This work could be a powerful resource in helping ministers to devise, develop and deliver partisan policy goals. How advisers engage with departments is explored in Chapter Six, and their engagement in policy making is examined in Chapter Seven.
Finally an important coordination role developed for advisers in the Keating period. This was detected by Dunn (1997). It was important in facilitating the decisions of the ministry, both inside and outside of cabinet, and enabling the executive to manage the conflict within government. It was recognised as one of the main functions of advisers, by ministers, advisers and public servants in this study. It is work that ministers do not have time to do themselves but it is vital to the effective operation of the government. This role is explored further in Chapters Eight and Nine.

Advisers' roles in communication, steering policy and coordination enable management of modern government by the executive; and the possibility of partisan influence over government decisions. They are made necessary by the busyness and workload of ministers, and their expectations of policy control and policy activity. They are made possible by the unique position of advisers: conduits of information flowing within the executive and outside of government; linked in surrogate relationships with the variety of players within government; and with enough authority, knowledge and opportunity to act on behalf of the minister in negotiation and exchange.

This chapter sketched the scope of the adviser's role at the time, rather than any individual performance of it. There was considerable variation in how advisers behaved. The next chapter explores this variation and accounts for it.
Advisers do not all act in the same way and in describing their behaviour, differences must be identified. Understanding how advisers differ in performing their role is important to assessing the impact and the significance of their work. As seen in Chapter Two, the literature has not yet provided a way of capturing the variation in advisers' behaviour nor the factors associated with this variation. This chapter distinguishes between advisers on the basis of their behaviour in the steering policy role (described in Chapter Four). It also examines some of the factors associated with this variation.

VARIATION IN THE ROLE PERFORMED BY ADVISERS

This study found considerable variation in the performance of the role of adviser. There could be great variation in one office in the way advisers operated. An individual adviser might act differently at different times and in relation to different issues. Some policy areas required little attention because they were not a high priority for the minister at the time; or because policy settings were in place; or because individuals in those areas of the department were seen as capable and trustworthy. By contrast other programs required constant oversight and direction, down to the level of very fine detail, situations where the adviser played a de facto management role in the department. The choice of approaches could change as a policy area became controversial or levels of trust in sections of the department changed. An adviser's behaviour could also change with the electoral cycle, their growing understanding of their minister's expectations or their increasing skills.1

The main role variation was between the advisers in the three central offices (the Prime Minister's office, Treasurer's office and Finance Minister's office) and advisers in the line ministers' offices. This chapter describes the behaviour of 'line' adviser (that is, 31 of the 41 advisers interviewed). The very different role of advisers in the three central offices will be explored Chapter Nine.

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1 Advisers learn on the job as there is no formal training (Warn 1996).
Three different types

The main area of variation amongst line advisers was in the steering policy role - their work with departments and in policy making.² The aspects of the steering policy role are summarised in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: The steering policy role of ministerial advisers

| - engaging the department | - supervising |
| - orienting |
| - mobilising |
| - alternative source of advice |
| - engaging in policy making | - vertical: shared with departments |
| - generating ideas |
| - policy development |
| - policy implementation |
| - horizontal: independent roles |
| - agenda setting |
| - linking ideas, interests and opportunities |
| - mobilising |
| - bargaining |
| - delivering |

Their behaviour in steering policy formed the basis of classifying them into three types.³ Advisers were classified using the reports of the ministers and public servants they worked with as well as their own perceptions. How active advisers were ranged on a scale with three points, termed 'very active', 'active' and 'passive/reactive'. Around one third of respondents fell into each classification.⁴

The 'very active' group marked themselves out by a drive to achieve certain policy agendas - often major change agendas or personal agendas to which they were committed - and their use of a series of strategies to pursue these agendas. They were highly directive and deeply involved in the department's work, and energetically performed the roles of supervising, orienting and mobilising the department. They exerted considerable authority in their dealings with public

² As outlined in Chapter Four, even those advisers who described the most limited roles for themselves participated fully in the personal and political support, communication and coordination aspects of the role.
³ This can be compared to Forward’s (1975) typology which was mainly based on demographics and only partly based on behaviour.
⁴ Because sampling was not random this does not indicate that these proportions would be reflected in the overall group of advisers working at this time.
servants. They saw the policy roles of generating ideas, policy development and policy implementation as shared with the department. They frequently came up with new policy ideas, and saw this as one of their most important roles. They marked themselves out from other advisers in their concentration on policy implementation. Some were almost obsessed with keeping control over the details of implementation. This grew out of a strong commitment to ensuring certain policy goals were achieved. These advisers also differed from the other two groups in performing the 'independent' policy roles of agenda setting, linking, mobilising, bargaining and delivering (these roles are described in detail in Chapter Seven). Thus in their work they covered all aspects of the steering policy role.

Those advisers classified as 'active' varied in their behaviour. Some could be involved in all aspects of steering policy on some issues at some times, but they were not consistently active, as those in the 'very active' group were. They did not usually have major change agendas that they pursued vigorously. Some in this group were keen to perform a 'very active' role, and were capable of doing so, but something prevented them from behaving in this way. (These factors are explored later in the chapter). Many of them were very energetic and careful in their work with departments: supervising, orienting and mobilising, and being closely involved in policy making work with the department. However for a variety of reasons they rarely performed the 'independent' policy roles of agenda setting, linking, mobilising, bargaining and delivering. Sometimes this was because they were mired in conflicts with their departments, and this consumed most of their time and resources.

Those advisers classified as 'passive/reactive' performed a limited version of the steering policy role, for a variety of reasons. Some tended to spend their time fighting fires or reacting to policy agendas which were driven from outside the ministerial office. For some their focus was not on policy but elsewhere, such as their political or parliamentary work; or they were senior advisers who left the active policy roles to others. In general their work with departments was limited to supervising and orienting, and providing an alternative source of advice. They often had little involvement in policy making, except in a reactive way. The three groups of advisers will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.
2.

Minister's needs - scope and demands - minister's authority - roles within the office

Since advisers' work is defined as providing assistance to the minister and is performed within a one-on-one relationship with a minister, it unsurprising that the role should be greatly affected by who that person is. The approach of the adviser had everything to do with how the minister operated and what his or her objectives were. The defining power of the minister is evident in Adviser 35's description of the role as 'to do your bit to advance the interests of the minister you work for. It's as simple as that. Only one thing matters: what is in the minister's interests - that should be your first question and the basis on which you work.' There were two factors associated with the minister which affected how active advisers were: the minister's style or approach; and the minister's needs.

1. The minister's style or approach

Advisers, ministers and public servants stated that ministers had different ways of working and this very much affected how their advisers worked. Their style not only encapsulates their personality, but also their attitude to the
department, how active they expected to be in policy making, and what they were trying to achieve. Minister Orange saw a strong link between a minister's style and the adviser's approach:

The type of advisers you find depends on the personality or style of the minister. Their energy, what they want to achieve, if they have risen above their competence. This is reflected in who they choose as advisers. Take Minister Bronze, he is hard, hierarchical and miserable, and so is his office. ... A weak or compliant minister will hire compliant staff. If they are not, they'll move away. Minister Bronze and Minister Turquoise both had staffs full of soulless, rude, arrogant, nasty people who enjoyed causing pain. This reflects the minister's personality. Other ministers have a more humane attitude to the job. ... It all comes down to how the minister sees their role and how they are prepared to work.

He put ministers into different categories, based on how they related to their departments:

Those ministers who do what they are told, and their advisers are the same.
Those ministers who have advisers from the department who run them. Those ministers who are merely mouthpieces for their departments. Those ministers who are self-directing and critical. They may have advisers from departments but they play a more authoritative role. ... The main factor involved is the strength and style of the minister. Some are overawed and don't handle the situation, especially if they come up against an alien department. Others feel uncomfortable and either step outside their departments or are swallowed up.
It depends on their personalities and abilities as to which way it goes.

If the minister was capable, wanted to get involved in policy making, and expected to direct action in the portfolio, then his or her staff were often expected to play 'very active' roles in relation to the department and to policy making. All except one of the 'very active' advisers worked for such ministers. This was noticeable amongst ministers who were pursuing particular policy agendas or who were committed to the idea of policy reform. They often had high expectations of their advisers and looked to them to be knowledgeable about policy, to generate policy ideas and opportunities, and to deliver policy outcomes by steering through decision making processes.

An exception to this was where ministers were policy experts themselves. Two ministers fell into this category (Minister Crimson and Minister Blue). They had both written books on the issues in their portfolios and had very clearly articulated policy agendas. Even though they were active policy makers, they did not expect their staff to have great input to policy. They both felt the department understood their agenda and responded to it, and they did not
need advisers to orient or mobilise the department. Their advisers tended to be in the 'passive/reactive' category.

**Attitude to the department**

Ministers displayed different attitudes to departments and to political control, and these greatly affected the roles their advisers played in steering policy. Ministers who saw the department as having its own agenda and 'not always understanding that the government agenda must prevail', tended to have high expectations of their advisers in working with the department and in policy making. Ministers who did not perceive the department as having an agenda of its own or who did not feel comfortable with the term 'political control', tended to downplay their advisers' roles in engaging the department and in policy making.

**Desire for political control and sense of contest with the department**

Eleven of the thirteen ministers stated that they desired to have political control over the department (Table 5.3). To them, ministers could either run the department or be run by it. These ministers perceived that departments actively pursued their own agendas, which were distinct from the government's agenda.

**Table 5.3: Attitudes of ministers in the study to departments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desired political control</th>
<th>Did not desire political control</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sense of contest with department</td>
<td>Orange</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purple</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Grey</td>
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<td>Red</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no sense of contest with department</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crimson</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Silver</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>White</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Minister Brown, a very experienced senior minister, saw departments in this way:
Departments are not benign implementers. They have policy agendas of their own, which is what they see as the intellectually proper approach and they think that way whichever government is in power and they try to get that policy implemented. ... They may move the nuances a bit but they still have their agenda. ... They often dress that up in terms of getting you to implement your policy but in fact they’re trying to implement their policy.

For six of these eleven ministers (Orange, Purple, Green, Grey, Red Brown), ensuring that it was the government’s agenda that prevailed was an ongoing struggle, in which advisers were an important weapon. Junior Minister Purple explained:

The bureaucracy has a culture and a brief of its own. ... And sometimes its agendas are counter to what the government of the day wants. Well, tough! If that means taking them on through your office you must. ... [As an adviser] you’ve got to be fairly astute and know that working for the minister you will prevail. Because cabinet government means that the minister must prevail.

Junior Minister Green had a very strong department with its own agenda. He reported frequent clashes with public servants:

On one occasion I said to a senior officer from the department “Look I understand that you people have got your agendas but let me remind you that I also have my agenda, and if I don’t achieve mine, then you bloody well won’t achieve yours!” There were occasions where I found it personally exhausting to attempt to push the government’s agenda in the face of a quite legitimate agenda which the bureaucrats had. They had policy ideas in mind - that is their vocation, that is their profession, they want to see things being achieved. And that’s perfectly legitimate. But I said to them on numerous occasions “You fellows have to understand that you are the bureaucrats, and I’m representing the government!” ... I found it often very physically and emotionally exhausting because they would dig in their heels, they would shift up their position, “But Minister, you can’t do it that way.” They would give me the options, A, B and C. And you didn’t have to be brilliant to see that in developing option A and option B, they gave you options that were just not acceptable. And you knew that they were wanting you to adopt option C.

The other five of the eleven ministers who sought political control had no sense of contest with the department. There was either a coincidence of agendas - the department had its agenda and pursued it, but that agenda happened to coincide with or fit with what the government wanted to do (Gold, Silver) - or where there was a difference in agendas the minister did not have difficulty prevailing (Crimson, Blue, Black). Therefore it was possible to work cooperatively with the department. These ministers talked less about staff fighting or driving the department, though they still had an important role in
providing alternative views and challenging the department's advice. In two
cases (Crimson and Silver) the main enemies were outside the portfolio and
both the department and the advisers were 'up to their eyes' in fighting those
battles together. One of those who had no sense of contest with the
department, Minister Blue, said:

Basically I ran the policy from the office for thirteen years and ... I never at any
stage felt that there was a contest between the minister's office and the
department. I saw the department as a resource there to be used with varying
degrees of capacity within it, mostly much more than they're given credit for.
There were certain people who were old-fashioned and entrenched in their
ways. [Some departments I had] were notoriously not very good or high
flying. [Some] were very technically competent but with not too many brave or
adventurous policy ideas. But when challenged to develop them I had no
particular difficulty in getting them focused and moving because basically there
were enough good people higher up. From time to time senior officials and
even secretaries were a bit of a dead hand, a bit of a drag in the sense they
weren't really an engine, but I was able to go around them without any
particular sense of struggle.

Two of the thirteen ministers, however, stated that they did not try to control
the department (White, Yellow). They saw the relationship as a cooperative
partnership.

Minister Yellow saw her role as more leadership than domination, saying: 'I
didn't try to exercise control in the department'. She admitted to having fairly
modest objectives which she relied on the secretary and the executive to pursue
within the department. She felt her agenda and that of the secretary were very
similar and for that reason she could be confident in relying on him more than
other ministers might have. She did not perceive that the department had its
own agenda and she saw no reason to be sceptical about its ability to deliver
what was required. In her description of the role of advisers she did not list the
control functions of supervising or orienting the department or an active role in
policy making, except in the pre-election period.

Junior Minister White did not feel comfortable with the word 'control'. He had
a corporate view of the relationship between a minister and the department.
He saw the minister as 'the executive chairman of the whole show':
I'd like to think of the relationship that we had as an extension of my office into the department. We had ideas to contribute, and we'd like to hear from them as well. ... I had a philosophy that was totally corporate, not just within my office but within the department which I still to this day would like to think didn't represent any real threat to them. ... That's not to say at times that I didn't think that they were never going to try and get one up on me ... and they probably succeeded! I'm sure that's true with every single minister, much as ministers would not care to admit it. But I really can't think of any damaging examples where ... it was a battle of ministerial versus departmental control over a decision.

He described the role of his advisers as to 'act as a filter to me from the department'. He did not describe a policy making role for his advisers.

**Delegation**

The scope of the role advisers played also depended on their minister's approach to delegation. Some were given high levels of delegation to act with the minister's authority, while others were far more constrained in what they could do. Those who were most autonomous were those in the three central offices (Prime Minister's office, Treasurer's office and Finance Minister's office). For advisers in line offices the amount of delegation the minister gave them affected how extensively they could be involved in policy making activities.

At one extreme, amongst line ministers' offices, some advisers were given almost complete delegation to run their program areas. This could occur within a portfolio where the minister chose to become heavily involved in some areas and left other areas to advisers to run, or where ministers generally delegated a great deal of authority. It sometimes occurred with an extremely busy cabinet minister, or one with several portfolios. Adviser 14, a 'very active' adviser, 'ran' a particular policy area for many years in this way, working closely with the department, and acting as the de facto decision maker. The department knew and accepted that the minister had delegated the area to this adviser while he concentrated on other areas of the portfolio. Ironically while advisers in these situations had great freedom to act, they could be constrained in their impact on policy making. They could not make major changes, because the authority delegated to them only stretched so far. They required the minister's involvement and interest to make changes which entailed going to cabinet and this could be difficult to get. It could be hard to get access to the minister.
In other cases highly delegating ministers were preoccupied with political difficulties or with extremely marginal electorates. Two other ministers delegated to their staff because they were either unwilling or unable to get too involved. One of them was said by his department to 'want a quiet life' and the other reportedly had difficulty understanding the portfolio. In the latter case, his adviser claimed that the ministerial office had a free rein to form policy opinions, deal with other offices and with outside bodies virtually without reference to the minister (A25). This was rare and perhaps due to the highly technical nature of the policy.

Ministers generally felt that such high levels of delegation were legitimate. When asked if she thought that type of arrangement was appropriate Minister Purple said 'yes, if that was what the minister wanted'. However she felt that departmental secretaries should be able to meet the minister from time to time with no adviser present, so that if the department had grave concerns about what was happening in an area that was run by an adviser, they would have the ability to raise it with the minister.

At the other extreme were ministers whose style limited the role their advisers could play, because they refused to delegate much authority to them. There were two examples of this type of relationship in the study. Both involved junior ministers. Adviser 4 and Adviser 6 had active role conceptions and sufficient policy competence to be 'very active' advisers. However they were only classed as 'active' because they were constrained by a lack of delegation. One of the ministers - Minister Red - had been involved in a number of controversies and, perhaps as a result, did not trust her staff or her department. She read draft legislation in detail (and claimed to find grammatical mistakes) and wanted to read all the letters that came into her office. To her frustration neither her office nor the department would allow her to do this. She was a slow decision maker, refusing to sign anything she had not personally read and fully understood. (This can be compared to the position of other ministers who stated that they would never sign anything their staff had not read.) Adviser 4 had previously been 'very active' when working for Minister Orange, playing many of the 'independent' policy roles. She had much energy, many new policy ideas, and a wide network through which to pursue them. However she found Minister Red to be too cautious and untrusting to allow her to play a 'very active' policy role.

Most ministers fell into a middle ground in which they maintained their involvement, but they delegated sufficient authority to enable their advisers to...
be 'very active' in dealing with the department and in policy making. In some cases these ministers were involved personally; in other cases they left a great deal to their staff but they insisted that staff consult them and obtain their authorisation for actions they took or had taken. These ministers were very much the directors and authorisers of action though it was conducted by others. Advisers described these as very productive arrangements where they could progress issues effectively as they had the delegation to do so, and could obtain the minister's imprimatur when they needed it.

2. The minister's needs

The second factor which was important in defining how active advisers were in steering policy was the minister's needs. Their needs related to the portfolio and how they organised their office.

Portfolio

A major finding of the study is that advisers in the three central offices (Prime Minister's office, Treasurer's office and Finance Minister's office) played distinct roles to those in 'line' offices. Thus portfolio is a crucial factor in defining advisers' roles. However the following analysis applies only to advisers in 'line' portfolios.

When asked what he saw as the role of the adviser, Minister Silver said that it depended entirely on the portfolio you had. He had had five portfolios in seven and a half years. The nature of the portfolio in which advisers worked could drive or limit the scope of the role played. This depended on the scope and demands of the portfolio; and the nature of the minister's authority within the portfolio.

i) scope and demands of the portfolio

The scope and demands of the portfolio could greatly affect the role that it was possible for advisers to play and the role they needed to play. Some portfolios did not lend themselves to major policy development. Some were limited in policy terms (Minister Purple described policy in one of her portfolios as 'like eating a piece of cardboard between two pieces of stale bread'); while in other portfolios the policy settings were in place and it was simply a matter of delivering on them (eg Minister Black). The demands of portfolios varied
according to the complexity of the policy area; the level of conflict within the policy community and the political arena; and the number and complexity of the lobby groups associated with it.

Portfolios with extensive involvement with state governments (such as community services or health) tended to require 'very active' advisers, compared to a department which was fairly self contained with its own service delivery (such as social security). One minister described his four years with an extremely controversial portfolio (aboriginal affairs). In implementing the party's agenda in that area he met resistance at every level including amongst his own colleagues. He had to work very closely with state governments and there was a confrontation with a state minister 'almost daily'. In that portfolio he relied heavily on his advisers who had a very significant role in policy development and who were needed to push the agenda and to participate in the many political fights he had to undertake. They worked closely together with the department in 'hand to hand combat' with other political players. Four of the ten 'very active' advisers worked in portfolios with major Commonwealth-State components.

Another important difference was between spending portfolios and policy portfolios. Spending portfolios required far more work for advisers in dealing with other ministerial offices, especially working with the three central offices, because of their need to win money or avoid cuts in cabinet, especially at Budget time. Advisers in spending portfolios were likely to be far more active in their policy roles for this reason. (Virtually all 'very active' advisers in the study worked in spending portfolios).

The demands of a portfolio could also change over time. A minister who held one portfolio for seven years, Minister Crimson, reported that he needed different types of advisers as the 'health' of the portfolio changed. At first it was a stand-alone department with considerable policy prominence. At this time he had a senior adviser with technical abilities, who was not a great networker. As the portfolio came more and more under attack from the economic departments and became subsumed into a large mega department, he needed an adviser who could promote his cause in Caucus; who had the skills to win intra- and interdepartmental battles; and who could build support in the Prime Minister's office. His new senior adviser had these abilities. Later the role of his senior adviser again changed, as the minister became more and more desperate to fulfil his agenda and to prevent further cuts.
ii) the nature of the minister's authority within the portfolio

There were different requirements of advisers in senior and junior ministers' offices. Some of the most energetic advisers in the study were in junior minister's offices. There were two reasons why they had to be. Often they reported that they did not receive the response and service they desired from the department (because the minister was not accorded the same priority or quality of personnel as the senior minister) and thus spent much energy in supervising, directing and mobilising the department. They also often needed to secure the agreement of other ministers for the minister's decisions, and this required extensive negotiation and consultation with other offices. Some also had ministers who were very energetic and ambitious.

By contrast, advisers in senior ministers' offices often had less contested authority both with the department and in their dealings with other ministers. The standing of the minister and the portfolio within cabinet could make a big difference to how much time advisers spent fighting, either to achieve an agenda or to stave off the directives of more powerful ministers.

Where ministers did not have clear authority over their policy area, or where the authority over the policy area was shared, their advisers often had to play far more active roles than in portfolios where the minister had undisputed authority. Such situations could be very difficult, especially where ministers had the portfolio of a 'minister assisting', such as the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on the Status of Women, or the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Aboriginal Affairs. In such cases not only did the ministers have an interest in what was being done by other ministers in their portfolios (and thus a need to intervene or influence outcomes over which they had no authority) but they also did not have clear authority over the department they were dealing with on a daily basis (the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet). Advisers and ministers in these situations reported very strenuous roles in supervising, orienting and mobilising the department, active roles in policy development and policy making, and important roles in lobbying, negotiating and consulting other ministerial offices, especially the Prime Minister's office.

It was not only junior ministers who could find themselves without clear authority over their policy area. A classic senior portfolio in this situation was the Environment portfolio, where the minister had the job of influencing outcomes in other portfolios, over which he or she had no authority. Much of the advisers' work involved negotiating with other ministerial offices and they
often played 'very active' roles in policy making. Four of the ten 'very active' advisers and six of the eleven 'active' advisers worked for ministers with split or contested authority. Only one of the 'passive/reactive' advisers was in this situation.

**Roles within the office**

For some advisers, the role the minister required of them within the office constrained how active they were in steering policy. Four advisers who were very experienced, knowledgeable and had active role conceptions were limited by their responsibilities as senior advisers (A35, A30, A05, A28). Two advisers (A26, A17) had special party political roles which limited their policy activity; they were both classified as 'passive/reactive'.

**The adviser**

In addition to the requirements of ministers and the demands of portfolios, how the role was played also depended a great deal on what the adviser brought to the job. Several advisers commented that the role was 'whatever you made it'; that in many ways advisers defined their own roles. There were two factors which either drove or limited the role they played: their policy competence and their role conception.

1. **Policy competence**

Advisers' level of policy competence greatly influenced how active they could be in working with departments and in policy making. Public servants particularly commented on the fact that the scope of the role played by advisers depended on their policy knowledge and abilities.

A crucial aspect of policy competence was subject matter expertise. Eight of the ten 'very active' advisers were subject matter experts. They usually had a background in either the public service (where they had been working on the policy issues for some years) or were activists or academics, who also could bring significant subject matter knowledge to the job. However it was possible to be 'very active' without subject matter expertise. Two of the 'very active' advisers and many of the 'active' advisers had general expertise in policy making. They often had a wide range of experience in government and policy making either as public servants or as long time advisers. These 'generalists'
could be highly valued by ministers and frequently moved with the minister from portfolio to portfolio. Their experience, basic skills and general understanding of policy making and political processes, enabled them to play 'very active' roles even in portfolios which were new to them.

By contrast, several advisers were constrained in the roles they played by their (sometimes self admitted) lack of policy competence. Three of those classified as 'passive/reactive' (A03, A24, A17) played limited policy roles partly because they did not have enough policy knowledge, even though two of them worked for very driving ministers with policy agendas. They also had difficulty directing the work of departments and could not 'share' policy roles with them as they lacked sufficient experience and knowledge.

2. Role conception

An adviser's role conception was an important factor in the scope of the role they played in steering policy. Role conception refers to what they saw as the appropriate role of an adviser and what they personally hoped to achieve in the job.

Appropriate role

'Very active' advisers in the study typically saw all the aspects of the steering policy role as not only appropriate for advisers, but as their responsibility. They expected to be highly directive of departments and to play the 'independent' policy roles of agenda setting, linking, mobilising, bargaining and delivering. It was their responsibility to 'deliver' policy outcomes and to ensure the department was also 'delivering'. By contrast other advisers did not see all of the aspects of the steering policy role as appropriate, and felt some elements were the responsibility of departments.

Two 'passive/reactive' advisers were unusual in having limited role conceptions based on the fact that they were public servants. (They represented a small proportion of the 22 advisers who came from the public service.) Adviser 23 saw his position as 'really a de facto additional departmental position in the office' and thus felt there were limits on what it was appropriate for him to do. He avoided most contact with political aspects of the job such as dealing with Caucus and lobby groups. Both Adviser 23 and Adviser 29 said the reason they took the job was because they 'wanted a change from working in the bureaucracy', and Adviser 29 added she felt it would look good on her
CV. They identified themselves as public servants rather than as advisers and tended to down-play their policy role. Adviser 23 described his role as 'a facilitator and filterer rather than a policy maker' though he admitted 'contributing ideas to the policy process' and substantially influencing some submissions before they reached the office. Adviser 29 saw her role as 'a mix of handmaiden and real policy adviser' but stated that most of the policy she undertook was 'implementing what was there', 'fixing things within the current framework' and facilitating the contact of the minister and the department. These limited role conceptions constrained the roles they played in working with the department and in policy making.

Motivation

The second aspect of role conception was motivation. Advisers who came to the job with either specific policy agendas they wished to pursue or influence agendas tended to be 'very active' in steering policy.

Some advisers came to the job with a strong commitment to particular policy agendas and to the realisation of specific policy goals. They were often involved in mobilising and implementation in their drive to ensure change occurred. These advisers tended to be either activists or public servants. Activists came into ministers' offices as specialists and often retained strong links to their lobby organisations. Their commitment to certain policy agendas was often separate from and deeper than their commitment to the minister. They often saw themselves as working in government for a short interval only and thus were very driven to achieve certain outcomes as quickly as possible. Some advisers from the public service had worked in one area for a long time and were strongly committed to realising a policy agenda in that area. They too described 'very active' roles for themselves in working with the department and in policy making.

Some 'very active' and 'active' advisers had an influence agenda, which emphasised that the party, the minister or the adviser ought to be influencing government and directing policy. Some advisers who were recruited through party connections were very driven by party goals and the sense that they as advisers had a one off opportunity to influence government on behalf of the party or to 'make their mark'. They had a strong commitment to Labor in government and were driven to take or make opportunities to create changes. Some of these advisers were also public servants, who held strong views about the importance of executive dominance of the bureaucracy. Their experience
within the bureaucracy had left them with a determination as advisers to ensure that ministers prevailed and to take opportunities to create change (some expressed frustration about the pace and opportunities for change they experienced while working in the public service).

By contrast, three of the advisers classed as 'passive/reactive' (A09, A24, A26) did not describe themselves as aiming to prevail over the department. They tended to accept the department’s advice with little challenge and thus can be seen as lacking an influence agenda.

Thus many factors interacted to define the scope of the role advisers played in steering policy. These related to the minister, the portfolio and the adviser him or herself. The final section of the chapter briefly describes the characteristics of the three different types of advisers identified in the study.

'Very Active' Advisers

Some of the characteristics of the 'very active' advisers appear in Table 5.4. 'Very active' advisers occupied all positions and were mainly public servants and activists. One was an academic who had worked as a state adviser and was recruited through political channels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.4: Characteristics of 'very active' advisers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>background expertise position yrs as party yrs member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A11 public servant specialist AA 2 y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A14 public servant specialist Cons 5.1 [+2.6] y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A22 public servant specialist A 1.75 [+1.3] n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A41 public servant specialist SA 3 y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A01 public servant specialist A 2.75 y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A15 public servant generalist A 5 y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A07 activist specialist SA 2.1 n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A08 activist specialist Cons 1.1 n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A33 activist generalist A 4.9 y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A27 academic specialist Cons 2.2 y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AA = assistant adviser A = adviser SA = senior adviser Cons = consultant
# periods in brackets indicate periods of employment as a DLO, continuous with work as an adviser

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Of the six public servants, five were policy specialists in that they had been working on the same policy issues that they were now advising on either in the department the minister was responsible for or in another department (A11, A14, A22, A41, A01). The other (A15) was a generalist who originally worked as a policy specialist, but had moved to a new portfolio.

Of the activists, two had come directly from lobby groups to work as advisers dealing with the same policy issues (A07, A08). The third had been originally recruited in this way, but had since worked as an adviser in two different portfolios outside his original policy expertise (he had become a generalist) (A33). He brought to the job not only his experience working with community organisations and lobby groups, but also almost 5 years of experience working as an adviser to two ministers.

Specialist policy knowledge was clearly important to an adviser's ability to play a 'very active' role, but it was not essential. As the two generalists indicate, a wealth of experience in policy making generally, at a community, departmental and ministerial level, could also equip an adviser to play a 'very active' role in steering policy. (Both generalists had worked for around five years as an adviser).

Another important factor was partisanship. Most of these advisers were party members, and were driven by a desire to see party policies implemented and to ensure that the party dominated the policy agenda. The three 'very active' advisers who were not members of the party had quite a different orientation. These three (A22, A07, A08) were strongly committed to particular policy agendas that happened to be part of ALP policy. The two activists in this category saw their period as advisers as short term opportunities to achieve some of their policy agendas, after which they would return to pursuing these ideas as activists. The public servant who was not a party member had worked for more than ten years on a particular set of policy issues in his department; he was committed to the issues first and government second. He could not conceive of working as an adviser in another portfolio. He saw his future as returning to the department to continue pursuing 'good policy' in the area.

All except one of the 'very active' advisers worked for ministers who desired political control and saw contest in the minister-department relationship.

For most of these advisers, factors relating to the minister, the portfolio and themselves all drove them strongly towards playing a 'very active' role. Adviser 11, for example, was a young party member from the department, who
was not only highly policy competent but strongly committed to the party and to the minister's right to direct the department. Her minister (Minister Orange) was committed to certain policy goals and made it clear to her when she started the job that 'he was prepared to become unpopular in the department and have disputes' in pursuit of those goals. He would often ring her at home to complain 'we're not driving the department hard enough!' The portfolio had many complex Commonwealth-State programs, about which there was constant conflict; and she spent much time fighting off threats by Finance to cut program funding. Thus she faced the expectation and the need to play 'very active' roles in steering policy, and she had the capacity and desire to play such roles.

'ACTIVE' ADVISERS

Some of the characteristics of the 'active' advisers appear in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5: Characteristics of 'active' advisers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>background</th>
<th>expertise</th>
<th>position</th>
<th>yrs as adviser</th>
<th>party member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A12</td>
<td>public servant</td>
<td>specialist</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.75 y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A25</td>
<td>public servant</td>
<td>specialist</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>1.5 y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A37</td>
<td>public servant</td>
<td>generalist</td>
<td>Cons</td>
<td>5.6 y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A18</td>
<td>public servant</td>
<td>generalist</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>5 y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A35</td>
<td>public servant</td>
<td>generalist</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>1.7 n</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A30</td>
<td>public servant</td>
<td>generalist</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>7.5 y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A06</td>
<td>activist</td>
<td>specialist</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>2.5 n</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A13</td>
<td>journalist</td>
<td>specialist</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>2.2 n</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A02</td>
<td>state public servant</td>
<td>political</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>3 y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A04</td>
<td>private sector</td>
<td>political</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>3.25 y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A19</td>
<td>private sector</td>
<td>generalist</td>
<td>Cons</td>
<td>2.5 y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AA = assistant adviser A = adviser SA = senior adviser Cons = consultant
# periods in brackets indicate periods of employment as a DLO, continuous with work as an adviser

'Active' advisers occupied all positions and most were party members. In contrast to the 'very active' group, the public servants in the 'active' category were more likely to be generalists than specialists. Two had 'political' backgrounds in the sense they had been recruited through party channels and
were not policy specialists (A02, A04). Yet unlike many 'political' advisers, both had role conceptions which drove them to take 'active' roles in policy. The four public servants who were generalists displayed high levels of policy competence: three had been long time advisers of between five and seven and a half years' standing (A37, A18, A30), and the other was a very senior and experienced public servant (A35).

Most of these advisers could have played a 'very active' role but something held them back. For example, Adviser 12 was a policy specialist from the public service who was highly partisan, had an active role conception and had been 'very active' with his previous minister. However his current minister's attitude to the department constrained him: the minister had an edict that 'Thou Shalt Get On With The Department' and he 'stepped back' from major conflict with the department.

Adviser 18 was very experienced, had an active role conception, and worked for a driving, policy-oriented minister. He had been 'very active' in previous adviser positions but was not classified as 'very active' in this study because his minister decided to concentrate his energies on another part of the portfolio and specifically asked the adviser to 'play dead' in his policy area. This meant Adviser 18 played strong roles in working with the department, but was not authorised to perform the 'independent' policy roles of agenda setting, linking, mobilising, bargaining and delivering, which are aimed at creating new policy directions.

Adviser 2 worked for a senior minister who was engaged in major policy reform. He was highly partisan and motivated to influence government. He was very involved in generating new policy ideas and active in the full range of 'independent' policy roles. However he was classed as 'active' because his role conception held him back from extensive involvement in the department's activities: he believed his job was to set directions and leave the department to comply; and that it was not his job to get involved in the detail of programs and policy implementation. Thus while he was 'very active' in his policy making roles, his departmental work was more limited. Adviser 35 and Adviser 30 were senior advisers to very senior ministers, and this role limited their proactive policy work.

'PASSIVE/REACTIVE' ADVISERS

Some of the characteristics of the 'passive/reactive' advisers appear in Table 5.6.
### Table 5.6: Characteristics of 'passive/reactive' advisers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>background</th>
<th>expertise</th>
<th>position</th>
<th>yrs as adviser</th>
<th>party member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A29</td>
<td>public servant</td>
<td>specialist</td>
<td>Cons</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A23</td>
<td>public servant</td>
<td>specialist</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A03</td>
<td>public servant</td>
<td>specialist</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A26</td>
<td>public servant</td>
<td>generalist</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A05</td>
<td>public servant</td>
<td>generalist</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A28</td>
<td>public servant</td>
<td>generalist</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A24</td>
<td>electorate officer</td>
<td>political</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A17</td>
<td>private sector</td>
<td>political</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A09</td>
<td>activist</td>
<td>specialist</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A16</td>
<td>academic</td>
<td>specialist</td>
<td>Cons</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AA = assistant adviser A = adviser SA = senior adviser Cons = consultant

The 'passive/reactive' group were in all positions and were quite diverse. Sixty per cent were not party members. Their reasons for playing a 'passive/reactive' role in steering policy varied.

Some had a limited role conception in relation to their work with departments (A29, A23). They saw themselves as a filterer or checker of the department's submissions to the minister. They saw the department as the main policy engine and that their work involved supervising the department; evaluating the department's work and being an alternative source of advice to the minister. They described their role as ensuring information flow between the minister and the department and where there were differences, to bring the minister and the department together to resolve them.

Four had limited steering policy roles because of their other roles in the office: Adviser 5 and Adviser 28 were senior advisers with mainly management roles; and Adviser 26 and Adviser 17 had important political responsibilities which limited their policy work. Three worked for ministers who did not see any contest with the department or who were not prepared to fight with the department (A26, A05, A16). One young adviser had an active role conception but was too inexperienced to be able to realise her ambitions (A03). Adviser 24 lacked policy experience and felt his program areas had little scope for policy reform.
This brief description of the three types of advisers demonstrates that the reasons why advisers played more or less active roles in steering policy were complex, and involved a number of factors coming together.

CONCLUSION

This chapter described the variation in advisers' behaviour and distinguished three different types of advisers based on their work in steering policy: 'very active', 'active' and 'passive/reactive' advisers. The chapter also discussed the factors which influenced advisers' behaviour. These were the minister's style and needs; and the adviser's policy competence and role conception.

Implicit in much commentary about the growing role of advisers is an assumption that they all behave in the same way. This thesis reveals the complexity of the phenomenon and the dangers of generalising about advisers' work. It is important to recognise the contingency and particularity of advisers' behaviour, and that there are subsets of advisers who act differently.

The thesis now examines in detail how advisers performed the steering policy role, first exploring how advisers worked with departments (Chapter Six); and then how they engaged in policy making (Chapter Seven). It largely focuses on the work of the 'very active' and 'active' advisers in the study.
Six

Engaging the department: Political-bureaucratic relationships

This chapter examines how ministerial advisers in the study engaged with departments. This engagement was fundamental to political-bureaucratic relationships in the Keating years. The study challenges the dominant image of relationships between advisers and public servants as essentially cooperative and complementary. It first describes the three roles played by advisers in engaging with departments. It identifies some different responses by public servants to working with advisers. Finally, it analyses closely the dynamics within the relationships between advisers and senior public servants and considers whether, as some writers suggest, there is an Australian model of political-bureaucratic relationships which is essentially cooperative and complementary. The study does not support this image of the relationship, and presents an alternative model of competitive and overlapping roles, producing fundamental tensions which must be managed in government.

Importance of the relationship

The relationship between ministerial advisers and departments has become critical in conducting business in government. Its importance is evident in Hollway's image of ministerial offices as 'the powerpoint that makes the day-to-day connection between a minister's interests and the work of departments' (1996:133).

Ministers realised that the quality of the relationship was critical to what they could hope to achieve in government and set high priority on advisers dealing effectively with the department. Most had delegated the ongoing conduct of that relationship to their advisers. Minister Blue saw it as crucial that advisers had 'a real capacity to liaise with the department in an effective way':
You need people on your staff that know exactly where to go and how to extract the relevant information and advice from the relevant people with a minimal amount of fuss. And also to do it in a way which keeps the trust and confidence and good humour between the office and the department. It requires a real set of skills too. Someone who is technically and intellectually very good but personally very bad in terms of their relations with others - is always peremptory or demanding - that can be a turn off for people at the other end and mean that you just don’t get the service that you need. It sounds boring, but done well, matters crucially, done badly it’s disastrous.

Minister Orange said it was the adviser’s job to do ‘most of the work, the interchange’ and to ‘massage that relationship ... so it is not detrimental to the minister and the government’.

Although they may not have been happy about it and would have preferred to have a direct relationship with the minister, most public servants appeared to accept that advisers were the intermediaries within their relationships with ministers and that they had to work well with them. It was a key part of the job of the senior public servant to participate in these relationships and to ensure they were positive, as Public Servant 8 stressed:

Your relationships with advisers are absolutely critical. It’s really, really important to have a good working relationship - ... being able to establish faith with the ministerial advisers that your advice is legit and that you’re not hiding things from them and you’re not putting a particular spin on things or you’re not ignoring their views. ... And if you alienated one of those advisers? You’re buggered.

Minister Grey observed: ‘They’ve got to work well with advisers!! If they want a good working relationship with their minister!’.

Ministers judged advisers by how well they conducted these relationships. Advisers were also aware that it was through their relationships with public servants that they could exert influence, as Adviser 17 explained:

It is very difficult to have control of policy as an adviser. There’s armies of bureaucrats versus you, and your time, and you’re one of a kind. You can only develop some influence over the policy area by your relationship with the bureaucrats.

Just like the public servants on the other side of the relationship, they felt the effects of poor relations could be disastrous. This was because they recognised they were dependent on the department’s resources; Adviser 14 said: ‘If you get the department offside you’re gone. You won’t be able to get anything done.’ It was also because they felt that departments could actively obstruct them:
Your relationships with senior public servants are absolutely critical. If they are not on your agenda they'll kill you. Go slow. Block you. There are many ways they can do it and I don't just mean the SES and top people, I mean the branch heads too (A02).

Yet while its ongoing conduct was in the hands of ministerial advisers and senior public servants, the relationship was largely defined by the minister's approach. One very experienced public servant explained:

If it's clear the minister has a good relationship with the department and trusts it, then the office will have a good relationship with us. If the minister conversely doesn't trust the department, or thinks it's incompetent or whatever, then you won't have a good relationship. If the minister is standing back (like Minister Yellow did) then it is a question of whether the office has faith in the department or not (P01).

How critical the minister's approach was in defining the relationship between advisers and public servants can be seen in two examples.

In the first, an adviser had worked on the same subject area for three different ministers and had always had good relations with the department. An important part of her style as an adviser was to take what she called a 'softly softly' approach with the department and to be conscious of the constraints the department operated under. However the third minister she worked for (Minister Scarlet) had a driving, aggressive approach to the department, which he felt was resisting his agenda and 'had to be whipped into shape'. Despite her history of good relations, the pressure she and the department were put under by this minister turned many of her relationships sour. She explained: 'I've always taken the approach of letting things go when nasty things are said. I've just taken it and said OK. But lately I've had some people being very rude to me and I've started biting back.'

By contrast three advisers who worked for another minister reported he had an edict in his office that 'Thou Shalt Get On with the Department' (because of problems in his last portfolio). Though he was an active minister with his own policy agenda, his advisers were told to pull back from major conflict with the department. If a disagreement occurred with the department the minister himself always stepped in. They felt this undermined their ability to produce the outcomes he wanted.

It is also important to recognise that departments were not monolithic. Senior public servants varied in how they responded to advisers, and this greatly affected how relationships operated. Within the small sample of ten senior
public servants in the study, four distinct approaches to working with advisers were identified: a cooperative approach, a responsive approach, a competitive approach and a powerful approach. These different responses are also discussed in the chapter.

ADVISERS' ROLES WITHIN THE MINISTER-DEPARTMENT RELATIONSHIP

In Chapter Four it was argued that advisers performed four key roles within the minister-department relationship: supervising, orienting and mobilising the department, and providing an alternative source of advice. This work enabled the minister to engage the bureaucracy and thus contributed to political control. The following section explores how advisers in the study performed the roles of supervising, orienting and mobilising the department.

Supervising the department: the adviser as gatekeeper

Advisers supervised the department's activities in several ways. The most important way was by the adviser checking and evaluating all the documents that came to the minister from the department. Advisers could also request reports from the department on what it was doing. Apart from these more formal means, advisers could generally require, in their day to day conversations with senior public servants, that they be kept informed of what was happening in their program areas. However the core of this role was the scrutiny of documents.

Advisers had accrued considerable administrative authority in their dealings with departments. No brief went to the minister without being read and commented on by an adviser first. Advisers had the authority to check and question the department's work and to approve it to go forward to the minister. Each adviser had responsibility for scrutinising documents coming from the department in their designated policy areas. While some advisers had 'barrowfuls' and 'mountains' of papers coming into their in-trays, others did not have as much and rarely saw a brief that they were not already very familiar with.

For most advisers, the task involved devising a set of questions about each brief; it was in answering these questions that flaws or gaps in the document might be exposed. However because of the volume many felt they could not
give detailed attention to every document. They often chose the most important and 'let the rest go through' (as 'OK'). One long time adviser revealed her anxiety about the responsibility she had in this role:

One time I rang the department and said "I'm unhappy with the brief but I don't know why. Can we go through the questions I have?" Sure enough, as we discussed it they realised all these problems they hadn't considered and worse, that what they were proposing was totally against government policy!! The FAS apologised and admitted he was wrong, but it made me very worried. What about all the other submissions I approved? How many were wrong?

(A14)

Some ministers wanted their advisers to provide them with a summary of what was in the brief, while others only wanted advisers to comment on whether the document was 'OK to sign' or not.1 If the brief was not 'OK to sign' the adviser could provide a suggested comment for the minister to write on the brief before it was sent back to the department. Or the adviser might not send the brief to the minister at all, but rather talk with the department and send it back for amendment before the minister saw it.

Some ministers had high expectations about their advisers' thoroughness. One adviser reported that if she had written 'OK to sign' her minister expected that she could answer any question he had about the brief, and if she could not, he growled 'then why did you write "OK to sign"?' However to achieve this level of understanding took much time and interaction with the department. This conflicted with the need to deal with briefs promptly and not hold them up in the minister's office.

Ministers in the study saw this as an extremely important part of the adviser's role, but their needs varied. One senior minister, Minister Blue, only needed his advisers' views to add to his own:

I wanted the submissions from the department to be scrutinised and my attention drawn to anything that was iffy, unsustainable or dopey or misconceived. I certainly didn't want my staff to sit there all day long summarising submissions for me and telling me [what was in them]. But because they'd be by definition devoting more time to each given thing than I would, what I wanted was the benefit of their reactions as to whether the submission was either good, bad or indifferent.

---

1 The pay TV inquiry in 1993 involved much discussion about what was meant by the term 'OK to sign' and how much responsibility advisers had to take for making this notation. Pearce's (1993) report rejected the idea that it indicated the adviser approved of the contents of the brief.
Other ministers were far more dependent on their advisers' evaluations, either because of a lack of time or a lack of knowledge. It was surprising how often ministers admitted to not reading the briefs themselves. Minister Black said:

Advisers need to be able to grab a big brief and condense it to a short note. This is a very useful role ... because often there is just so much detail that it is not really necessary to know and you simply have no time to consider it yourself.

Minister Purple admitted: 'I didn't have the time or space to read all the documents that came to me. So I relied heavily on rigorous scrutiny by my staff. I wouldn't sign anything they hadn't read first.' Minister Grey admitted to being heavily reliant on his advisers' scrutiny of briefs:

Ministers haven't got time to read all the pieces of paper that come to them. You rely heavily on your staff and put a lot of trust in them. ... They read all the briefs and give you a short precis on what's in it and what points to look at. ... I had to read all the minutes of course, but they'd tell me what they were about. I couldn't possibly have operated effectively without my advisers working there.²

However this was of great concern to some public servants in the study. Public Servant 9 was not happy about ministers' dependence on advisers to 'interpret' the department's work:

The classic bureaucrat's concern is that the actual advice gets through, the advice in its original form as opposed to a potentially distorted shorthand version of it. I think that is the trouble, there is so much paper ministers need to read, that more and more they are dependent on advisers' summaries. ... I suppose our desire is that all angles get represented, that the thing is presented in its complexity not just with some particular features pulled out.

Public Servant 7 felt it was dangerous that departments could not see or comment on the accuracy of the adviser's notes: 'They often get it wrong through ignorance, lack of experience ... and no one ever knows'. He claimed that occasionally when he had seen advisers' notes to the minister he had been 'horrified at the mistakes and errors'.

From the adviser's point of view it was crucial that their comments be removed from briefs before they were returned to the department. They did not want the department to know where they had opposed its recommendations. Adviser 32, a long time adviser from the public service, said:

² This created problems for Minister for the Environment Ros Kelly when she signed off on a booklet for schools, the content of which she later discovered she did not agree with. It had to be pulped.
Departments are always suspicious of what you are saying to the minister of course. ... The department always knew I put my own advice to the minister on top of theirs and they never knew what my advice was. They knew I was smart enough never to let that be revealed.

Yet others preferred to be 'up front' with the department when they took a different position and rang to inform them they would be opposing their recommendations. They felt this transparency kept trust in the relationship (A18, A10).

Another complaint expressed by public servants was that some advisers scrutinised departmental documents too closely. Public Servant 4 complained that with one long time adviser, he could exchange six to ten telephone calls a day about documents. He was critical of her approach:

She at times behaved more like a public servant than an adviser and would want to query very fine details of program matters which, really, she didn’t need to involve herself in. [It was] partly because she was such a subject matter expert, and had often more corporate memory than the people in the public service. ... I don’t think really think it is a good use of an adviser’s time, nor appropriate given the division of roles, to get too much into details of program administration - that is fundamentally a role of the public service.

However he did see some positive outcomes to her approach:

While at times that seemed excessive, and occasionally irritating, because I had a division to run, on balance I appreciated that level of contact because it meant that we did have confidence that the minister’s office knew precisely what was going on. ... They knew our views, and we knew their views. There was never anything hidden or misunderstood.

He stressed that most advisers he dealt with lacked the expertise to delve into that level of detail, and he added: 'I suspect that public servants by and large would react unfavourably if they did.' Yet a public servant's power to restrict an adviser's involvement was limited. Another FAS who worked with the same adviser tried, and failed, to cut her out, as the adviser recalled:

He said to me 'you know too much'. It used to irritate him that I would ask questions [about briefs]. Often he tried to get things up around me but of course they always landed back on my desk - if it's your area of policy, it always comes to you (A14).

From the other side, advisers were often critical of the number of mistakes they found in the department's work. Adviser 19 complained that: 'They can all put up duds and very often do. ... In all the areas I look after there's a real problem with quality. They send up so much poor work, with so many mistakes.'
Ministers too complained about this. As small mistakes could be very damaging to a politician, carefully checking for errors was something they relied on their advisers to do.\(^3\)

It was extremely difficult for advisers who felt they could not rely on the department to do competent work. Adviser 4 dealt with a section which she said was 'completely incompetent - it was like McHale's navy!' She gave the example of an information booklet the minister was going to launch, which came to her for final clearance with 93 errors in it. She ended up performing a management role, working on early drafts of letters and minutes, and even writing the funding guidelines, but she said: 'I don't blame the bureaucrats ... as the area was basically unmanaged.'

**The power of the gatekeeper**

The role of gatekeeper, or intermediary, in the flow of information between the minister and the department gave advisers considerable leverage in their dealings with officials. They could get things decided or attended to. They could delay or block documents going to the minister. They could be an advocate for the department. They could stand over ministers to get papers signed. The gatekeeper role created an exchange relationship with public servants. Adviser 1 explained: 'They had to trade with me, they had to do business with me, if they wanted to get things through.'

The smooth passage of documents through the ministerial office was a benefit advisers could exchange within their relationship with the department. The consequences of the paperwork not flowing well could be significant. Public Servant 3 described these as: 'Costs, frustration, confusion - forever updating briefing material ... delays in lodging cabinet submissions. ... It can be, and is, very, very significant.' Departments needed the cooperation of advisers and therefore had incentives to create good relationships with them. It meant that advisers could demand to be informed and involved in the department's activities. Thus some advisers had created a relationship with the department where they were regularly consulted on program matters and gave clearance of proposed actions at very detailed levels.

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\(^3\) A junior minister (who was often under attack in Parliament) cited the example of the absence of the word 'not' in a question time brief. 'If I had read that in Parliament as the department had written it I would have been dead. Politically dead' (Red).
However advisers differed in their perception of their power as gatekeepers. While some felt it was considerable, others stressed its limitations. Adviser 27 saw himself as possessing 'veto power':

I have the power of veto. And they know that and have to understand that I either give something the tick or its "Phht". ... All the submissions that come to me either get the tick and go through to the minister or they stop with me. If I don't like something it goes back to the department. It doesn't get to the minister.

Yet others stressed that changes to documents had to be negotiated, and this took time and there were costs involved. Adviser 25 stressed that he needed 'to get enough out of it to warrant the consequences of disagreement'.

An important limitation on advisers' power as gatekeepers was the power of the secretary of the department. Secretaries were the only public servants with a direct relationship with the minister, not mediated by advisers. Many secretaries had weekly 'chats' alone with the minister, in which they could raise portfolio issues and also problems with the way advisers were handling matters. Some advisers had close and dependent relationships with the secretary, but others were quite threatened by these weekly 'chats', felt a strong sense of competition with the secretary, and feared being undermined. This channel of direct communication with the minister limited their gatekeeping. Adviser 18 said it could be risky for him to stop documents going to the minister as the secretary could ask the minister 'during one of their weekly chats - "what happened on this"? If the minister says "I know nothing about it", then you're in the pooh!'

**Orienting the department: the adviser as surrogate**

The second role advisers had within the minister-department relationship was to orient the department to focus on and understand the minister's agenda. There were three main aspects. The first was communicating the minister's decisions and directions to the department. The second aspect was clarifying and reinforcing the minister's agenda within the day to day work of the department. The third aspect was taking minor decisions on behalf of the minister as his or her surrogate. This role grew over the Labor period, according to one long time public servant:
[Today] there's much more contact with advisers and less with ministers. You go back to the last period of the Fraser government or the beginning of the Hawke government, policy or legal discussions were always with the minister. Discussions with the staff were essentially about arranging a meeting with the minister or the logistics of implementing a decision but not about the substance of the matter. Now the substance of matters is on a regular basis discussed through ministerial staff rather than directly with ministers (P07).

As the minister’s surrogate, an adviser could carry the minister’s authority and decision making power into a wide range of interactions with the department.

Public servants saw this as a legitimate and useful role played by advisers. It could facilitate their work and add value for them. It was part of crafting a match between what the department was doing and what the minister wanted. Things could get done faster. They stressed the value of advisers’ access to the minister (‘they can ask the minister a quick question’) and of advisers’ accessibility. Ongoing dialogue with the adviser could ensure a high level of input from the minister in the department’s work. Public Servant 4 felt this was a useful role for advisers:

A good adviser should be the interpreter of the minister’s will to the department. You should be able to say, what does the minister mean by this, or how would the minister respond if this happened or how do you think the minister would view this? So you don’t have to actually get to the minister on every issue.

Part of this role was helping to communicate and clarify the minister’s agenda for the department. Adviser 7 felt this was important for those lower down in the hierarchy who may have this withheld from them by higher officials, because ‘information is power’. He felt he provided a ‘translation point’ for the ‘big picture’.

Also very useful to public servants was the adviser’s ability to take minor decisions on the minister’s behalf or resolve issues without reference to the minister. An adviser to a minister with two cabinet portfolios explained: 'The minister doesn’t want to know unless it’s a big issue’ (A17). This depended on relationships between ministers and advisers working well, and there were perils if they were not. Public servants could find that 'the minister doesn't actually know what you're doing and you think they do' (P06).

To public servants it was crucial to know if an adviser was an effective surrogate: that when they spoke for the minister it reflected the minister’s views and when they directed the department, it was with the minister’s authority.
For advisers, it was crucial that the public servants they dealt with accepted them as the surrogates of the minister. Where advisers were not effective or accepted surrogates, major problems could occur.

Effective surrogates?

Some public servants had no trouble accepting the authority of advisers as surrogates of the minister. Public Servant 10 stressed:

If A47 is going to come back to me and say the minister wants to go in this direction, I'm going to hear that and I'm going to believe that. ... I don't see them as separate from the minister. They're the surrogate for their minister. So when I spoke to A47 and he gave me an answer the answer that I got was from the minister. ... Ministers ... employ these people because they trust these people to know what's going on in their minds.

Yet for many public servants, advisers may or may not be effective surrogates. For an adviser to be an effective surrogate they had to have clear-cut responsibility for a program or policy area. Where this did not occur it was difficult, as Public Servant 6 recalled:

The role of an adviser is ambiguous and difficult enough without not knowing what their area of policy responsibility is. ... When you end up having two or three, each with parts of responsibility, it can be very confusing as to what the minister actually wants you to do. Over the last few years there's been lots of conversations with other division heads about not knowing what the hell we're meant to do ... as a result of having conflicting messages from different advisers.

A key issue for public servants was whether they could trust that the views and directions expressed by the adviser actually reflected the minister's views and directions. Because they were not communicating directly with ministers, it was always something that was present in their thinking. They made constant assessments of how close the adviser was to the minister, how in tune with the minister the adviser was and how confident the minister was in the adviser. They felt this was something that could be picked up fairly easily.

An adviser who could be trusted as reflecting the views of the minister was 'really valuable' (P05). Public Servant 1 recalled an example of this type of adviser: 'You knew that if A44 agreed to something, it was 99.9 percent likely that the minister agreed to it, because they had a very special relationship - if A44 was convinced, the minister was convinced.' In these cases the adviser's directions were clearly authoritative.
Public servants were understandably very keen to detect where an adviser was pursuing a personal agenda. This suspicion was something that was always present in how they responded to advisers. (However advisers running personal agendas did not appear to be a common situation: 'it has been definitely in the minority of cases' (P02).) This dilemma could be avoided where advisers made clear distinctions between their own and the minister's views. This made them a more trusted surrogate. Public Servant 7 described an adviser whom he saw as being a very effective surrogate:

He had the full confidence of the minister. He always consulted the minister. If you told him something was important he would get you an answer almost invariably in fifteen minutes. He was very useful ... in terms of giving preliminary feedback on what the likely reactions of the minister were. But always clearly distinguished his own views from the minister's views and made it very clear whether he was giving you his assessment or the minister's assessment.

Public Servant 6 described a situation where he did not realise that the adviser he was dealing with was not an effective surrogate - she was not close to the minister and did not reflect his views. It was a very dangerous position to be in as a public servant. He ended up being 'carpeted' by the minister for doing things the minister did not want:

Minister Bronze's offices were never happy. They were always riven with conflict and I had some very painful experiences early on, where I was assuming that they were talking to each other and they weren't. And the adviser was becoming more and more assertive with me, basically because I was the only person she could talk to. I assumed that she was in the loop in the office, and that she was speaking with her minister and the issues I was raising with her, and we were talking about, were going back to him. I ended up getting carpeted by him. Because we were doing things that he wasn't approving.

There were several reasons why this occurred. The adviser was low status in the office and had been 'frozen out' by the senior adviser, and the minister had not made clear what his agenda was. He was a minister whose advisers thought the way they would impress him and gain favour, was 'by turning the furniture over'. He actually did not want to 'turn the furniture over' in this area, but had never made that clear to the adviser. Public Servant 6's strategy to deal with the situation was to go around the adviser and form a direct relationship with the minister:
I said to him, "Well you and I obviously need to spend some time together and talk. So I understand what you're after. So can the deal be if I ring and say I need to speak that I get time?" and then it worked quite well. The relationship with that adviser wasn't then very good. So I had to do a lot of work to draw her back into the process. ... By forcing a relationship between me and the minister I actually then created a relationship between the minister and that adviser.

Accepted surrogates?

An adviser who is giving directions to the department is exercising power. Advisers reported that departments only accepted that exercise of power conditionally. The authority an adviser needed to direct the department had to be established and constantly reinforced, and it could be undermined. Adviser 1 said a minister could seriously undermine an adviser in meetings with the department if he or she did not treat them respectfully or said 'something different':

They watch body language in meetings. It gets down to that. If a minister in a meeting has a go at one of his advisers that can be the death of that adviser. The department will just watch and they'll get the message, and that can set you back two months with the department.

If the adviser was not accepted by the department as the minister's surrogate, the job could be very difficult. For some advisers, being accepted as authoritative was an ongoing struggle. They were ever alert to how public servants responded to them. Many felt their authority was unstable and had to be constantly reaffirmed.

Senior advisers could reinforce or undermine an adviser's authority with the department. One assistant adviser told of her difficulties in a situation where the senior adviser actively undermined her authority. In her experience any gap in authority could be used by the department as leverage:

Every so often she'd swoop in and do deals with the department which would undermine me. Usually it was when the department was having trouble with me - if we were disagreeing over something and had been fighting for a while - the FAS would call the senior adviser and she'd give up my position. It made things very difficult with the department. Often she would do it with complete ignorance of the facts. ... She'd give in, without finding out from me what the story was (A04).

She felt that this was all part of the senior adviser's tactics, which were to concede on policy at times to keep a good relationship with the FAS, because
'she felt that whatever happened to us the FAS would save us'; therefore
'because I didn't back down I had to be "done in".'

Acting as the minister's surrogate could involve fine judgments about when to
involve the minister and when the adviser could act alone. How far could the
adviser could go in interpreting the minister's position and taking decisions
without reference to the minister? There was an element of risk involved in
these judgements which could leave advisers feeling exposed, particularly if
their ministers were so busy that they were rarely available to them.

From the minister's point of view, delegating power to advisers to direct the
department could have three important benefits. It could preserve the
minister's authority. Several ministers commented on the value of their
advisers being the ones engaged in 'hand to hand combat' with senior public
servants. By standing back from this type of interaction the minister could
enter the discussion as an arbiter, judging between different points of view
rather than getting involved in fighting the department. In this way their
authority was intact as the decision maker, rather than as an advocate or
participant in debate.

It could also protect the minister's relationship with the department. Some
advisers felt that they performed a 'lightning rod' function within the
relationship between the minister and the department. By this they meant
criticism was deflected away from the minister and onto themselves (cf Ellis
1994). In this sense the adviser could become the focus of the department's
negative feelings and thus preserve the relationship between the minister and
the department from being tainted by resentment and conflict. This could be a
difficult part of the job of adviser. An adviser who worked for a demanding
minister felt she often had to 'wear ... the department's anger and their pressure
being taken out on me' (A14). Others said that public servants 'liked to blame
advisers' for decisions which they were not happy with, believing they
persuaded the minister not to follow the department's advice. It could be more
palatable to take this view rather than accept that their advice might have been
rejected by the minister.

Delegating to an adviser the power to direct the department could also free
ministers to focus their time and energy on higher priority issues. Public
Servant 7 recalled a minister who wanted to be 'insulated' from many of the
matters in the portfolio to allow him to focus on a small number of key issues.
Public Servant 7 had sent up several briefs to the minister on a matter, which he
discovered had been delegated entirely by the minister:
A crisis arose and ... I went over and started an oral briefing with the expectation that he'd absorbed this over a period of some months because we'd got instructions back as to what his views were and it suddenly turned out that he had never seen any of the pieces of paper we'd put up to him. And all the instructions were in fact the instructions of his principal adviser. ... The minister picked things up very, very quickly in the few minutes we had before the meeting with the Prime Minister but it was quite a shock.

In another example, an adviser 'ran' a policy area in close collaboration with a senior public servant, because the minister's main focus was elsewhere in the portfolio. Adviser 14 exercised the minister's full authority and the department accepted her as the minister's surrogate. She was a consultant who had advised three different ministers on one subject area for more than five years. She had extensive subject matter knowledge, drawn from working in the public service. The public servant she worked with, Public Servant 4, was a FAS who had also previously worked as an adviser. Theirs is an example of a close and positive relationship between a public servant and an adviser, where they managed the policy area together. It was a very effective arrangement for the minister who, according to Public Servant 4, 'saw himself, correctly in my view, as a key player in economic policy for the government. So for those very understandable reasons ... his focus was on the other side of the portfolio.' Public Servant 4 saw this as quite appropriate:

He basically delegated his relationship with the department to Adviser 14. ... He was able to do that ... because he had an extraordinarily experienced adviser in Adviser 14. And basically without ever saying it explicitly, he said to Adviser 14 and me, 'OK you run [the policy area], and I'll put my energies into the rest of it'. So he entrusted us, in effect, as a trusted senior public servant and a trusted adviser, to keep that set of issues bubbling along without causing him too much trouble. ... What I am talking about was never explicit, it was always implicit, that what he was looking for was to be able to be comfortable that that part of his portfolio was operating smoothly without him having to keep a close eye on it all the time.

Adviser 14 found this a difficult situation to be in:

Basically the minister and the rest of the office works on [–] and I'm the one who carries the rest. When the minister came into the portfolio he made this very clear to me. He said 'You have to just keep the policy rolling and keep everyone off my back.' ... It was difficult because the lobby groups were angry that they had no access to the minister and neither did the department really. They just had me. ... I was very lonely and frustrated. Even I couldn't get in to see the minister about things. He really wasn't interested and I had to run everything.
The adviser did not just 'keep the policy rolling', she negotiated a package of new policy in the Budget, working closely with Public Servant 4:

I was always on the phone to P04 saying we had to push it and take the proposals further. Then after I'd done it all I'd go and tell the minister what I'd done. ... If he didn't approve of what you'd done he'd tell you. And at times you'd have to put your case to him. But basically he left it to me.

What made this work was the extremely close and trusting relationship between Adviser 14 and Public Servant 4. Yet this was not unusual according to Public Servant 4: 'It is not uncommon to have that degree of close working relationship between an adviser and a senior public servant. I had a similar relationship to A14's with me, when I was an adviser, with other people in the department.'

**Public Servant 4: A cooperative approach**

Public Servant 4 exemplifies a particular response to working with advisers - a cooperative approach. (This was one of four distinct approaches to working with advisers amongst public servants in the study). He and the adviser had a shared commitment to the policy agenda and mutual respect. They worked cooperatively in developing policy and in operating programs. Their relationship was not competitive, in fact Public Servant 4 felt it was a relationship 'between equals' where 'she was just as happy to defer to my views on certain things as she was to try and impose the view from the office'. There was a clearly understood distinction between the two roles: 'The line was always drawn at the political.' Otherwise the roles were shared, with Public Servant 4 accepting a high level of involvement by the adviser in day to day program administration.

**Mobilising the department: the adviser as driver**

The third role advisers had within the minister-department relationship was mobilising the department. Mobilising the department to work on the minister's key projects or to deliver major policy change is a crucial part of directing government and delivering a partisan agenda. While ministers were obviously critical in inspiring or driving a department to deliver on that agenda, advisers had an important role in day to day mobilisation.

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4 The other three (responsive, competitive and powerful) emerge later in the chapter.
Bakvis listed mobilisation as one of the seven categories of executive 'needs' that advisers fulfil (1997:86). He described mobilisation in the following way:

If ministers are to make headway in achieving some of their goals then the task involves mobilizing the bureaucracy, or at least critical segments of the bureaucracy, to get them onside. Here advisers can play a critical role, if only by not alienating key bureaucrats (1997:96).

He felt mobilisation was one of the four needs which political staff have a strong ability to meet compared to other advisory units such as think tanks, kitchen cabinets or management consultants (1997:122). The mobilisation role of advisers has not been explored in Australian studies even though, as Bakvis suggests, it is one of their most important tasks.5

Some advisers in this study saw mobilisation as a crucial part of their role and their daily work. They described it as 'finding a way that the department is willing to work on your agenda'. How to achieve this was something they readily discussed; it had great moment for them. Whether they were successful in this endeavour was critical in being effective advisers. How they sought to mobilise the department was seen as an important part of their skill and style as an adviser.

By contrast public servants did not generally mention this element of the adviser's job. They did not see themselves as needing to be mobilised, and tended to describe themselves as responsive to the minister's agenda. However some did discuss instances when their own departments or other departments actively resisted the agendas of ministers and advisers. Most ministers mentioned their use of advisers to counter resistance by the department or to address problems in responsiveness.

Preliminaries: understanding the department

Before advisers could successfully mobilise the department they needed to understand the department and its agenda or agendas. Minister Red explained:

A very critical part of the adviser's job is to have a very good working knowledge of the people you are working with in the bureaucracy and where they are in their own personal history. Because all of them are running another agenda. ... The advisers need to be like ferrets.

5 It is also a major contribution to policy making, and thus will also be briefly discussed in Chapter Seven.
They also needed to understand the forces working against achieving the agenda. Adviser 7 felt that to mobilise the department successfully 'you have to have a good understanding of the ways the bureaucracy can delay, defer, shelve, compromise and do deals ... to subvert or slow down your reforms. ... They have a million and one subtle ways of dudding you and you'll only know that you've been dudded at the end but by then it's too late.' There were several strategies for mobilising the department.

Selling the agenda

Advisers had an important role in persuading public servants of the merits of the minister's agenda. This was described as 'selling' the agenda to the department or 'massaging ideas through the department' (Orange). In this way advisers could provide the energy or momentum to 'kick off' the department's work. Some advisers described this as 'enthusing' public servants about the agenda. Public Servant 3 saw this as the most effective way for advisers to operate:

It's a lot more effective where an adviser works in close cahoots with an influential person in the department to try to get that person on side and agree that it's a good thing to develop - "let's do this" - rather than saying "prepare a submission on this, that and the other".

Driving the agenda

A 'pushing' or 'driving' role was a very important part of the approach of many advisers. They saw it as their role to push progress on key matters and to stay on top of the timing and direction of major initiatives. 'Pushing' and 'driving' were words that were frequently used by advisers in their discussion of relationships with public servants. Yet this could take some skill: advisers needed an ability to push the department to achieve things often in unrealistic timeframes, without alienating them too much.

Developing a shared agenda

A third way of mobilising the department was to create a shared agenda with the department. It was possible to engage the department's commitment to the minister's agenda by ensuring that agenda also met some of the department's objectives. While this could work well there were also often tensions inherent in a shared agenda.
Adviser 7 was a senior adviser to a reformist minister. He had been an activist before working as an adviser and had an enthusiastic approach to policy reform. He saw mobilising the department to achieve the minister’s reforms as his most important task. He put a high priority on ‘driving’ and ‘inspiring’ the department, and on ‘pushing them to be bold’:

To be able to drive the department you have to be very clear as to what you want and where you can push it. So I would make a list of people in the department and I would ensure I rang them regularly and asked them where are you up to, how’s it going, when will it be ready and so on. ... If I want to force the pace I might say we will meet with the minister on X date to review where we are up to. There’s nothing like a meeting with the minister to get bureaucrats working. ... I think that if you make it clear to them that you want to achieve something then they feel a change in their job satisfaction and motivation. The department has been driven hard (some working up to 1am recently) but I think they feel alive - they see there is an opportunity to do something and I tell them it is only here and now. I try to inspire them. ... To be involved in real reform is a powerful motivation I think.

Engaging responsive individuals, disengaging opponents

In a less responsive environment one mobilisation strategy was to engage responsive individuals and disengage or neutralise those who were not responsive or who were opposed to the minister’s agenda. Some ministers and advisers were quite deliberate about operating through selected responsive individuals within departments. Adviser 17 (who worked with a department which several interviewees described as unresponsive6) explained how he selected a few key officials to work with:

That would be my approach - to deal with one person I might have confidence in or know, and they could then go and talk to [others]. I try to develop a good relationship with key individuals because they will work for you a lot better if they are enamoured to you [sic]. I think you’ll get a better result if you (I use the term advisedly) charm people ... to ensure what you want is implemented.

A reign of terror doesn’t work with the bureaucracy.

He described how he would go about ‘charming’ individuals:

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6 For example A32 reported the minister’s office having to write cabinet submissions because the department refused to accept direction; and Minister Green described his personally exhausting attempts to get them to accept his agenda rather than pursuing theirs (in Chapter Five).
Make them feel important, keep them advised, thank them if they do a good job and make your point if they stuff up without severing the relationship. And recognise that there's a difference between the way you think and the way they think. ... Most of the time, the minister's office will win. It's a question of how you go about winning and not rubbing it in.

While having an active minister caused tension with the department, it also created opportunities for individuals, as Adviser 7 explained: 'The people who are good and you work with, you can really empower them. And you can easily kill off the duds. You just reject their stuff and say "this is not what we want".'

Some advisers had a deliberate approach to those public servants they felt were not responsive - they froze them out. Adviser 19, who had a rather abrasive manner in his dealings with the department, reported times when he worked with junior public servants and cut out their superiors. He described his approach to those he called 'dead wood' and 'dills':

I haven't got time to stuff around with dubbo public servants [sic]. If I meet someone who is unnecessarily obstructive or they don't have the horsepower intellectually I just cast them aside. I don't talk to them. I look around them and usually find one person in every section who is creative and responsive and I deal with them. I search for the value, I don't respect the hierarchy. Of course they hate that and I've gotten into trouble a few times with it, but nothing I'd call trouble. I haven't got the time to do it any other way. ... If you want feel-good, cosy, chatty relations with the department that's fine but that's not our objective. Our objective is good policy outcomes and there's not enough time or energy to gladhand the department along the way.

A public servant said he was 'hated' in the department.

**Public Servant 2: a responsive approach**

Public Servant 2 exemplifies another of the four approaches amongst the public servants interviewed: a consciously responsive approach to ministers and advisers. He was a FAS who had previously worked as an adviser. He not only worked cooperatively with advisers but actively pursued close relationships with them. His style, and the trusting relationships he forged with several advisers, created many opportunities for him to pursue what he called 'things that make a difference'.

He worked closely with Adviser 17 and Adviser 32 to deliver a major new policy initiative. He described how the reform came about:
Adviser 17 ... said to me when I was over there on some other issues, ..."look we need a bit of an agenda, we need a few positives, because the minister's getting all this garbage tipped on him right, left and centre. Everything in the portfolio is a negative". I said to him, "look that is a happy little coincidence". ... I ran this idea at him, and he liked the sound of it, so then we talked to the minister, and he wanted a much bigger plan built up around it, not just [the initiative], but how does it fit in with everything else and so I did that for him and he thought it was a great idea and we just moved from there. ... And for the minister it became a very positive thing that he could work with.

There were great benefits for Public Servant 2 in this situation: 'I never had any trouble getting access to the minister. I could always talk to him about this, and it always mattered to him ... and he wanted to see it nurtured.' However he attracted suspicion in what was a conservative department. There were many who, he said, 'saw this as being maybe a bit close to the minister's office - ... "This guy, he's away with the minister, you know (grrrrr)".'

Two philosophies underpinned his approach. As a public servant he felt driven by the idea that 'you're here to make a difference'. This drove him to want to be involved in major policy changes that required close involvement with ministerial offices and with ministers (whose engagement and political authority was needed to effect policy change). He also saw ministerial advisers as a positive force in government, and was an advocate of a 'competition of ideas' model of the relationship between public servants and advisers. He appreciated and even relished intellectual competition with advisers on policy issues:

Ministerial advisers ... can ask the question of you, it can be answered, it can lead to a genuine couple of minutes debate on something. The minister is far better informed as a result of that. ... It is also a good test for the intellectual validity of the idea. You can put down on paper a very good case for something, easily punctured by one or two questions it evaporates. Not punctured by those questions the minister signs, "I agree" ... three months later the policy is seen to be a crock because those basic questions weren't asked and answered. ... I've tended to get pretty helpful questions asked and answered. ... I am a big supporter of the competition of ideas.

He had a conscious approach to working with advisers and building trusting relationships with them. He anticipated their needs and was seen to be responsive:

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7 Yet someone with his access to the minister's office could be valuable to a department. He reported that when there had been breakdowns between some senior public servants and advisers he had been able use his own relationships and credibility to raise issues for the department.
You adjust to their needs. It is the job of the bureaucrat to anticipate what the agenda of the adviser is and why they're doing what their doing. It's the intent all the time. It is not so much so and so wants this, you give it to them, but you're analysing why do they want it, what does it mean for my working relationship with them? How can I best pick up something in the future, anticipate their needs, and be seen to have done so, so that they will see you as a person who’s like that? Some people like to have stuff offered to them, other people don't. Other people will deeply resent that feeling that you're going to run them - "I'm not working to your agenda son". So you’ve got to read them.

This section has described how advisers in the study worked to engage departments. Advisers performed the roles of supervising, orienting and mobilising, which were crucial to political control and to the minister's capacity to impart direction to government. Advisers had accrued considerable administrative authority in their role as gatekeepers in the flow of documents between departments and ministers. This role empowered them and created an exchange relationship between advisers and public servants. Advisers also acted as the minister's surrogate in communicating with and directing the department. While this had benefits for the minister and the department, there could also be problems where advisers were not effective or accepted surrogates. Finally advisers had a crucial role in mobilising the department to deliver the minister's agenda. This involved persuading, driving and selectively engaging and disengaging senior public servants. Having described the roles advisers played in working with departments, the thesis now turns to a broader analysis of the relationship between advisers and senior public servants.

ADVISER-DEPARTMENT RELATIONSHIPS:
AN AUSTRALIAN MODEL?

While writers in the 1970s emphasised friction, overlap and clash between the new partisan advisers and public servants (Smith 1976, RCAGA 1974), more recent analysts of the relationship between advisers and departments have tended to portray their interaction as positive, and based on clearly defined roles (Dunn 1997, Hollway 1996). This has been described as an 'emerging Australian model' of political-bureaucratic relationships (Davis 1995), in which ministerial and bureaucratic functions are distinct and complementary.
This 'model' has two key features: that relations are generally harmonious; and that the roles of advisers and public servants are essentially complementary. Dunn's study of political-bureaucratic relations in the 1990s found that relationships generally worked well. Concerns and criticism occurred, but not often (1997:89-92). The relationship worked well because both advisers and public servants recognised their roles as complementary and accepted the value of each other's contributions (1997:89-90). He concluded that:

Because of these common beliefs in mutual responsibilities that recognise a politics-administration dichotomy, the division of labor between ministerial staff and the department does seem to be better defined and more accepted by both sides than is the case in some countries (1997:93).

Hollway also bases his notion of a positive partnership on the idea of complementary roles:

At base, the roles are not the same. They are different but complementary. ... They should be partners, not adversaries or competitors. ... Departments ought not to view ministerial staff as rivals but as creative collaborators. ... The interests of the public service, and good government, lie in not resisting this role but accepting it as legitimate and value-adding, and then establishing with the people involved a partnership which is both intimate and proper (1996:135-148).

The advocacy evident in Hollway's comments indicates that there is a normative element to the notion of complementary roles and that perhaps this notion is not as well accepted by public servants as Dunn's research suggests. 8

Davis sees the distinction in roles as stark: he sees advisers as working in the 'political' domain only, while public servants play roles in the 'policy' and 'administration' domains (1995:28).9 Dunn's concept of a politics-administration dichotomy is more complex: some areas are better left to advisers (partisan politics), some are better left to departments and 'others they engage in jointly' (1997:92). For Dunn the key distinction is between the partisan competence of advisers and the neutral competence of public servants in Australia. He draws interesting lessons for US public administration from observing how these elements combine in policy making.

8 As noted earlier Dunn's study is based on interviews with departmental secretaries and (mainly) senior advisers. Most of the day to day negotiation and joint work between advisers and public servants is conducted at a lower level: between public servants at an FAS and AS level, and advisers with policy responsibilities. This may partly explain why Dunn's respondents view the relationship more positively than the subjects in this study.

9 He uses this distinction in discussing policy making and executive coordination at a state and national level (Davis 1995, 1997; Bridgman and Davis 1998). In his state level analysis the exception was the Premier's Office staff who crossed all three domains.
This study argues that while there are aspects of complementarity in the relationship, it is not wholly, or even mainly, complementary. While advisers and public servants may bring different strengths and perspectives to their work, they are often working jointly, on the same projects and programs, problems and strategies. Much of what they are doing is shared and contested. While there is a clear division of labour over party political work (clearly understood as the responsibility of advisers), this does not represent the bulk of the work undertaken by advisers and public servants, or the work which is most significant in terms of setting directions for government: policy work. Both see themselves as policy advisers and as involved in policy making. Public Servant 6 made this clear as he described what he saw as the 'ambiguous and difficult' role of the adviser:

The line between politics and policies becomes so fuzzy ... advisers are trying to so much more than just advising the minister on the political ramifications of options and decisions, which is very much the core area - the obvious core of their territory, their domain. ... Administration is clearly my job. Politics is clearly their job. Policy is the nether region, it's the middle ground, because obviously everybody has a role to play in the formation of advice to the minister.

Senior public servants believe they face strong competition from advisers in the ever more 'crowded' arena of policy advising. Some express the view it is an increasingly unequal contest, in which they must now 'fight for their position at the table' (Woodward 1993; Weller 2001; Halligan, Mackintosh and Watson 1996:71-2; Fitzgerald 1996).

This thesis argues that, rather than being complementary and harmonious, at its heart the relationship between advisers and public servants is competitive and conflictual, and cooperation must be negotiated. While it is often cooperative and works well for ministers, this is because the parties are successfully managing the essential competition and tension inherent in what is a relationship of control. Dunn emphasises the positive aspects of the relationship between advisers and public servants in Australia, but (following Heclo) he sees it as 'conditionally cooperative', conditional on mutual performance (Heclo 1977:193). He emphasises what he sees as the fundamentally positive basis for cooperation, rather than the processes of negotiating cooperation. In contrast to Dunn's broad analysis, this study focuses on the day to day negotiation of these tensions.

Interviews with public servants and advisers engaged at the political-bureaucratic 'coalface' elicited more than occasional reports of tensions and
conflict, as has already been evident in this chapter. While there were reports of cooperative and harmonious relationships, this did not indicate an absence of tension. Rather, they were relationships in which the essential tensions existing between players were managed or minimised.

Public servants did not describe cooperative relationships as typical, but rather as possible. Public Servant 7 said:

I think in some situations you've got a very effective harmonious working relationship, both trying to serve the one minister from slightly different perspectives but you work together, and in other cases I think there is mutual resentment.

Public Servant 8 saw tension as common in these relationships, and cited what he saw as a rare example of an adviser who managed the relationship positively:

More often than not - from a bureaucrat's perspective - ministerial advisers are usually rude, cajoling, directive, difficult people. They are under extreme pressure, frustrated with the pace of bureaucracy, they tend to give you a hard time and demand things in time frames that you are really not that comfortable with. Whereas someone like A48 is one ... that never ever yelled or screamed or demanded - he always asked politely and people respected him and therefore worked very hard for him.

Public Servant 3, a very experienced FAS who had previously worked as an adviser himself, described his relationship with four ministerial offices he dealt closely with between 1990 and 1996. Only one of the four offices had a relationship with the department he could describe as 'pretty comfortable' and even that had tension within it. This was caused by some 'difficult' advisers, who were 'playing games' that were not accurately relayed to the department and that sometimes ended up in 'shock and horror'.

He said the other three minister's offices had poor relations with the department. One minister, whom the department greatly respected, had staff who were 'real problems'. They created barriers and hoops the department had to deal with between the minister and the department, and 'didn't actually advance policy one iota'. He commented that 'some of the smartest ministers have some of the worst staff'. Another minister, who was 'a nice bloke' but weak and ineffective, had an office which had 'quite uncomfortable' relations with the department. There were many tensions, largely caused by one adviser who was seen as running unwinnable agendas which were actively resisted by the department. With the fourth minister, there was 'a huge problem' in
relations between his office and all the senior people in the department. There was a complete breakdown in the relationship, caused by a falling out between the minister and the department.

From the adviser's point of view, while tension and conflict may occur over a relatively small number of issues, these were often the most important issues. While there were thousands of cooperative interactions and much praise for the neutral competence of departments, advisers were often preoccupied with the struggle to dominate on key issues of contention. The frictions they experienced and how they dealt with these, or avoided these, loomed large in their interviews. Tension was at the heart of the relationship between advisers and public servants, and much energy was absorbed in managing this essential tension so that relationships were productive.

Tension in the relationship between advisers and public servants

Most ministers, advisers and public servants in the study saw tension between advisers and public servants as inevitable. Even in good relationships there was underlying tension, because of the fundamental nature of the adviser role. Minister Black stated:

I believe tension is inevitable. If the adviser is prepared to challenge the departmental advice, then there will inevitably be tension with the department. But this isn’t a bad thing because this is one of the most significant roles an adviser has. If they don’t do this, it becomes a ‘Yes Minister’ situation.

Ministers did not see tension between their advisers and public servants as a problem; in fact most saw it as positive and healthy, referring to it as 'healthy suspicion and creative tension' (White). However the tension had to be managed, or there was a risk of it getting 'out of control' and things going 'off the rails' (White). There were five main sources of tension in the relationship.

Sources of tension

The first source of tension derived from the fact that advisers stood in the way of a direct relationship between the minister and the department. Their very interposition in the minister-department relationship caused tension for public servants. Advisers' roles as gatekeepers and surrogates could cause difficulties.

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10 There were 2 public servants (P05 and P07) and one minister (Blue) who did not see it as inevitable.
as described earlier in the chapter. The inescapability of their relationships
with advisers could be deeply frustrating for public servants. Generally senior
public servants would have preferred a direct relationship with the minister.

The second source of tension between advisers and public servants related to
the fundamental nature of the adviser's role: to challenge and contest the
department's advice. This role could create much negative energy, as Adviser 4
explained:

> The adviser has the unenviable task of having to point out the department's
classing all the time. Therefore it is very hard for them to feel good about their
interactions with you. And there are 7000 of them and one of you. So there is
an incredible amount of negative energy directed at you. ... You are seen as
criticising the professionalism of hundreds of people.

While this tension was difficult for the advisers and public servants involved, it
was seen as having good outcomes for ministers, as Minister Purple explained:

> I think tension between advisers and departments is inevitable and I think it's a
good thing. ... That tension is *terribly* important. ... If it isn't there how do you
get the rigour into what we're trying to do? There has to be rigour there.

Part of the problem, according to advisers, was that public servants felt they
were being criticised by people less expert than themselves. The department
considered it had 'intellectual ascendancy' over the policy issues, but did not
always win contests with the ministerial office, as Adviser 17 said:

> Most departments are full of intelligent people, with technocratic knowledge,
who've worked on these areas for a long time. They'll always probably think
that they know best. ... You have to accept some degree of tension in terms of
the intellectual ascendancy over what we're doing. ... They always think
they've got it but they won't always get their way.

Thirdly, a fundamental source of tension was the difference in the perspectives
and imperatives of the two parties. In his study of the relationships between
political appointees and career bureaucrats in the United States, Heclo (1977)
described a mismatch between the knowledge, experience, values and
timeframe of public servants and political executives.11 Whereas career public
servants generally had a preference for gradualism, indirection, political
cautions and a concern to maintain their relationships (1977:143-146), political
appointees were more likely because of their short tenure to demand that

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11 The political executives Heclo studied were political appointees in the bureaucracy, rather
than political advisers. However the dynamics between partisan and non-partisan bureaucrats
in his study are relevant to the relationships between career bureaucrats and partisan advisers
in Australia.
changes occur quickly, to prefer direct confrontations, to demand responsiveness and to disregard the self interest of the public servant (1977:153). Minister Yellow saw the clash of the different perspectives of advisers and public servants as having benefits for both parties:

I actually think it is quite healthy. I don’t see tension as a catastrophic outcome. I think it means that the advisers have to think twice sometimes about cracking the whip quite so hard. If the department is telling them “look you can’t actually do that and this advice won’t be forthcoming in ten minutes, it’s going to take further detailed work”, that’s a reasonable brake on perhaps the over-enthusiastic jejune. But equally from the department’s point of view I think it helps sometimes to have people with a slightly different point of view questioning them about policy initiatives and drawing their attention to others. ... Because the advisers are more likely to be having their ears hammered than the department is, they are more savvy about the immediate impact of the decision. So I think that’s a useful exchange.

The different time perspectives of the two groups were a particular source of tension. Public servants in this study reported that they were always given less time than they would have preferred in providing advice and briefings and that this caused tension, as Public Servant 2 explained:

By definition we’d always prefer more time. ... When we’re doing very big issues, but you’re forced to do them extremely rapidly, you’re in grave danger of stuffing them up. ... It is not a question of you should cut no corners, you are always cutting corners. Timing is vital. ... Things often had to be done swiftly, but they had to be done right. ... The tensions, such as they are, will tend to arise from that. I’ll often want more time to be able to do things to ensure there are no stuff ups, than they are able to give me.

Short term tenure made advisers impatient. Failure to meet what public servants felt were unrealistic or dangerous timetables could be perceived as resistance by ministers and advisers. Public Servant 4 recalled an example of such tension in the relationship between Minister Scarlet and his office and the department:

There were some difficulties, partly relating to the minister's driving nature, his impatience for outcomes in areas where outcomes aren’t quickly achieved. ... He was impatient to move forward and like a lot of impatient ministers reluctant to accept sound advice about where there were speed limits on change and occasionally misinterpreting advice about speed limits on change as resistance to change. ... Partly also because of unrealistic expectations. Advisers being seen to pursue unrealistic agendas. Egging the minister on to pursue unrealistic agendas.
Conversely, advisers often complained that the officials they dealt with did not understand the pressures they were under, their needs or the environment in which they worked. For example advisers were criticised for 'sitting on things' or not returning calls, when they may not have reached their desks until night fall, and then had dozens of urgent matters or phone messages to attend to, not just the one that was important to a public servant in one policy area. Public Servant 2, who had worked as an adviser, felt his understanding of the needs of advisers was unusual for a public servant:

I can understand entirely what their problems in life are. I've seen it ... So for example, when he says I need a brief (clicks fingers) and I need it in five minutes, and it's got to cover this, this and this, the natural inclination of the public servant is to cover this, this and this, even if it takes half an hour or an hour. Whereas I know what he means is ... if it is not here in five minutes, it doesn't matter whether it's the world's most brilliant brief, it ain't gonna be read, he's gone in the car, or he's in the meeting or whatever, so in five minutes, as best you can, look at each of these things. I know that, a lot of people don't know that, and they don't realise that time is probably the number one in everything that happens over in Parliament House. If it's late it may be brilliant, but it could well be irrelevant.

The fourth source of tension between advisers and public servants was the highly personalised and highly charged environment of executive relations. The intense pressure, and interdependence, could provoke anger and frustration. In an environment where so much was at stake, a lack of sensitivity or a difficult personality could cause tension. Public Servant 9 explained that 'from time to time tempers do get frayed. On both sides. You occasionally might be short, very short, and you usually apologise afterwards.' She described Adviser 35, whose lack of sensitivity caused tension in his relationship with the department:

Very thoughtless, very aggressive, very demanding I am afraid. He was rude, swore at people, demanded things, slammed the phone down - was very unpleasant to deal with and this was counter-productive for his working with the department. He was hated by the department. Really all he had to do was say he recognised the pressures people were under, or say 'I'm sorry to ask you for this but ...' - these little acknowledgements go a long way. But he didn't do that.

Advisers saw it as a real skill to be able to push and demand within unrealistic timeframes and yet maintain positive relationships. Having the right personality to handle interacting under pressure was seen as important by ministers in evaluating their staff. However the difficulties in the relationships between advisers and public servants were mainly structural, not personal.
The final, and most significant, source of tension was the fact that the relationship between advisers and public servants was inherently a power relationship. This is down-played in analyses which see the relationship as a complementary, harmonious partnership. In their day to day interactions, advisers and senior public servants enacted the struggle for political control between the political executive and the bureaucracy.

For many ministers and advisers, tension was the inevitable outcome of the quest to prevail over the bureaucracy. For Minister Orange, tension indicated the minister had not been coopted: 'Tension happens and it's likely, unless the minister is a total client of the department.' Adviser 4 believed that 'there is always antagonism, unless you back down'. Adviser 1 saw tension, or friction, in the relationship as essential to the pursuit of political control and therefore as appropriate, and even ideal:

Some people say the ideal minister's office-department relationship is where they are very close and the agendas are the same, but I disagree. Productive tension is important - it is as it should be. If you are too close it is counter-productive, there is a blurring of the line between the public service agenda and the government agenda. ... There is constant conflict between the political and bureaucratic agendas and this must be managed. ... There is always friction.

Managing tensions, creating productive relationships

Managing the tensions within the working relationship with the department could consume much time and energy for advisers. They also had to manage skilfully the power they had and needed to exercise within the relationship. Advisers were very conscious about their approach to this problem. At times the issue dominated discussions, and they talked often about experiences they had learnt from and how they had developed their approach. Many were open about the negative aspects of their approach and the problems it produced.

Advisers faced a dilemma: tensions arose from their very existence within the relationship between ministers and departments; the roles they were required to play in the relationship (supervising, directing and mobilising); the incompatibilities of the relationship itself; and the environment in which it was operating. Somehow these tensions had to be managed so that the relationship was productive.

There was also a major counterpressure in the adviser's job: they were responsible for both the quality of the relationship with the department, and for
its productivity. Advisers felt they would have failed if they had good relations with public servants but the minister's agenda was not being delivered. However they would also be very likely to fail to achieve that agenda by asserting themselves too strongly within the relationship. Being too assiduous in pursuing control could weaken their power by souring relations with the public servants whose services they depended on. They needed skill to balance the contradictory pressures inherent in this situation.

In his study of the relationships between career public servants and political appointees in the US bureaucracy, Heclo (1977) describes this as the fundamental problem of political control. He defines as 'statecraft' how political executives choose to act in their relationships with bureaucrats (1977:155). He claims the real test of a political executive's statecraft is 'his ability to institute the changes he wants without losing the bureaucratic services he requires' (1977:181). The problem arises from the fact that political executives not only need cooperation from the bureaucracy to achieve their objectives, but active help and services. It did not take active resistance on the part of public servants to obstruct the executive's agenda, a passive or 'obedient' approach could achieve the same outcome. Therefore the challenge for political executives was how to secure the active pursuit of the executive's agenda on the part of the bureaucracy. This required sophisticated 'statecraft' on the part of political executives: building effective relationships with bureaucrats and the strategic use of those relationships in the pursuit of political goals (1977:154-234). Advisers in this study faced similar problems and challenges.

In this study, ministers had high, and often contradictory, expectations of how advisers would work with senior public servants. Many ministers wanted their advisers to operate positive relationships with the department, while at the same time they expected them to ensure the department did what the minister wanted. Adviser 1 felt: 'If something isn’t working, if the department’s not delivering, the minister will rightfully ask the adviser to explain. The responsibility and the burden to deliver are enormous.' It was the adviser's responsibility to get the department to deliver, yet to ensure this, they often had to be aggressive and demanding in pushing and directing the department, the opposite of good relations. Some advisers felt this to be a great source of pressure in their relationships with ministers, as they could be criticised for either not getting the department to deliver or for creating conflictual relations. They felt this was a source of leverage for departments in their dealings with advisers. Public servants were certainly aware that ministers evaluated
advisers by how productive these relationships were, as Public Servant 6 explained:

Ministers in my experience pick up whether the relationship between the adviser and the bureaucrat is one that they can trust. A clever minister will not want a combative relationship between his office staff and their department and will work out which advisers actually can get good advice out of departments.

Adviser 3 felt that some sections of the department had undermined her in the minister’s eyes by promoting conflictual relationships surrounding her. She felt this caused the minister to question her ability. Advisers felt their reputations could be damaged by being associated with either conflict or mistakes. Ministers confirmed that they carefully observed and evaluated their advisers’ interactions with the department. Minister Gold recalled overhearing an adviser using 'the wrong language - authoritarian language' on the phone to the department as he 'wandered' through the office. He was angry because he preferred to do the 'heavying' himself:

That was my job. Mostly because I know in the end if the advisers go too far then the department will revenge itself. And it will set up a bad working relationship. They had to prepare bullets for me to fire.

Minister Orange captured the essential contradictions when he said that: 'there were quite a number who worked with me who failed ... mainly because ... they weren't terribly good at working with the department or they weren't terribly good with their control of policy'. He said that if advisers misjudged the mix of power and persuasion in the relationship, they could 'become ... a bit unnecessary'. Their skill in working with the department was a threshold issue in their employment.

**Game playing, bargaining and power struggles**

Relationships between advisers and senior public servants in the study often involved game playing, bargaining and power struggles. Adviser 1 felt her relationship with senior public servants was all about game playing:
The whole thing's a game. The bureaucracy can quickly learn 'if I can capture this adviser, I've got the minister'. So they work on advisers, flatter them, or pamper them or promise them deals or whatever. It's a two way thing. The adviser is thinking 'if I can get the department behind me I can deliver for the minister' and the department thinks 'if I can capture this adviser it's all over'. It's constant, and it can really deteriorate into pathetic game playing. The strength of a good adviser is to manage all that and keep the integrity of the system, and still deliver.

She felt it was important to build positive relationships with public servants, but this had to be worked at strenuously as there was a basic distrust of advisers:

Public servants almost always have a negative attitude to advisers. You've got to prove yourself otherwise. They see no legitimate authority invested in them. ...

... You start with nothing and must build something.

Some advisers described the use of power and persuasion within a relationship of trust as the most productive way to deal with public servants. Adviser 32, who had worked for more than five years as an adviser, said: 'I realised I needed to have a relationship of trust - I could still ring up and abuse them on the phone if necessary but that was only OK if it was within a relationship of trust.'

Advisers needed skill in managing the power they had within their relationship with public servants. They referred to how to have 'robust debates' without damaging relations; strategic calculations about knowing when to fight and when to back down; how to win without 'rubbing it in'; the importance of letting the department have some wins; and the 'cardinal sins' of saying one thing and doing another or taking credit for the department's work.

Advisers' main resource in bargaining with the department was their access to political authority and their political relationships, what Heclo has described as 'live political connections' to political superiors and to sources of external power (1977:222). Advisers were particularly empowered by their proximity to the minister. They could often draw readily on the minister's authority to reinforce their position. Advisers reported bringing in the minister in cases of dispute or lack of performance by the department (though there were limits on the use of this tactic and it ultimately indicated the failure of their own authority). Public Servant 3 saw this as a source of power for advisers:
At the end of the day, they'll always be stronger than the department is, and they'll always be able to escalate things to a minister whereas the department can't escalate it to a minister as easily. And the minister will always support their own staff ahead of the department, always they'll be loyal to their own staff before they're loyal to the department.

Their closeness to the minister meant that if the adviser was convinced of the merits of a proposal, this would increase the chances that the decision maker would be convinced. In this way, they could be crucial in getting bureaucratic proposals onto the minister's agenda. Public Servant 8 saw this as a reason to get advisers 'on your side':

I think they are pretty much the key to it all - if the minister's not interested in your issue, as a bureaucrat, it's really hard to get things going. So I would say in terms of the shared role you are most effective when you've got ministerial advisers on your side and they probably play more than fifty percent of the role. ... I think that ministerial advisers are the ones that really kick things along, really get things moving.

Another 'live political connection' was to the Prime Minister's office. Adviser 7 said that 'something magic happened' when he told the department the Prime Minister's office was interested in his policy ideas.

Advisers' access to political authority could also enable them to be powerful advocates, and this provided another incentive for cooperation. Adviser 22 recounted several examples of his advocacy on behalf of a statutory authority he had responsibility for, which he saw as a form of 'pay back' for them allowing him to become heavily involved in their work:

I give my areas a lot of loyalty - backing them in Budget priorities and backing them in organisational fights. ... I take up things on their behalf with other ministers, with other departments, with other advisers. ... I had lunch with [one group] yesterday and they actually thanked me for all the good things I'd done for them. ... They got a $14 million Budget boost last time, because I pushed their case. That's the first increase they'd had in living memory. ... So that's how I pay back and get their loyalty because ... I really do go in and defend their areas and try and deliver extra resources and extra policy development.

Public servants were well aware of the power relationship that framed their interactions with advisers. They were very conscious of advisers' need to feel 'in charge'. Public Servant 5 said the key to managing a relationship with an adviser was to 'Talk talk talk. Go and see them. Grovel.' Public Servant 6 had a conscious way of managing his relationships with ministerial advisers - he ensured they felt in control:
I have a deliberate strategy. I think it's fair that they need to assert themselves in that relationship. Generally they don't have the knowledge or depth of the people they're dealing with in the department, nor the seniority or experience usually, but their whole viability is about getting on top of those departments. One of the things that I've always said to new advisers is that I understand the minister is the boss, that I understand that he is the one who's elected, I'm not. The government sets the policy directions. That I expect a hearing if I think they're making a mistake, but at the end of the day they won't be resisted.

The subtleties of ensuring political executives felt in control were evident in a recent study of departmental secretaries, who talked of how to 'get your way without appearing to do so' and how to have the minister accept your advice 'without making them feel you are telling them what to do' (Weller 2001:95).

Perceptions were also important to ministers and advisers. Several ministers commented on the symbolic value of the department being physically separate from (and often far from) the ministerial office. That public servants had to make appointments and travel to see the minister and the advisers reinforced the power relationship, as Minister Gold commented: 'I virtually never went over to the department, they all had to come to my office. Just to re-establish and reinforce the view that we run these things. We're elected to it and we run it.'

Advisers talked of different tactics public servants could use against them in power struggles. Reputation was a valuable commodity in the world advisers operated in, especially since their employment depended entirely on the minister's opinion of them and they could be sacked at any time without reason. Several advisers spoke of public servants 'setting advisers up for a fall'. Adviser 18 said:

Sometimes they try and set up advisers for their own (small 'p') political ends ... if they see an adviser constantly taking a different line to them. I've seen them try and set people up for a fall. They get the adviser to agree to something that they know is a stupid thing to do. Or they can put something through in a hell of a hurry knowing that an adviser wouldn't have the time to look at it in detail, and pick up the flaws in it.

Another subtle tactic advisers talked about was undermining or subverting the minister's agenda by under-resourcing. Adviser 4 found herself in this situation. She worked for a junior minister and had responsibility for a policy initiative which was small in money terms but high on her minister's political agenda. She felt the department was not fully committed to the objective as they 'did not see it as substantive in policy terms'. She believed that senior
management allowed the section working on the initiative to be incompetently
managed for this reason. Working with public servants who did not embrace
the minister's agenda was very difficult:

They did dreadful things. They had a blatant disregard of the minister's agenda.
One of the executives in the area was later charged with a series of offences,
including forging the minister's signature. She was basically a bad bureaucrat
and this made my life hell. ... The problem is that as an adviser it is your
responsibility to make these relationships work. And you have to fix all the
fuck ups.

Eventually she said the department decided to get rid of the 'bad bureaucrat' in
the most expedient way, which was to swap her with a problem person in
another department. According to Adviser 4, he was 'completely incompetent'.
She had a very negative, even paranoid, interpretation of senior management's
role in the situation:

Sometimes it is in the FAS's interest to let an adviser be sidetracked by bad
relationships with individuals. It is in their interests to let these situations go
on. ... The department has ways of subverting policies at a program level. I'm
sure the placement of terrible people in that area was deliberate and the way
senior management allowed them to fuck things up there.

The language Adviser 4 uses indicates the enormous stress she was under, and
the disastrous outcome it had for her personally. She was not able to 'deliver'
for the minister:

This whole situation was a great source of professional embarrassment to me -
that I could not bring the program under control. Even though it was because
of problems in the department, I still wore the responsibility for it. ... It think
this is an example of how working as an adviser has the potential for a negative
impact on your career. ... If you can't fix the problems it is your problem. ... There is a great danger of damaging your reputation. ... All the fuckups and
mismanagement by the department, the under-resourcing, come back to the
ministerial office. We take the rap for it all.

A more subtle, yet very powerful tactic, was passivity, or simply obeying.
According to Heclo the power of senior bureaucrats did not typically derive
'from refusing to do what superiors want, but from withholding positive help':

12 By this she meant they did not act to rectify the situation, and allowed it to go on. It was not
uncommon for junior ministers' programs and priorities to be accorded low status within
departments.
It is a power that can consist simply of waiting to be asked for solutions by appointees who do not know they have problems. ... Because most political appointees require considerable help in government, higher civil servants normally need do little by way of harmful actions in order to prevail. All that is usually necessary is for officials to fail to come forward with their services (1977:171-3).

An adviser who had worked in several different portfolios, Adviser 18, recounted the difficulty he faced in Defence, where he said some officials would only obey:

They give something to the minister ... it is 'what's your decision, X or Y'? And I'd say 'well I want to talk about whether Z is really an option' and they'd say 'we'll do Z if that's your decision'. ... It would be 'just order us to do something'. ... There's no to and fro about the best decision. ... And so then you make some decisions that you're concerned about because you don't get an opportunity to bounce things off the people who should know more than you do. They just refused that.

Public Servant 2 referred to this as 'playing the Sir Humphrey game'. He felt there were many 'cunning ways' of obeying but not doing what the minister intended:

The minister says "do this" and because the minister is not as familiar with the complete detail of every part of the initiative, you can give him literally what he asks for without giving him the intent behind what he's seeking.

Information wars

Power struggles between advisers and public servants were often played out in battles over information. Some advisers described their relationships with public servants as an ongoing 'information war'. Information is a very powerful resource within government. It is one of the most valuable resources that departments have in bargaining with political executives. Information is also a strategic resource for advisers.

Advisers had important sources of their own information, from their relationships within the ministry, Parliament and with external groups, which could supplement the information they were given by departments. This information was something they could exchange with public servants. They also had several sources of strength in helping ministers to extract information from the department.
Struggles over information occurred even in relationships which were generally described as positive. Adviser 19 described his struggles while working for a minister whose relationship with the department was 'amicable' (P01):

He got the department fired up to do work for him. The department was very responsive to his concerns. But they still tried to bluff him all the time by information control and information management. So it was my job to counter that and keep a close eye on the department. The Deputy Secretary had a modus operandi of information control and power through dispensing information. I had to really be on the ball all the time to manage him. The adviser's job was to realise what the gaps were and be always pulling out the gaps to provide leverage for the minister.

The Deputy Secretary controlled a key policy area and according to Adviser 19, 'always held back information from minister's offices. ... We had good relations with him. We'd just discover things later that we hadn't been told and we'd fit it in to the jigsaw and realise he withheld it from us, trying to keep us out of the picture.' He felt the Deputy Secretary did this to 'hold the balance of power in his court', so he would become indispensable and not easy to bypass. It was one of the most difficult situations for an adviser to handle, and all he felt he could do was to 'try to be smarter than them, using logic and first principles' and to 'ask the right questions'. Adviser 1 said that 'the withholding of information is the most powerful tool, ... the worst thing that they can do to you'. She felt her role was often one of 'trying to squeeze information from an organisation that doesn't want to give it to you'.

One tactic to detect if information was being withheld was to have multiple lines of communication into the department, as Adviser 27 explained:

If I ring ten different senior officers one day and get different signals then I register that something odd is going on that I need to get to the bottom of. ... Something is happening which I don't know about and is being kept from me.

Yet unlike many advisers in the study he felt comfortable with information being 'managed around' him:

There's a lot of information that I know the Dep Sec manages around me, that never gets to me and probably if I did know about those things I'd manage them differently. But that doesn't worry me, because that's the art of being a good senior public servant.

Public Servant 7 admitted to alerting advisers when he felt the department was actively opposing the minister's agenda:
I might in the course of other discussions with the minister’s advisers mention that a particular matter seemed interesting and important and they might want to take an interest in what was going on, full stop. In other words I would not go and say I think they are acting contrary to what you would want. I would simply in an informal setting mention that there was an exercise ... that they might want to take an interest in.

Minister Grey recalled his office receiving information from party and union contacts within the department about actions the secretary was taking which were not approved by him.

Adviser 11 described how officials in the state offices of the department gave her information about what officials in the Canberra office were withholding from the minister. She worked for a very active, policy-oriented minister, Minister Orange, who often found himself embroiled in conflict with state governments. Adviser 11 was able to use her relationships with public servants in the state offices of the department, and with community groups, to gain a knowledge of what was happening ‘on the ground’ that was equivalent to that of the senior public servants she was bargaining with in Canberra. Using these sources, she discovered that they were keeping information from the minister (by deleting it from briefs coming through them from the state offices) about directions the program was heading in which were contrary to the minister’s agenda. She felt this was to make bureaucratic life easier, as they knew that pursuing the minister’s agenda would cause much conflict with their counterparts in the state bureaucracy. They also knew the minister would be determined to fight these battles if he knew about the problems.

Using information from her community and state office contacts, Adviser 11 was able to recommend that the minister not approve submissions which did not meet his objectives, to the great annoyance of the senior public servants she was working with in Canberra. Her independent sources of information were vital in the minister’s pursuit of control over the program; they were also a powerful weapon in forcing greater openness in her relationships with the Canberra bureaucrats.

Adviser 1 stressed the value that her networks with community groups had in strengthening her hand and providing leverage with the department in the struggle to obtain information:
It's hard to know what they are not telling you, so you have to build up other networks that can inform you and that's where the community groups come in. If the department knows you have a strong relationship with certain people in the community, it does ... make them very nervous and therefore they're more inclined to tell you things to cut off this alternative source of advice that they know you are getting. A lot of it is about how they perceive you. If they perceive you as a powerful individual who can get information from a number of sources then they feel it's often more in their interest to tell you things than keep things from you.

The problem of being too close

Cooptation was another problem advisers struggled with. While there could be deliberate attempts to coopt advisers, more often it was simply an outcome of becoming closely involved with the bureaucracy or client groups. All advisers interviewed saw cooptation as a danger and feared it. Many had strategies to counter it, including distancing themselves from public servants or creating counterpoint relationships with other players.13

It was another of the contradictions in the relationships advisers tried to forge with public servants: they needed to build strong, close and trustful relationships with individuals, but they could not afford to be too close, or to get on too well. Too amicable relationships could indicate capture and that they were merely delivering the department's agenda, rather than the government's. Adviser 35 said because the department was 'so valuable and well positioned, they can easily have you adopting their line. It is easy to slip into that mode. But an adviser like that is not worth having around.' An adviser who worked in one policy area for a long period of time prided herself on the fact that no group felt it had captured her; she faced criticism from all quarters:

I was accused of taking a lobby group's point of view. At the same time that lobby group said I took another lobby group's point of view. And the other lobby group said I took a departmental point of view. I felt that was a good sign (A14).

Ironically cooptation could be the product of attempts to assert control - by becoming deeply immersed in the details of programs and policy.

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13 There were also dangers for public servants in being seen as too close to the minister's office. Heclo described the problems for career bureaucrats seen as too close to political appointees as jealousy and political identification (1977:144).
implementation. Only one public servant, Public Servant 6, touched on the issue of cooption. He admitted providing information could be a tactic in capturing advisers:

There are two kinds of strategies. Some people deny knowledge and hope therefore to keep control. I tend to think I can have more useful input if I make information available so they can be informed. I spend time with new advisers, I draw them maps of all the players. ... I make people aware of the world and the forces in it. Which inevitably to some extent is making them aware of the world as I see it.

Public Servant 6 had a distinctive approach to dealing with advisers. His approach, and that of Public Servant 1, was more competitive and contesting than the cooperative and responsive approaches described earlier. These are the final two distinctive approaches displayed by senior public servants in the study.

**Public Servant 6: a competitive approach**

Public Servant 6 typified a competitive approach to working with advisers. He was a FAS who had never worked as a ministerial adviser. Yet he had a very political approach to his job, and was able to manoeuvre politically in his own right, using his relationships and networks within the executive. In this sense his approach was competitive with the advisers he was working with, and he did not see them as delivering much of value to him. This competitive edge led him to comment on 'battles over policy' with advisers and 'power games about who gets to advise the minister'. One adviser who had worked with Public Servant 6 described him as 'slippery' (A04). He had a mixed assessment of advisers:

The brighter they are the better it works basically. And that intelligence is not all just about IQ - it's a combination of political astuteness and an ability to understand policy. When they come together, it means an adviser is actually going to add value. ... One of the things that rapid turnover means is you spend a lot of time dealing with opinionated, ignorant people with high levels of intelligence, in the minister's office. ... People who have a lot of ability but know nothing about the area that you know about, and who tend to think you're just trying to slow them down, when actually what you're trying to do is educate them about the realities of the situation they're dealing with.

He was able and willing, where necessary, to run the 'politics' of the policy area, a role normally left to advisers. He recounted how in working with two

14 Heclo (1977) refers to this as the bureaucratisation of the political executive.
ministers he had to 'manage the politics' and was involved in much political manoeuvring:

For both Minister Bronze and Minister Yellow I had to manage the politics, even to the point of that being quite uncomfortable. I mean the lobby groups, the media, the party, interest groups, the unions. People who both Minister Violet and Minister Orange would have been furious if they thought it was being left to the bureaucrats to run the relationship with. In some ways even working for really astute advisers we always did a lot of that, it was just a question of how overt the role was. And in some ways in not having to mediate it through others is easier. It's not all bad, but you're definitely more exposed.

He also was a public servant with his own networks within ministerial offices. He was willing to use those networks to achieve his objectives at Budget time:

The other thing that's emerged is that people like me have relationships with the Finance Minister's office, the Treasurer's office and the Prime Minister's office. That's partly because the government was in power for so long that those jobs came to be filled by people who were my peers - you know, like A38 in the Prime Minister's office - she's an old mate of mine ... and ditto A34 who was in the Treasurer's office, or A40 who was in the Finance Minister's office. Those personal relationships work as well at Budget time and you've got to acknowledge that.

However he admitted that such political game playing was dangerous and had its limits:

Now - now - you've got to be careful with that because there are protocols and proprieties involved. ... There was a case once where Minister Orange wanted to take something to cabinet and I just knew that the Prime Minister would go off his brain about it, and those agencies would go off their brain. ... Those people [in the Prime Minister's office, Finance Minister's office, and Treasurer's office] when the shit hit the fan would know that it was only professionalism that stopped me from saying to them 'Minister Orange is about to do something that you're going to really hate' because they know I work for him, not for them. That's what I mean by propriety. ... You've got to be careful - you've got to be very careful.

Public Servant 1 also had a competitive style in working with advisers and exemplifies the fourth and final approach evident among public servants in the study.
Public Servant 1 displayed what can be termed a powerful approach to working with advisers. He was a very experienced FAS in a highly technical area of policy. He had extensive delegation powers in his position. He had been in his job for eight years and had never worked as an adviser. He had previously worked with dominant advisers and ministers who had had significant influence on policy making in the portfolio, but in the relationship being studied (with Minister Yellow, Adviser 19 and Adviser 27) he was very powerful. This was partly because the minister did not exert much authority in the department and was not committed to an agenda of major policy change. She also stood back from relations with the department, and delegated these almost entirely to her staff, which reduced their political authority in dealing with the department.

Public Servant 1 was unworried by the presence of advisers. He was able to repel directions which he did not support and to keep the scope of their activities within bounds he felt comfortable with. He described Budget discussions with the advisers, which involved ‘hosing down’ their ideas:

They would start out with some concepts about what we should be doing, we would start with what we were doing and we would identify difficulties with some of the things they wanted to do and the reality of the system, and eventually we would come to some slight variation to what we were doing. Basically helping them come to the view more radical reform was not going to be successful.

He had problems with Adviser 19, but had no difficulty asserting his authority over him, as he recalled:

In one discussion with [an industry group] they told me what I was saying was not what the minister’s office had told them. I told them that if they didn’t believe I was speaking for the government that I would walk out. They naturally gave in and I went back and told the office that I would not accept that sort of contact. I just made it clear to the office that they either let the department do it, or they could do it themselves. ... That stopped after that.

He felt advisers were useful in their relationships with lobby groups and other ministerial offices, particularly during Budget formulation when they could play a critical role in massaging these relationships to get proposals accepted. However, he said: 'I don’t think ministerial advisers have altered the way we work terribly much.' While he acknowledged Adviser 27 as ‘an interested and active person and persuasive with Minister Yellow’, he had no sense of
dependence on him. He did not need advisers to achieve what he wanted to achieve:

It is a chicken and egg situation. Because he was there you needed his support.
If he wasn't there we would have gotten most things we wanted to do up anyway through someone else.

While most of the power struggles between advisers and public servants were ongoing battles within generally positive working relationships, there was one example in the study of 'all-out war' between advisers and public servants. It was a case of extreme agenda conflict. The relationship between the minister, the adviser and the department had broken down completely and they were engaged in a vicious struggle for political control.

Advisers and public servants at war

Adviser 6 worked for a junior minister, Minister Pink, who dealt with several departments and agencies, without clear authority over them. Adviser 6 described his relationship with one department as 'terrible — I hate them and they hate me. We both try to stab each other in the back at every available opportunity.' He felt the department actively opposed the minister's agenda:

Their advice is bad. It is extremely conservative and it is contrary to what the minister wants to do. In fact they often actively want to frustrate what he wants to do. ... They actively try to set the minister up for a fall. If you are a good bureaucrat you can play the game exceedingly well. For example, if they want to set the minister up on a funding matter, they send up stupid advice and leave it right to the last minute so you have absolutely no time to act properly. They send appalling advice which you wouldn't normally take and if that advice were to be leaked the government would be severely embarrassed. A lot of people wouldn't believe that goes on. The thing is it is always ambiguous, and they can say it was the best advice they could provide at the time, so you can never pin it down as straight malice.

His negative language and views are matched by those of Public Servant 3 who worked in one of the departments Minister Pink was responsible for. He claimed Minister Pink 'had a falling out with virtually all the SES officers in the department' and communication with him was only in writing. The department was restructured and Public Servant 3 was moved to run a new division which looked after all Minister Pink's programs:
The objective was to isolate his influence on the rest of the portfolio. He was causing such mayhem that the decision was that he had to be kept to one division, and I was it.

From his point of view the problems in the relationship were mainly to do with the minister's approach. He described them as follows:

He was mad. ... Some of the things I've actually seen him do, if he wasn't a minister he would have been committed. I think misplaced aggression - his type of aggression - is just an absolute waste of space and turns an entire organisation into either neutral or negative. ... He thought that we had so many program dollars at our disposal that we weren't using them wisely and we should have been able to make a difference. ... He intervened frequently in the most detailed way in changing program arrangements and rules. ... I don't think he had any concept about infrastructure, he thought he could make a decision today and it would happen tomorrow. ... I think he hated public servants with a passion. ... His office was mad too.

Yet he also admitted the minister had grounds for frustration with the department, because it withheld information:

It used to really worry me. ... I thought that some of our people had been pretty careless really in not keeping the minister informed about pretty big problems in some areas. ... Certainly I would err on the side of telling ministers things rather than not telling them things, whereas they would do the opposite. ... The other difficulty in all this is, the secretary of the department became almost paranoid about him because he really felt that the minister was going to ensure that he got sacked ... you know if these things had become public the portfolio wouldn't look very good at all.

In this sense the minister was perceived as a threat to the department, and the department responded accordingly. The struggle for political control that was at the base of this terrible relationship was confirmed by outsiders. Public Servant 7 was from another department but also worked closely with Minister Pink. He observed that:

He had strong reservations about their competence. Reservations which I think others shared. ... I think that he took the view that they did not share the government's agenda. ... Was there a real problem with the way the departments responded to him? Oh yes! The advice that they were preparing was not consistent with the minister's policy objectives. For example I was given instructions by departmental officers ... which I believed were contrary to the wishes of the minister.

This public servant had a positive view of the minister's staff, in contrast to Public Servant 3's view of them as 'mad':

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Most of his staff were I thought particularly capable. ... My dealings with his office were very positive. But in the relationship between his staff and departments I think there was mutual resentment. That was in part a reflection of the fact that he as a minister was not happy with the advice he was getting. ... And the department didn't like the minister and didn't like the staff.

For an adviser, engaging a department that was fighting the minister was very difficult. Adviser 6 felt his main resource was his political connections:

I can go to the political level to neutralise the department. A good relationship with someone in the Prime Minister's office can cut out the department completely. A bad relationship with the Prime Minister's office conversely empowers the department.

This situation represents an extreme, where there was active resistance to the minister's direction and his authority. Though there was at times much negative language in the way advisers and public servants talked about each other, most described more potentially productive relationships than this.

CONCLUSION: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ADVISERS AND DEPARTMENTS

The three main roles advisers played within the minister-department relationship were supervising, orienting and mobilising the department. The basis of this work was their position as gatekeepers within the department's relationship with the minister and their role as surrogates of the minister. This work had several important outcomes. It could drive high levels of engagement between the department and the political executive in government, by creating incentives for public servants to involve advisers and ministers in their work, and by providing leverage and opportunity for ministers to obtain information about the activities of the department. By expanding and preserving the minister's authority, advisers could increase the minister's capacity for political control.

However the performance of these roles, and advisers' very existence within the minister-department relationship, caused tension between advisers and public servants. Tension was typical of the relationship, and was considered by most respondents to be inevitable. Managing the tensions and creating productive relationships with public servants was a challenge for advisers. There was contradiction in the 'twin tasks' of controlling and making positive use of the bureaucracy (Heclo 1977:6).
There were elements of cooperation and interdependence in the relationship between advisers and senior public servants. However, competition was also at its heart. Overall, the relationship between advisers and senior public servants was characterised by negotiation and bargaining within overlapping and competitive roles; rather than by harmonious relations based on complementary roles (Davis 1995, Hollway 1996) or by the stable achievement of political control by ministers (cf. Campbell and Halligan 1992).

This chapter examined how advisers in the study engaged with departments. It challenged the dominant image of political-bureaucratic relationships as harmonious and complementary. The next chapter examines how ministerial advisers engaged in policy making. This is the second element of the steering policy role.
Engaging in policy making: Shared and independent roles

This chapter explores how advisers in the study engaged in policy making. This is the second aspect of the steering policy role, described in Chapter Four.

In recent times there has been an increased focus on policy actors and how they interact in policy formulation. Ministerial advisers, if mentioned at all, are usually seen as one of the group of state actors, alongside ministers and departmental officials. However the roles they play in policy making are often not explained or distinguished from those of other state actors. While advisers are often described as influential in policy making, we do not have a full understanding of the roles they play in the policy process, or whether they have distinctive roles arising from their location in government. Research has mainly focused on their primary role of facilitating ministers and departments working together in formulating policy.

This chapter argues that in the Keating period, ministerial offices could be significant 'policy powerhouses' in their own right, often sharing roles with the department in policy initiation, policy development and policy implementation, and working in close partnership with departments in these traditional policy making functions. However advisers could also perform distinctive roles in policy making, arising from their location within the executive. The chapter brings both aspects together to conceptualise the full extent of the policy role played by advisers at this time.

POLICY AND POLICY MAKING

'Policy' can be defined as both authorised decisions by ministers and cabinet and also the ongoing structures, routines and resource allocations that express policy positions (Colebatch 1998). For the purpose of this thesis 'policy' is defined as 'whatever governments choose to do or not do' (Dye 1981:1), keeping a focus on government decision making. Policy is made not simply in the decision making undertaken by authorised decision makers such as
ministers and cabinet. ‘Policy making’ also refers to the process leading up to the decisions, in which policy is shaped through complex interactions - often involving contest and negotiation - between many actors both inside and outside of government.

Traditional accounts of policy making which describe policy ideas as being framed in the bureaucracy, receiving approval of the minister and going to cabinet for endorsement, before being transmitted to officials for implementation, have been challenged by the large body of writing about the horizontal linkages between policy actors, who interact in complex ways to shape policy outcomes. These have been referred to as policy communities or policy networks (eg Marsh and Rhodes 1992; Coleman and Skogstad 1990). The concept of a ‘core executive’ has also been suggested to describe executive decision making as a complex process of group interaction (Dunleavy and Rhodes 1990).

In his description of the policy process, Colebatch (1998) identifies two dimensions to policy - a ‘vertical’ and a ‘horizontal’ dimension. The ‘vertical’ dimension refers to the interaction of authorised decision makers and subordinate officials, encompassing the processes of ministers and departments working together in policy making, as well as hierarchical decision making in the minister’s office and the cabinet (1998:37-39). The ‘horizontal’ dimension is concerned with policy activity across organisational boundaries, with relationships among policy participants in different organisations and the structure of understandings and commitments between them (1998:39).

This distinction between different dimensions of policy activity is a useful one for the purposes of this chapter: it distinguishes between work conducted between ministers and departments and that which involves ministers interacting with other policy actors in a complex set of relationships involving interest groups, cabinet colleagues, senior departmental officials, backbenchers and other political parties.

General literature

While Australian policy text books often list advisers as one of the group of actors involved in the policy process, their roles are often seen as limited to offering alternative policy views to those provided by the public service, political scrutiny of proposals, political strategy and media presentation (eg Bridgman and Davis 1998). Some writers exclude advisers altogether from the
'policy domain' of government and see them as operating solely in the 'political domain' (Bridgman and Davis 1998, Davis 1995). In some texts they are more active participants in policy making but the nature of their involvement is unclear. For example Colebatch discusses advisers as policy actors in this way:

An important change in the practice of government in recent years has been the much greater part played by aides to the leaders... These people are particularly active in policy work, but since their role is relatively new and unstructured, they do it in a variety of ways (1998:93).

These ways are described as 'maintaining good relations with organised interests', promoting the partisan agenda in the policy process, writing expert opinions as an alternative to the department and 'a succession of ad hoc activities - “trouble shooting” ' (1998:94).

There has been little exploration of the policy roles of partisan advisers in comparable political systems such as Britain and Canada, largely because they are not seen as having the importance in policy making that Australian advisers have. In Britain and Canada, partisan advisers have been generally judged not to play significant policy roles (Plowden 1991; Young and Sloman 1982; Kavanagh and Seldon 2000; Bakvis 1997; Campbell 1998). This thesis argues that Australian advisers are distinctive in their emphasis on a partisan policy role.¹

**The centrality of policy to advisers' role conception**

In his detailed study of advisers Walter (1986) found policy work to be at the heart of the adviser's role. He found that Hawke advisers saw advising the minister on policy to be their most important task. Eighty-six per cent of his subjects stated that advisers' contribution to the policy process was either 'very important' or 'important' (1986:136). He suggested that the first Hawke advisers were more policy-oriented than their predecessors (1986:32-3).

Thus at the beginning of the Labor period, policy work was central to advisers' conception of their role. This was also very much the case at the end of the Labor period. When asked to describe the role of the ministerial adviser, Keating staffers in this study almost always talked about policy. They saw no separation between politics and policy; they were indistinguishable, and their job involved both. They described the role of the adviser as 'facilitating the

¹ This point shall be returned to in the Conclusion.
Previous studies of advisers: describing the policy role

Though he sees advisers as important providers of policy advice to ministers, Walter (1986) emphasises the primacy of the department's role in policy work. He down-plays advisers' role in generating policy ideas and policy development (1986:147-8). Mostly, advisers prompted the department to work on policy issues, which one adviser he interviewed referred to as 'poking sticks into the ants' nest' (1986:149). Walter states that it was only in 'extreme circumstances' that advisers took more interventionist roles in policy work with the department (but when they did this could be 'crucial') (1986:149).

However in Walter's study we do glimpse a broader policy role for advisers. Advisers could spark ideas; extend policy options; direct attention to items on the policy agenda; play a 'catalyst' role; or mobilise the department (1986:138, 152-154). The making of Budgets could also be a time when advisers could influence policy. However Walter generally stresses the limitations of advisers' policy work: he sees the adviser as 'for the most part a bit-player in a group enterprise' whose contributions are difficult to trace (1986:160-161). Yet he argues they can be influential and are a third force in policy making alongside bureaucrats and politicians (1986:5,187).

Dunn's (1997) study of the Keating and Howard governments explores both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of policy making. Dunn sees advisers' main role as assisting ministers to provide political direction to departments and to achieve political responsiveness from departments. He describes the way advisers work with departments in shaping policy, by directing departmental work; evaluating policy proposals; overseeing policy development; and monitoring the implementation of policy (1997:78-93). Advisers help departments and ministers to work together on policy, thus facilitating 'the mix of strengths that bureaucrats and politicians can bring to policy making in a democracy' (1997:108).
An important finding in Dunn’s study is that the role advisers play in policy making has extended in recent years into oversight of the implementation of policy (1997:107-108). However Dunn does not emphasise advisers’ role in policy development. He states that there are ‘periods of policy development’, usually occurring where there are disagreements between department and minister (1997:82-83), suggesting that advisers are not routinely involved in policy development. During these periods of ‘intervention’ advisers oversee policy development to ensure it coincides with what the minister wants (1997:82-83). Dunn stresses that: ‘no one sees the role of staff as developing policy independently’ (1997:87).

However Dunn detects an important policy role for advisers which exists outside the minister-department relationship and which relates to the ‘horizontal’ dimension of policy. This involves brokering agreements among ministerial offices in cases of policy overlap and policy conflict, with the aim of resolving differences before an issue was taken to cabinet (1997:93-97). This activity appears to be a distinctive policy role for advisers, played within the executive. Dunn suggests it may represent a development in the adviser role since this work was not rated highly amongst Walter’s respondents.

In Ryan’s (1995) study of the influence of advisers on some policy decisions between 1990 and 1993, he found that advisers played a range of different policy roles, depending on the portfolio and the disposition of the minister (1995:150). In relation to the role of generating policy ideas, Ryan concluded that advisers were rarely the sources of policy initiatives and that ‘ministerial staff are not generally active in introducing policy to the political agenda’ (1995:148). However he found that they were influential in setting agendas (1995:155).

Ryan also found that advisers exerted considerable influence on the policy process and believed that they were ‘the driving force’ in about half the decisions surveyed (1995:155). Ryan concludes that ministerial advisers ‘exert enough power and influence over the policy process to be considered formidable actors for the purpose of public policy analysis’ (1995:156). However his focus on power limits his exploration of the nature of advisers’ policy roles.

In Halligan and Power’s 1992 study of political-bureaucratic relations we glimpse another area in which advisers may play a distinctive role in the policy process: in their relationships with interest groups. They refer to advisers ‘managing networks of political interaction’ (1992:83). However they do not
explain this role and refer only to its impact on the power and autonomy of senior officials.

The literature on the policy role of advisers thus emphasises the primacy of departments in policy work, with advisers not routinely generating policy ideas or being involved in policy development, though they have become more active in policy implementation (Walter 1986, Dunn 1997, Ryan 1995). However it also suggests some important policy work outside the minister-department relationship. Dunn suggests an important brokering role within the executive; Ryan detects a significant role in setting policy agendas; Halligan and Power refer to advisers 'managing networks of political interaction'. However these roles have not been conceptualised nor fully explored.

Studies of the Hawke-Keating period (1983-1996) suggest that advisers became increasingly important in policy making during this time. Campbell and Halligan's study of political-bureaucratic relations during the Hawke years (1983-1991) found that:

Over time ... the policy capacity of the ministerial office was strengthened. Policy had become much more of a top down process; the political directions emanated from the political executive and the minister's office, not the department, was often the pivotal actor in the process (1992:204).

This view has been echoed by the writings of some practitioners (Fitzgerald 1996; Hollway 1996) who emphasise the growth in the policy role of advisers during the Labor period. Sandy Hollway (a former career public servant, secretary of two departments and Keating adviser) stated that:

Ministerial offices are as important now in big policy, big program design ... as departments. More selectively to be sure, differently to be sure, but as important in their own way. If departments not only generate some creative ideas but also do the bulk of the hard, slogging work ... ministerial staff can be crucial in choices about prospective lines of work, sifting options, running an ever critical eye over what is put forward, tossing out ideas (in both senses) and navigating propositions forward through the political labyrinth in Parliament House to a point where decisions are made (1996:134).

He also stressed their joint policy roles with departments:
[There are] two important realities. The first is that analysis, policy advising, program design and even the larger questions of program implementation are often handled iteratively as both a minister and a department feel their way forward together on complicated matters. Second, much of this process is not these days handled personally by a minister but with and through his or her personal staff. ... The system works best when both the ministerial offices ... and the departments work together to generate good ideas and translate them into good public policy (1996:133-4).

Some former practitioners argue that the growth in the role of advisers in policy making has been accompanied by a reduction in the policy role of senior public servants. Vince Fitzgerald (a former secretary of two departments) expressed concern that ministers and their advisers had enlarged significantly their involvement in policy development and that this had resulted in 'the taking of roles ... which were previously the preserve of public servants' (1996:121-123). This presented a challenge to what 'had long been an article of faith, that the public service had the major role in policy advice' (1996:120). He counselled against the 'monopolisation' of the 'higher levels' of the policy advising role by advisers (1996:130) and stated that:

It is still true that most of the ground work for policy development ... must necessarily be done by departments. While ministerial advisers have become involved down to these levels, it is at the more strategic levels of policy development - the defining of the issues and objectives, the development and consideration of major options etc - that I perceive the balance to have shifted most towards ministerial advisers (1996:122).

Recent studies of departmental secretaries reveal a perception that they face strong competition from ministerial advisers in policy making (Weller 2001; Halligan et al 1996). They refer to the policy field becoming 'extremely crowded' (Halligan et al 1996); having to 'compete for the policy attention of the minister' and 'fight for [a] position at the table' (Weller 2001:105); and facing competition for ideas at the technical as well as political level (Weller 2001:100). Though it was not the view of all, one secretary in Weller's study believed that public servants were no longer 'the initiators of policy thinking': 'We are there to give effect to policies and programs that are devised by others' (Weller 2001:103).

Thus the views of practitioners suggest that the role of advisers in policy making grew over the Hawke-Keating period and is more complex and important than has been suggested so far by the literature.
This chapter, then, considers two issues. First, in relation to the 'vertical' dimension of policy making, which refers to ministers and departments working together, what were the policy roles played by advisers in the Keating period? Were departments still mainly responsible for the work of generating ideas, policy development and policy implementation or was it the case, as some practitioners have suggested, that advisers were now significantly involved in this work? Second, in relation to the 'horizontal' dimension of policy making, recent studies have suggested that there may be some distinctive policy roles for advisers, which exist outside the important ongoing policy work that advisers do with departments (Dunn 1997, Ryan 1995, Halligan and Power 1992). The second part of the chapter explores and conceptualises these policy roles.

Views of public servants, ministers and advisers

Public servants in the study echoed the view that departments had lost their monopoly on policy advice in the Labor period. However Public Servant 4 did not describe a loss of policy role, but rather a loss of policy authority. He said that since 1983:

Ministerial offices have become significant policy powerhouses in their own right, replacing a situation where effectively all of the policy expertise resided in the department, if you go back to Fraser years. I suppose there has been a diminution in the policy authority of the department, but not a diminution in its policy role, if you can understand the distinction. There is now an additional source of input, an additional source of interpretation, which stands alongside the department and in a good relationship works with the department. But the department is no longer the sole source ... of policy advice, as it was.

Public Servant 3, who worked as a ministerial adviser in the Fraser years, saw the policy role of advisers in the Labor period as very different in the Keating period:

They have a very different role to what they had when I was there. Very, very different. There's now an expectation that they have a significant policy advising role, that the department is only one of the sources of advice, and I think that's perfectly appropriate. Perfectly appropriate. I've seen with my current minister and his adviser, quite significant changes, positive changes being made by using the skills and the knowledge of the adviser, as well as our own expertise and knowledge.
Public Servant 5 saw the role of Keating advisers in policy making as 'very significant'. Public Servant 9 saw it as 'a given' that Labor advisers would engage in policy making:

Over the life of the Labor government that was just a given, that advisers would come to terms with and understand the policy. It was a given that they would engage fully in the policy process.

Senior public servants also appeared to have accepted the legitimacy of a significant policy role for advisers, as Public Servant 3 stressed:

I think they need to take a real policy interest in whatever the minister's portfolio is and to feel that they can contribute to the development of the policy. ... I think it's very healthy to have a strong policy line being developed and pushed from a different perspective by people in a minister's office who have exposure to a whole lot of other people that the department doesn't have exposure to.

Ministers too described an important role for advisers in policy making. One stated that his advisers 'played a considerable role in formulating policy' (Silver). Another said that her advisers' role was 'absolutely critical. ... The only place for policy is the minister's office' (Red).

Advisers' views varied. Some were very confident about their own capacities and authority in policy making, typified by Adviser 15, an adviser of five years' standing:

As an adviser, if you don't like something, you just say "No". There are some things I might have preferred to do differently, but I'd have to say over the last two years by and large what's gone on in my area I've shaped in some way. There's been nothing done that I didn't want and all the things I wanted have been done.²

At the other extreme was an assistant adviser, Adviser 6, who down-played the influence of advisers in policy making. He felt advisers were boxed in, that there was not much room to move in policy making. His experience was in working for a junior minister with very strained relations with the bureaucracy, whose lack of authority meant he had very few policy successes. The minister reportedly could not delegate, and allowed his advisers very little scope for creative policy work.

Many advisers felt their capacity for influence in policy making varied over time. Adviser 41 also stressed the variation between different offices:

² Public Servant 3 commented that Adviser 15 was 'pursuing his own line' but that was 'not negative in any way' as he was sensible and had a strong bureaucratic background.
Advisers can be tremendously influential in policy making. I actually believe whole programs or particular projects can appear because of the direct influence of a particular adviser. At some times it's a little bit dangerous the extent to which an adviser can influence the development of a program or of a policy. There is enormous capacity for advisers to have an enormous influence. But that would vary between offices. Perhaps not so great in our office ... [the junior minister’s] staff had a much greater capacity to determine policy.

As seen in Chapter Five, the behaviour of advisers in this study varied greatly. How line advisers engaged in policy making was part of their classification as 'very active', 'active' or 'passive/reactive' (along with how they engaged with departments). Thus a significant role in policy making was possible, but it was not played by all advisers at all times. The policy role that this chapter now describes is that which the 'very active' advisers played, and which the 'active' advisers played at some times on some issues. It therefore describes what was possible at the time, the boundaries of the policy role. The chapter first considers the policy role in the vertical, and then horizontal policy dimensions, as outlined in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1: Policy roles of advisers

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THE VERTICAL DIMENSION OF POLICY: ROLES SHARED WITH DEPARTMENTS

Most of the advisers in the 'active' and 'very active' group reported working closely with senior public servants in generating policy ideas, policy development and policy implementation. They saw these roles as shared with the department.

3 The 'active' group were distinguished from the 'very active' group in that they reported being active on some issues at some times, whereas the 'very active' group tended to be continuously active in pursuing policy change or policy agendas.
Generating policy ideas

Many 'active' and 'very active' advisers saw initiating policy ideas as a fundamental aspect of their work as adviser. For example Adviser 15 stated that one of the two key elements of the adviser's role was to 'provide an injection of new ideas, different approaches and new perspectives, ... [to] get new things off the ground'. Adviser 19 described the role of advisers as 'to generate ideas, test them out and run with them'. Adviser 18 explained:

That's the valid role now for advisers, to be ... coming up with new ideas of their own. The department is not the only generator of new ideas and new programs and new initiatives. The ministers and their offices take on that role as well. ... Certainly Minister Ivory encourages us to both come up with new ideas and to give our advice on things that the portfolio is putting to us. So it's both initiating and being part of the creative process as well.

Most ministers saw this as part of the adviser's role and what they expected their advisers to do.4 Minister Orange expressed a clear expectation that his advisers would come up with new policy ideas:

They [had] an essential role in being hooked into industry and consumer networks and feeding in ideas for new policies and new directions. ... An adviser has to have listening points out in all directions and be getting good solid information coming from as wide a range as possible, so that they can actually analyse all that, put it all together and come up with new ideas, rework solutions to fit problems, or create new ways about putting new policy up.

Minister White consciously recruited 'people who think ahead with ideas and things that we could do'. Some ministers were forthright in their desire for new policy ideas to come from partisans. Minister Red held this view:

The only place for policy is the minister's office. ... I think if we have departmental-led policy it's very different from ministerial office-led policy and it is the Labor caucus and the Labor ministry that ought to be driving policy and implementing it. ... Good policy in government ... ought to come from what was promised in election speeches, it ought to come from what was won through Labor conferences to establish policy. ... And then having agreed what the policy position is, you then ask the department to produce the documents.

That advisers were often the source of new policy ideas was attested to by the fact that some public servants complained about this. It created work for them,

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4 Only two ministers (Minister Blue and Minister Crimson) stated that they did not seek policy ideas from their advisers. Nor did they seek them from the department; they were the generators of ideas themselves. Both had written books on their portfolio policy areas.
either in pursuing and developing the ideas that advisers generated, or in 'hosing them down'. Public Servant 3 (who worked as an adviser in the Fraser years) felt that advisers created a constant and unrealistic atmosphere of policy change:

The trick is to make sure that there's an air of reality, and there often isn't, between the bright creative ideas and actually being able to do things on the ground. ... I think there's a hell of a lot of 'wouldn't it be a good idea if ...' and bang! - the department do it. ... I suspect that there is a finite limit to the amount of policy development and change that ought to occur. But many ministerial staff, as opposed to many ministers, have a view that it's a continuum of change, and they want to keep doing things in order to highlight the profile of the minister. I think that's a pretty bad development in Australian political life frankly. We have an enormous amount of unnecessary changes as a result of trying to raise the profile [of ministers] and having staffers who have a more significant role than what they did in my day.

Raising the profile of the minister was only one of the incentives for advisers to come up with new ideas. Public servants also commented that: 'That's how advisers get their spurs' (P06). Adviser 2 illustrated this constant drive for policy change when he said: 'I believe you must always push for reform, you can never sit still.'

Public Servant 3 felt the role of the public service in coming up with new policy ideas had reduced and been to some degree taken over by advisers. This had happened for two reasons. First, the advent of managerialism had reduced the policy capacity of senior public servants and left a vacuum for advisers to fill:

You actually have to know what you are talking about to make policy input and because so many of us are shunted so quickly we haven't got the background and expertise in an area to make that input. I think that's left the door open for ministerial staffers to come in and fill the void, because no matter what was ever intended, creative ideas by and large are not generated by that instability and shunting around of staff within portfolios. Most of us are so desperately trying to do our jobs and get the essentials done you just think 'what's next?'

The second reason was that the media had created a demand for continuous policy change which the public service could not meet:

The other element of it is the whole technological change - the way in which the media can have access to ministers - has forced ministers to ... be seen to be a) on top of the portfolio and b) pushing change, because that's how you get known in the media and I don't think the bureaucracy has the skills to handle that day to day continuous 'what are we going to do today?' push and it needs to be generated by ministerial staff, and that's where it is.
Advisers could be conscious of the pressures they created for the department by generating new ideas. One 'very active' adviser acknowledged:

You might have a good idea in the office so you ring the Assistant Secretary and say 'can we have a brief on this tomorrow please?'. Then you'll have another good idea to ring through, then another and another. So the department is often put under pressure by advisers (A15).

Adviser 8 recognised how 'overwhelming' it must be for the public servants she dealt with as: 'I tend to go into a room and say 'here's these ideas, here's some more ideas, what about this idea, what about that idea, could we do this, what would be the political position on that?"'.

Advisers usually sent their ideas to the department to be developed. In this sense some advisers described themselves as 'creating the seed of an idea' (A34) or as being the 'flint spark that sparks off an idea' (A26). Departments could react in various ways to the new policy ideas that advisers initiated. Adviser 14 described three ways that departments could respond. In the first way the idea was absorbed by the department:

It can disappear. They say they are working on it and it has to go through a long policy process. It disappears for a long time but then it may slowly float back up to the top. The department may then send it to you after they've worked it through and its basically your idea in a policy guise. It has become their idea.

The second way was where the minister's office was more directive:

The adviser puts an idea forward to the department in a more committed or forceful way. Then the idea gets labelled by the department as a 'minister's office idea' and it has a very negative ring about it. So they may work on it reluctantly but as time goes on they begin to own it. Then it develops a momentum of its own and you no longer have to fight for it.

The third way was where the idea could be taken up by an influential and responsive public servant. She described an example of this process:

One Christmas quiet period I went over to the department and talked to the Dep Sec and some others about an idea I had for new policy. They were adamant that it couldn't happen. It would result in substandard [services]. They just said 'no, no, no!' ... I spoke to the minister about it and he took it very seriously and said he wanted it to happen. Next thing we know one of the First Assistant Secretaries came over (one who was very innovative) saying he had this idea ... Basically he decided to run with the idea so presented it as his. He was the type of bureaucrat who likes to work towards the minister's agenda.
The approach the adviser took often depended on the likely reaction of the department to the new idea. Adviser 25 explained that if he was confident the department would agree, he might 'go to them first' and ask them to do some detailed work. If he was less confident they would agree, 'which is often the case, ... then you might need to do enough work initially before you go near them so that you don’t leave them with so many options.' In other cases, he might leave the department out of the process altogether:

In extreme cases you may deal with something entirely up here, you may not go to the department. That’s less common but it does happen. You need to be very careful when you’re doing that sort of thing because you can burn a lot of bridges.

The high levels of policy competence that some advisers had meant that if the department was resistant, they could develop the idea themselves. Adviser 14 (a policy specialist who had worked for three ministers in the same policy area) explained how one day:

I sat down and wrote my own new policy proposal, all set out in the correct format and costed out and everything. I sent it over to the department for comment. The department was rather taken aback!!

She did this because the department had reacted negatively when she had described her idea:

I wrote it up because I wanted to show it clearly and because I wanted to show it was workable. They sent it back with all these negative comments and I fixed those aspects up and showed my second version to the minister. He said 'it's a good idea - I think we should do it - get the department to implement it'.

Another 'very active' adviser, with a reformist minister, reported that:

In the office I work in we start a lot of work, we write a lot of stuff ourselves rather than wait on the department to produce the material for us. So if there’s a new policy direction it isn’t unusual for our office to write the first policy paper and then send that to the department and say we want more work done or what do they think about this (A01).

Advisers who did this described it as very hard work and as 'literally crafting the agenda' (A07). This was seen as a way of keeping control of the idea in its original formulation and of forcing the department to engage in detail with the

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5 Adviser 14 had advised ministers on the same policy area for over five years and was acknowledged by public servants as having had significant influence on the policy agenda over this period. Some policy initiatives were described as 'hers'. Another adviser said that all the changes that had occurred over the last five years 'had a bit of her blood in it' (A40).
idea. It could also enable the idea to gain some momentum and authority before it was exposed to the department, as Adviser 1 explained:

> The risk is if you do have a big new idea and you let the department in too early on, it could jeopardise it, because they're a powerful little group, the senior departmental people, a few phone calls ... give it the kiss of death and it will never see the light of day.

Thus, in contrast to earlier research, this study found that advisers could play significant roles in generating policy ideas. It was an important part of the role conception of many 'active' and 'very active' advisers, and many ministers expected this of their advisers. Many advisers saw this as a role they shared with departments.

**Developing policy**

Developing policy can be understood as the process of moving from an initial policy idea or policy problem to a proposal for a decision. Policy development, or policy formulation, has been described as 'a process of defining, considering, and accepting or rejecting options' (Howlett and Ramesh 1995:122) and as 'the setting of objectives and the means to achieve them' (John 1998:204). It includes the crucial elements of analysing and designing policy.

Some public servants expressed a sense of ownership of policy development work: 'I think the department feels strongly that it has the responsibility to pursue the policy development, no matter where the idea is generated from' (P03). Some advisers also commented that 'the department likes to own policy development' (A14). There could be resistance to advisers being involved in policy development, as Public Servant 5 indicated:

> What you're after from the minister and their office is direction, not policy development. ... If you've got people in minister's offices who want to develop policy, the details of it, they're not serving their minister. There are hundreds of people who can do all that sort of rubbish for them. What they should be doing is trying to make sure everything is headed in the right direction, not that some particular policy is developed well.

Yet interviews with ministers, advisers and public servants in this study indicated that the ministerial office was at times an important locus of policy development. Many ministers and advisers saw advisers' work in policy development as a crucial part of ensuring ministerial direction over policy in the portfolio.
Advisers could play critical roles where the minister was not happy with the policy work of the department. This could be because the department was running a different agenda or because of problems with quality (Silver, Gold). In such cases the policy competence of advisers could be crucial in enabling ministers to pursue their objectives, by reducing the ministers' reliance on the department for policy development.

However advisers and ministers in the study also reported that advisers could be *routinely* involved in policy development, jointly with the department. Many advisers were aware that the department's role of developing policy ideas into submissions gave it considerable advantages in shaping policy, and were committed to ensuring they countered this, as Adviser 15 explained:

> Generally in terms of political control ... you are always reliant on the department to produce the papers and write up or develop the ideas. ... This gives them the chance to frame the discussion how they'd like to. Then you're reliant on the advisers to say "No, we don't want it this way, we want it another way" and keep pushing and pushing.

Adviser 30 reported being routinely involved in overseeing and steering the department's policy development work. She said: 'You may find out the department is heading off down a particular track and you have to say to them "No way Jose". It's about steering and guiding policy in a way that meets our agenda.' Advisers could also be involved in what she called 'refining and focusing' policy development. This meant responding to the department's initial work at an early stage. Minister Black saw this as the most important point for advisers in policy development:

> If [the advisers] had an idea or I had an idea - or the department did - I found a good way of crystallising our thinking on it would be to ask the department to do a memo on the issue, giving options. ... It's then you talk to the adviser and get them to consider the idea and ask them if they have a different view. That is a critical point for the adviser in policy making ... - taking the department's work and refining it, or making judgements on it. ... We'd sit down and go through that document and discuss the policy questions. It was at that point that they were very important in providing policy analysis and policy innovation.

As well as steering and refining the department's policy work, advisers could be more deeply involved in policy development. They could work closely and iteratively with the department in jointly 'working up' policy proposals. This was seen as desirable by some public servants, such as Public Servant 4, who said:
It is desirable that subject matter experts who are advisers should participate with the subject matter experts in the department in the development of policy from its early stages. That way not only is there a high level of understanding in the minister's office of the detail of the policy, but there is a high level of ownership, and there is also a degree of confidence in the department that it is truly reflecting the will of minister.

However he felt that advisers who were not subject matter experts were not in a position to 'participate on an equal footing' with the department. Adviser 28 stressed that to be able to be deeply involved in policy development with the department required 'assiduous contact' with senior public servants and much effort:

It requires a lot of effort, a lot of talking, a lot of time. ... And a lot of reading. ... You've got to know what you're talking about, you've got to know the detail of these issues before you can really become a valued interlocutor on them.

A 'very active' adviser, Adviser 15, explained how he worked jointly with the department in writing policy submissions:

I've trained the department ... to send me over something quick and dirty, informal. Then let's work on it together. ... I can say 'that's the direction we're going'. Then they're on track from the start. ... The way I work (and most advisers do I think) is that all subs go through a few drafts between the adviser and the department. ... It's better if they write what you want them to write.

Some advisers wanted deep engagement in the development and consideration of options that occurred within the department. They felt to influence policy they had to be 'involved in all the interchange'. This could involve 'pulling out' divergent views from different areas of the department and 'picking apart' positions which were cohering within the department, to 'keep a richness in the policy debate' (A27). Adviser 7 stressed this was crucial in shaping policy outcomes:

To be a good adviser you have to go down and be in it. You've got to know what all the options are. Otherwise if you come in at the stage where they've developed their preferred option, it is likely to be the lowest common denominator.

Such an approach clearly clashes with any desire by departments to 'own' policy development. Yet not all advisers were involved to such a degree. Those termed 'passive/reactive' were not deeply involved in policy development.
Finally, some advisers were able to do detailed policy development at times without the involvement of the department at all. This could occur where the department was unresponsive; where there was a need for speed or secrecy; or where policy development had a strongly partisan focus - for example in developing policies for election platforms. Adviser 27 talked about these situations:

I've been involved in a few exercises where advisers have got together and made policy. I've done that a couple of times with advisers in the Finance Minister's and Treasurer's offices. I think there are enough skills amongst advisers now to be able to generate policy, do the costings and devise an implementation plan without the aid of departments. But it's not done very often because it's very time-consuming. [It] would be rare rather than common.

The study found in the Keating years that the ministerial office could be an important locus of policy development. Rather than being rare, it could be routine for 'very active' advisers to be closely involved in policy development. This was seen by many 'very active' and 'active' advisers as a shared role, in which advisers could have legitimate, substantial and ongoing input to the department's work. It was also what some ministers expected of them.

Implementing policy

This study found, like Dunn (1997), that advisers could play important roles in policy implementation. Not all advisers were involved in implementation; some expressed the view that it was clearly the department's responsibility and not theirs. However 'very active' advisers were heavily involved, had a strong ethos about implementation and saw it as a fundamental part of their job.

Advisers' work in implementation involved steering, lifting technical decisions up to the political level, ensuring that implementation happened in the right way, and ensuring it happened at all. Some advisers reported being involved in drafting guidelines for new programs and for pilot projects, attending departmental workshops and other detailed implementation activities.

Advisers who took a strong interest in implementation had several aims. Some felt it was important to ensure that political advantage flowed from the implementation of decisions; especially that political capital was gained from funding choices and funding processes. Some advisers felt that being involved in implementation was an important part of delivering policy outcomes. Their
commitment to seeing policy changes through took them right up to the implementation stage.

This approach sprang from two sources. One was a deep commitment to the policy agenda which meant they wanted to ensure that decisions that had been won actually got onto the ground and operated as intended. Advisers with this approach were often policy specialists (former activists and public servants). Adviser 8, a former activist, said:

I spent four months trying to get the [—] response through cabinet. ... Now I'm looking at the implementation of the package. It involves constant follow-up with the department. ... I consider implementation to be an absolute priority for an adviser. An adviser must be monitoring the implementation of policy. It's absolutely essential because really what we're on about is outcomes, not just policies. Policies are pieces of paper. To do a good job for a minister you've got to care about outcomes. And to produce outcomes you've really got to get down into the detail of things and keep a very close eye on things. And really apply pressure.

The second motivation was a pragmatic understanding of the ways in which policy could be altered, watered down or slowed as it progressed through its implementation stage. Advisers with this motivation were often from the public service. Their experience in departments had taught them to pay attention to implementation; and that direction was required. One 'very active' adviser (and long time public servant), Adviser 22, stressed that 'to be an effective adviser you've got to put time and energy into implementation':

My work in implementation involves problem solving, speeding up things, making sure things are going in the right direction and removing blockages. A lot of advisers ignore implementation, or don't put much energy into it, but I am really committed to it, probably because of my knowledge and experience in the bureaucracy. I believe the greatest threat to good ideas is the bureaucracy. They can kill off good ideas so easily. They can not do anything and let time kill it. Or they can do things the wrong way. I believe to really deliver something, good ideas need to be implemented in the right way. ... You really have to be right on the ball, you have to be a real tiger with it and a lot of it's unpopular work, behind the scenes - that is where you really make things hum and happen. And happen in the right way.

Adviser 41 felt that paying attention to implementation was 'imperative':

As a long time bureaucrat I've seen numerous instances of departments thwarting ministerial intentions and governmental desires by simply not producing, just not doing it. Receiving directions and then ensuring that nothing happens. ... What is politics after all? Politics is all about implementing the policy.
Advisers could also be drawn into implementation issues by client or lobby groups who saw them as a channel to ministers to complain about the department's activities. Minister Red commented that community groups often sent her the message through her advisers that 'you know how you think it is happening, well it is not.' The ongoing operation of programs could also be very political. This was especially the case with Commonwealth-State programs, where advisers reported being drawn into the detail of administrative conflicts, which often had to be resolved at a political level. Thus advisers who looked after joint programs often played very active roles in implementation.

Some advisers also saw implementation as providing opportunities for further policy development. Adviser 22 recalled when he took over responsibility for a small program and discovered the agency that administered it 'wanted to spend its money largely on studies and stuff rather than doing it'. Against strong resistance from officials ('they were basically very unhappy, but we dragged them kicking and screaming') he forced a change to more practical action:

> When I took over looking after it ... I said ... 'if you want to get some additional money ... we're going to have to start delivering some high profile points on the board.' And the only way to do that is to forge stronger links with reality and with stakeholders and what the community want.

His strategy for changing the implementation 'paid off' when new money flowed into the program:

> That came out of these building blocks that we'd created earlier. This is an example of where you can use implementation to drive further policy development. ... The reason we got that new money in my view is because we'd made that fundamental change in the delivery of the stage 1 and got the profile and the points on the board and ... got the stakeholders on side and it was hugely popular.

Thus implementation could be very political and 'very active' advisers could place great stress on it in their understanding of their policy role.

**Conclusion: the vertical dimension of policy**

Many of the advisers in the 'active' and 'very active' group reported working closely and routinely with senior public servants in generating policy ideas, policy development and policy implementation. They saw these roles as shared
with the department. This was possible because some had considerable policy
competence (particularly as policy specialists), because they saw this as part of
their role as 'partisan policy advisers', and because their ministers expected it.
Public servants appeared to accept their involvement in this work, but there
were also tensions. Some public servants felt a sense of ownership about policy
development and program management.

THE HORIZONTAL DIMENSION OF POLICY:
INDEPENDENT ROLES

The study also found that there were important policy roles played by advisers
at this time which were distinct from their work with departments. It was in
these roles that advisers believed they could be very influential in government
and could make a real difference in policy outcomes, even though they were
not decision makers. These policy roles are distinct because they belong solely
to advisers. They occur within the 'horizontal' dimension of policy making
(Colebatch 1998). It is this work that the second part of the chapter
conceptualises.

A typology of distinctive policy making roles

There are five aspects to 'very active' advisers' work in this arena of policy
making. They derive from how advisers themselves talk about their work. All
five could be important in shaping or influencing policy outcomes. Advisers
believed that this work could be critical in whether policy change occurred at
all. The five roles were agenda setting; linking ideas, interests and
opportunities; mobilising; bargaining; and 'delivering'. 'Delivering' refers to
bringing the four other roles together in consistently working towards the
achievement of a policy objective.

1. Agenda setting

Agenda setting is policy work in which political actors are often seen as pre-
eminent (Kingdon 1995). Ministers are the key players in agenda setting, but
advisers are critically placed to provide input to their thinking in having access
to both political and technical information, and being linked into relationships
with key players both inside and outside of government. Their role arises from
their proximity to the minister; their partisanship; and their strategic location within government.\textsuperscript{6}

Advisers could help the minister to craft the agenda by coming up with ideas, searching for ideas to fit the agenda and lifting ideas onto the agenda. This could be seen at Budget time, when ministers decided the themes or priorities for their portfolio budgets. Advisers helped ministers to draft major speeches and key policy statements setting out future policy directions for the portfolio. Advisers also played important roles in developing election commitments and election platforms, which set the agenda for the next term of government: 'The time when you came up with ideas is during an election campaign. Then you have the time and the freedom and you can do it all yourself — write it and cost it on the back of an envelope!'(A34).

Public servants commented on the importance of advisers in this sense. They were 'the key to it all' (P08) in terms of getting the minister interested in or committed to a policy proposal. Minister Brown stated that advisers 'have a big influence on the agenda and the public perception of the agenda'.

Advisers were not only important in helping ministers to craft the agenda, they also did important work in agenda management. This involved understanding the array of interests and ideas within the policy area and how to steer amongst them to achieve the minister's objectives. Advisers were well placed to play this role because of their links into the policy community and their work in managing the minister's relationships with interest groups and stakeholders. Advisers often liaised directly with interest groups and had much contact with them. They were often those with first hand knowledge of the agendas of individuals and groups and how hard and soft their positions were.

'Very active' advisers could also influence agendas as policy advocates within government. Adviser 8 was an adviser who was extremely active in agenda setting as a policy advocate. She had worked for a lobby group for seven years before she became a ministerial consultant to the minister in charge of that policy area. She maintained good links with lobbyists in that policy

\textsuperscript{6} Much agenda setting literature is about how groups external to government get policy ideas onto government agendas, and stresses the importance of resources, public opinion and the media (Cobb and Elder 1983; Cobb and Ross 1997). Advisers' work in agenda setting is largely internal to government, about crafting the \textit{formal} agenda as opposed to the \textit{public} agenda (Cobb and Ross 1997:7). Advisers talked about agenda setting where they were helping to create formal agendas with little reference to the public or the media except as a negative force (cf Kingdon 1995). The interests amongst which they pegged their agendas existed within government and within policy communities: their work was about processes internal to the policy community and internal to government.
community. (Links with and understanding of interest groups could be highly prized by ministers in recruiting staff.) While still an activist she had convinced the lobby groups to put a particular policy issue ('policy issue A') onto their agenda for the next election. As an adviser she convinced her minister to put policy issue A on the government's agenda for the next election. She was now developing a package of measures to address policy issue A:

Basically I've put together a one-and-a-half page draft of ideas, things that we can do on the ... issue. I wrote it up, put all my ideas down, then sent it to the department for comment and tried to generate some ideas within our office.
And I've sent it around to other people. I've already sent my ideas out to the Prime Minister's office, [and] other ministers' offices.

In her time as an activist she had developed good links with the NSW minister and the head of the NSW department. She went to Sydney and talked to them about her ideas, and hoped to come up with a joint proposal that would advance the agenda nationally by showing other states what was possible in this area.

In another area she was trying to change the balance of the government's whole agenda on policy issue B. This involved talking to other ministers' offices about why the agenda needed to change; and asking the department to do a study which gathered data to show the need for a more balanced approach and the implications of pursuing the current agenda. She was having many discussions with an adviser in the Prime Minister's office and asking experts from outside of government to speak to this adviser to convince him of the need to change the government's agenda. The Prime Minister's adviser had forced other departments to make some concessions, but she saw this as a long term project that would require much pushing to achieve agenda change. She was strongly motivated to affect the government's policy agenda: 'Working in the non-government area and working here are both part of one agenda, moving the agenda forward and having an impact'.

2. Linking ideas, interests and opportunities

Linking ideas, interests and opportunities in policy making was often described as where advisers as individuals could have great impact on policy outcomes. 'Very active' advisers tended to be energetic in pursuing this type of policy work. It had two elements. The first entailed recognising policy opportunities

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7 This was also a weapon to undermine the position of the department dominating the debate.
in government. The second involved making links between ideas, interests and opportunities.

Adviser 22 described his approach in the following way:

Working on policies and looking for new policy initiatives is a bit like surfing in that you watch the waves and you see the right wave and you jump on it and go for as long as you can. ... It's looking for those opportunities to get your policy agendas, and some of your ideas into contemporary government.

To be successful in this, advisers emphasised the importance of both timing and opportunity:

Timing is everything. Opportunity is everything. Opportunity is everything. Opportunities will open up and then they'll close. Forever. And if you are not in sync with that, you will be frustrated. ... If you want to influence policy you must be there at the right time (A07).

They also needed an ability to see and make links:

A50 you could say has a lot of power over policy because he has the capacity to draw together and integrate everything. He sees links in things (A15).

Advisers could link ideas and opportunities; or interests and opportunities. They could also create policy opportunities.

**Linking ideas and opportunities**

One aspect involved linking the minister's ideas into broader agendas within government. An example of this was finding out that an issue was high on the agenda of the Prime Minister's office at that time, and finding a way of getting the minister's ideas linked into that agenda. It could be finding out there was a major policy package being put together within government and getting funding for some projects into that package. Adviser 30 described the process in this way:

On the proactive side, there is a requirement to recognise opportunities with policy, in a political sense. Say the government wants to spend some money, it's my job to think "what projects can we push through here?". Or where a debate is focused on a particular area there may be opportunities to progress issues. You've got to recognise where you can push things.

Adviser 1 gave the following example:
For example someone decides we’re losing on forests, we need another environmental issue, let’s … move the whole agenda onto the urban environment. That’s a political consideration, and you need a policy to fulfil your political motives, and you put something together and suddenly it becomes the government agenda. That’s the most exciting thing about being an adviser, when you can achieve that.

Adviser 22 cited several examples of where he had seized political opportunities to get policy ideas in his portfolio endorsed. In one case he used the opportunity of the Prime Minister making a major policy speech to get two initiatives announced as government policy. One was a policy which his department had been trying to get off the ground for months and had been caught up in inter-departmental negotiations. The other was the development of a National Charter which had been opposed by elements within the portfolio and which looked like it was not going to succeed. After the Prime Minister’s speech, there was no longer any argument about whether these initiatives would happen - it was just a matter of discussing how they would be done.

Solutions were not necessarily ‘pre-made’. At times advisers could sense an opportunity to advance policy in an area and then search for or craft a policy idea to fit that opportunity.

**Linking interests and opportunities**

Advisers reported using their personal relationships or contacts to bring about powerful alignments of interests which could impact on policy outcomes. They often called this ‘bringing players together’.

In one example Adviser 15 had responsibility for an industry where he saw big opportunities that were not being taken up. Contracts in the area always went to foreign companies. The department’s agenda was to put many little players together to form a consortium to tender for the big contracts, but they had not managed to win any contracts yet. The adviser had the idea that what was needed was one big Australian player, but the department ‘wouldn’t buy the idea’. So he rang the NSW Minister and spoke to him and his chief of staff. (His chief of staff was a former colleague; he had worked with him in another federal minister’s office). He put forward the idea that they could use a state-owned company as the basis for an Australian company in this area, by putting

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8 Networks of relationships and contacts were a very important resource to active advisers and were consciously cultivated. They referred to this as ‘keeping up strategic contacts … the more contacts you’ve got the more effective and powerful you are’ (A22).
it together with a major private firm and some other players. The idea took off in NSW and that agreement changed the agenda in the policy area. Adviser 15 said 'my role was I created the idea, I brought the players together and I smoothed things over. ... I'd describe it as very entrepreneurial'.

In a variation on this, Adviser 7 deliberately worked to link policy players with opportunities in government. He had worked for many years as an activist and as an adviser consciously promoted or managed the input of interest groups into policy making:

I spend a lot of time ringing people up and saying "this is coming up, if you want to influence it you need to speak to X and you need to speak to them at X time." ... I often speak to people in the [-] sector and say "these issues are on the agenda, you need to talk to X if you want to influence our minister - this is how you should go about it". I'll tell them who the key people are to talk to in the minister's offices. I'd say "this will cut ice/this will cut no ice; this issue has been lost, there are a range of things worth lobbying on or the one key person to influence to get your reform up is X".

Creating policy opportunities

While chance played a part in what opportunities presented themselves, so did skill and ingenuity on the part of advisers at times. Advisers could make strategic use of procedure and relationships to create policy opportunities. This entailed advising the minister on the political use of policy mechanisms such as launching reviews of a policy area or program, inquiries, public forums or studies.9 In this sense some advisers displayed an interest in procedure as the shaper of policy and for creating opportunities for policy initiation. Some 'very active' and experienced advisers displayed a mastery of policy process which could be very useful in pursuing policy objectives.

This linking role can be seen to grow out of advisers' location in government. They operate within the political worlds both within government (the ministry) and outside of government (with interest groups and other political parties). Their location gives them two critical resources which enable them to play the linking role: information and relationships. They have access to information about agendas that are running within government and opportunities that are

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9 Policy reviews not only could structure the policy debate, but also create opportunities and momentum for policy change, both within the policy community and within government. One senior adviser explained her use of policy reviews in agenda setting: 'I've had a bent for some time about how [-] is done .... I set up a reference to a Parliamentary Committee ... which has just reported. I wrote the terms of reference for the review and because I was unhappy with [-] I put that into the terms of reference' (A30).
emerging, as well as knowledge of the positions and interests of key political players and stakeholders. Their position in government also means that they are linked in relationships with key players both within the executive and the wider political environment, through which strategic alignments could be made.

Advisers' descriptions of their work are reminiscent of Kingdon's (1995) work on agenda setting in which he describes the critical step in making policy change happen as the coupling of problems, solutions and political opportunities. He claims this 'coupling' work is done by 'policy entrepreneurs', and is most effective when a 'policy window' is open. Thus individuals can be critical in bringing about policy change.

In some ways the policy work of advisers echoes Kingdon's descriptions of 'policy entrepreneurs'. However his 'policy entrepreneurs' seem more passive than advisers describe themselves. While his entrepreneurs wait in readiness for policy windows to open (due to forces beyond their control) (1995:181), 'very active' advisers appear more likely to be on the hunt for open windows or working to 'prise windows open'. 'Very active' advisers described their role as less about reacting to political developments than about pursuing, seizing or creating opportunities for policy innovation.

3. Mobilising

Mobilising was a very important role for advisers, one which could be critical in whether policy proposals succeeded or not. There were two elements to the mobilisation work that advisers did in policy making. The first involved providing energy or drive to ensure that proposals were 'kickstarted', stayed alive and progressed through the policy process. Advisers referred to 'driving the agenda and cracking the whip over it'; 'really putting the pressure on to get things happening' and 'keeping working on the certainty of the idea'. Public Servant 8 said: 'I think that ministerial advisers are the ones that really kick things along, really get things moving'.

The second element of mobilisation involved building political support or political will both inside and outside of government. It could involve lobbying other ministers and their advisers to get support for a new policy, or working to

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10 Kingdon defined policy entrepreneurs as 'advocates who are willing to invest their resources - time, energy, reputation, money - to promote a position in return for anticipated future gain in the form of material, purposive or solidary benefits' (1995:179).
neutralise opposition to the minister's proposal, or mobilising political will to resist a change being imposed on the portfolio. Advisers referred to this as 'working the political system really hard' (A22). Public Servant 6 commented that 'I think that's a very important role and ... in fact that's one of the things they should offer.'

Both departments and ministers also had a role in building support. Often advisers and departments worked together to mobilise support at different levels of government, as Adviser 1 explained:

> If you've built up really good relationships with senior levels in the department, you can say ... 'you cover this Dep Sec, that Dep Sec, that FAS, that secretary ... use all your networks, do it today'. At the same time I'll be covering that adviser, that senior adviser, that parliamentary secretary. You are trying to influence all sources of advice to the other cabinet ministers.

Ministers appeared to be too busy to meet more than occasionally with key players. Advisers did most of the 'leg work' (A01). Even where ministers talked, usually their advisers had met first.\(^\text{11}\)

Advisers described three stages to mobilisation. The first was to get political support for an idea or proposal, sufficient to get it 'off the ground' and into development. Adviser 1 explained her approach:

> You've got to be very persuasive, articulate and have dogged determination. You can't afford to go away. ... I've always taken the approach of blitzing people. You work out in your head who are the key players, in the different constituencies, the real head honchos. You come up with an idea. You write it down ... and you get the minister's commitment to it. This is ... before you even talk with the department. Then there is almost a two month period when you're blitzing all these key people, outside and inside the government. In other ministers' offices, in key departments. So eventually there's so much power ... there comes a point where it turns. ... You're trying to build political will inside the government and community will outside the government. It's a way of surrounding the bureaucracy, and then you crunch in on them. And suddenly it's too big to fight. Too big for them to fight.

A very important part of building political support entailed lobbying the powerful advisers in the three central ministerial offices (Prime Minister's office, Finance Minister's office and Treasurer's office). Minister Black explained why this was important:

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\(^{11}\) This work is analysed in more depth in Chapter Nine.
There is an inner circle of advisers who are very powerful. ... You had a small group of advisers, who tended to be the coordinating departments of PM&C, Finance and Treasury, and they were close to each other and it was hard to get things past them if they didn’t agree.

Securing the support of the Prime Minister’s office could be critical in succeeding with policy, as Adviser 1 said:

They know as soon as they give any small sign of affirmation you are going to take it and run, so the PM’s office are very careful. ... It’s so important to get that tick because our current PM and his office are so fundamentally powerful in the building. Anything that gets the tick usually happens. ... I’ve generally learnt the hard way that you don’t bother proceeding with anything new unless you’ve got those key offices behind you because they’ll dud you every step of the way.

While it may not be possible to persuade advisers in the Finance Minister’s office and Treasurer’s office to support the proposal, they could be neutralised or ‘have their teeth taken out’ by anticipating their positions and being ready to counter them.

The second stage of mobilising was keeping up pressure on the department to do the work necessary to develop the proposal. This was referred to as ‘pushing’ or ‘driving’ the department (described in Chapter Six).

The third stage of mobilising involved securing support in cabinet for the minister’s submission and winning the funding needed to realise the policy. Advisers could play very important roles in lobbying and positioning with other ministerial offices before cabinet. One minister described this work as ‘the bread and butter’ of the adviser’s job (Orange). Another saw it was ‘exceptionally important’ (Black); for another it was ‘crucial’ (Purple). Advisers saw this as a fundamental part of their role:

[Lobbying other advisers] is incredibly important. When the minister goes into cabinet, most often the decision is made before he gets there. ... It’s important that I know what’s going on and have sought to influence what will happen. I have to give him a clear idea of the support he can expect, what he should change when he gets there and who will oppose him. ... Nine out of 10 times agreements are struck between advisers before it goes to cabinet or in meetings of ministers. For example on the [–] Statement [about to go to cabinet] ... I could tell you now 90% of it will definitely get up; 5% will probably get up and what 5% is in doubt (A07).

This work could also be important to public servants, as Public Servant 1 explained:
When [policy] is close to being finalised then the minister’s office can play a significant role in dealing with other ministers’ offices. Stitching up things that have got to go to cabinet or things that cut across portfolios ... They can play a very significant role in that. There are things you can’t win departmentally that you can win at a ministerial office level.

4. Bargaining

The bargaining and negotiation that advisers engaged in could be very influential in developing the policy alternatives on which ministers decided; and on shaping the contours of possible decisions.

Much bargaining on policy matters occurred between advisers. This bargaining happened before cabinet; in the preparation of Budget submissions; in times of policy dispute; and in major cross-portfolio policy exercises, where consensus had to be forged between various portfolio interests in government. Negotiation between advisers was particularly important when ministers resolved matters outside of cabinet. Long time ministers remarked that more business was decided outside of cabinet under Keating, compared to the Hawke period. Decisions were made informally amongst groups of ministers, usually involving one or more of the three central ministers (Prime Minister, Finance Minister and Treasurer).12 This can be seen as a distinctive part of the Keating style of government. It was only possible because of advisers’ work in conducting negotiations or preparing the ground for ministers to talk.

This work arises from the fact that advisers have become the executive-level negotiators within government. It is work that ministers are too busy to do and it frees ministers for higher level negotiations. Advisers reported that it was often extremely difficult to find times when ministers were available to meet and talk for any length of time. Most ministers delegated sufficient authority to their advisers to be effectively involved in negotiations. Minister Orange described his expectations:

Advisers are essential in negotiating policy - offices talk with authorisation and move it along, towards agreement. Usually getting the agreement of the minister as they go. Advisers rarely do it all alone, but it depends on the level of delegation allowed.

Minister Grey saw it as 'a last resort' that problems would be resolved 'minister to minister'. Public servants also had this expectation:

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12 This work will be discussed in Chapter Nine.
A lot of things can be resolved ... between advisers in ministers' offices. I mean if departments can reach agreement, and advisers can reach agreement, it is frequently not necessary to actually engage the ministers, except in ratification of the final outcome (P04).

Underpinning this work were clearly understood ways of interacting and authority structures between advisers, which enabled matters to be resolved. Critical to the processes of bargaining and negotiation was the strong authority of advisers in the three central offices (Prime Minister's office, Finance Minister's office and Treasurer's office). As will be seen in Chapter Nine, these advisers played the roles of arbitrators between different interests. They had the task of forging consensus within the ministry where possible and of setting the parameters and boundaries of policy exercises.

While it is important to note that advisers were not decision makers in these interactions, their bargaining and negotiations could be decisive in shaping the policy options on which ministers decided.

One example was where the government was developing a package of policy measures which covered a wide range of portfolios. As part of developing the package a group of advisers was convened in which six line ministers' offices and the three central ministers' offices were represented. The advisers' group played a critical role in defining or shaping alternatives for the package. It was operating at the same time as an interdepartmental committee (IDC) was working to develop options for the package. The advisers' group saw its role as to directly influence the work of the committee, effectively ruling proposals 'in' and 'out', and directing that certain options be developed. Adviser 1 who was in the group recounted:

It was an IDC process, which advisers have no faith in. ... So at the same time as the IDC was running - you'll often find this - a team of advisers was running parallel. I guess it's a safety net because you're not quite sure what is coming out of the IDC so you're running your own little show. All the advisers that were putting together the [-] package were sitting around the table and [I] finally convinced them to have an [-] component.

The convenor of the group, Adviser 8, stated:
It's usually not a visionary or a vital package that comes out of an IDC. So by setting up this group of advisers that would run parallel to the IDC I wanted to try ... to get the ministerial advisers' discussions to influence the IDC so that stronger positions would then be taken in the package. So on the things that we got agreement on in our meetings then messages were sent back to the departments that this is what the advisers wanted in the package. And ... the things we didn't get agreement on well nothing was done about those.

Advisers were also involved in bargaining with other political players (such as interest groups and other political parties) which could influence the shape of policy outcomes. They often reported having significant input to policy decisions because they were in the place where political negotiations were happening:

An example was in the [ - ] negotiations when the government had to decide whether to agree or not agree with the Greens. The reason why I was able to be so influential was that I worked very quickly and I was in the minister's office where it was all happening. I produced a paper which became the blueprint for negotiations with the Greens and heavily influenced what was decided. I had influence because the negotiations involved both politics within Parliament House and public or community politics (A06).

Adviser 33 gave an example of a major cut which was proposed by Finance to the department. His minister managed to convince the ERC that the proposal would not get through the Senate because the major interest groups had the support of the Opposition and Democrats who would oppose the legislation. The minister was told he had a year to come back with a package which would get through the Senate, but which also delivered major cuts.

The department was at the centre of the process in drafting and costing the various options considered. However the shape of the final package was very much the outcome of negotiations over a long period with interest groups - selling the idea that the cuts had to be made and figuring out what trade-offs were necessary to gain their support - and with advisers in the three central offices. These advisers had to be convinced that the package went far enough financially; that the sweeteners in it were necessary; and that it could be delivered politically. These negotiations shaped the package before it went to cabinet. The minister - his credibility and positioning - was obviously critical in all these negotiations. However they were mainly conducted through numerous conversations between the adviser and key political individuals.
5. Delivering

'Delivering' policy was a term used frequently by very active advisers to describe what they saw as their ultimate or most important role in policy making. This concept should not be confused with the traditional notion of 'policy delivery' which refers to policy implementation. What advisers referred to with this term was bringing all four tasks together (agenda setting; linking; mobilising and bargaining) and being consistent and constant in working towards the achievement of a policy outcome or policy objective.

Some advisers said it was what their ministers expected of them; it was the adviser's responsibility to deliver the minister's agenda. Adviser 1 said:

Advisers are meant to ensure and deliver on the implementation of the government's agenda. ... The first year I basically responded to the minister's agenda. What he wanted to get up, I went and delivered. He wanted a National [-] Strategy - we delivered it. He wanted a Commonwealth [-] program, we delivered it. ... Enormous expectations are placed upon you to deliver.

Minister Orange expressed the concept of 'delivering'. He said that while it was important to have advisers who could understand or analyse policy, what he was really looking for was people who were 'good at making things work'; who could 'bring it all together and get it through the process'.

Advisers described 'delivering' as doing whatever it took to ensure a policy proposal got from the stage of its inception to a decision: guiding it through the processes of government; removing blockages; driving things along; negotiating with other players. Adviser 22 referred to this work as 'creating the means' of achieving policy outcomes. Advisers were well placed to do this, as many of the key players and processes they had to get through were at the executive level.

Some advisers felt that this work was very influential; that if they had not been there looking after the policy idea - keeping it 'on the boil', smoothing its passage through the bureaucratic and political environment - then it would have foundered. They saw themselves as important in bringing policy ideas to their conclusions. This work was done in conjunction with departments and ministers, but those who were most focused on 'delivering' saw themselves as those responsible for seeing things through to the end.

13 Hollway referred to this as 'navigating propositions forward through the political labyrinth in Parliament House to a point where decisions are made' (1996:134).
Adviser 41 described his role in 'delivering' a package of policy reform, and believed his work was critical to the achievement of that reform:

I believe we in the office played an incredibly important part in achieving the [¬-] Statement. ... We provided the energy and the constant affirmation that this was a vitally important project that simply had to be achieved. ... It is a project that I think but for the drive and the commitment of the minister's office it simply would have just meandered along and would not have been achieved. I believe the fact that there was somebody in the minister's office that said 'look I'm the person in this office that accepts responsibility for achieving this particular part of the minister's agenda and it's simply got to be achieved' actually led to its achievement.

A public servant from the department described Adviser 41 as having 'quite a significant influence on policy' (P07). There were several aspects to his work in delivering this policy reform for the minister. First, once the minister had decided it was part of his main policy agenda, the adviser was involved in planning the strategy for bringing about the policy change. This involved choosing a policy mechanism, in this case a review committee:

This was a mechanism for focusing and giving us something to run with. ... Get your committee, get your report, ... hold consultations in a public way if you can to give yourself a profile. Get Prime Ministerial support, get the money, implement it. ... Right at the outset we had discussions on the way to do this. And we agreed that this was a mechanism. We developed it and refined it as it went along.

A critical part of achieving the reform was getting the Prime Minister's support for the proposal, which entailed persuading the Prime Minister's advisers of its political and policy merits. This happened early in the process, before the department had begun work on the policy proposal. Adviser 41 felt that:

The Prime Minister's office were very important to the fact that the [¬] Statement happened. ... Without a tick from the relevant senior advisers and principal adviser within the Prime Minister's office the [¬] Statement would not have happened.

Another aspect of his work was mobilising the department to work on the agenda:
There were times when we cajoled and cajoled and cajoled. And asked ... 'is it fully understood that this is really important and this simply must be done?' ... I think initially they were disbelieving, they didn't think we could pull it off, they didn't think it was possible, it had never been done and wouldn't be achieved. ... There was an enormous well of disbelief and incredulity in the department about the [–] Statement. They thought it was just a pipe dream. But we just said 'look we're doing it' and the department did it.

The final stage of his work to deliver the policy reform involved lobbying ERC ministers, through their staff, to get agreement to fund the policy package. This was a difficult process:

I think it was generally accepted that no new policy would get up unless it was vitally important to our re-election ... And so basically we set out on a major selling program trying to sell the [–] Statement as very good policy and consequently as very good politics. I was just adamant that it was really good politics. ... I left lots of the meetings and briefings that I delivered with that feeling that well it is great but so are a million other things.

The ultimate success of the statement was testimony to the minister's skill, vision and commitment, but also to the adviser's work at every stage of the policy process. His personal commitment and sense of responsibility for guiding the proposal through the necessary processes was vital. 'Delivering' the policy reform required enormous energy, ingenuity and persistence.

Adviser 22 exemplifies the influence 'very active' advisers could have on policy outcomes, by operating through a network of 'horizontal' relationships. He brought to completion a major policy initiative which involved interests both inside and outside of government. He said 'I've been driving this agenda and cracking the whip over it for over a year now. ... It's almost become a passion.'

First he came up with an idea and brought a number of interests together. He had responsibility for a program which had a small amount of money to buy land for a certain purpose, but there was not enough money in the program to achieve its objectives. He identified a community group that also wanted to buy land in the same area for another purpose and had some money but not enough to achieve its aims. By making a coalition with this group and getting them to align what they were intending to do with his program objectives, they were able to greatly increase the amount of land that could potentially be bought, achieving two different objectives at the same time.

However for this to occur, there were other major stakeholders who had to agree, whom he brought together to build what he called 'a coalition of
... interests' in the proposal. He also had to smooth things over, because all three had different agendas. The stakeholders then drove the issue themselves outside of government, but his job was to help them at strategic times:

I've been telling them the timetable, and been telling them how much they need to go for and really been working hard on the detail. I've organised meetings between them and the minister at strategic times ... I've briefed the PM's office. All the sort of usual things you do as an adviser, just working the political system really hard.

As well as creating the idea and bringing the stakeholders together, it was his job to get more money. This was extremely difficult, but as the government swung into a pre-election period, circumstances became more favourable. Getting the money involved convincing an adviser in the Prime Minister's office of the value of the proposal. This was a person with whom he had a close relationship. 14

The department did not play much of a role in developing the proposal. The adviser did a lot of work himself, looking at property lists and maps with the help of a good friend in the department, who helped him 'on the quiet': 'just so we know that we've got all the arguments and the facts there so we can keep the issue going and unblock problems.'

One problem he encountered was that someone senior in the department was hostile to the idea. He worked hard to bring this person around. This involved asking key individuals to lobby him:

It's been a real process of working on him. ... Know[ing] where he stands, know[ing] what his arguments are. Work[ing] up alternative arguments. Let[ting] people know what he's doing and work[ing] around him. ... [We] got him in a pincer movement. ... He's been brought along [now] which is good as he will have to deliver on it.

There seemed to be no doubt in Adviser 22's mind that if he had not been working away constantly in the background on the proposal, driving it along, linking it to opportunities and unblocking problems, it would not have happened. Overall his assessment of his impact was this: 'I don't want to say it's totally my idea but the means that all this will occur is really mine.'

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14 Because this was a pre-election period 'it doesn't have to go anywhere near cabinet!' (A22).
Conclusion: the horizontal dimension of policy

This section conceptualised the distinctive policy roles played by 'very active' advisers in the Keating government. Their policy work went beyond the work they did with departments in generating policy ideas, policy development and policy implementation. Based on their own descriptions of their work, the chapter outlined a typology of five distinctive policy roles: agenda setting; linking ideas, interests and opportunities; mobilising; bargaining and 'delivering'. This work could be important in shaping policy outcomes.

The thesis does not suggest that advisers were more important policy actors than either senior public servants or ministers, nor that these five policy roles were more significant than the work advisers did in assisting ministers and departments to work together in policy making. It described the roles 'very active' advisers could play within the horizontal dimension of policy without exploring questions of relative influence.

CONCLUSION:
HOW ADVISERS ENGAGED IN POLICY MAKING

This chapter has explored how 'very active' and 'active' advisers engaged in policy making. Policy was central to advisers' work and their conception of their role. There are signs of a shift in the role of generating ideas towards ministerial offices. In the Keating period 'very active' advisers generated new policy ideas, and could be closely involved in policy development and policy implementation, jointly with departments. The role of advisers also grew over the Labor period to include important policy work performed outside the minister-department relationship. These distinctive policy roles - agenda setting; linking ideas, interests and opportunities; mobilising; bargaining and 'delivering' - could greatly increase the capacity of ministers to direct policy in the portfolio, to pursue policy goals and to innovate.

Advisers' distinctive policy roles grow out of their location within government. They exist at the intersection of the horizontal linkages of policy actors such as interest groups, policy specialists, senior departmental officials, cabinet ministers and other stakeholders which come together in policy making. Their location gives them two important resources: information and relationships. They are involved in a minister’s overlapping relationships with other policy actors and are conduits for information within these relationships. With
sufficient skill, expertise and delegation from the minister they could be very effective players within these interactions.

This chapter addresses the problem expressed in some of the literature that advisers appear to be powerful policy players, but it is not clear what it is that they do (Ryan 1995; Colebatch 1998). Advisers' distinctive policy roles in the horizontal dimension of policy are difficult to observe and articulate but are crucial in modern complex policy making. The thesis provides a conceptual framework with which to view the policy roles glimpsed in other research (Ryan 1995; Dunn 1997; Halligan and Power 1992).

These findings have two main implications. First, advisers cannot be viewed as peripheral actors in policy making. The work of 'very active' individuals located so close to decision makers could have an effect on policy process and policy outcomes. Advisers could be important state policy actors with distinctive roles in policy making, which extend far beyond analysing the department's work and injecting a political perspective into policy advice. This work largely occurs within the 'horizontal' dimension of policy, where various players interact across organisational boundaries.

The second implication of the findings relates to ministers' involvement in policy making. Through their distinctive policy roles, 'very active' advisers could enable ministers to engage with the complexity of the policy process. They could enhance ministers' capacity to influence policy as it is shaped through multiple interactions of policy actors in different organisations. Some ministers in the study had high expectations of what their advisers would do for them in policy making. Active and skilful advisers who could perform these roles could be vital to a minister's pursuit of policy objectives in government.

This broadens our understanding of advisers' function as a mechanism of political control. If political control is understood as being able to effectively steer government, then it requires an ability to devise, develop and deliver partisan policy goals. As partisans, advisers can contribute to the executive's capacity to steer government not only in their policy work with departments, but also through distinctive policy roles played within the 'horizontal' dimension of policy making.

One of the problems of political control can be seen as engaging in the complexity of modern policy processes. The literature which sees the problem of modern leadership as a loss of capacity at the centre of government (referred
to as 'hollowing out of the state' (Weller, Bakvis and Rhodes 1997)), views the executive as ill-equipped to deal with modern government, which is characterised by overlapping networks, fragmented policy structures and multiple policy actors. Others argue that policy making has become more difficult as 'policies and interrelationships become more complex, and as the electorate fractures along multiple fault-lines' (Davis 2000:241-2). Thus the policy role of advisers can be seen as developing in ways which meet the needs of ministers in pursuing political control, by enabling partisan engagement in modern complex policy making.

Some of the most important policy work explored in this chapter was the bargaining and negotiating that occurred amongst ministerial offices. The next two chapters explore this work, the networks between advisers which underpin it, and how it functions as a coordination mechanism within the executive.
The fifth aspect of the role of advisers in the Keating years was coordination. Ministerial advisers performed a significant role in coordinating within the executive. This occurred at two levels: within the ministry (between ministerial offices) and within a portfolio (between senior and junior ministers). Their coordination activities ranged from keeping channels of communication open and information flowing within the ministry, to consultation, negotiation and even, at times, de facto decision making. The three central ministerial offices (the Prime Minister's office, the Treasurer's office and the Finance minister's office) played special coordination roles. (These are explored in detail in the next chapter).

Advisers' coordination work was very important to the government because 'a government's ability to determine political direction and priorities depends on its capacity to function collectively' (Campbell and Halligan 1992:17). This role could ensure that ministers were acting in accordance with whole of government agendas and that conflict between ministers was resolved appropriately. It was also important to the executive's dominance that the resolution of internal conflicts and cross-portfolio issues was done by partisans, rather than the bureaucracy.

This chapter describes how the networking that occurred between advisers operated as a coordination mechanism within the executive. It first discusses coordination in government. It then identifies particular features of the Keating period which shaped the coordination role of advisers. It then examines in detail the networking that advisers did with other advisers. Finally it identifies three features of this networking that enabled it to operate as a coordination mechanism within the executive.

COORDINATION IN GOVERNMENT

In parliamentary systems of government, coordination is seen as 'a primary political virtue, espoused by executives and practised through a complex array
of agencies and routines' (Davis 1997:145). In the complexity of modern government, coordination involves managing diversity and conflict within the executive, and attempting to achieve some central direction and overall cohesion in what government decides to do. There is no simple process for achieving coordination within the executive; it is an ongoing process of negotiation, contest and attempts to exercise control.

Australia's Westminster style of government provides strong centrifugal forces and fragmentation within the executive. Ministers have individual responsibility for departments, and their reputations rest on achieving certain objectives and goals within their own portfolio. These objectives often involve spending money. There is thus a strong pull towards individual political imperatives amongst ministers. To resolve policy conflicts and prioritise competing claims there is a need to shape and enforce a 'whole of government view'. The fundamental bases of conflict within the executive mean that they require 'active, political forms of management' (Painter 1987:10).

Campbell (1998) sees the relationships between ministers as one of two 'gearboxes' which a government needs to engage effectively if it is to have the capacity to govern. The political executive needs to achieve 'coherence through collective deliberation' (1998:228). Thus coordination within the political executive is vital to the pursuit of political control. Executive coordination is also seen in the literature as increasingly difficult to achieve (Rhodes 2000d).

Advisers have been described as one of three executive coordination mechanisms, the other two being cabinet and strong central bureaucratic agencies (Davis 1997). However the coordination role of advisers is often seen as confined to the 'political domain' and concerned with what is termed 'political coordination' (Davis 1997). Policy coordination is seen as the role of cabinet and central bureaucratic agencies. Yet the role of cabinet as the main executive coordination mechanism for both policy and political coordination has been seen by some as in decline (Smith Marsh and Richards 1993:584-587; Campbell 1998). The complexity and pace of modern government has placed enormous pressures on the cabinet workload which threaten to make cabinet unworkable as a decision making forum. This has resulted in attempts to reduce cabinet deliberations to only the most significant or high level issues.

The trend towards reducing cabinet business has led some British writers to suggest that the coordination role of cabinet has moved elsewhere (Smith, Marsh and Richards 1993:585). Smith, Marsh and Richards (1993) suggest that the likely candidates for assuming the role of coordination within the executive
are the Prime Minister, the Cabinet Office and the Treasury, but that there is 'a lot more room for investigation into these issues' (1993:587).

In Australia, the cabinet system underwent important changes in its operation in the late 1980s under Hawke which, according to Campbell and Halligan, increased its effectiveness because it enabled cabinet to focus on strategic policy problems (1992:76-77). In 1987 a new cabinet was created, based on portfolio (or senior) ministers assisted by junior ministers, in which all departments were represented. Because there were fewer portfolios and larger departments, more was resolved within portfolios than ever before, rather than coming to cabinet (1992:77). The amount of cabinet business in the Hawke period was substantially lower than in the Fraser period, and there was a marked decline in the volume of cabinet business after 1987.1 According to Codd:

   The volume of business being dealt with in cabinet and its committees ... has been substantially reduced, with a counterpoint increase in the extent to which ministers take decisions themselves, either singly or in a collective fashion through more informal consultation with colleagues (1990:14).

Page (1997) has suggested that the result of these changes has been 'the development of a network of structures and procedures which have changed the collegial nature of cabinet and the balance of forces operating in and around it' (1997:133).

The trend towards reducing cabinet business which began under Hawke, was taken even further under Keating, according to ministers in this study. In the Keating period more things were resolved outside of cabinet, often between two or three ministers including one or more of the three key ministers (Prime Minister, Treasurer and Finance minister).

This chapter argues that such informal decision making was only possible because of the work of advisers. Through their informal relationships and networks, ministerial advisers provide an arena for policy coordination which overlays and surrounds that of cabinet. Painter (1987) uses the notion of 'arenas' in analysing coordination processes. He states:

   Arenas are settings for competing teams and players to come together for contests. ... They exist within and around formal structures and procedures. ... Each arena embodies 'rules of the game' both formal and informal (1987:10-11).

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1 Page (1997) reports that 'compared with the figures for 1985-86, by 1989-90 the numbers of cabinet committee meetings held and papers submitted to cabinet had halved, while the number of decisions taken was reduced by one-third; by 1994-5 the numbers had declined further' (1997:129).
The relationships between advisers were an important arena for policy coordination in the Keating period, one which was vital to the effective operation of cabinet (the ministerial forum for coordination) and which operated alongside the bureaucratic arena. The networking between advisers in different offices could reinforce, modify or negate the policy coordination done by central agencies at the bureaucratic level. Thus the informal interactions between advisers were an important adjunct to the cabinet system at this time.

Both ministers and public servants in the study saw this work as an important part of what advisers contributed to government, and expected that advisers would perform this role. It was work that ministers did not have time to do themselves but it was vital to the effective operation of the government.

Fundamental to this function was the role of advisers in the three central ministerial offices (Prime Minister's office, the Treasurer's office and the Finance minister's office); as well as a clear power structure amongst advisers and unwritten rules of appropriate behaviour. This chapter explores the structures, relationships and practices underpinning the work advisers did together in executive coordination.

ADVISERS WORKING TOGETHER: THE KEATING PERIOD IN CONTEXT

The contact between ministerial advisers has been a question of interest to most of the main studies of Australian advisers. Early studies suggested such contacts constituted 'an informal infrastructure' that could serve the interests of the ministry as a whole as well as the interests of particular ministers (Forward 1977:164; Smith 1977:153). Forward (1975, 1977) and Walter (1986) asked advisers to rank the degree of contact they had with staff of other ministers. The results of those surveys appear in the table below:
Table 8.1: Contact with staff of other ministers 1974-1983

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>extensive</th>
<th>fairly wide</th>
<th>limited</th>
<th>rare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whitlam\textsuperscript{a}</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraser\textsuperscript{b}</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawke\textsuperscript{c}</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{a} (Forward 1975:146)
\textsuperscript{b} (Forward 1977:164) Note: Forward changed the categories for his Fraser sample to 'high' 'medium' and 'low' contact which are comparable to the first three categories used for other samples
\textsuperscript{c} (Walter 1986:134)
\textsuperscript{d} this category did not appear in the Fraser survey

Interpreting this data is difficult, as perceptions of what constitutes different levels of contact is very personal and also because the categories mix the concepts of \\textit{wide} and \textit{frequent} contact.\textsuperscript{2} Walter interpreted his survey results to mean that Hawke staffers were more 'insular' than their predecessors and focused inwards on their own offices (1986:134-135).

In his study of the Keating and Howard governments, Dunn found that liaising with other staff was a key role for advisers, and involved coordinating within portfolios and negotiating and brokering positions with other ministers' offices before cabinet met and in cases of policy overlap and policy conflict (1997:94-99). He suggested two reasons why his findings differed from Walter's. These were that this may be a growing expectation that ministers have of their staffs; or that the advisers in Walter's study (interviewed only six months into the new Labor government in 1983) had not yet had time to develop more extensive working relationships.

Making such comparisons is difficult as what is more significant is what occurs within those contacts (is it merely social or does it involve negotiation and bargaining on policy matters?). The earlier quantitative studies are opaque in this sense; it may be that what occurred in the 'limited' contact reported by Hawke staffers was of more significance than the more 'extensive' contact of earlier cohorts. In fact, there may not be such a difference between Walter's and Dunn's findings, if it were known what occurred within the adviser contacts Walter detected.

A view of changes in adviser networking over the Hawke-Keating period was provided by two advisers of long standing in this study, Adviser 32 and

\textsuperscript{2} The categories were not numerically defined. The emphasis is on breadth of contact but it is not clear what this means. Later, it is seen that most Keating advisers had very targeted contacts - not necessarily broad.
Adviser 37. They held similar views about differences between the early to middle Hawke years and the late Keating years. They both felt that the new Parliament House building (opened in 1988) militated against casual contact between staff. They reported that in the old Parliament House one could not avoid running into other staff on a regular basis. In the Keating period there was less accidental and social contact amongst staff. The culture of long lunches and drinking sessions (amongst ministers and staff) had disappeared by the late Keating years. (The non-members bar was closed in 1995 reportedly due to lack of patronage). Parliament did not sit late as often as in the past, which meant people did not wander the corridors late at night as they used to.

The atmosphere of the new Parliament House is very different to the overcrowded, communal nature of the old Parliament House. While all advisers are located in the ministerial wing of the building, they spend much of their time inside their offices. Advisers do not gather in the wide carpeted corridors of the ministerial wing. Individuals are seen hurrying from one office to another. Advisers rarely meet in the Parliament itself. Most advisers view proceedings from internal televisions in their offices. There are few natural meeting places, apart from the staff cafeteria or the coffee shop.\(^3\)

According to Adviser 32 and Adviser 37, in the Keating years contact with other staff was more deliberate and more serious. It was easy to become isolated; relationships had to be consciously developed since there was little natural or accidental meeting within the building. The far greater number of staff also meant advisers had more time for making such contact. Because contact was more functional, there were many staff whom one did not see. This was particularly the case on either side of the economic and social policy divide. Adviser 32, who worked in an economic portfolio, revealed the depth of this divide in recounting a story about a friend who worked in a social policy portfolio:

> I was on the phone to an old friend and I said 'where do you work?' and he said 'I work for Minister Lilac'. Which is the next door office. He was on the other side of the wall from me as I spoke to him! I was horrified to discover he had worked there for the whole three years I had worked in Minister Amber's office and I had never met him. That's next door. That's sad.

Thus according to two advisers of long standing, in the Keating period there was less social contact between staff, but more deliberate 'networking'. This

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\(^3\) Long time Labor adviser Patti Warn commented that 'the layout of the new Parliament House defies easy socialising and militates against the useful exchange of gossip and information' (1996:161).
was partly because staff had more time to do it and also because it was necessary to counter the isolating effects of new Parliament House.

Features of the Keating period

Several features of the Keating period also drove the development of a policy coordination role for advisers.

As mentioned earlier, the trend towards reducing cabinet business which began under Hawke was taken further under Keating. More things were resolved outside of cabinet, and networking between advisers became the means of informally resolving matters between ministers. Keating also had a very dominant style within cabinet and the ministry. Knowing his view on a matter or influencing that view was crucial, and therefore interaction with staff in his office was important, and they were particularly powerful. Because his style was to concentrate his energies on a list of key policy issues, his staff managed a large number of policy issues of lesser interest to him.

The Keating period was also characterised by 'feverish' policy activity (Keating in Gruen and Grattan 1993:xxiii). The challenge for the government was to produce policy initiatives to counter the impression that the government had run out of ideas. The Keating government was 'driven' by big policy initiatives, attempting to gain political momentum by generating policy momentum (Watson 2002:524,642). Keating himself espoused a 'culture of continuous initiative' and felt the 'crime' in politics was inaction and 'not doing enough' (Watson 2002:145,506,689). The second Keating government also had to balance the need to deal with a large deficit and to fulfil the many promises that had been made in the 1993 election campaign, in a period of severe economic downturn (Edwards 1996). There were therefore major pressures within government between spending and economic portfolios, and considerable policy activity, particularly cross-portfolio policy initiatives. There was thus a strong need for advisers to help ministers to balance competing pressures and determine priorities, to undertake creative policy development and to determine the timing, shape and cost of major policy statements. This policy coordination work was performed through the networking advisers did with other offices. The rest of the chapter explores in detail the structures and practices involved in networking.
'NETWORKING'

The term advisers use for their work with other advisers is 'networking'. It encompasses forming and maintaining links and relationships, and using those relationships to transmit information, consult, and negotiate policy decisions. The networking advisers did was seen as very important by advisers, ministers and public servants in the study. It was what advisers were expected to do.

Views of ministers

All ministers interviewed valued highly the networking their advisers did. They saw interoffice relationships as 'exceptionally important' (Black). Minister Purple saw these relationships as one of her most important resources:

The networking advisers do for you is crucial. ... They've got to know each other and be able to work easily together. ... They had to have a minister who could network. Working this place is as important as working the bureaucracy.

Minister Orange described the networking advisers did as 'part of the bread and butter of this place really, very much. ... Cups of coffee and all that sort of thing ... telephone calls, it's all very important.' He felt it benefited ministers in their relationships with each other:

It gives ministers the chance to not have their relationships clogged up with minutiae. ... They ... make sure the crap [is] dealt with at an adviser level and sorted out there as best as possible, rather than becoming an issue of contention and arm wrestling or ego bashing between ministers.

Minister Yellow stressed that the networking advisers did was important for the government as a whole, saying 'the whole of government depends on those links being strong and easy', and to the extent that they were not, 'then government becomes dysfunctional'.

Views of public servants

Public servants, though at times threatened by it, saw the value in the networking advisers did, and it was part of their expectation of what advisers would do. Public Servant 6 commented: 'that's one of the things they've got to do.' It was useful to help them gain access to information, as a Finance official, Public Servant 5, remarked:
Advisers play a really important role within Parliament House. The linkages between minister's offices are important for the ministry, to keep them across what's going on. It's really important for departments ... because we can't go to another minister's office and find out what they're thinking. Our minister's office can go and talk to them and provide feedback to us about what's going on and then we can provide a better service because we know what's happening. ... It's just keeping the communication open so the whole of government is moving in one direction. It's a coordination role.

The informality of advisers' interaction could also speed up the processes of government, as Public Servant 4 explained:

It was a way of accelerating the processes, and a way of managing the processes so that there was a shared understanding of the priority of particular issues. ... If there are good relationships between ministerial offices ... then an enormous amount can be achieved quickly that would otherwise take a much longer period of time, through much more formal processes.

He reported that there was 'a very good network' between the offices of the Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Minister for Education and the Treasurer, and this was of great value for their departments:

We had a very good relationship there between the relevant advisers and could facilitate a great deal of decision making quite quickly. And that was unquestionably advantageous to the departments, because it means you could get coordinated responses without necessarily having to go through a full cabinet process. ... If the adviser in the portfolio minister's office can walk across the corridor and talk to the adviser in the Treasurer's office and say, 'look this is really important can you just talk to Ralph about it and see whether he's comfortable with it', that is so much faster than going through the bureaucratic processes.

The advisers' network was also used to resolve log jams and difficult policy issues that departments could not handle. Public Servant 2 was strongly of the view that this was a role for advisers:

Warring departments should not waste the time of ministers, and advisers should settle issues between themselves. Now that's, in my view, highly appropriate. If it is a contest of wills between 'I can convince my minister to write to your minister and say do so and so', and then someone on the other side of the fence says 'I can convince my minister to write back saying get stuffed', the problem with that is that no one's actually debated the issue and got an outcome, so if it can't be done by departments then it could and should be done by ministerial advisers.

Public Servant 4 recalled using the 'advisers' network' to resolve log jams between departments:
As public servants, ... we were able to say ... 'we're running into an impasse between officials, let's get the advisers to talk', and we knew we could ring up our respective advisers and they could have a rational discussion and come back to us with some views, if necessary involving the ministers directly, because they've got that 24 hour a day access that public servants don't have. So on occasions as public servants we used the advisers' network as a way of breaking log jams which would otherwise have required much more drawn out processes.

Views of advisers

While the amount of time advisers spent working with staff in other offices varied, almost all stressed how crucial this work was. Only three of the 41 advisers interviewed did not put an emphasis on it. Advisers saw working with staff from other ministerial offices as a very important part of the job of adviser. Adviser 26 commented: 'that's really where the advisers earn their keep'. To be effective in this work, advisers needed to build relationships with other staff. Adviser 2 said: 'without them you don't get business done'. Typical of the high value advisers placed on networking were the comments of Adviser 15:

Your networks with other advisers are critical - at the end of the day they are critical in getting big things through cabinet. ... You are more effective the greater degree of closeness you have with the people you are dealing with.

Adviser 4, who worked for two junior ministers in spending portfolios, stressed: 'You'd do a lot of work forming strategic alliances with other minister's staff. This was very, very important. ... Forming relations with other advisers is critical.'

For most advisers networking was functional and largely influenced by the needs of the portfolio. Thus their main contact was with adjacent and conflicting portfolios and with the three central offices (Prime Minister's office, Treasurer's office and Finance minister's office). For a smaller group, networking was a conscious part of their style as advisers and they cultivated as wide a group of contacts as possible. Advisers referred to these people as 'networkers'.

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4 One was involved in managing a program within the department and concentrated on her relationships with community groups. Another was a subject matter expert who provided technical advice to key ministers, and was not involved in policy negotiations at all. The third was a senior adviser who did not network much and admitted it might be seen as one of his 'weaknesses'. His staff however did do a lot of work with other advisers.
Networking was particularly important to staff who worked for ministers who were isolated factionally or not good networkers themselves. It was a very important role for staffers of ministers who were not powerful in cabinet, those whose portfolios were the targets of spending cuts (and therefore were often fighting battles in cabinet) and those whose portfolios involved a lack of clear authority, who needed the support of other ministers to achieve policy outcomes (eg the Environment minister or Aboriginal Affairs minister). Minister Orange, a junior minister in a spending portfolio who had a weak status in cabinet, relied heavily on his advisers’ relationships with other advisers. He recalled how one of his staff, a partisan from the public service who was ‘an exceptional talent’, cultivated a trusting relationship with a key adviser in the Prime Minister’s office, Adviser 38. Through the advocacy of Adviser 38, Minister Orange secured funding for a major new policy initiative which neither he nor his department were powerful enough to win. For such ministers, the relationships their staff had with other offices were a crucial resource. Adviser 38 commented that:

Advisers can be exceptionally talented but their ministers might be low status or pretty awful. Often those people … would come to me and we’d get the ideas up by another route. The good advisers ain’t the ones who shout their names from rooftops. They’re the ones who understood how within their strengths and weaknesses of their position they could use other people and network and make it happen.

A 'community' of advisers

While ministerial advisers were a collection of individuals working for individual ministers, they were also a community, in the sense of being a group with a common framework, operating with a common set of understandings, and ultimately working towards a common purpose. I use ‘community’ in the same way that Heclo and Wildavsky did in their classic study of actors in the British expenditure process:

Community refers to the personal relationships between major political and administrative actors - sometimes in conflict, often in agreement, but always in touch and operating within a shared framework. Community is the cohesive and orienting bond underlying any particular issue (1974:xv).

While Heclo and Wildavsky wrote about long term relationships between career public servants, their identification of ‘kinship’ and ‘culture’ in the ‘village life in Whitehall’ is relevant to the relationships between advisers in this
study. Kinship was 'who matters most? and how are they related?' and culture was the standards that told them how to act towards each other (1974:1,14). There were shared understandings of both 'kinship' and 'culture' amongst advisers in this study.

The community of advisers in this study consisted of multiple informal communication networks. Interactions were only occasionally group processes. Usually it was work conducted one on one, through intensely personal links. As well as information exchange, these conversations contained the fundamental elements of political contest: weighing argument and political strength, persuading, manoeuvring and fighting. Advisers felt that the quality of the individual they were dealing with made a difference to the ease of negotiations and to their outcome.

These conversations mattered. Much was at stake. At the end of the day, the minister could always choose to take the fight to cabinet, but the attitude of other ministers in that meeting could depend on the salesmanship, doggedness and social skills of the adviser in the talks that had gone beforehand.

To enable advisers to undertake these interactions, certain things were necessary. They must build and use relationships. They must play the game according to its unspoken rules. They must have a good reputation, or if not, sufficient authority to win without one. Information must flow to those who need to know and those who must be involved, and discussions must be decisive. Decisions must be made according to the priorities and objectives of the government as a whole.

The milieu of the ministerial wing

A cut-throat environment

Positive and trusting relationships with other advisers were important in operating within what was frequently described as a cut-throat environment. Advisers were generally suspicious and competitive, as Adviser 1 commented: 'People are so suspicious of one another. ... The longer you are there the more closed you become and careful and paranoid.' Adviser 19 had a very cynical view of other advisers:
The dynamics of Parliament House are not based on camaraderie. Advisers are generally self-interested, opportunistic and into information manipulation. By self-interested I mean obsessed with their minister's cause. ... I don't look for friendships but I am courteous. Some are more altruistic in their motives, but all are opportunistic. I have a low level of trust and that's out of seeing what they do.

One senior adviser who came from a lobby group, Adviser 7, found it 'a particularly vicious environment'. On his second day in the job he inadvertently cut into a telephone conversation between two advisers who were talking about him:

I was being shafted, based on rumours and untruths. I was very shocked. People seek to undermine you even before they've met you. If you come here with any reputation then you have to go through a time of testing and backbiting, then after a while you become part of the furniture in the place. You can't afford to be a shrinking violet here or you'll get rolled over. ... It is very competitive. ... You have to carve out your sense of what you're prepared to put up with and build alliances.

Getting access to other advisers could be very difficult. Often they did not return your phone calls. Adviser 6, an assistant adviser to a beleaguered junior minister, explained the importance of good personal connections in getting access to other offices:

If you don't know other advisers they can be incredible hostile when you approach them at first. It's all about the ethos of protecting your minister and not giving anything away. Good personal connections can get you over that and get you into the loop very quickly. I didn't consciously [develop contacts] — but it is very necessary. ... I tend to socialise with people from Parliament House. These social contacts give me an entrée into other ministers' offices. It makes it easier to get over the first hurdle. It means you are taken seriously and not fucked around at the gate.

There were a range of personalities within the community of advisers, some easy and some not so easy to deal with. Adviser 19 commented that: 'Some are good, friendly and trustworthy, some aren't. Some are very ruthless.' Adviser 20, who was in a powerful position in one of the three central offices, gave this assessment of the advisers he dealt with:

I generally see people as competent or incompetent. There are the utterly stupid and obstructionist and others who are on the ball and easy to do business with. Among those who are competent there are the players and the non-players. The players are those who are in the political game.
Hierarchy

Though interactions were generally fluid and personal, there was a hierarchy amongst advisers based on their title (consultant, senior adviser, adviser or assistant adviser). Some people ignored the hierarchy but not all did. Some said they could not get access to senior advisers in other offices if they were an assistant adviser or an adviser, and that they either had to take their senior adviser with them or get the senior adviser to take up the matter to be listened to, as Adviser 1 explained:

There's definitely a hierarchy. If you're at a lower point in the hierarchy, it's not appropriate for you to speak to someone who is right at the top of the hierarchy. When I was an assistant adviser I wouldn't have dared speak to the head of the Treasurer's office or the head of the PM's office, I wouldn't have even smiled at them! If I had needed something from their office, I would have gone to someone much lower. They're so arrogant - and they let you know they're not going to waste their time with you. So you just don't put yourself through that humiliating experience!

Yet she stressed that good personal connections could cut across the hierarchy:

Some people can ignore all of that and pick up the phone and go straight to the top and argue their point. I was too nervous to do that, in the first year, but then you build up relationships and you can cut across it if you have good relationships.

Ways of operating

Informal, verbal, brief, reciprocal

Advisers had a clear idea of how to operate in this environment. Contact was informal and verbal, and involved phone calls, dropping in to see people ('sticking your head around the door'), meeting over coffee, perhaps dropping off a piece of paper for someone to look at. Things were kept short: 'you don't talk too much' (A01). It was not done to waste people's time or to harass them more than was necessary. There was no time to put much on paper even if they wanted to (which they usually did not).

Advisers worked hard to build up a rapport with important people. The 'rules' for lobbying powerful advisers were to be polite, brief, talk to them face to face on their turf (where they felt most comfortable), and try to bring the issue to their attention as early as possible: 'Never at the last minute, 24 hours before something goes to cabinet. That just won't work' (A28). Adviser 1 felt it was possible to build up a relationship with powerful advisers 'which really pays
off'. An adviser to the Treasurer confirmed that she talked more with advisers she respected and passed them more information (A34).

Reciprocity was very important. If someone helped you, you would also like to help them if you could. People sometimes felt they were 'owed favours'. This provided leverage. Though 'of course', Adviser 26 said, 'those in the central offices were smart and tried never to owe anyone anything'. Trust was important. People who could not be trusted were considered dangerous. A long time adviser, Adviser 33, described the networking behaviour of advisers he could not trust:

There were those who you couldn't trust. Thankfully there weren't many of them, but there were some who were lazy and would not consult, or they'd tell you one thing and they would turn around and do the opposite. They were quite dangerous from a government perspective, they took on their traditional constituents' view or were lazy, dishonest and incompetent.

By contrast he described advisers who networked positively:

At the other end of the spectrum I think are advisers who really do consult well, they work hard and understand the issues, they listen and try to take a constructive, creative approach to policy development or resolving issues.

**Operating through known contacts**

It was important to communicate through known contacts. One senior adviser stressed: 'Always make the initial approach through a contact in the office' (A28). Working through known contacts ensured access, which was otherwise not guaranteed. Advisers usually had a contact in every office they dealt with. It might be someone they had dealt with in the past, someone they had a rapport with, even someone they met at a party. They then worked through that contact, even though that person may not be the one who was dealing with the matter. They could find out nuances and agendas from their friendly contact. It helped to get an idea of how best to approach the person they had to deal with, for instance they might be told that: 'so and so is dealing with that but just be aware of this' (A22). The friendly contact may then pass on the message to their colleague that you were to be trusted. This could be useful if you were relatively junior or from another faction.

Advisers talked 'shop' endlessly, and it was considered acceptable to raise work matters with staffers met in the corridor, at parties or at the gym. Advisers were opportunistic and pragmatic in the use of their relationships in networking.
The power of reputation

Reputations were common currency around the ministerial wing. Adviser 1 commented on the power of reputation:

If you’re in you’re in, if you’re out you’re out. A lot of that’s to do with personality, factional allegiance. Sometimes even the very best people can’t achieve in Parliament House, not for want of trying or lack of skills as an adviser, but because they either work for a minister who is on the nose, or not in, or someone somewhere along the way doesn’t like them. It’s such an incestuous building, most people have a personal entanglement with someone who knows someone.

If an adviser could help someone they may drop everything to do so, to gain a reputation as someone who 'delivered'. Some offices and individuals had reputations for not returning phone calls. In the case of one office this was seen as very detrimental to their status in the ministry - they put themselves outside the loops of information and help others could provide. Some advisers had to work hard to build a reputation for trustworthiness, as Adviser 8, a former activist, explained:

I found that advisers had a natural suspicion of someone who came from outside of government. I was fairly unknown to them. But they knew that I was set in the mould of [an activist] and I was not to be trusted. ... I had to really work hard to develop relationships with people in other offices and after twelve months I think I’ve got some good contacts and I can speak easily to people in a lot of ministerial offices. And the fact that I can do this now has made my job a great deal easier.

She described the reputation she had worked hard to establish and how it spread:

They know that I’m a straight shooter. ... They know that what I agree on I will do. And after you deal with a few people and they have good dealings with you, word travels. Of course some people I will never be able to work well with. But the more contact you have with people who have initial animosity but are able to say ‘well I worked together with her and we were able to get good outcomes’ ... then if you can get a linkage with one person that will link you into others.

Adviser 1 felt that powerful advisers could destroy your reputation if you did something they felt was wrong:

They could certainly put you on the outer to the point where nobody touched you. ... You know who is not favoured in the ministerial wing, you know who has made a big mistake really quickly.
For this reason she felt that if you were pursuing something that may not be popular with powerful advisers it was best to protect your reputation by keeping a very low profile: 'Invisibility is necessary if you are trying to achieve something that is not fashionable - working for the faction I've worked for, you learn to do things that way.' At times advisers sacrificed their reputations in pursuit of the minister's agenda. Adviser 35 recalled how he had to 'do the dirty' on an adviser who had been an ally:

It wasn't in the interests of my minister or the government that what he was pushing should happen. I stitched up a different deal with the Prime Minister's office behind his back and he only discovered at the 11th hour that his proposal was not going to happen.

He felt his own reputation and rapport with other advisers could be 'traded in' at key times 'for getting your minister's interests done'.

Thus to operate within the cut-throat and competitive environment of the ministerial wing, advisers cultivated positive relationships and made use of those relationships in their day to day work. There were clearly understood ways of operating and behaviour was monitored though the power of reputation. The next section explores the structures underlying advisers' interactions with each other.

**Mapping advisers' networks**

Communication patterns among staff have been a topic of some interest to US scholars of Congressional staff and White House staff (eg Kessel 1984, Fox and Webb Hammond 1977). Kessel (1984) explored the underlying structures which enabled senior staff members to coordinate the White House staff under several Presidents. He explored several structures amongst staff, two of which are relevant to this study: a communication structure and an influence structure.5

Kessel's communication structure records 'those links between individuals who spend time together and share information with one another' (1984:232). Using interviews with White House staff, he found the communication channels in the Reagan White House were centralised and hierarchical, with much of the communication flowing to a central coordinating group (1984:238-240). He also

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5 Kessel's methods have been taken further by Link (2000).
described an influence structure which identified those staff who were able to exercise power over other staff members.

To explore the communication structure which underlay coordination routines, advisers in this study were asked to describe their communication networks, by listing which offices they had most contact with.

There were a few formal networks. There was a parliamentary tactics group, which had a core of five advisers: one from the office of the Leader of Government Business in the House, one from the office of the Leader of Government Business in the Senate, one from the Treasurer's office, one of the Prime Minister's political advisers and the director of the Ministerial Media Group. This group coordinated parliamentary strategy and was a core group, as one of its members, Adviser 26, explained:

then we'd basically add on people that we needed like Industrial Relations or Health or Communications or whatever and we'd pull people in and we'd talk about tactics for that day. Overall strategy was set by the big chiefs - attack, defend, whatever - and then we work out the best way to do that.

There was a wider question time group where all offices were represented, which met after the Whip's meeting on parliamentary sitting days to exchange political information. There were also meetings of senior advisers from all offices, chaired by one of the Prime Minister's advisers, which discussed tactics and reported on the main action of the week ("basically what the PM is doing this week" (A05)).

There was a formal network of women policy advisers from most offices, which was brought together to collate information about what Labor was doing for women across all policy areas and to create policy ideas. It was chaired by one of the Prime Minister's advisers and met several times between 1993 and 1996. This was an interesting group because it was outside the usual functional linkages and cut across the major policy and political divisions between advisers. Some women who were in the group when it was established in 1993 said it was the first time they had made contact with some advisers on the other side of the social/economic policy divide or who worked for ministers from other factions.

Apart from these formally constituted groups, there was a range of informal networks associated with policy issues. Most of the advisers reported being part of networks which comprised advisers in adjacent or linked portfolios; the senior or junior minister's office; and the three central offices. The social policy
network and economic policy network were quite distinct. The social policy network, for example, consisted of the main offices involved in social policy plus designated social policy advisers in the Prime Minister’s office, Treasurer’s office and Finance minister's office. It was headed by the Prime Minister’s social policy adviser Mary Ann O'Loughlin who, it was said, 'sometimes called a "council of war" about a social policy issue'. (She was praised by many in the group for her coordination work). There was also a network of advisers from various offices brought together to discuss environmental issues, chaired by the Prime Minister's environment adviser.

Apart from these highly functional networks, there were factional networks which were basically loose alliances, as Adviser 1 explained:

You know the parliamentarians who are in your faction and they know you. ... You know their staff. There's things you'll say to them because they are in the same faction that you won't share with other offices. There's a closeness and camaraderie between offices in the same faction and similarly there's suspicion between offices from different factions.

Advisers also had personal networks based on people who socialised together, who had worked together in minister's offices in the past or who knew each other through their activities within the ALP. These advisers generally wanted 'to facilitate good outcomes for each other'. There were several advisers who had all worked in PM&C who 'helped' each other. Some very experienced advisers had good links with others who had also 'been around for a while'. One long time adviser commented: 'The longer you've been around the more extensive your networks are' (A15).

Figure 1 shows five examples of advisers' communication networks. It reveals how functional these networks were and how they related to the needs of the portfolio and to the particular role of each adviser.6

Adviser A worked for the Minister for Defence, Robert Ray. Her communication network comprised advisers in the junior minister's office (Defence Science & Personnel) and in the adjacent portfolio (Foreign Affairs). It also included advisers in the Prime Minister's office, Finance minister's office and Treasurer's office.

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6 It should be noted that the figure is indicative only and overlaps which may have complicated the figure are not detailed; for example that some left wing ministers were also in social portfolios.
FIGURE 1: ADVISERS’ NETWORKS

Adviser D (environment)

Adviser C (housing and regional development)

Adviser E (industrial relations and transport)

NSW right wing ministers

Adviser A (defence)

PMO= Prime Minister’s office
FMO= Finance minister’s office
TO = Treasurer’s office
Adviser B worked for the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of Government Business in the Senate, Gareth Evans. He had a special role in assisting with the minister's parliamentary responsibilities. Thus his communication network comprised the other members of the parliamentary tactics group and the three central offices - the Prime Minister's office, Finance minister's office and Treasurer's office.

Adviser C was a policy adviser who worked for Brian Howe, the Minister for Housing and Regional Development and the leader of the parliamentary left faction. Her communication network involved the social policy network which comprised the social policy advisers in the advisers in the Prime Minister's office, Finance minister's office and Treasurer's office, as well as staff in the offices of the Minister for Health, Minister for Social Security and Minister for Employment, Education and Training. Her communication network also included the staff of left wing ministers.

Adviser D was a policy adviser in the office of the left wing Minister for Environment, Sport and Territories, John Faulkner. The breadth of Adviser A's communication network indicates that this portfolio had an interest in what happened in a range of other portfolios and the need to consult widely to gain the support of other ministers. His network included advisers in the Prime Minister's office, Finance minister's office and Treasurer's office, as well as advisers in the economic portfolios of Resources; Industry, Science and Technology; and Primary Industry and Energy. It also included advisers in the social policy portfolios of Employment, Education and Training; Health; and Housing and Regional Development, as well as advisers working for left wing ministers.

Adviser E had political responsibilities in the office of the Minister for Industrial Relations and Transport, Laurie Brereton. His communication network differed from the other examples. Brereton was a member of the NSW right wing and had strong connections with the Prime Minister. Therefore Adviser E's communication network comprised only the other offices of NSW right wing ministers and the Prime Minister's office. This reflected Adviser E's role and the influence of his minister with the Prime Minister. Adviser E had ready access to the Prime Minister's office where he felt he could negotiate about matters his minister was pursuing, without needing to bargain with the Finance minister's office or Treasurer's office.

These networks reveal the importance of the three central offices (Prime Minister's office, Finance minister's office and Treasurer's office). Like the key
advisers in Kessel's White House study, they were at the intersection of the overlapping communication networks, and were part of most of the information flows that occurred amongst advisers. Their presence in virtually all the communication networks indicates their importance within the advisers' community, and their role as central coordinators. The examples also reinforce the functionality of the links between advisers, and explain why advisers in dissimilar portfolios might have virtually no contact with each other.

**Coordinating within the portfolio**

In line with Dunn's (1997) findings, this study also found an important communication link between senior and junior minister's offices, which was used to coordinate within the portfolio. There was often extensive contact between staff in the senior and junior minister's office. The senior advisers in each office saw it as their job to ensure the relationship worked, as Adviser 30, the senior adviser to a senior minister, explained:

> I talk regularly with staffers in the junior minister's office and parliamentary secretary's office about what decisions they are taking and what's going on. It is my responsibility to manage the relationship between our office and the junior minister's office. The junior minister has a distinct role but wherever there is a major policy issue in his area we get involved. ... It helps if the two senior advisers have a good relationship.

Often this interaction was vital because relationships between ministers were poor. Adviser 5 recalled how there were 'major confrontations' between with one senior minister he worked for and the junior minister:

> I saw it as my job with Minister Olive's senior adviser to manage that. We had to make sure we got the processes right. ... We had to ensure we managed the relationship in a way that was productive or at least minimally counterproductive.

These relationships did not always work well, and coordination was not always achieved. Advisers referred to 'tension, resentment and bad blood' between some senior and junior minister's offices (A27). Public servant 3 commented on 'huge problems' in one portfolio, where 'the communication on many occasions was zilch between the staff of the respective ministers'. This was particularly difficult in one case where the senior minister, junior minister and parliamentary secretary were from three different factions. Public Servant 6 commented: 'In this portfolio that has been a very fraught area. ... If you can get
NETWORKING AS COORDINATION

Three features of the networking between advisers enabled it to operate as a coordination mechanism. First, there were high levels of delegation between many ministers and their advisers, which enabled advisers to act as effective proxies. The limits of delegation were understood. Second, there were commonly understood 'rules of operation' in advisers' interactions which (where adhered to) kept the group operating effectively. Third, there was a well-understood power structure between advisers, with a small group of advisers having considerable authority and licence to direct other advisers. This meant that adviser level networks could be used for more than simply communication and consultation: they could be used to negotiate outcomes and to settle disputes.

Delegation

It was understood by ministers and their advisers that as much as possible executive negotiations should be done by advisers, acting as the representatives of ministers. Adviser 26 explained that this was because ministers 'were busy being ministers':

> Sometimes they would meet themselves ... but that was pretty rare, largely because they just didn't have the time and secondly unless it was really really sensitive and complicated it didn't need their personal involvement.

Ministers usually 'set the parameters' or gave 'riding instructions' for advisers' negotiations. They were usually only brought into negotiations themselves as a last resort, as Adviser 4 explained:

> Ministers don't have the meeting if the deal is done - they only meet if it is not able to be stitched up by staffers ... or if there was a need for more pushing and shoving. Mostly it was advisers who slugged it out.

Not all ministers were highly delegating (as seen in Chapter Five). A few were said to be 'very hands on' and 'extremely controlling', which constrained their advisers in negotiations. Much depended on the minister's personality, seniority and busyness. Advisers to busy ministers often had far more autonomy, as one explained:
The minister is comfortable in delegating a lot of the decision making to you as long as you keep her in touch when the major decision points come up. But generally she doesn't want you bothering her with information. So I ensure I bring her in at all the important decision points (A19).

The time pressures on some senior ministers were immense, with one adviser admitting that 'basically I always assume that he's always busy. ... Usually I simply can't find time to brief him on most things' (A08).

For advisers to operate as effective delegates they had to know their minister's mind and faithfully reflect the minister's agenda. They had to have a clear understanding of the parameters and objectives of the negotiation. Most advisers saw no problem with this as they were close to the minister, had ready access to him or her and were immersed in the policy issues. Adviser 6 said: 'You absorb the minister's position very strongly ... I know what he will do on an issue, what his boundaries and interests are. ... You know what positions he will and won't accept.' However it could be a problem when this was not the case, for example where advisers could not get access to talk over issues with the minister. In these cases the senior adviser often was their point of reference.

It was important to the functioning of the whole system that advisers knew the limits of their delegation. They had to know when they could agree to something and when they had to consult the minister. They had a fine sense of the parameters of their negotiating brief. This was important for their own survival - they would be very reluctant to go out on a limb that was not supported by their minister.

Ministers delegated, but were always the principals. They saw no distinction between what their advisers did for them and what they themselves did. Ministers in the study felt confident in advisers' operating as their agents and had a high degree of trust, saying 'any action they took would be in line with discussions we'd had' (Silver); 'I knew what they were doing most of the time even though I was busy' (Brown); and 'I wouldn't let someone go and do something if I didn't have trust or confidence in their ability to do it' (Orange).

Underpinning the system was the fact that if negotiations broke down, an issue could always be taken to ministers, either bilaterally or to cabinet. Advisers would say 'let's agree to disagree and let our principals sort it out' (A26).

Major problems occurred on the rare occasions when delegation was not working properly. Minister Red recounted a time when one of her advisers was not reflecting her position in negotiations with other staff. (She was
negotiating compromises with key advisers when the minister had no intention of compromising). This ran counter to the expectation that advisers would pursue the minister's position, even if they did not agree with it. She recalled:

Some of that interoffice networking was negative for a while because I discovered I had one person on staff who was running a different agenda, not a nice thing to discover. ... She had made a judgement that certain things couldn't be achieved ... but I had the inclination, and indeed the determination, that I would stand and fight. So then the messages were coming back in two directions and that was very problematic. ... It became very, very difficult.

**Rules of operation**

In their study of the community of bureaucrats involved in budgeting in Britain, Heclo and Wildavsky detected a 'culture' of rules which told members how to act towards each other (1974:14). These informal rules were very important as so much was at stake in these interactions:

Experienced members in the tightly knit community value such rules of the game, for they are rules which help them contain very real conflicts and a game about deadly serious questions of public policy (1974:94).

In his work on executive coordination mechanisms, Davis cites the importance of what he calls 'coordination routines' (1995:20). Using March and Olsen's (1989) work on institutions, he defines routines in the following way:

Routines ... are the standard repertoire of institutions, those rules and codes which guide action and give effect to values. Such routines impart character and culture to an organisation, since they establish and reinforce acceptable behaviour and shape daily practice (1995:25).

According to Davis, routines are crucial in enabling coordination; they are 'the key agent of coordination' (1995:26).

Advisers in this study expressed some common perceptions about what was 'done' and 'not done' in working with other advisers. These can be seen as informal 'rules' about how they should operate as a group, and thus as the 'culture' of the community (Heclo and Wildavsky 1974). These 'rules' were very important in enabling advisers to operate as a mechanism of coordination within the executive. There were four key understandings underpinning interaction. (Of course they were not always adhered to).

The first was *keep talking*. Relationships must remain amicable, even when you disagreed, when you didn't like or respect the other adviser, and even when
you lost a battle. If advisers had a falling out over a policy decision they had to 'get over it and go around the next day and ask them about something else. ... You can’t get the sulks just because someone’s turned you down' (A28). Some advisers consciously worked to keep their relationships operating in difficult times. Adviser 4, who worked for a junior minister constantly fighting off cuts, deliberately used humour to relieve the intensity of her conversations with the Finance minister’s adviser: 'I’d try to make our discussions enjoyable. She did not laugh much but I tried to keep it lighthearted, because it was so very serious.' An adviser to the Prime Minister explained that 'You can get very angry with people and say "right that’s it!" But ... in the end you always have to get over those differences and keep the communication channels open' (A38). Another Prime Ministerial adviser stressed how difficult this could be because 'often they’re people you just don’t like. ... If you never see them again you could be happy' (A36).

It was seen as crucial to keep talking when ministers were not. Advisers had to keep their relationships 'open and operating' when their ministers were in conflict or when relations had broken down between ministers. It was vital that the advisers kept channels of communication open. The next chapter discusses a major breakdown in policy coordination which occurred when this 'rule' was not adhered to. Several advisers stressed this as the most important 'rule'. Adviser 24 said:

That is absolutely crucial. If you don’t have a good relationship then you’ve got Buckley’s chance of being able to sit down with people [from a warring office] easily and comfortably. ... If you have disagreements over policy issues you don’t let that spill over into some sort of personal conflict. And it always helps to have another issue that you can agree on very quickly together. I think it’s absolutely crucial that you keep the relationships open and operating.

Adviser 6 felt that if two ministers had a bad relationship it was vital that their advisers had a good one:

A good relationship between advisers can be used to get around a bad relationship between two ministers. It’s a way of keeping the lines of communication open and carrying on doing business.

To be an effective adviser, you had to be able to work with the minister’s opponents. Adviser 18 recalled a case where he had to work with several hostile ministers’ offices about a submission his minister was putting forward. This was a process of careful consultation. For the minister to have any chance of succeeding in cabinet, the adviser had to be able to sit down with advisers
from hostile offices, find out their positions and deal with them. He explained the process:

It was just consultation, consultation, consultation. That's taken three months, but it was worthwhile. ... We got them down to one remaining issue, from one department, we solved all the other departments' problems, not because we had to compromise anything but because we had to make clear to people why their concerns were not real concerns. You sort it out one on one usually. Talk to them about their minister's concerns ... and say 'this is why it's not a problem for X. This is why it's not a problem for Y'. ... What you're trying to do is to take away the substance of their criticisms so they're just left with a straight out emotional response that 'this is something that has come from [portfolio A] so automatically I as the Minister for [portfolio B] have to oppose it'.

Third, advisers said it was important to 'play it straight' in policy fights, especially at Budget time, or at least to be seen to play it straight. This meant doing what you agreed to, and not taking outside of the ministry the fights going on between advisers, by leaking to interest groups, Caucus or the media. Ministers had to be seen as team players, so if such tactics were thought necessary, it was important 'not to leave your fingerprints on anything' (A15).

Lastly, while advisers were expected to fight for their minister's interests and agenda, it was seen as vital that they also take a whole of government perspective. This was expressed as being able to see 'what's best for everyone' (A24). An important part of this was accepting as authoritative the rulings of powerful advisers and ministers. Some advisers were notorious for not doing this, and for pursuing sectional interests above the interests of the government as a whole. Adviser 27 expressed the 'correct' view:

You have to know when you've lost and it's time to roll over. That is very important. Some minister's offices just don't know when the point has come to give up. They pretty soon get a label in the key offices and that label says 'pest'. I try never to reach that point, because it makes you ineffective as an adviser. Once the Prime Minister's office have decided I try and deliver it for them, because I believe in a corporate approach to government. I believe we should behave like public servants should with us - we have a right to put the argument, but we should know when to stop and accept the decision.

The power structure amongst advisers

The third factor which enabled advisers' networking to function as a coordination mechanism within the executive was the power structure which
underlay advisers' relationships. As Painter argues in his work on coordination, power and control are at the heart of coordination in government:

Coordination, like any other power game, is a matter of attempting to exercise, not simply assuming, control (1987:11).

Advisers in this study were asked about their perceptions of the pattern of influence amongst advisers in the ministerial wing, to detect whether there was a commonly understood power structure between advisers which shaped their interactions and served as a mechanism of coordination.7

Respondents were asked: 'who are the most influential advisers in Parliament House?' Because the interviews were qualitative and open ended, this question was followed by a general discussion of the pattern of influence amongst advisers. Respondents were always asked to explain what they meant by 'influential'; what it was that these individuals were able to do that demonstrated their influence. They were also asked to explain what they saw as the source of the power of the advisers they named as influential. There were 25 usable data sets.

Advisers found it easy to talk about the patterns of power and influence amongst their peers. It was often something they had thought about because of the nature of the environment in which they worked. They were very conscious of the relative weight and influence of individuals they dealt with, because so much of their work revolved around contest with others.

There have been criticisms of the reputational method of studying power, with the idea that elitist methods will tend to yield elitist results (see Muller and Heady 1996:138). Polsby's (1961, 1980) criticisms of the reputational method were that the scope of influence was not explicitly defined (so that nominators were asked to name the most influential people in the system as a whole); that nominators were assumed to agree on the meaning of terms such as influence and power; that there was no reason to assume that the nominators would be knowledgeable about who the influentials were; and that it was arbitrary to ask each nominator to supply ten names of influential people (see Muller and Heady 1996:139).

In this study, both the scope of influence and the meaning of the term 'influential' was discussed with each respondent. Those with both a narrow and a broad scope of influence were named, and the use of the term 'influential'

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7 This is based on Kessel's (1984) exploration of an influence structure amongst White House staff, discussed earlier.
was made explicit by each respondent (advisers generally expressed common understandings in their use of the term, which will be discussed later). The small size, coherence and physical proximity of the group and their frequent contact with each other are all reasons why I suggest that the advisers did have enough knowledge about the behaviour of other advisers to make valid assessments of relative influence. They were people who were very conscious on a day to day basis of weighing power and seeing it demonstrated in decision making processes. Advisers were also able to nominate as many 'influentials' as they wished to.

Because respondents were not randomly selected or spread evenly across all portfolios, the results do not provide a comprehensive map of all influential individuals within the ministerial wing at the time of the interviews. Rather the study aimed to detect a pattern of influence amongst advisers, and to explore whether there was a common perception of an underlying influence structure.

The study explores advisers' influence within the advisers' group rather than their influence per se. Interviewees were quick to point out that an adviser's influence within their own sphere was difficult for others to detect. It depended on how influential they were with their own minister, and how responsive the department was to their directions. Thus an important element of an adviser's influence was embedded in their relationship with their minister and the department, and was often hidden to others. It was made clear in interviews that the research sought to uncover an underlying influence structure amongst advisers; thus the question referred to their perception of the pattern of influence in the interactions between ministerial offices.

**Perceptions of power within the ministerial wing**

There was a high level of agreement amongst advisers about the pattern of power within the ministerial wing. They described a core influence structure in which there were two groups of influential people: those who were influential in political strategy; and those who were influential in terms of policy (with a small degree of overlap between the two groups). Outside this highly concentrated group of powerful advisers, there was a spread of influential individuals 'dotted around the place', whose influence was defined in relation to the core influence group. There was also an important power differential between advisers in senior and junior minister's offices within the same portfolio.
**Political strategists**

A group of seven advisers were nominated as influential on political strategy for the government as a whole. They were important in shaping the political agenda, 'getting our message out publicly' and managing the media for the government. These were (in order of the number of nominations each received):

**Table 8.2: Influential advisers: Political strategists (1995-6)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>name</th>
<th>position</th>
<th>no of nominations</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russell</td>
<td>(PMO - Principal adviser)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cox</td>
<td>(TO - Principal adviser)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watson</td>
<td>(PMO - Speechwriter/consultant)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Callaghan</td>
<td>(FMO - Senior adviser Parliamentary)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowtell</td>
<td>(PMO - Senior adviser Political)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowan</td>
<td>(PMO - Senior adviser Political)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epstein</td>
<td>(Director - Ministerial Media Group)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=25  PMO = Prime Minister's office; TO = Treasurer's office; FMO = Finance minister's office

This group comprised key individuals in the Prime Minister's office (Don Russell and Don Watson, 'the two people closest to the PM', and the Prime Minister's two political advisers, Bill Bowtell and John Bowan). It also included key political advisers in the Treasurer's office (David Cox) and the Finance minister's office (John O'Callaghan), as well as the Director of the Ministerial Media Group (David Epstein). Those who named Epstein saw him as a powerful figure, 'important in terms of the message you want to communicate' (A26), and in Watson's (2002) account he appears to be centrally involved in political strategy. That only 24% nominated him may indicate not all advisers were aware of his role and influence.8

Adviser 2 described this group as 'a coterie - very, very powerful. They devise the question time strategy and create the politics of the day'. Adviser 1 described them as:

> a conscious group of people who are a real tight core and they run the show in the interests of the Labor government. They are very bright people and formidable people. ... They see themselves as political warriors, in the Labor party for the long haul.

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8 To place these individuals in context, a list of the advisers who worked in the Prime Minister's office, Finance minister's office and Treasurer's office is at Appendix 2.
While most advisers described their influence as being limited to political strategy, some felt that this could also have implications for the policy sphere, as Adviser 25 explained:

They are not that important in getting policy decisions taken but ... very important in getting tactical or strategic decisions taken which can often be crucial in getting policy decisions taken, if you know what I mean.

Don Russell was nominated by all the respondents and was clearly seen as the most influential person in relation to other advisers. This was partly because of his position as head of the Prime Minister's office, but also because of his very close, trusting relationship with the Prime Minister. According to Watson, Keating and Russell decided 'jointly what to say, what not to say, what the tone and volume should be' (2002:215), and Keating praised Russell's 'splendid political mind' (2002:231). Watson said that Russell:

had the menace to win with the bureaucracy and with the ministers; the ability to handle several portfolios; the depth of corporate knowledge running back into the Hawke government; ... [an] intimate, mutually reinforcing relationship with Keating ... [and an] unequalled capacity to influence the Prime Minister. ... He was the one reliable conduit into Keating's mind. Where he went there went one's own influence (2002:385-6).

David Cox was also considered extremely influential. According to Adviser 40, he and Russell were 'the two bright stars who dazzled you' and were 'exceptional' compared to other advisers.

Policy influentials

There were 11 people perceived as most influential within the advisers' group on policy. These were (in order of the number of nominations):
Table 8.3: Influential advisers: Policy (1995-6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>name</th>
<th>position</th>
<th>policy sphere</th>
<th>no of nominations</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russell</td>
<td>PMO Principal adviser</td>
<td>all areas</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cox</td>
<td>TO Principal adviser</td>
<td>economic</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Loughlin</td>
<td>PMO Senior adviser social policy</td>
<td>social</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simes</td>
<td>PMO Senior adviser economic</td>
<td>economic</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapman</td>
<td>PMO Consultant</td>
<td>economic/social</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gyngell</td>
<td>PMO Senior adviser international affairs</td>
<td>international</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hickman</td>
<td>FMO Principal adviser</td>
<td>economic</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostyn</td>
<td>PMO Senior adviser communications</td>
<td>communications</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Neill</td>
<td>PMO Senior adviser environment</td>
<td>environment</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angley</td>
<td>FMO Consultant</td>
<td>economic/social</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livesey</td>
<td>TO Consultant</td>
<td>economic/social</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=25  PMO = Prime Minister's office; TO = Treasurer's office; FMO = Finance minister's office

These advisers were exclusively located in the Prime Minister's office, Treasurer's office and Finance minister's office, and included all of the Prime Minister's senior policy advisers. The Prime Minister's office was clearly very influential on policy. However there were differences in the scope of influence. Some of the Prime Minister's specialist advisers, such as Alan Gyngell, Sam Mostyn and Mark O'Neill, appeared to have a more limited scope of influence, though within their specialist policy areas they were considered very powerful. Mary Ann O'Loughlin's position on social policy was considered decisive. According to one key adviser this was because Keating was never as interested in social policy as other areas, 'so he very much left it to her, because he trusted her judgement' (A39). Ric Simes, Barbara Livesey and John Angley were influential because of their key roles in the Budget process. Don Russell, David Cox and Syd Hickman were said to have the broadest scope of influence in their input to economic policy generally.

Putting Tables 8.2 and 8.3 together, there were 16 people nominated as most influential in adviser interactions (as Russell and Cox appeared in both lists). Considering the total number of ministerial advisers was around 172, this represents a highly concentrated influence structure. The dominance of the Prime Minister's staff was evident in advisers' comments. For example when

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9 Ministerial Directory October 1995. The number varied over time. For a definition of the group see Chapter One page 10.
asked which advisers were most influential in Parliament House, Adviser 41 replied:

Unquestionably each of the senior advisers in the Prime Minister's office. Unquestionably. There can be no doubt about it. And following that the advisers in the office for the Minister for Finance who control the purse strings. But only to the extent I think that one needed them in order to get through to their minister. I don't know whether they were individually powerful. ... But in terms of policy development easily the most important people are the people in the Prime Minister's office.

**Other influential individuals**

As well as the core group which were nominated repeatedly, there was a small group of advisers who were mentioned several times. While most of the core advisers were nominated between 10 and 25 times, three advisers were nominated two or three times (Jack Lake 3; Ashley Mason 2; Gary Quinlan 2). They were all senior advisers to senior economic ministers (the Minister for Primary Industry and Energy; the Minister for Industrial Relations and Transport; and the Minister for Industry Science and Technology). They were also all advisers of long standing, whose experience, reputations and networks were significant. In addition, 11 individuals were nominated once.¹⁰

**General pattern of influence amongst advisers**

The pattern of influence amongst advisers described by respondents is thus a compact 'inner circle' of powerful advisers, based on the offices of the Prime Minister, Treasurer and Finance Minister. Other advisers were placed around the inner circle, but not in any hierarchy. Adviser 1 described the pattern in the following way:

There is an inner circle. ... Then you have another round of advisers who are doing a lot of the policy work, implementing a lot of the ideas that are coming from the inner circle. ... It vibrates out from the centre.

Interactions were focused on the inner circle, and other advisers were judged in relation to their influence on the inner group, rather than on interactions with each other. Adviser 23 explained:

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¹⁰ There may have been other influential individuals who were not listed for the reasons explained earlier relating to the number and spread of respondents. Responses are indicative only of the perceived pattern of influence.
It's actually hard to compare the influence of different advisers apart from the Prime Minister's office. Many advisers are not competing with each other for influence. They're all in separate boxes. ... But I think your relative power in relation to Finance is important.

The meaning of influence

Advisers tended to be consistent in their understanding of what it meant to be 'influential' amongst the adviser group. It had three aspects.

The power to support, obstruct, and veto

Many described advisers as influential because it was necessary to gain their support for policy proposals, and because they could obstruct or veto proposals they did not support. This particularly applied to the inner circle of policy influentials. Adviser 4 described influence as having 'the power to make decisions and stop things'. Adviser 1 described influence as being able to determine 'what gets up and what doesn't':

You could count on one hand the people that make a difference. If you have all those five people on side the issue will get up. ... The power in the ministerial wing is really in the PM's office, the Treasurer's office, the Finance minister's office. ... Coordinating the budget process for the portfolio this year ... was a real insight into how things actually work. There is an inner circle, ... a very small group of people who actually do determine what gets up and what doesn't - and they are advisers.

Adviser 19 explained that Barbara Livesey was influential because: 'to get something up I have to convince her and she has the power to obstruct you and to veto what you're doing.'

Who wins and gets their way

The second aspect to being influential was being able to 'win' and 'get your way', as Adviser 15 explained:

When I name them as powerful, I mean they can get their way. The powerful advisers are who wins and gets their way. ... A lot of decisions are made between ministers, corporately. The advisers who are the powerful players are those who can get the corporation to move the way they want, who can get the big ship to turn one way.

This meaning applied to both those in the inner circle and to those individuals who were powerful in relation to the inner circle. For example Adviser 15 saw Gary Quinlan as influential because 'he gets things up when he wants to.'
Access and involvement in key decisions

The third aspect to advisers' understanding of influence was demonstrated in involvement in key decisions and access to decision makers. This particularly applied to advisers outside the three central offices. For example Adviser 17 said Ashley Mason was influential because: 'he is very much involved in negotiating the Accord. He gets into the Prime Minister’s office, he has guaranteed access. He gets his phone calls returned.' Adviser 40 said David Cox had 'extraordinary' access: 'He can walk in anywhere and that makes him very influential'.

Power structures: senior and junior minister's offices

There was also an important difference in influence between advisers within a portfolio. Senior ministers' staff had power in the relationship. Junior Minister Green said about his staff: 'They recognised the senior adviser of the portfolio minister as their senior.' Adviser 5, who had worked for both senior and junior ministers over a ten year period, commented that when he worked for a senior minister: 'When I would go and see the junior minister's staff or the parliamentary secretary’s adviser I would feel like "aren't I a nice guy coming around to see you like this?".' Whereas when he worked for a junior minister and went to see the senior minister's senior adviser, 'I was more cap in hand, wanting something.' An adviser to a senior minister felt his office was 'in a position of power towards [the junior ministers’ staff] which is similar to our relationship with the PM's office. Ultimately we call the shots' (A27).

Several advisers to senior ministers reported incidents when they had prevented junior ministers taking decisions or actions by 'bouncing' the junior minister's staff. One said: 'I told them "Your minister should do it this way instead" and they followed that' (A23). Another stated: 'It was a blatant use of power I just said "no we're not doing that" ' (A41). The relationship between staff could be used to try to keep a junior minister in line. A senior adviser to a junior minister recalled the senior minister's senior adviser saying to him: 'if you can't control your minister what on earth are you there for?' (A37). But while they were clearly powerful in relation to the junior minister's staff, they were not more influential than junior ministers, as Junior Minister Green stressed:
There was one occasion where an adviser to the [senior] minister ... was immature, he was arrogant and he was stupid. And I said to the minister, 'Put him on a bloody rein. Don’t you allow him ever to bloody dare to presume to tell me what to do. Don’t ever let him think that he can get away with that. I simply won’t tolerate it.' ... And that’s all there was to it. It was over. I said 'You and I have related very well. If you want that damaged, you let that fellow have a free hand. If you don’t want that damaged, you put him on a bloody rein and tell him to get back into his kennel.'

Sources of power

Advisers were asked what they saw as the sources of power of those advisers they nominated as influential. In Kessel’s study of the influence structure amongst White House staff he found those nominated as powerful advisers were able to exercise power over other staff because they were held in respect; regarded as expert; because they were in a position to exercise sanctions; or because they had a legitimate right to supervise the work of those who reported to them (1984:240).

Advisers in this study nominated position and personal qualities as being the sources of power of the most influential advisers. Position was by far the most important factor, but the two came together as these advisers explained: 'People are influential because of the combination of where they are and the sort of people they are' (A18); 'Partly their position and also their competence. It’s the two coming together' (A20).

Position

The pattern of advisers’ influence reflected ministerial authority. This related not only to who the adviser worked for but also their position within that office. Adviser 28 stressed the primacy of position: 'It’s all positional. The most powerful adviser is the PM’s principal adviser - whoever that happens to be.' Adviser 1 said: 'It’s not so much who they are, but who they work for. ... I think it is the position and you attach status and intelligence to people according to their position.' A Prime Ministerial adviser agreed that:

It’s the position that gives you influence without a doubt. ... The Prime Minister’s the most important person in cabinet. ... If Paul Keating is convinced about something he is a hard person to toss. ... It’s really [more] about him than about us (A38).

The most influential advisers spoke for, and had the potential to influence the views of, the most powerful ministers in cabinet. Adviser 7 felt the Prime
Minister's office and Treasurer's office were 'extremely influential, mainly because the Prime Minister and the Treasurer can never lose in cabinet.'

An important mediating factor however was the quality of the relationship the adviser had with their powerful patron. Adviser 17 stressed that: 'I don't think any adviser has the peak of power without a strong personal relationship and influence and credibility with their minister.' For example it was said that Don Russell was far more powerful than others who had worked as Principal Adviser to Keating, because of the extraordinarily close relationship he and Keating had. By contrast it was said that no advisers in senior Minister Blue's office were very powerful amongst advisers, because he 'thinks he knows more than anybody on anything' (and thus they did not have much influence on his views).

**Personal qualities**

The personal qualities which affected advisers' influence encompassed their expertise or competence; their networks; and their style in exercising power.

Expertise and competence were cited as a source of power amongst advisers. Don Russell's enormous influence was linked to the fact he had policy expertise as well as political nous. Some commented on the 'genuine intellectual horsepower' of one influential adviser. Adviser 20, a member of the inner circle, said that 'in terms of your influence as an adviser, quality does count. If you're not up to it people will ignore you and you won't be invited to the meeting.'

Experience as an adviser and extensive networks could also be a source of influence in adviser interactions. Adviser 22 felt that: 'the more contacts you've got, the more effective and powerful you are.' One long time adviser saw influence as based on 'the people you're linked to and the capacity to get around and network' (A15). Adviser 18 nominated several advisers as influential 'because they've been around for a long time, and everybody knows them. They have been in quite a few portfolios, are experienced, have a broad view of government relations.'

Finally some felt that advisers could be empowered by a judicious personal style. For Adviser 4, this meant they did not behave harshly unless necessary:

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11 Former minister John Kerin has suggested that the Prime Minister 'always effectively has about ten votes in cabinet' (1996:20).
By personal style I mean they could achieve things without a blood bath. Take A44 for example. He had the potential to become one of the key advisers, because of his position, but he didn't. Why? His nickname says it all: Big Foot. He was arrogant, harsh. It's about knowing when to crush and when to laugh. It's about knowing when to let someone have a win. It's the style with which you inflict a loss. Take A53 - she was a vogue adviser. She had a great style, personal charisma, friendliness. She didn't rub things in, she took things in her stride. Whereas A44 was nasty.

By contrast Adviser 15 felt that ruthlessness was important to being influential:

Take A51. He gets his own way all the time by rat fucking everyone. I've been a great admirer of his for some time now! [laughs]. To win and get your way you need both a policy bent and a strategic political rat fucking bent.

Yet he also agreed that: 'often the most powerful are those who only use it when they have to'. One of the most influential economic advisers admitted to cultivating a 'hard man' style, which was useful because of the special role his office had in maintaining fiscal discipline:

A lot of them think I'm a bit of a bastard, so they don't approach me. I tend to take a pretty hard line on things. This can be useful to the advisers in the office to have me in the background. They can threaten other offices with me. If they're having difficulty with someone they can suggest they talk to me (A20).

Reputational analysis thus reveals that there was a commonly understood power structure amongst advisers at this time, consisting of an 'inner circle' of influential advisers drawn from the three central offices as well as a series of influential individuals whose power was defined in relation to this group. This perception can be seen as 'kinship' in Heclo and Wildavsky's (1974) terms; that is, a shared understanding of 'who matters most? and how are they related?'. There was also found to be a 'culture' of rules that told them how to act towards each other (1974:14). It was the 'kinship' and 'culture' amongst advisers, as well as high levels of delegation by ministers, which enabled their networking to operate as a coordination mechanism.

CONCLUSION

This chapter used qualitative interviews and reputational analysis to illustrate two points. First, advisers interact through informal relationships and develop networks with other advisers which are essential to the performance of their
work. Second, this networking between advisers functioned as a coordination mechanism for three reasons: because ministers delegated sufficient authority to advisers to make their interactions meaningful; because there were informal rules which ensured interaction was functional; and because there was an underlying power structure amongst advisers which allowed some staff to exert authority in these interactions.

It is important to stress that while the underlying power structure amongst advisers may have been clear, how power was exercised was not simple. There were strong conflicts between individuals in the Prime Minister's office, with different forces winning out at different times, and also conflicts between advisers in the Prime Minister's office and the Treasurer's office. Ministers had cross-cutting power relationships which affected advisers' interactions. Prime Ministerial advisers were also keen to stress that they were dependent in important ways on the work of line advisers. One Prime Ministerial adviser, Adviser 38, commented that:

I am influential, but sometimes I think the more interesting question is who influences me? And they were the good ministers, the good advisers in ministers' offices who did exactly that.

The next chapter shows adviser networking in operation, examining how advisers worked together in policy coordination. It focuses on the role of advisers in the three central offices, particularly the Prime Minister's office. It examines a case where there was a breakdown in adviser networking which caused major problems for the Keating government.
Nine
'Trying to make the whole thing run well':
The role of the centre in policy coordination

Having explored the structures and practices underlying advisers' networking, this chapter examines how advisers worked together in policy coordination, with a particular focus on the role of advisers in the three central offices. These advisers played important coordination roles surrounding the formal decision making processes within the executive. The chapter first describes how adviser networking was used to coordinate policy within the ministry. It looks in detail at the work of central office advisers in the Budget process. It then discusses the special role of advisers in the Prime Minister's office. Finally it analyses a case where advisers failed to coordinate, and then worked to repair the damage this caused, to illustrate the critical nature of this work and some of its vulnerabilities.

ADVISERS' WORK IN POLICY COORDINATION

Ministerial offices were the locus of much policy debate within the executive, with advisers acting as the agents of ministers. While they were political debates, the content and outcomes were all about policy: how much money was spent or saved, whether ministers could pursue new agendas and if so, when and how. The work of advisers in policy coordination had three elements: facilitating cabinet decision making, resolving policy conflict and pulling together new policy.

Facilitating cabinet decision making

Adviser networking was critical to the effective operation of cabinet. It facilitated cabinet decision making in two ways: by assisting ministers to make decisions in cabinet; and by enabling decision making to occur outside of cabinet.
Decision making in cabinet

Communication between advisers before cabinet meetings was vital in clarifying and refining the issues to be discussed, identifying areas of disagreement and in preparing ministers for cabinet discussions. This made cabinet's discussions more focused. Several advisers commented that 90% of issues going to cabinet were already agreed upon before they were formally considered by cabinet. This left fewer contentious matters for cabinet to deal with, which reduced both the conflict in cabinet and its workload. That advisers conducted much of this business saved ministers' time and kept them out of the 'minutiae' and petty conflict that could harm their relationships (Orange). It was often very detailed and time-consuming work.

Adviser networking was important in preparing cabinet ministers for cabinet meetings. Advisers played a vital role in reading all the incoming cabinet documents, selecting those the minister would be most likely to have an interest in, researching those proposals by speaking to others, and providing advice about whether support was warranted. Often one person in the office was assigned this role. This was a service line departments did not provide for ministers. Minister Brown, whose many portfolios had included Finance, remarked:

Your office is crucial in enabling you to play an effective role in cabinet. There's so much paper coming through you simply have to have people around you who can give you advice on at least all those areas where you have an interest. Many issues as a cabinet minister you have minimal interest in and you can let them go by. Except as Finance Minister, where the cabinet is absolutely your forum and you have to be across everything.1

He described what he expected his staff to do in helping him prepare for cabinet meetings:

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1 Ministers varied in how seriously they took their cabinet role. Some ministers did not give it high priority and did not wish their staff to spend much time on this task. They considered themselves able to participate as discussion occurred without much briefing (Blue). Others wanted detailed briefs from their advisers and relied heavily on these in cabinet (Black). Their style related to the nature of their portfolio and their workload as well as their personality and interests.
I expected them to look at the cabinet submissions and ... to write me a note on it saying 'I think this or that about this issue. I'm going to argue with them or agree with them or it's just a non-issue.' Often their comments in writing I would have no chance to discuss with them because there was just such a welter of issues around. So I had to stagger into cabinet with all these documents, some of which you had read and some of which you hadn't had time to read, no matter how diligent you were. You'd look it up and see 'what does this adviser say about this?' There was usually a note from them, particularly on anything important.

Adviser 18 had responsibility for briefing his line minister for cabinet. Part of preparing a note involved talking to other advisers about their ministers' submissions. He explained:

I can read a cabinet submission, and have a pretty good idea of what I think they’re after. But it’s quite often worthwhile to ring them up and say 'Look, after reading through, this is what I think you’re after. But is that true?' Quite often they’ll say 'No. This is what we’re really after. This is how it’s come about. This is the background to it.'

An equally important part of his brief to the minister was what he found out about the views of other cabinet ministers, in particular what position the Prime Minister and Finance minister were likely to take. This was important to know because: 'all ministers will factor in, if they’re going to say the same as somebody else, what that means for relationships and alliances.' It was vital to know the Prime Minister's position before the meeting because of Keating's style in cabinet - a 'propensity to lead from the front' (Blewett 1999:268) - which Minister Brown described:

Keating was more inclined to state his position early, which had the effect of chopping off debate. Some ministers were not inclined to vent their disagreement with the Prime Minister. Things they would have said weren’t said. ... I tended to think Keating should have let discussion run on a bit first before coming in, but probably Hawke let it run too far. I think Keating came into the ring far too quickly in general. I should say that on some issues Keating let things run on unbelievably, especially on difficult issues. So it wasn’t always the case that Keating would be in there, but if he had a point of view he expressed it.

Public Servant 5, a finance official who was centrally involved in the Budget process, saw this 'pre-digestion' of cabinet matters amongst advisers as critical to effective decision making, because 'you can't run these things cold':

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It's important that everyone knows where everyone is coming from, that there's not too many surprises when you get to the table, or else there's just no decisions. We can do a bit of that by keeping aware of what's going on, but the ministers' offices play a really critical role in that area. When they didn't, that's when things tended not to go very well. ... Decisions were not made on the basis of a full understanding of what's going on. People were talking at odds. Advisers then talk after the event when everyone has settled down and they go through and realise where the mistake is and they go fix it. But it is very rare that that would occur. Generally advisers performed that role well, so those mistakes didn't happen. John Angley [FMO] was fabulous at that.

Ministers taking a proposal to cabinet relied on staff to explain the proposal to other advisers, sound out the likely views of other ministers and attempt to persuade them, through their staff, to support it. Trading may occur on the basis of these discussions. At the very least the minister would know the reception he or she was likely to receive in the cabinet room, enabling arguments to be marshalled and tactics honed. Adviser 4 described her role in pre-cabinet networking:

My job would be to assess the obstacles you faced within the ministry and with particular staffers in particular offices. You would get a clear idea of your objective in the battle and assess who you needed to negotiate with yourself and when you would actually have to word the minister up and organise a meeting between ministers. This didn't happen often - mostly things were negotiated out by advisers.

Public Servant 1 described the work of line advisers before cabinet as finding out the real agendas, 'stitching up things', and trying to 'soften up' ministers, often by 'trying to split them away from their department's views'. Advisers felt the quality of their networking affected outcomes in cabinet. Adviser 15 described how in one of the major policy statements, his portfolio delivered $800 million in savings, $350 million of which was spent by another minister. He felt that 'really effective networking may have got us more of the money'. Adviser 19 recalled some cabinet submissions 'that I should have massaged better' which 'got knocked off'.

Because the position of advisers in the three central offices on any matter was influential, finding this out and lobbying them was crucial to a minister's success in cabinet. Adviser 27 described how he lobbied advisers in the three central offices before cabinet:
If there is something I want to get up, I'd go and talk to them about it, I'd argue it out with them and try and win the argument. I'd go back and try again. I'd come at it from a number of different ways. I'd try to form strategic alliances. I'd try and find a strategic lever to push. I'd twist arms if necessary. ... Sometimes I'd win.

These advisers could respond in different ways, but only occasionally said 'yes', according to Adviser 4:

Sometimes they'd say 'piss off - it'll have to be sorted out in cabinet.' Sometimes they'd say I'll get back to you when I find out a little more about it. Sometimes they'd then come back with some of what you want. Occasionally they'd come back and say 'yes' but more often they would offer a compromise position and you'd either accept it or not.

Thus adviser networking before cabinet had two useful functions for decision making in cabinet. First it was important in the flow of information in the ministry, ensuring there was adequate consultation and clarifying ministers' intentions. Second, advisers' discussions played the role of what former Treasurer and Finance Minister Brown called 'thrashing out' issues:

My advisers would talk to staffers about those issues and try to understand them better and argue things through with them and test propositions out with them. ... To try and thrash out an issue.

These discussions also refined the issues of dispute, what one Prime Ministerial adviser referred to as 'boiling things down to their essentials' (A36). Public Servant 5, a senior Finance official, saw this as vital to ensuring cabinet worked effectively:

The objective is to get ministers to be making big decisions not little decisions. You want to get all the crap off the table so that they're actually saying 'Do we want to achieve this objective?' You don't want them to start talking about how we're going to do it. Which is a waste of their time. ... That is sorted out between departments and between advisers beforehand. That's what happened all the time and that is what is desirable. Our system is built around getting most of the rubbish off the table.

It was expected that this negotiation and debate amongst advisers would resolve issues as much as possible before they came to cabinet. Adviser 36, from the Prime Minister's office, said that often 'nine out of ten issues are decided, but on one out of ten there is still some talking necessary'. Another Prime Ministerial adviser, Adviser 38, saw it as important to have these fights outside of cabinet, in the 'argy-bargy' between ministers' offices:
There is quite a bit of that argy-bargy between ministers' offices to resolve something and then you get the tick of the ministers. ... So when they [go] to cabinet the fight has been had already. ... We already had the big argument and knocked this off, we didn't do that, and put this forward.

She saw this as part of Keating's style in managing relationships within the ministry, saying:

It's true that a lot of things were decided outside of cabinet and ... even where things went to cabinet often the decision was made beforehand by getting the ministers together. That's just the way Paul liked to work.

This process recalls Heclo and Wildavsky's image of ministerial conflict as 'like the collision of mammoth icebergs': 'Before the tips impinge, the grinding and crunching has already been well underway below the surface' (1974:79). This 'grinding and crunching' occurred at two levels: between departments and between ministerial offices. Departments and advisers worked together to win these debates, bargaining at different levels. Advisers could find out information from other ministerial offices which helped departments in their battles, and vice versa. Adviser 4 recalled how the battle was waged at two levels:

Often your department would alert you that their department was going to block you - you'd get tipped off early to get to them. ... You'd go around to see them unannounced if possible, before they've been briefed by their department, so you'd catch them when they weren't fully across it. It was important to get to them before their position had hardened around their department's advice.

Departments which were not close to their ministerial offices were vulnerable to adviser level lobbying. Adviser 23 said: 'It is not uncommon to find an office with a different view to its department - that gives you leverage.'

At times conflict between ministers was managed entirely outside of cabinet. Some Prime Ministerial advisers saw it as their role to settle arguments before cabinet met, so that there were no 'fights' in cabinet. One Prime Ministerial adviser, Adviser 10, saw this as her role in working on a major cabinet submission:

My job was to make the cabinet process as uncontroversial as possible. Last time they went to cabinet there had been a lot of conflict about the issue within cabinet. So my role was to ensure it was an uncontroversial cabinet item. I made sure all the major portfolios and stakeholders were consulted and understood what we were doing well before hand.
She felt she was successful because the package went through unchanged in the cabinet meeting and was not seen as controversial. However the desire to ensure there were 'no brawls in cabinet' was at the heart of the problems that beset the government in its decision on woodchip export licences, which will be discussed later in the chapter.

Decision making outside of cabinet

In decision making which occurred outside of cabinet, advisers operated as the delegates or proxies of ministers in negotiating outcomes. They could also play an important role in preparing ministers for their ad hoc and informal negotiations outside of cabinet.

This type of interaction between advisers was common, especially where several ministers needed to be consulted about a decision outside of cabinet. For example, an adviser reported that during an industrial dispute in the portfolio, the minister was required to get the agreement of the Minister for Finance and the Minister for Industrial Relations to the proposed offer of settlement, because of its cost and precedent value. The Minister for Finance was often required to endorse bilaterally the final costings of proposals that had been approved in principle by cabinet.

Advisers could be delegated to talk and negotiate an outcome (seeking authorisation from their ministers as they went), which was then confirmed by exchange of letters between ministers or telephone conversations when an agreement had been reached. Advisers reported it was often extremely difficult to find times when several ministers were available to speak to each other either in person or by phone. Usually if an agreement had been reached there was no need for ministers to speak. They might talk only if there were outstanding issues that could not be resolved by advisers. However they always signed letters authorising what had been agreed.

Where ministers did meet to decide matters informally outside of cabinet, advisers also played an important preliminary role, finding out what these ad hoc meetings were about and what the views of other ministers were. This was critical, according to one key minister, Minister Brown:
Can I say it is really, really important to have a senior adviser who is on the ball politically in those small group meetings. Often he could find out things before hand which helped you, so you knew what you were walking into. Often, you weren't sure what was happening! [laughs] Not that you would be entirely without thoughts on the issue yourself but you're not sure where anybody else is coming from, particularly the Prime Minister. To find out what his thinking is beforehand is really quite important. It is really important as a minister to know what's in the minds of your fellow ministers before you actually hear them say it. ... So you have to have somebody on staff who is able to find that out.

Resolving policy conflict

Advisers' networking was also used to resolve policy conflict in the executive. Staff worked to develop consensus on issues on which there were conflicting views amongst ministers. Often issues were lifted up from the bureaucratic level to be resolved by staffers. Adviser 24 recalled a group of four advisers representing four portfolios sitting down over a coffee and resolving a joint approach which had been preceded by months of fighting between departments. As noted in Chapter Eight, public servants reported that it was easier for advisers to break the log jams that at times developed between departments, because they had a clearer sense of the whole of government perspective on an issue and the political authority to strike compromises.

Resolving the government's position on complex, multi-player policy issues could be very time-consuming and was often done informally, through dialogue and negotiation between advisers. Minister Grey recounted his advisers' role in facilitating a major policy change in his portfolio that was politically controversial and involved much conflict between ministers:

The advisers played a big role behind the scenes, talking to other senior advisers. ... They were involved in lots of negotiations with Health and Finance on funding issues. There were big meetings with Industrial Relations because the unions weren't happy with what we were doing. ... They attended lots of meetings with ... other minister's offices and would come back and tell me where we were at. ... The advisers would go through all the avenues to resolve the problems before involving me. At times as a last resort problems would be resolved minister to minister.

Sometimes on difficult issues consensus was ground out through meetings of groups of advisers, chaired by someone from the Prime Minister's office. This process was critical in forcing ministers to take a whole of government
perspective and in managing conflict within the ministry. The Prime Minister's advisers had considerable authority to make deals where there were policy disputes outside of cabinet. One Prime Ministerial adviser explained:

I guess on a lot of things you’re saying 'OK I’ve got the authority to work out this deal and I understand what the PM would agree with or what he wouldn’t agree with or what he’d care about. Let’s resolve the issues' (A38).

Another adviser from the Prime Minister's office, Adviser 10, described herself as 'an arbiter':

You are the one who makes the call as to where the balance is struck. You need an ability to negotiate and balance packages in the context of competing interests. This is very important. ... [Last week] two ministers put up a joint proposal but were coming from very different perspectives. It was my role to try to negotiate some way through so that the Prime Minister knew what was good policy.

Prime Ministerial advisers were not only arbiters but also enforcers of consensus, as another Prime Ministerial adviser explained:

The Prime Minister's office often becomes a third player in a dispute, trying to resolve some question of policy. ... At some particular point you have to change your role and then tell them that they have to accept what’s happened (A36).

**Pulling together new policy**

The final policy coordination role advisers had was pulling together new policy, where policy packages involved a number of portfolios. This involved brokering consensus and enforcing a whole of government approach. The Prime Minister's advisers played a key role in coordinating and steering the development of these policy packages, to ensure they delivered both policy coherence and political advantage.

This involved deciding when and how different packages of new policy would occur. A line adviser explained that:

Because they have the levers on all the big government strategy, they’ll usually give you a sense of if you can proceed with an agenda, how, what language should be used, what to link it to and when you can start to get moving on it (A01).
An adviser recalled Don Russell playing this coordination role when he returned to head the Prime Minister's office at the end of 1995 and began 'pulling together' what became the Community and Nation Statement:

He said to the various offices involved 'Give me your drafts. I need to pull things together. I need to work out timing, sequencing, when we're going announce, how we're going to link these things up, how we're going to trade off because if you want to spend on that and that, but you can't spend on both, how are you going to do it?'...and there was a great burst of energy and coordination (A26).

Part of this role entailed mobilising other offices and departments to do the work within certain timeframes. One Prime Ministerial adviser saw it as her job 'to pull together other ministers' offices and departments to make things happen. That's an important part of my advisory role. I really have to push it' (A10).

Where policy development involved a number of portfolios, groups of advisers often worked together to develop policy and to negotiate the detail and shape of packages. Advisers' meetings, usually chaired by one of the Prime Minister's staff, mirrored interdepartmental committees (IDCs) operating at a bureaucratic level and directed their work to ensure political control of policy development. While departments did the detailed work it was a group of advisers who often decided where lines would be drawn and shaped the packages that then went to cabinet for decision. This work was particularly important during the Keating years, which were notable for the large number of major cross-portfolio policy statements released (Cockfield and Prasser 1997).

According to one Prime Ministerial adviser, Adviser 38, who used adviser groups to develop several major policy packages, this process had two functions: 'it was a deliberate strategy to try to influence the IDC, but also to make sure the ministers' offices could keep their ministers aware of what was happening'. For these complex exercises, it was her job to ensure the process was effective in setting priorities, and also in managing conflict between ministers and driving consensus by everyone feeling satisfied they had 'had their say'. She explained how important this was to delivering political agreement:
Very soon ... they were going to have to jump on an issue. And it wasn't any good coming at the end of the day and simply going "have you thought about this?". Because they were such big issues of government we were dealing with, it had to be that people felt happy with the processes and felt they'd had their say, and there weren't surprises. ... And at the ministerial office level that we'd thrashed things out enough so that we felt that we could advise our ministers that we were pretty happy with what was happening. It does tend to cut down on the big stand-offs and the brawls right at the end. The taking up of the gunfighting position. We did that quite a lot.

The policy coordination role described in this section can be seen as important in facilitating the decisions of the ministry, both inside and outside of cabinet, and in helping to manage conflict within the political executive. It also enabled political management of major policy development exercises which crossed a number of portfolios. This is work that ministers do not have time to do themselves but it is vital to the effective operation of the government. It is a role now recognised as one of the main functions of advisers, by ministers, advisers and public servants. It is an important element of the functioning of the 'gearbox' of executive coordination (Campbell 1998), which a government needs to engage effectively if it is to have the capacity to govern.

THE WORK OF ADVISERS IN THE THREE CENTRAL OFFICES

The preceding description of advisers' policy coordination work confirms the enormous power of staff in the three central offices in relation to other ministerial advisers. Adviser 34, who moved from a spending minister's office to the Treasurer's office, was struck by the realisation that: 'within the ministers' offices, the grouping of the Prime Minister's, Treasurer's and Finance Minister's offices are much more in control of decision making than I realised'.

The power of advisers in the three central offices stemmed from the power of their ministers within the government, and from the power of the departments they worked with.

These advisers briefed the most powerful ministers. They were the last to speak to those ministers before they entered the meetings where important decisions were made. They were keen to stress that their ministers were extremely capable and experienced (some having been in cabinet for 13 years) and that they came to their own views on all matters. Still, it was significant to
be the people providing those ministers with information, opinion and argument. Junior Minister Purple felt this made them at times more powerful than some ministers:

Of course they're powerful. Do you not think they can zap some little wet-behind-the-ears adviser who doesn't have the networks? Of course they can! Those powerful advisers are probably at times more powerful than some ministers. Cabinet documents don't go to all ministers. If you can advise your very senior minister when s/he goes to cabinet 'Listen support this' and that minister says 'Yeah righto' - of course they're powerful. But sometimes you may be able to beat them.

Another source of their influence was the fact that these advisers could unleash or restrain the power of the coordinating departments (Prime Minister and Cabinet; Treasury and Finance). They had the power to confirm, modify or negate the advice provided by the three most powerful departments. Long periods of fiscal restraint during the Labor years had empowered these departments, and they ran strong agendas which aimed to tightly control spending (Campbell and Halligan 1992). Their intransigence (especially Treasury and Finance) gave these advisers an important role and significant influence. It was often up to them to devise compromise solutions or to 'think creatively' about how to reconcile the budgetary and political problems arising from policy proposals, while their departments held their lines. Adviser 34, an adviser to the Treasurer, explained how she did this at Budget time:

A department will put up a proposal and Treasury will advise "No" and I'd find a compromise way through. It's one of the things I enjoyed most about my role. In my briefing to the minister I would come up with a "possible way of dealing with this portfolio". We can accept these and reject those; we can ask them to develop a package with these elements. This is the creative or lateral work. ... In the programs I looked after the advice Treasury gave was fairly predictable which meant I had a bigger role in crafting options which suited his thinking.

Finally, advisers in the central offices were powerful because they worked closely together and if they could all agree, then their position would be almost 'overwhelming'. Adviser 39, from the Prime Minister's office, commented:

Usually by the time things get to cabinet there's been a filtering of issues and refinement of positions. And there is generally agreement between the Prime Minister's office and the Treasurer's office and the Finance Minister's office, and if that's the case it's the end of the game really.

Adviser 31, who worked for the Finance Minister, stressed that usually it would be 'sorted' so those ministers never 'clashed' in cabinet.
The Budget

Advisers to the Prime Minister, the Treasurer and the Finance Minister had special roles in the Budget process, a time when ministerial conflict was particularly intense and the need for executive coordination was particularly acute. These roles were largely played out in the informal processes which surrounded the formal stages of the Budget. There were four stages in the Budget process in the Keating years: Troika, Trilaterals, Expenditure Review Committee and Budget Cabinet. The Expenditure Review Committee of cabinet (ERC) was established in 1983 to vet government expenditure and advise cabinet on spending priorities (Hawke 1996:176). It operated as the main engine of the Budget process (Campbell and Halligan 1992:136-144). Yet much crucial work was done before ERC actually met, in the Troika and Trilaterals. These meetings can be seen as part of the 'ERC process'.

A group of six advisers (two each from the Prime Minister's office, the Treasurer's office and Finance Minister's office) had important roles in managing the ERC process. They not only prepared their ministers for meetings and attended the meetings, they also played key roles in informal negotiations with other advisers outside those meetings. Public Servant 5, a Finance official who was centrally involved in the Budget process, said that 'only ministers are important in the Trilaterals and ERC meetings themselves, but advisers play a critical role in the run up to the meetings and after the meetings'.

Troika

Key advisers were involved from the earliest stage of the government's Budget deliberations: Troika. Troika meetings involved the Prime Minister, Treasurer and Finance minister, as well as advisers to each of these ministers and a cabinet note taker. Troika decided the target for the Budget bottom line and the general parameters and key themes of the Budget. There were also informal Troika meetings where the three ministers met, with one adviser each and no notetakers. An adviser to the Treasurer said these informal meetings were very influential in deciding the 'game plan':

2 The ERC process was also used for developing major policy statements outside of Budget time such as the Innovation Statement and Creative Nation.
It is these meetings — which I attend — which make the influential decisions on the government’s priorities. ... You decide whether you’re going to spend money on two or three key areas or whether you’ll do a range of smaller things across a wider perspective (A34).

At times advisers could participate actively in Troika meetings as Adviser 38, an adviser to the Prime Minister, explained:

The Prime Minister is there with a million proposals in front of him and there’s no way he is going to know the details of every single one of them. And they’d be saying ‘well let’s knock this off’ and he’d say ‘I don’t know’ and I’d say ‘we shouldn’t do that because of blah, blah, blah’. He’s looking to me and I used to find when it got down to that that I’m fighting with other ministers.

However advisers were always clearly subordinate. An adviser to the Finance minister described as ‘nerve racking’ a period when he often had to attend Troika without his minister; he felt he ‘was skating on thin ice’ (A40).

Trilaterals

After the parameters of the Budget had been set by Troika, portfolio ministers were grilled about their submissions (containing new policy proposals and offsetting savings) at the Trilaterals. Trilateral meetings involved the Treasurer, the Finance minister and each portfolio minister, one by one. PM&C staff would record decisions of the meetings. The Finance minister had one or two staff with him and someone from the department. The Treasurer also had staff present.

Only ministers were important in the Trilateral meetings, but advisers had done crucial work before the meetings. Six advisers from the three central offices (two from each office) had done a preliminary cull of submissions. One adviser involved in culling described the process:

The preliminary culling process in the Budget involves going through all the various proposals and saying which are economically sensible and which are not, culling and adding things which we thought should be pursued. ... That was always done without reference to our ministers. But it was not just "out"/"in". There were five categories I think ... "clearly out/clearly in"; "probably out/probably in" and so on. There were shades of grey. The three ministers weren’t involved in that process. Because it was so detailed they were happy to delegate (A21).

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3 It was a pre-election Budget and his minister held a marginal seat and was frequently ‘on the road somewhere’ on weekends when a lot of the early Budget work was done.
This culling formed the basis of the grilling ministers faced at the Trilaterals, which decided what ministers could or could not bring forward to ERC, what additional savings proposals they had to work on and bring forward, and what the bottom line of their portfolio submission was to be. In this way by the time ministers fronted ERC much work had already been done to shape ministers' portfolio submissions. Trilateral meetings could be fairly 'brutal', as an adviser to the Finance minister who was centrally involved recalled:

Generally ministers would go out fairly bruised. At times they'd get some things through, at times they'd get their submissions thrown out completely and be told to come back with something entirely different. ... In the last couple of Budgets some of my advice in the Trilaterals would be to reject that submission entirely as a junk submission - they're miles out of the ball park, there's nothing either politically or economically sensible in that submission, there's no argument for supporting what they have done, get rid of it! ... After they'd been to the Trilaterals the stamp would be all over them before they came back again (A31).

Critical discussions occurred amongst advisers in central and line offices after the Trilaterals. This concerned what was able to be brought forward to the ERC and what reception proposals were likely to get in ERC. Adviser 34, who worked for the Treasurer, reported that advisers rang her constantly before their minister's appearance at ERC wanting to talk about their submissions:

They want an indication of the Treasurer's likely position on their spending or an idea of how much we will ask them to save. My standard response was 'we don't have money to spend in these areas at all'. ... I'd always be harder than I knew we'd be at the end of the day. It's all about game playing. ... These conversations can be decisive because at times advisers would go back and tell their ministers that this was the Treasury office view and then the proposal would be changed or dropped.

These conversations were also useful for her, to assess which proposals line ministers were genuine about and which ones were 'departmental shopping lists'. Adviser 32, who had worked for the Finance minister, said:

You would have a look at a department's list of new policies and go and talk to the adviser and say, "now you're not serious about the bottom 15 are you?" And they would say "oh well, I am serious down to the bottom 10". And then you would report to the minister that he might get away with knocking off the bottom 15.

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4 Lobbying also occurred at a ministerial level. ERC member Neal Blewett recalls colleagues 'beating a path to [his] door to make their claims' (1999:105).
In these discussions the advisers who attended ERC had 'a lot of clout', as Adviser 31 recalled: 'You’d see them exercise it. People would come in and say: "We’ve got to get this up" and they’d say: "That’s crap, you’re not going to get it up. It’s not going in".' Adviser 40, who worked for the Finance Minister, felt that he and the Treasurer’s adviser ‘really shaped a lot of the agenda of the ERC by cutting things off before they got there, by turning up together to negotiate with ministers, saying "we’ll accept this or that" or "we don’t want that going in".’ Adviser 34 said she would tell other advisers 'no, you can’t bring that forward', but always with the Treasurer’s 'blessing'. Adviser 40 described the tone of these negotiations:

> It was all pretty ruthless really. ... We did some terrible things to people. ... We were rarely open with other advisers. ... We’d go back and renegotiate deals. ... We reserved the right to continually change the rules.

Before ERC the three central offices would also have generally agreed on a common approach, which was then 'pretty powerful', an adviser to the Treasurer explained:

> I usually developed joint positions with the Finance Minister’s office and Prime Minister’s office before ERC meetings. ... I think I have the ability to have a lot of influence on the outcomes of the ERC because I can work with the three offices and develop agreed positions, which are then pretty powerful (A34).

**ERC**

In the first Keating government the ERC comprised the Prime Minister, Treasurer, Finance Minister and six senior ministers. Its decisions were 'de facto cabinet decisions' (Walsh 1995: 103). The Treasurer chaired ERC meetings. Portfolio ministers appeared one by one before the committee. ERC members generally did not have staff present; only the Treasurer and Finance minister did. While there was always someone from the Prime Minister’s office present, Keating himself rarely attended ERC. This was different to Hawke who had chaired ERC.

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5 The senior ministers were Richardson, Beazley, Blewett, Button, Howe and Evans (Blewett 1999:78). Its membership and size varied over the Keating period.

6 According to former Finance Minister Walsh, ministers 'hardly ever' exercised their right to appeal its decisions to full cabinet (1995:103).

7 Though towards the end of his period as PM, Hawke sent his economic adviser as a 'surrogate': 'his brief was to keep me informed of the ERC’s daily deliberations on the understanding that no binding decisions would be taken by the committee on any sensitive issue without my intervention, either to endorse a tentative position or to overrule it’ (Hawke 1996:387).
Keating especially kept away. ... He left a lot to the Treasurer. He would come in for some issues, usually towards the end of the process when there were extremely difficult issues to be resolved. ... But he always had someone from his office in ERC to keep across what was happening. Sometimes they would play a role in discussions. At times we would ask if they had anything they wanted to say on this issue.

The fact that Keating rarely attended ERC made it difficult for his advisers, as Adviser 38 explained:

It was a very hard job that we did at ERC because ... [if you disagreed with something] the most you can say is "I think I'd like to talk the Prime Minister about that further". Because he wasn't there. And you can't claim too much. ...

The most we could do was often to get them to say they agreed in principle but they deferred it until further discussions with the Prime Minister.

According to Edwards (1996), Hawke's chairing of ERC 'buttressed' his influence over the Budget and prevented ministers from seeking to have ERC decisions overturned (1996:251). Keating's absence at ERC appeared to both weaken his influence over the Budget (Watson 2002:401-3) and also to encourage ministers and their staff to lobby the Prime Minister's office about ERC decisions. According to advisers in the study this dynamic greatly irritated staff of the key economic ministers. It caused tension between them and staff in the Prime Minister's office, whom they described as 'the point of least resistance' (A40).

The influence of advisers in the Prime Minister's office, Treasurer's office and Finance minister's office in the Budget process was significant, but it was always exercised on behalf of their ministers, and was always subordinate to that of ministers. A former Finance minister and Treasurer, Minister Brown, said that: 'they had a role that was important, but at the end of the day the shots were called by the ministers.' Adviser 40, who worked for the Finance minister, stressed that what he did in his minister's name always came before ministers themselves at some stage in the process. In his negotiations with other ministers' offices, he reported occasionally being told to 'get stuffed' by ministers who succeeded in 'bullying their way through' against the wishes of advisers in the central offices. However in general these advisers acted with

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8 Blewett suggests it was to reduce the influence of Keating and his office that the ERC process was so 'reformed': 'The place is an administrative shambles, with Paul acting independently in every sphere but without the physical stamina ... to carry things through. Thus enormous powers accrue to his office and departments are by-passed not merely by the PM but also by his staff. We [Dawkins and Blewett] agreed that we must get Keating out of the ERC process completely, with Dawkins taking charge and he and Willis keeping the PM informed' (1999: 151,160).
much authority in negotiating with other advisers, because they were transmitting the views and instructions of the most powerful ministers in the process.

The work of these advisers was vital to the effective functioning of the Budget process, as Adviser 40, from the Finance minister's office, explained:

   We had our own role and they let us go at that. We were seen as the dogs that went and bit people, and got things running and made sure the ERC functioned. ... We were the ones that ran the processes.

They helped facilitate the process of setting priorities and securing political agreement, by transmitting information and reinforcing the power of key ministers. Their role was also important in managing conflict during these times of intense ministerial combat. Former Finance Minister and Treasurer, Minister Brown, stressed the value of advisers' negotiations before ministers met in this sense:

   It's very difficult and demeaning for ministers to get it all blown away in ERC. It's embarrassing. It's better that they don't do that, so you try and get them to withdraw on the basis it's not going to get up and they won't suffer a big defeat.

THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

The Prime Minister's office had a pre-eminent role in the policy and political coordination which occurred amongst ministerial advisers. Under Keating, the Prime Minister's staff were divided into three groups: an Administrative/Coordinating group, an Advising group and the Press Office. This is the same structure that existed under Hawke. Out of 30 staff in Keating's office, there were between 10 and 12 senior advisers with policy and political responsibilities.9

Much of the writing about the role of the Prime Minister's office notes its role in strategic leadership and overall management of the government, in maintaining coherence, and as a 'gearbox' for the Prime Minister's relations with other ministers (Weller 2000; Hollway 1996; Walter 1986, 1992; Campbell and Halligan 1992:66-71). Yet how it performs this coordination work in its relationships with other ministerial offices has rarely been explored.

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9 The number varied over time. The office structure in April 1995 is listed in Appendix 2.
The Prime Minister's office under Keating

There were several features of Keating's own style which increased the importance of the Prime Minister's office. First, power was more centralised within the ministry than had been the case under Hawke. Keating expected his office to have 'a finger in every pie' (A36), as Adviser 38 explained:

Paul Keating as Prime Minister, given his personality and his very strong views, did run more of a central Prime Ministership I think. And so ... our responsibilities were quite significant in trying to make the whole thing run well.

Second, policy coordination was an important part of the role of the senior advisers, as Keating himself was so 'committed to policy' (A39). Adviser 39 felt that the Prime Minister's office 'dominated the policy process. And generally the government was a very centralised place when it came to policy.'

Third, Keating focused on a small number of 'big picture' policy issues and delegated control of policy outside this agenda largely to his advisers. They operated with very high levels of delegation and considerable autonomy. Public Servant 8, a senior PM&C officer, confirmed the autonomy and power of the Prime Minister's advisers under Keating:

We had daily interaction with the Prime Minister's advisers, but more often than not you knew the briefs you wrote to the Prime Minister never went beyond the Prime Minister's advisers and they would brief him orally. From a PM&C perspective, you rarely saw the Prime Minister. Under Keating, the advisers were the Prime Minister - and they had a very strong role in directing ministers.

Because the Prime Minister was so busy, his advisers had far less access to him than did their counterparts in ministers' offices. They had less time to brief him. Adviser 36 explained that what might have been a one hour discussion with a minister 'might be a one minute discussion with the Prime Minister'. Another adviser described the limited time she had for briefing the Prime Minister before cabinet:

10 Unless stated, all quotations in this section are from Prime Ministerial advisers.
I had three things that went to cabinet last night. He stopped by my office on the way there. I said "The first item is fine. On the second one be aware that Ralph [Treasurer] has put this and this forward." He asked "But is the package OK?" I said "Yes." That's all he needed to know. "On the third item be aware that this minister may want to add some comments." That's all I'll have a chance to tell him and all he needs to know. If I know the PM&C briefing position is one I don't support, I'll write him a separate note, just stating that this is not my view and doesn't take account of this or that consideration (A10).

Part of the requirement of the job was to not to involve him in most issues. Adviser 38 said: 'It's your job to make sure the problems go away and they're managed and kept away from him'. She saw this as part of Keating's style, he was 'a big thinker and doer, on the big scale':

The way this Prime Minister ran his office and his agenda was very much that if I went to him every day with these things he'd just look at me as if I was nuts ... whereas other Prime Ministers might be very much involved in the nitty-gritty. ... The autonomy came from understanding him and understanding that he would want these things resolved and ticking over, or he'd want to do good work in [a policy area] and so to kick off an agenda on that, at the end of which you'd go back and say 'look we've done some really terrific work and so let's do it in the Budget' and he'd go 'yes all right'. ... The autonomy is because of the certain Prime Minister he is.

Knowing what the Prime Minister's view would be on a matter, were he to think about it, was a skill; as was knowing when he had to be consulted, as Adviser 36 explained:

[Often] you have to act in effect totally autonomously. ... There is a great degree of trust given to you and responsibility. And the trick in this business is to know at which point you must see the Prime Minister and get a direction or talk it through with him.

Access to the Prime Minister was limited and competitive. Adviser 10 said she 'could easily go a couple of weeks without seeing him':

You are making big policy calls and often making them alone. ... Often you can't get to him to talk about it so you just have to assume that you are making the right calls. ... What you say is very much based on a knowledge of where the idea came from, the background to the issue and the positions of the key players, which you must always be on top of.

Adviser 38 recalled her advice to someone new to the office, to illustrate how frustrating but necessary it was to operate without involving the Prime Minister:
I said to him 'Look my advice to you is you will start the beginning of the day thinking 'I have ten things that if I don't talk to Paul about the world stops'. And you'll get to the end of the day and you'll think "I have one thing and if I don't talk to Paul about this one thing the world will stop". And surprisingly then you'll find at the end of the day, actually the world didn't stop and you probably didn't need to see Paul at all.' We always imagine that our things are terribly important but Paul, by giving you the position and giving you the authority, always would be saying get out of his hair.

Thus advisers in the Prime Minister's office had significant responsibility to coordinate policy within the government, and this was to be done, as much as possible, without involving Keating directly.

The Prime Minister's senior policy advisers were extremely powerful in their policy areas. Line advisers stressed that it was the Prime Minister's staff who had the power to 'put the mockers on you' (A11), to 'deliver something for you against opposition' (A35) or to 'save you' (A11) when under attack. Much of this came from their power to support or overrule the advice of PM&C. It was quite common for Prime Ministerial advisers to disagree with PM&C's advice, according to Adviser 10: 'It is quite common for me to have to tell PM&C that I don't agree with their advice and I will be running counter to it.' Adviser 38 said: 'On all the things that really matter I think often the advice was different.'

A judgement from the Prime Minister's office did not substitute for cabinet deliberation of a matter, but those judgments could have much force. A senior adviser to a line minister remarked: 'If you can't get the support of the PM's office on something, with maybe one exception in my experience here, it's not worth pursuing. As black and white as that' (A28). Another line adviser said of Adviser 38: 'If she has decided something, it will happen.' Junior Minister Red stressed 'how impossible it was if the PM's office was against you'.

The Prime Minister's office had the authority to demand that line ministers consult with them, or with other ministers, in developing policy proposals. Where they did not feel they were properly consulted, they had the power to stop things going to cabinet:
We can handle that very clearly by saying we won’t put it onto the cabinet agenda. We can just say “we’re not doing it”. And the other thing we can say is “we don’t like these ideas”. That just buys you time as well. ... It’s a silly way to play the game when the ultimate power lies elsewhere. You would say for example, ... "it’s not getting onto cabinet until the next time when we want to see the proposals up front". It’s very easy for us to get the Prime Minister to sign a letter that says you have to talk to your ministerial colleagues about this, you can’t just bring it forward. There are all those things you can do. And there’s also demanding to see things, demanding to have conversations with people which you can do (A38).

Where the Prime Minister took a strong interest in a policy area, the role of the senior policy adviser could be much stronger, and included directing the work of the line minister's office and having a decisive say on policy issues. One senior policy adviser was in this situation, where she said that 'a lot of the agenda is being run out of this office' (A10).

How senior policy advisers in the Prime Minister's office exercised their power had much to do with their judgements of staff in other ministerial offices. An adviser's reputation and the quality of their relationship with the Prime Minister's office were important factors in the level of control exercised at the centre, as Adviser 38 explained:

> How I decide what to do has a lot to do with my relationships with other ministerial offices. ... Where ministers are good, of which there were many, then I’m pretty keen on letting the minister run the agenda and therefore just making sure I understand what’s going on. ... Where the minister is not very good, then the role becomes one of trying to bolster that minister and the policy side up a bit. So there is a responsibility to keep in touch with the other ministers’ offices ... and to take account of where the strengths and weaknesses are. And if there are strengths to get the hell out of the way.

Her judgements about policies were influenced by her judgements of the abilities and approach of the advisers who pushed them:

> I think you get to know very clearly - because you work so closely together with people - who the good people were. So I was extremely influenced by people who had very good judgement, very good policy nous, were reliable. I always did listen to people who I genuinely believed cared one, about their minister but two, about the government. There’s a lot of people in minister’s offices who care one, about themselves, two, about their ministers and three, not about anything else. ... Whereas other people would put ideas up to me and I’d know it had come with a very good brain behind it, a very good intention to do good work for their minister and the government, and with a great sense of responsibility.
Public Servant 6 stressed how important an adviser's relationship with the Prime Minister's office was to the department in this sense: 'A relationship with the [senior] policy adviser in the Prime Minister's office is incredibly important. Life is very hard if your adviser isn't respected by that person.' It was also crucial for ministers, as Minister Purple explained:

[My senior adviser’s] relationship with the PM’s office was unbelievably crucial. Being a junior minister with [portfolio A] and [portfolio B] - if I didn’t have someone who knew that office and could work that office - God! Because if a junior minister hounds the PM too much forget it. You only go to a PM if you really need something and you want it and then you’ve got to get it.

Yet there were also limitations on, and counterpoints to, the power of the Prime Minister’s office. There were often strong conflicts between advisers within the office (Watson 2002). At times the Prime Minister’s office was in conflict with the Treasurer’s office and it did not always win fights with Treasury (Watson 2002:670). Ministers could choose to fight them, and could sometimes win. Some ministers had cross-cutting powers. Minister Gold, a factional leader, said: 'their ability to fight me was extremely limited by the fact that no Prime Minister really wanted to push me off side.' Adviser 38 stressed her own dependence on others, 'some very strong people in departments and ministers' offices'. Adviser 39 felt that he had less power when cabinet was involved:

If I had passionately wanted something I could probably have got it. But that would have to be in processes that don’t go to cabinet. I think we had less influence in things that go to cabinet where more formal processes take over.

However the key issue relating to the role of the Prime Minister’s office at this time is not power but responsibility. The reforms to cabinet in the Labor period delivered a critical responsibility to advisers in the Prime Minister's office, responsibility for resolving policy issues outside of cabinet, arbitrating disputes and managing conflict between ministers. Much of this was done at one step removed from the ministers themselves, by negotiating with their advisers. These developments placed considerable responsibility in the hands of individual advisers in the Prime Minister’s office.

The final section of this chapter outlines a short case study in which it could be argued that a Prime Ministerial adviser failed to perform his coordination role adequately, resulting in a major breakdown in government. A second Prime Ministerial adviser (his replacement) then played a strong role in coordinating

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11 Watson recalls that on the Innovation Statement the Treasurer was ‘intransigent’: 'It was like Napoleon surrendering to his accountant. Treasury set rules and the Prime Minister felt he had no choice but to obey them' (2002:670).
warring elements to restore consensus and repair the situation. It thus illustrates how powerful the role of the Prime Minister's office could be in driving consensus between ministers, and how vulnerable a system of informal coordination is when it is dependent on the abilities and performance of individuals, outside the coordinating structure of cabinet.

ADVISER NETWORKS AS COORDINATION STRUCTURES: AN EXAMPLE OF COLLAPSE AND RECOVERY

The government's decision on the granting of woodchip export licences in December 1994 is an example of the mishandling of an important issue in government. It was a serious stumble for Labor, and electorally damaging. Watson described it as 'a fiasco that left the government wounded for the rest of its life' (2002:537). It is an example of how relying on advisers to coordinate within the executive through informal processes could fail spectacularly. By contrast, the 'fixing' of the problem illustrates how strong central coordination by advisers through informal processes could be very effective in restoring and enforcing consensus within the ministry.

The decision

On 20 December 1994 the Minister for Resources, David Beddall, announced his decision to renew the 11 existing woodchip export licences and to grant two new licences. As part of the decision he exempted 85 forest 'coupes' (management areas within a forest) from logging. Beddall was a non-cabinet minister, junior to the Minister for Primary Industry and Energy, and under the legislation had the power to make this decision himself. However he was also required under the legislation to take into consideration the Environment Minister's advice on the environmental impact of the decision.

The management of forests and the granting of woodchip licences were issues that touched on a deep ideological divide both within the community and within the government. Within the community there was strong and passionate conflict between timber workers and companies and environmental groups over the issue. The politics of the decision needed to be managed carefully. Within the ministry it was also an issue of major conflict, which required consultation and arbitration from the centre, either through cabinet or using the Prime Minister's authority.
In the extensive media coverage that followed Beddall's decision it was referred to as 'the forest debacle', 'a legal, administrative and political mess' and an example of 'sloppiness' and 'policy ineptitude' (Emerson 1995; Greenlees 1995a, 1995b). It resulted in a threatened revolt by caucus, five threatened and one actual resignation from the ALP by backbenchers,\textsuperscript{12} massive demonstrations by the environment movement, and, several weeks later, a two day blockade of Parliament House by logging companies and timber workers. It resulted in a split within the government which took considerable time to heal.

The decision making process was so mishandled that when the Prime Minister intervened in late January 1995 and increased the number of coupes to be saved to 509 this was attacked by green activists as a 'disaster'. This number was far higher than had ever been preserved before (the previous year 16 were excluded) and the Prime Minister admitted that if the original decision had been 509, it would have been hailed by green groups as a victory (Greenlees 1995b).

Advisers played an important role in both the creation of the problem and the solving of the problem. The following analysis is based on interviews with some advisers and public servants who were directly involved in what happened, on newspaper reports and other accounts (Watson 2002), and on comments by other advisers and ministers in the course of their interviews.\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{Background to the decision}

An important aspect to the decision was that cabinet was not involved in the decision making process. While it was entirely the role of the Resources Minister to make the decision, in previous years the decision had been discussed in cabinet, where the Environment Minister advocated saving various coupes and there was vigorous and detailed debate. However cabinet did not want to deal with the matter in 1994, according to one public servant:

\textsuperscript{12} Tasmanian Senator John Devereux resigned from the ALP on 21 December 1994.

\textsuperscript{13} Their quotes are not attributed to ensure confidentiality. Because some of the key players were not able to be interviewed the analysis should be seen as drawing general conclusions from the case, rather than making definitive statements about the detail of the case itself.
Where the bun-fights came in cabinet [in previous years] were where cabinet ministers were forced to look at very detailed maps of compartments of forests, and make decisions, and there was a general feeling that this is not an effective use of cabinet's time and that the cabinet is not equipped to make those decisions, and that if you've got a situation in cabinet where the Environment Minister is saying black is black and the other minister is saying black is white, then how in the hell can cabinet make that decision? ... That was a pretty strong feeling right throughout the government, that this is not a decision that should go to cabinet in 1994.

What was different about the 1994 decision was that it was deliberately sent outside of cabinet, and the Resources Minister was required to formally consult with the Environment Minister in making the decision. This was what gave the Environment Minister, Senator John Faulkner, the opportunity to submit to the Resources Minister a list of coupes to be preserved. It also created an expectation that his views would be considered in the decision process and an expectation within the environment movement that he might have some impact on the decision.14

A decision made outside of cabinet

The role cabinet had previously played in mediating the conflict between the two ministers and deciding where the balance was struck was not formally given to anyone. There was no formal role for the Prime Minister to oversee the decision making process (this requirement was instituted after the 1994 decision). Informally though it was understood that it was the responsibility of the Prime Minister's environment adviser, Adviser 56, to monitor the decision process.

The two ministers not only represented polarised policy positions. Each had mobilised their political constituencies and had much at stake in the decision in terms of their own credibility. The ministers had a poor relationship. It would

14 Because he was to be formally consulted, the Environment Minister commissioned studies to provide him with information about which coupes were likely to have high conservation value and should be temporarily set aside from logging. Many of these studies were conducted by peak environmental lobby groups. This information was put together with advice from his department and 1300 coupes were nominated to be set aside until their environmental impact had been assessed. Thus the decision to preserve only 85 coupes fell significantly short of the expectations of the environment movement.
be true to say that relations had broken down between them; they were 'at
war'.

There was no mechanism for developing a whole of government view on the
matter. The Environment minister argued that the decision should be seen in a
broader context of government policy, as closely related to the National Forest
Policy, a structural adjustment package for the timber industry and a general
industry strategy. These wider policy considerations would have involved
several ministers in developing a coordinated response. However in the
informal processes leading up to the decision no one forced the issue to be seen
as part of a broader policy response.

One of the major problems in the process was a lack of communication between
the ministers and their offices in the lead up to the decision. One staffer called
it 'a failure of advising'. A public servant described the problem as 'a huge
failure in communication between ministers':

Ministers weren't talking to each other - they were only writing to one another -
and the ministers' advisers were not talking to one another. ... I basically put it
down to a failure of communication. A failure of action by the bureaucrats to
bring people together and a failure of communication between ministers and
their advisers. All round, right through the system, no one was really talking to
one another.

Another person involved felt that:

The only reason that it gained the momentum that it did, went on for as long as
it did, and had the passion that it did, was the absence of any relationship and
the absence of any ability to deal between the two ministers. The reason that
coordination did not occur was because ministers did not talk to one another.

The important role that advisers can play within government of keeping the
channels of communication open, especially in times of policy dispute, was
clearly not played here. The unwritten rule amongst staffers to keep talking
when ministers were not, was not adhered to. Why? One participant explained
that: 'Ministers did not want their staff to talk to one another. ... If ministers are
directing advisers not to deal with staff in another minister's office then it is

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15 The stakes were higher than in previous years because Faulkner was a new Environment
Minister and the conservation movement took this opportunity to make a concerted push on the
issue of forests. Faulkner had also signalled publicly that he was prepared to assert his rights
under the provisions of the Forest Industry Strategy to recommend temporary protection of
areas of high conservation value. According to one participant, all involved were 'playing harder
ball'.

16 The structural adjustment package and industry strategy ultimately formed an important part
of the resolution of the problem in 1995.
very difficult.' Faulkner's staff tried many times to open up dialogue with Beddall's office but did not succeed. Some said that Beddall had instructed his staff not to talk to Faulkner's staff, one of whom commented:

We didn't have enough consultation between ministers' offices, that is an understatement. ... I mean we did request it and we said we were happy to talk through it, but it wasn't forthcoming. They were just not talking to us.

So locked out was the Environment Minister from the decision process that, according to one newspaper report, the night before Beddall signed the licences Faulkner had been forced to write a letter voicing his 'extreme concern' at the 'approach you are reported to be adopting'. He then sent copies of the letter to Keating and four senior cabinet colleagues (Ramsay 1994:15). In the end, the Resources Minister gave the Environment Minister one hour's notice of his decision, when Faulkner was in East Gippsland, and the decision was about to be handed down in Canberra. There was no process of consultation where the Environment Minister saw a draft of the decision and was able to talk through the issues prior to the decision being made.

What role did the Prime Minister's office play in first, monitoring the situation and second, bringing the warring offices together and determining a whole of government position?

Those interviewed felt the role of the Prime Minister's office was a major area of failure in the process. One of the Environment Minister's advisers said:

Oh we lobbied the PM's office, we wanted them to coordinate the meetings and we told them that we weren't being consulted. Sometimes the response was 'leave it up to me, I'm working it through'. In my view the Prime Minister's adviser was negligent. I tried to talk to him and warn him but he wasn't interested. I'd hunt him out and he'd say it was too difficult, he was sick of the conflict. When I went down to see him he would say: 'go away and sort it out yourself!' He refused to play a coordinating role. ... The PM's office didn't take control and that was the only way the issue could be worked through in government and in the bureaucracy outside of cabinet - by firm control by the PM's office.

Without the Prime Minister's office being engaged in the issue, PM&C were powerless to coordinate, a PM&C officer explained:
Our role was pretty much at that stage one of ringing alarm bells and saying 'this doesn't look like it's going very well and we think there are some problems emerging'. ... We were very worried that it was going to blow up. We had difficulty in convincing the Prime Minister's adviser that it was a major issue requiring the Prime Minister's focus. His judgment at the time was that it wasn't. ... The Prime Minister's office is critical because we can coordinate all we like down here but unless we actually carry the authority of the Prime Minister to do it, departments and ministers tend to ignore you.

Ministers too commented that this case was one where the Prime Minister's office had not played the role expected of it. Minister Blue saw it as indicating 'an absolute absence of coordination':

It really should have been at a very early stage closely overseen with heads bashed together and the Prime Minister’s staff absolutely on top of the differences between the environment people and the resources people. ... A lot of that stuff shouldn't have been allowed to build up, they should have been dragged back and supervised.

Former Prime Ministerial adviser Don Watson felt it was 'remarkable' that 'no one called the warring parties together and demanded a political compromise' (2002:537). Some advisers suggested that Adviser 56 'took his eye off the ball' because he was tired and burnt out from working as an adviser for a long time and because he was busy with other complex and important problems. Watson also suggests the matter was not raised with Keating as it was the end of the year and he was 'determined to escape all but his inescapable duties' (2002:450).

Some public servants were keen to stress the atypical nature of this case. They felt that the Prime Minister's advisers were usually very good at playing the policy coordination role required of them, as one very experienced public servant stressed:

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17 He was the only one of Hawke's advisers to stay on when Keating became Prime Minister and before that had worked for Richardson when he was Environment Minister. He also had responsibility for sport and aboriginal affairs and had been involved in the lengthy Mabo negotiations. One long time adviser suggested that it was actually the head of the Prime Minister’s office who should have taken charge of the situation. He also commented that in this period (when Don Russell was not heading the office) communication with Keating and within the office was generally poor.
The role of the Prime Minister’s office in [policy coordination] in my experience has been superb. This is an example of a monumental failure and it’s atypical. Absolutely atypical. PMO staff ... are marvellous people. ... Look it doesn’t happen with these guys. ... They played very very strong roles and I mean it makes the failures all the more remarkable. The staff at the Prime Minister’s office are people of the absolute highest calibre. This is instructive as a lesson in failure. I can’t think of too many others.

In addition to the lack of communication between advisers and the passivity of the Prime Minister’s office, there might be a third element to the case. The Prime Minister’s advisers may have lacked the authority to control the situation. According to newspaper reports, the informal nature of the adviser’s role left him exposed: the Resources Minister did not recognise the authority of the Prime Minister’s adviser to influence his decision. The ‘spin’ which followed the decision suggested this may have been the case:

Mr Beddall ... is believed to have insisted to colleagues that he notified the Prime Minister’s office of his decision before it was announced. However sources said last night that Mr Keating’s office was given only the bare details of the decision after the licences had been signed, thereby making them legally enforceable (Gordon, Humphries and McLean 1994:1).18

Strong coordination roles to 'fix' the problem

After the December 1994 decision, the Prime Minister was directly involved until the end of January 1995 in changing the number of coupes to be preserved, and deferring the granting of the two new woodchip export licences. After this, his new environment adviser Adviser 48 took responsibility for coordinating a broad government response to the problem of the future management of the licence process, the restructuring of the timber industry and the preservation of forests.19 There was strong central control over the process, with a Task Force established in July 1995 involving 20-25 public servants from PM&C and the Departments of Environment, Sport and Territories and Primary, Industry and Energy, coordinated by PM&C.

A whole of government approach was ground out at a department level by PM&C and at a ministerial level by the Prime Minister’s office. Those

18 Indeed, Beddall’s approach as a minister was seen by some as a key factor. It was said he identified himself strongly with the logging industry and was determined to use his powers to deliver benefits for it, with no intention of accommodating the government’s broader interests. One adviser said Beddall judged his success by how ‘hairy chested and macho’ he could be, and saw accommodation as equal to failure.

19 Adviser 56 had left for another job.
interviewed described the role of the Prime Minister's adviser as 'paramount'. He ensured communication occurred between offices by convening regular meetings of the relevant ministerial advisers. There were up to six offices involved over time.

As the issues were drawn back into cabinet in 1995, Adviser 48 played a key role in resolving conflicts before cabinet, as a PM&C officer explained:

He forced the advisers to come together the same way we forced the departments to come together. ... He was the one that made the whole process work up there. ... It was smooth sailing from then on. We had the process for getting whole of government official views and a process for getting whole of government ministerial views and from that point on every time it went to cabinet we had the two ministers going in with an agreed view, or if it wasn't agreed there would be a Minister for Environment, Minister for Primary Industries view and then ... compromise options. Cabinet went extremely smoothly after that. ... But if it hadn't been for Adviser 48 I wonder whether or not all that would have come together. He was, to my mind, absolutely critical in the whole process - it wouldn't have worked without him.

An adviser involved in the process felt the coordination and leadership role of the Prime Minister's adviser was crucial to what was achieved:

We wouldn't have achieved what we did achieve without the PM's office taking a central role. Advisers met at all key stages and were critical in projecting and reinforcing the whole of government approach. ... Adviser 48 really was a decision maker in that he'd arbitrate between different interests in the adviser group. ... So that by the time the package got to cabinet there were very few sticking points. It was virtually signed, sealed and delivered. The consensus in government was very much ground out by the advisers, though the departments did a lot of the detailed work. ... It was an example of the bureaucracy working well together and the advisers working well together.

A public servant described how Adviser 48 brokered decisions outside of cabinet, by working with the advisers:

Ministers might be finding it difficult to come to a decision, and so we could just ring up Adviser 48 and he would go 'Right, I'll sort it out' - and he'd get back to you a few hours later and say 'Well, this is the decision' or 'we've changed it this way or that way'.

Another public servant saw him as strongly directing from the centre, using the Prime Minister's authority:
We would put up a subject for the decision of the Prime Minister, Adviser 48 would talk to his colleagues and other ministerial advisers, maybe talk to ministers and then go to Keating and say 'these are the views around the table, I think we should do this' ... and Keating would either agree or disagree. Then he was able to go out and say to Faulkner and Beddall 'that's the decision'.

The personal skills of the Prime Minister's adviser were important to the success of the process. One public servant described him as 'a very astute operator':

He was very careful ... because he always knew that ministers could just as easily walk in to see the Prime Minister and shaft him. He would judge and take decisions on the minor issues that didn't need to bother the PM, but where he knew it was a major one or where one or another minister might be seen as a winner or a loser, he would make sure that the PM was behind him, and he was extremely effective in doing that. I don't think I've met a more capable and competent ministerial adviser than Adviser 48. He really is a class act.

The Prime Minister's adviser can be seen as playing a very effective role in coordinating within government to develop a long term strategy to 'fix' the problem of woodchip export licences. He was crucial in ensuring there was communication within the ministry (by convening meetings of advisers) and in arbitrating between competing interests in informal processes outside of cabinet. While cabinet was brought back into the process and its authority on the matter reasserted, there were no longer the damaging 'brawls' in cabinet which had occurred before 1994. The Prime Minister's office took on the role of resolving conflict and forging consensus before matters reached cabinet, using the Prime Minister's authority.

The original mishandling of the issue was dramatic and also unusual. The Prime Minister's advisers usually performed their coordination roles more effectively. Advisers usually adhered to the key rule of networking, to keep talking. Yet the case reveals the vulnerability of a system of coordination built on informal interactions, in which enormous responsibility was placed in the hands of individuals. It also suggests adviser networking is more effective where it operates alongside cabinet processes, rather than as a substitute for cabinet decision making.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has argued that through their informal relationships and networks, ministerial advisers provided an arena for policy coordination, one
which was vital to the effective operation of cabinet. Reforms to the operation of cabinet in the Labor period led to a growth of the role of advisers as executive level negotiators. Their work had three elements: facilitating cabinet decision making, resolving policy conflict and pulling together new policy. The three central ministerial offices (the Prime Minister's office, the Treasurer's office and the Finance minister's office) played special coordination roles, with the Prime Minister's office clearly pre-eminent. This work assisted ministers in priority setting and political management, as well as in forging consensus and managing conflict within the ministry.

There were important benefits to ministers in advisers performing these roles. Ministers' time is limited, and by acting as their agents, advisers enabled them to focus on higher level issues and reduced cabinet's workload. They also reduced direct conflict between ministers. However something important may be lost when ministers rarely deal directly with each other. Vulnerabilities also arise when responsibility for executive coordination is placed in the hands of individuals, outside the formal coordinating structure of cabinet.

Having analysed the role played by advisers in the Keating years in Chapters Four to Nine, the thesis now concludes by discussing the broader implications of advisers performing this role in Australian government.
Conclusion

Partisans at the centre of government

This study addressed the question: 'what was the role and significance of ministerial advisers in the Keating government?' It showed advisers in the Keating years to be an important part of the central machinery of government, located at the intersection of linkages between policy actors, at the heart of decision making and policy making in Australia. Their central location, and the major development in their role, made them significant players in the structure and practice of government at this time. This chapter explores the significance of the role revealed in this research. It argues advisers' work has fundamental implications for governance in Australia and for the operation of our political institutions.

MORE THAN 'SPIN' AND 'MINDING': THE WORK OF ADVISERS

One of the problems of debating the significance of advisers in our political system is that their role is difficult to capture and has not been fully articulated. The thesis provides a conceptual framework to understand the work advisers did in the Keating years. The role of advisers had five elements, which directly related to the problems of political control faced by modern executives. These were personal support, political support, communication, steering policy and executive coordination. By performing these functions advisers helped ministers to direct government and to cope with the demands of their jobs. Advisers' communication work was important in helping ministers to deal with a demanding media-oriented political environment and to manage the multiple relationships inside and outside of government which are a feature of modern governance. Their work in steering policy could be crucial in helping ministers to direct the work of departments and to devise and deliver policy agendas. The coordination work advisers did through their networking was essential to the effective operation of the ministry and of cabinet. Their communication and coordination work had become core expectations of the role at this time; their steering policy work was more contested and variable.
An important feature of this thesis is its emphasis on variation in the behaviour of advisers. Too often commentators make broad generalisations about the work of advisers, not based on empirical research. This study demonstrates the complexity and contingency of advisers' behaviour. It is more accurate to refer to different subsets of advisers. The thesis provides a new way of distinguishing between advisers, based on how they performed their role.

The most important role difference was between advisers in the three central offices (Prime Minister's office, Treasurer's office and Finance minister's office) and those in 'line' offices. Advisers in the three central offices had special roles in the debates and negotiations staff engaged in on behalf of their ministers. They were crucial in developing whole of government positions, in forging consensus and resolving policy conflict, and in managing cross-portfolio policy development. As well as the special role of the Prime Minister's office, the thesis reveals the role and influence of the Treasurer's office and Finance minister's office, often neglected in previous research (Weller 2000, Walter 1986).

Line advisers in the study were categorised as 'very active', 'active' or 'passive/reactive', based on their behaviour in steering policy. The thesis focuses mainly on the work of two of these types ('active' and 'very active'). It describes the most active version of the role at the time - the boundaries of what was considered acceptable for advisers to do. Some advisers did not behave in this way, and were still mainly concerned with 'spin' and 'minding', often minimally involved in policy making. The factors which caused advisers to play a more active or passive role in steering policy were complex, and included the minister's approach and needs; and the adviser's policy competence and role conception. This complexity highlights the dangers of generalising about the work of advisers.

Advisers must now be recognised as potentially important policy actors. It is no longer adequate to exclude them from analyses of policy roles and processes. By articulating the policy roles advisers played at this time, the thesis provides a basis for inserting them into policy theory. It is also not adequate to locate advisers solely in the 'political sphere' of government, and outside of the 'policy sphere' (Davis 1997, Bridgman and Davis 1998). The thesis reveals some Keating advisers were powerful policy actors, with their own distinctive policy roles which extended well beyond injecting a 'political' perspective into policy advice.
It is important to note that the study does not assert that advisers were more important in government and policy making than either ministers or public servants. In fact, what emerged from most interviews was the view that ministers were by far the most important players.

One of the most interesting and least studied elements of the role of advisers is the work advisers do together. The thesis explored the structures and practices underlying the networking that advisers did and found that a highly-concentrated power structure and expected ways of behaving underpinned these interactions. That these relationships operated effectively was vital to the harmony and success of the government as a whole.

The thesis now turns to a discussion of the implications of the findings for wider questions of governance. It considers the significance of the role of ministerial advisers in the Keating years for political-bureaucratic relations in Australia; for the development of Australian political institutions; and for the capacity of the executive.

**MINISTERIAL ADVISERS AND POLITICAL-BUREAUCRATIC RELATIONS IN AUSTRALIA**

The relationship between ministerial advisers and departments has become very important in Australian politics. That it operates well is vital to effective government. However it is an inherently difficult relationship as it is the point at which the political and administrative worlds collide, where the struggle for political control is played out daily.

Advisers had gained considerable administrative authority in their work with departments in the Keating period. Their role as gatekeepers in the flow of documents to the minister, and as surrogates for the minister in communicating with the department, provided much leverage in their relationships with public servants. This exchange relationship enabled some advisers to demand a high level of involvement in departmental activities. This had a potentially positive outcome for departments, in greater engagement in and understanding of the portfolio by ministers and advisers. It could be useful for departments when advisers acted as the surrogates of ministers, but there could also be problems if the adviser was not an effective, or accepted, surrogate. For some advisers, being accepted as authoritative by the department was an ongoing struggle; their authority was unstable and had to be constantly reaffirmed. They needed
skill in calculating the balances of the contradictory pressures inherent in the relationship.

Tension was at the heart of the relationship between advisers and senior public servants, and much energy was absorbed in managing this essential tension so that relationships were productive. While there were aspects of complementarity, much of what they did was shared and contested. Because many advisers saw themselves as 'partisan policy advisers', it was a relationship with competitive and overlapping roles. Cooperative and harmonious relationships did not indicate an absence of tension. Rather, they were relationships in which the essential tensions between players were managed or minimised.

Many ministers saw this tension as not only inevitable, but healthy. For them, the rub of ministerial and departmental viewpoints produced good policy advice. It was also a reassuring sign that they had not been coopted by the bureaucratic agenda.

This thesis contests the notion of complementarity as the basis of the relationship between advisers and public servants which has been expressed by others (Dunn 1997, Hollway 1996).¹ Emphasising the complementary aspects of the relationship may obscure the fact that it is essentially a relationship of control, characterised by competition and overlapping roles.

Senior public servants have been challenged by the increased scope of the role of ministerial advisers. The relationship between the public service and ministers has fundamentally changed; it is now mediated by the presence of advisers. While this has increased the scope of communication (in that advisers are more available and can cover a wider range of issues to some depth), the presence of advisers as gatekeepers and surrogates frustrates some senior public servants. Ministers, however, welcome this as a way of managing communication with the department and of filtering the barrage of information and demands they receive. Yet in one case in this study, it meant a department had little direct contact with the minister. Public servants claimed the relationship was conducted entirely by her advisers and she communicated only in writing with the department.

Some have suggested the growing role of advisers has resulted a reduction in the role of senior public servants (Fitzgerald 1996; Campbell and Halligan 1992; ¹ This a normative view and can be seen as a way of making the role of advisers acceptable.
Halligan and Power 1992). Whether the growth in advisers' role has had this effect cannot be answered by this study, which focuses on the work of advisers rather than that of senior public servants. However it is notable that most of the commentary by senior public servants at the time did not express this view (Woodward 1993; Keating 1995; Hollway 1996; Volker 1993; Ayers 1996). It expresses an acceptance of the inevitability of working with advisers, the potentiality of positive relationships with them, and the dangers of not working well with them.

Senior public servants in this study did not express the view that their role had diminished because of advisers. Only one felt that the role of senior public servants had declined, but this was due to the advent of managerialism. In his view, senior public servants no longer had the time or specialised expertise to play the policy role they had done and advisers had filled this 'vacuum' (P03). Some of the senior public servants in the study saw growth in the adviser's role as positive; others did not express a view as to whether it was positive or negative (they were more interested in talking about how best to deal with them on a day to day basis). The two who had reservations about the growth of the role regretted the loss of a direct relationship with the minister. Senior public servants in this study generally saw the growing role of advisers having two effects on their work: they were challenged to perform by strong competition from minister's offices; and they faced the task of creating effective working relationships with advisers.

Chapters Six and Seven showed that some advisers played strong roles in supervising, orienting and mobilising departments and could be deeply involved in the department's work at times. The impact of this for public servants was to force them to engage with political actors and political agendas. They could face strong pressures to be responsive to ministers, particularly when advisers were able to use their own policy skills, and their links to other political actors, to develop policy themselves or to challenge the department's control of information.

Rather than seeing the growing role of advisers as resulting in a power shift from the bureaucracy to ministers, this thesis suggests that the work of 'very active' and 'active' advisers served to strengthen or bolster ministers in their dealings with departments. Public servants in the study did not appear to be passively complying with political direction. They were strongly present in the

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2 Fitzgerald (1996) is the exception.
relationship, to the immense frustration of advisers at times. There was
evidence of strong and robust engagement between advisers and public
servants, some of whom worked closely together in jointly developing policy,
grappling with the tension at the heart of their relationships. While advisers
could be frustrated by their struggles to assert ministerial direction, they also
recognised that passivity or simple 'obedience' by public servants would not
help them to achieve their objectives.

Adviser 35, a long time senior public servant who was working as an adviser at
the time of the study, bemoaned the fact that in his view, so much of the 'policy
stimulus' now had to come from the ministerial arena. He felt that advisers
were increasingly filling a gap because of an 'abrogation of responsibility' by
departments; he said: 'They've taken their bat and ball and gone home.' The
growing role of ministerial advisers is a positive development if it produces
vigorous engagement between the political executive and the bureaucracy in
policy making. However public servants (and ministers) need to be strongly
present in the relationship for this to occur.

A blurring of the roles of public servant and ministerial adviser was evident in
the study, both in the shared nature of much policy activity and also in the
recruitment of public servants as ministerial advisers. This is not a major
problem in relation to shared policy roles, because while advisers and public
servants work together on policy, there is a well-understood distinction in their
work as partisans and non-partisans (as is strongly argued by Dunn (1997)).

The blurring of roles is more serious when public servants are employed as
ministerial advisers. The partisan public servant has been a feature of the
Australian ministerial office since it emerged in 1972. Half of the advisers in
this study came from the public service, and all except two were partisan. It is
important to note in this discussion that public servants were on leave from the
public service while working as ministerial advisers (through the operation of
the MOP(S) Act). They were never a public servant and a ministerial adviser at
the same time. Thus the term 'partisan public servant' or the phrase 'public
servants in ministerial offices' refers to advisers, performing partisan work,
who have come from a department and are entitled to return to it.

The presence of public servants in ministers' offices is positive in that they often
bring policy competence and experience in government to the job, as well as
some understanding of public administration and public service ethics. They

3 See Appendix 3.
are often highly valued by ministers, who see their knowledge and skills, when combined with partisanship, as particularly useful in directing government and influencing policy. In fact Prime Minister John Howard recently referred to partisan public servants as 'in many ways the ideal ministerial adviser' (J Howard 2001). There are also benefits for public servants in experiencing the world of ministers.

Their presence in ministerial offices is evidence of the increasingly technical nature of the job of adviser. It also shows the MOP(S) Act has been an effective mechanism enabling public servants to move between ministerial offices and positions in departments. The fact that 67% of the 'long term advisers' in this study were public servants, indicates how effective the Act has been for facilitating long term advisory careers. It is now possible for public servants to express a long term attachment to a party by working as a government or Opposition ministerial staffer.

However the role of the partisan public servant in minister's offices is a point of tension because it has no basis in Westminster political culture. Being non-partisan is at the core of the identity of the public servant in our political system. Indeed, in the UK a 'partisan public servant' would be considered a definitional impossibility.4

There are difficulties at two levels. Being a partisan public servant in a minister's office could be difficult in that doing what was required by the minister might 'burn bridges' in the department, and result in considerable damage to one's career and reputation. It also creates difficulties for the public service, since most of these advisers return to the public service with known associations with one party in government. The degree of interpenetration of the political and bureaucratic worlds is evident in the fact that three of the ten senior public servants interviewed had worked as ministerial advisers before returning to senior positions in the public service.

For the individuals in these 'hybrid' roles there was no role confusion and they appeared to have no difficulty reverting to a non-partisan role - willing to serve a different government - on their return to departments. However they could be viewed with suspicion by others in the public service and in government. They could suffer career damage, or need to spend some time in 'Coventry', if

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4 In the sense there is a strong view that it is inappropriate for civil servants to work in political roles in ministerial offices, or for political advisers to be appointed as civil servants.
they returned to the public service after a change of government. If they returned under the same government their career damage might be less, but even then they reported being regarded with suspicion by public servants, and bearing the 'stigma' of a former ministerial adviser. While some did benefit in their careers, particularly very senior people in the Prime Minister's office, many experienced difficulties in the short term.

I maintained contact with quite a few public servant advisers in the study after the March 1996 election and change of government. Many returned to the public service; some happily so. There was some loss of talented people who did not return to the public service. Others were in limbo - guaranteed a position back in their departments but not yet given one, and sitting idle in empty offices waiting for the departmental executive to decide 'what to do with them'. (One spent more than a year in this position (A37)). Others had found niches for themselves where they were as far as possible away from direct dealings with their new political masters. They felt this was appropriate, and expected to spend some time in the 'wilderness' before they could move back into important areas of the department. Some had arranged study leave or overseas postings to avoid appearing immediately in their department. Several told me they had created enemies they feared meeting again as a public servant. Some were bitter; it did not appear that departments valued their experience as ministerial advisers. The re-integration of advisers back into departments was clearly not an easy process.

The role of the hybrid 'partisan public servant' in Australian ministerial offices echoes the cabinets ministeriels, the powerful political institution for providing partisan policy advice to ministers in France. Most members of the cabinets ministeriels are public servants and there is a high level of interchange between the upper public service and the cabinets (Gaborit and Mounier 1987:104). There is considerable debate in France about the significance of the fact most members of cabinets are public servants, with two main themes relevant to Australia. One view argues this is part of a general depoliticisation or technocratisation of the state in France (Searls 1981:165-166; Gaborit and Mounier 1987:92,97). The second view is that the number of public servants in cabinets indicates a politicisation of the administration (Gaborit and Mounier 1987:92,97).

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5 One adviser reported being often, and wrongly, targeted as the source of leaks after he returned to the department (A18).
6 This was partly because it was a time of major contraction in the public service.
In Australia the danger of technocratisation of the political executive from the use of public service advisers is mitigated by the fact that the ministers in this study employed a greater mix of staff (including activists, party people and academics), with public servants comprising only 56% of those interviewed. Indeed the diversity of advisers in Australian ministerial offices is a notable and positive feature of Australian advisory structures.

The concern about the politicisation of the bureaucracy by the use of public servants as advisers is a more difficult one in Australia, where the public service has a tradition of neutrality. Yet this tradition may also be a strength. The individuals in 'hybrid' roles appear to draw a strong distinction between their partisanship as advisers and their non-partisan identity as public servants in departments. Many of their personal accounts suggest the traditional neutrality of the Australian public service causes some difficulty and even resistance to their re-integration, which may minimise any politicising effects. They are not accepted back into departments as partisans, and seem to go to some lengths in the short term to prove their lack of partisanship. Though they are always known to have had an association with one political party, it does not seem to affect their long term careers, with some of those who worked for Labor ministers prospering under the Coalition government.

In other words they are allowed to, and are expected to, revert to non-partisan roles on their return to departments. For this reason, while it is a point of tension in our political system, it does not present a serious threat to the neutrality of the public service. Partisan public servants in minister's offices have not destroyed the fabric of the non-partisan public service. This analysis is anecdotal, based on the personal experiences of advisers in this study. It is an important issue which warrants research in its own right.

DEVELOPMENT OF A DISTINCTIVE AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL INSTITUTION

The evolution of the role of the ministerial office over the Labor period represents institutional development in the Australian political system. In the Hawke-Keating years the Australian ministerial office developed four

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7 The public service is not traditionally neutral in France. French public servants can be highly partisan, and there are mechanisms for accommodating partisan public servants while their opponents are in government.
distinctive features compared to executive advisory structures in comparable Westminster political systems such as the UK and Canada.

First, there is a clear distinction between the ministerial office and the department, which is emphasised by the physical distance between them. This is not the case in the UK, where ministerial offices are largely composed of civil servants who are on secondment from the department, are rarely chosen by the minister and maintain dual loyalties to the minister and the department (Page 1992:129; Headey 1974:130).

Second, the role of the ministerial adviser is unambiguously partisan. An important structural feature of Australian advisory arrangements is that the partisan ministerial office operates alongside the non-partisan public service. A perceived distinction between partisan and non-partisan roles in policy making is a feature of Westminster parliamentary systems. The development of the Australian ministerial office can be seen as reinforcing this distinction and thus emphasising the non-partisan nature of the public service. Canadian ministerial offices are also clearly partisan. However in the UK, apart from the Prime Minister's office, the partisan element in ministerial offices is still relatively small and distinct. While it is increasing under Tony Blair, it is still considered to be controversial and needing to be justified.

Third, that the role is partisan and policy focused (and to some degree policy competent) is different from the UK and Canada. Most Australian advisers in the study saw themselves as 'partisan policy advisers'. In the UK much anxiety has been expressed recently about the involvement of partisan (or 'special') advisers in policy work. Perhaps because of their small numbers, partisan advisers in the UK have traditionally played a small part in the processes of making policy (Plowden 1991:238; Page 1992:129; Young and Sloman 1982:91). It is only in the Prime Minister's office that there are significant numbers of partisan policy advisers (in the Prime Minister's Policy Unit). While this may be changing with the rapid increase in the number of 'special advisers' under Blair, the distinction between partisan and policy roles is still normatively important in the UK (Clifford 2000).

In Canada ministerial offices are highly partisan, but have traditionally had a limited policy role (Bakvis 1997; Savoie 1983; Aucoin 1986; Campbell 1983; Hockin 1991; Campbell and Wilson 1995:166). The Prime Minister's office has some policy capacity in the form of a small policy unit (Peters and Savoie 2000; Campbell 1998). However this has never been as significant or effective as the Prime Minister's policy unit in the UK (Campbell and Wilson 1995:166).
Campbell argues Canada lacks a strong tradition of 'party-political policy advice' in the Prime Minister's office, which has hampered the ability of its governments to 'sustain a viable level of partisan responsiveness' (1998:150). Thus the fact that many advisers in this study were both partisan and policy-focused is distinctive compared to the UK and Canada.

Fourth, partisan public servants in ministerial offices are a special feature of the Australian model. They are not a feature in the UK, and do not seem to have been promoted in the Canadian model (which has emphasised non-public servants as advisers (Hockin 1991)). However it is important to stress that Australian ministerial offices in the Keating period were generally marked by a mix of types of staff, with a range of backgrounds and combinations of political and policy expertise.

There has been much recent debate about the appropriate role of ministerial advisers in the UK (House of Commons Select Committee on Public Administration Sixth Report (1998), Fourth Report (2001), Seventh Report (2001)). Those who have called for increasing the partisan assistance for British ministers have often looked to France for a model and rejected its system of partisan public servants in cabinets ministeriels, because the openly partisan nature of the French public service is alien to the Westminster tradition. Perhaps it is time that reformers in the UK looked to the Australian model, which effectively combines partisan policy advisers to ministers, many of whom were public servants, with a non-partisan public service. The combination of these two sources of advice appeared to work well in helping ministers to govern in the Keating period.

The evolution of the ministerial office over the Labor period can be seen as a pragmatic response to the problems of governance. The ministerial office in the Keating years was part of an effective, and distinctively Australian, structuring of partisan and non-partisan advice to government, one which both reinforced and challenged elements of Westminster political culture.

PARTISAN CAPACITY WITHIN THE EXECUTIVE

Many contemporary writers believe that one of the urgent problems of modern governance is a loss of capacity and coordination at the centre of government,

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8 With some notable exceptions under Mulroney (Campbell and Wilson 1995:166).
9 Campbell and Wilson note that these discussions usually end with the conclusion that: 'this might well be true for Mars, but would it work on Earth?' (1995:70).
referred to as 'hollowing out of the state', and a 'weakness at the centre' (Weller, Bakvis and Rhodes 1997; Rhodes 2000d; Smith 1999). This view sees the executive as ill-equipped to deal with modern government, which is characterised by overlapping networks, fragmented policy structures and multiple policy actors. Others argue there is a 'crisis of executive leadership' in advanced liberal democracies, as the task of governing effectively, particularly achieving policy competence, has become more and more difficult (Campbell 1998).

The development of the role of ministerial adviser over the Labor period can be seen as strengthening the partisan element in government, and delivering much extra capacity to ministers in their quest to manage and steer government. This thesis has shown the important work that advisers could perform in helping ministers to manage the relationship between the government and the bureaucracy; and relationships within the ministry. These are the two 'gearboxes' which Campbell argues a government must effectively manage to achieve political control (1998). Advisers in the thesis could greatly increase ministers' ability to engage departments. Through their role as executive negotiators, advisers helped the ministry to coordinate. Their informal interaction operated as a vital adjunct to the cabinet system in the Keating years. While they can be seen as contributing to a de-institutionalisation of the cabinet system by making possible informal resolution of issues outside of cabinet, at the same time they worked to strengthen the cabinet system by supporting its operations.

A third requirement for political control is that partisans can devise, develop and deliver policy agendas. Through their interstitial location and access to information and relationships, 'very active' and 'active' advisers in the thesis were at times crucial in helping ministers to achieve policy innovation.

In studies of the Labor period the Hawke and Keating governments are seen as having two major achievements in managing government: an ability to create effective working relationships with the bureaucracy; and internal cohesion and direction provided by an inner core of ministers (the 'engine house' of the ERC) (Campbell and Halligan 1992; Gruen and Grattan 1993; Campbell 1998). They are described as successful in attaining policy competence - an effective a balance between responsive and neutral competence (Campbell 1998:159) - and as being 'good at gearboxes'. One factor in these achievements is undoubtedly the growth and development in the role of the ministerial office over the Labor period. In the Keating years some advisers played key roles in helping
ministers to work with the bureaucracy, to develop partisan policy agendas, and to determine political direction within the ministry. While not all ministers sought to influence policy and not all advisers played the role at its most active, the evolution of the ministerial office over the Labor period made it a potentially very powerful tool in helping ministers to govern. Its evolution provided 'an institutional capacity for effective governance' (Moe 1993).

Yet the development has brought with it some important vulnerabilities. These relate to the dilution of the relationship between ministers and departments; and a decrease in direct contact between ministers. There is danger in the increasing reliance on the informal interaction of advisers to negotiate matters on behalf of ministers outside of cabinet. Cabinet may lose control of issues which are decided outside its formal structures, as occurred in the woodchip licence decision described in Chapter Nine. This example also shows that the system is vulnerable to failure if advisers do not behave according to accepted norms. Much responsibility is placed in the hands of individuals.

There is also a loss of transparency in government when much important government 'puzzling' over policy occurs within an informal arena where file notes are rarely kept. Such a system relies for its integrity on strong relationships between delegating ministers and their advisers, and good communication between advisers and public servants. While this thesis does not explore the issue of the accountability of advisers, ministers were clear and even forceful in their view that advisers were highly accountable to them, and through ministers to the Parliament and the public. For such a system to function, ministers need to enact the chain of accountability that they so clearly believe in, by taking responsibility for the actions of their staff.

The thesis ends on the issue which drove the emergence of ministerial advisers in the 1970s in Australia - the desire by governments for political control. Throughout this study the enormous strength of the bureaucracy and the bureaucratic agenda was evident. There were many robust encounters between public servants and advisers. The thesis disputes the contention that 'firm political control' was achieved by the Hawke and Keating Labor governments (Campbell and Halligan (1992:204), Halligan and Power (1992:78)). Measuring political control is an impossibility, and even defining it (whether this is at the level of a specific policy issue, or a portfolio level, or a cabinet level) is difficult. In its evolution over the Labor period the ministerial office became a more effective tool in the battle for political control. But while advisers could deliver capacity, they did not deliver control. The presence of advisers put ministers
'in the game' - making a struggle for political control possible - rather than guaranteeing its outcome.
# Appendix 1

Referencing system

Advisers interviewed

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Appendix 2
The Prime Minister's office, Treasurer's office and Finance minister's office

This appendix provides the names of those people counted as advisers in the Prime Minister's office, Finance Minister's office and Treasurer's office in April 1995, when the study began. Two important changes occurred later in 1995. In June, the Finance minister, Kim Beazley, became Deputy Prime Minister when Brian Howe stepped down, and at this time his Senior Adviser was upgraded to Principal Adviser and he gained more staff. Later in 1995 Don Russell returned to head the Prime Minister's office, and John Bowan changed from Principal Adviser to Senior Adviser Political.

Advisers in the Finance minister's office April 1995

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### Advisers in the Prime Minister's office April 1995

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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Adviser</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Secretary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Secretary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrative/Coordinating Group</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Adviser (Government Business)</td>
<td>Conall O'Connell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Personal Adviser</td>
<td>Peter Robinson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Adviser (cabinet/parliament)</td>
<td>Clare Nairn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Adviser</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Adviser (Office administration)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant to Mrs Keating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Secretary to the PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Secretary/Appointments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Secretary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Secretary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Secretary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Secretary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Assistant to the PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receptionist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministerial Directory April 1995

### Advisers in the Treasurer's office April 1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal Adviser</td>
<td>David Cox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Adviser</td>
<td>Jim Wright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultant Social policy</td>
<td>Barbara Livesey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adviser</td>
<td>Fran McMullen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adviser</td>
<td>Mandy O'Brien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adviser</td>
<td>Paul Grimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Adviser</td>
<td>Colleen Sykes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DLO</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Adviser</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Assistant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal secretary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DLO = Departmental liaison officer
Appendix 3
Biographical data and types of advisers in the study

Description of the sample group of advisers

There were several strong features of the group. The advisers in the sample were mostly male (71%) and overwhelmingly in their 30s and 40s (90%). Their average age was 38 years and four months.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of advisers in the study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: n= 39 as two did not disclose this information.

Most were current or former Labor party members (62.5%). They were all highly educated, with 100% having one degree and 47% having more than one. The most common degree was the BA, and the most common specialist degrees were economics and law. Most had attended only government schools (64%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools attended by advisers in the study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: n = 36 as 5 did not disclose this information

Around half were currently public servants (56%). Public servants and non public servants were spread in similar proportions across all positions.

Experience as an adviser

The average period of employment as an adviser was 3.5 years. However the range of experience was great - from four months to more than ten years.

---

1 Twenty four advisers had a BA; seven had B Econ and five had BA/LLB or LLB.
### Years as an adviser

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>years</th>
<th>&lt;1y</th>
<th>1y</th>
<th>2y</th>
<th>3y</th>
<th>4y</th>
<th>5y</th>
<th>6y</th>
<th>7y</th>
<th>8y</th>
<th>9y</th>
<th>10y</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>no of advisers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**n=41**

Half of the advisers in the study were relatively new and had two years or less experience (51.2%). This is unsurprising since when interviews began, in April 1995, the second Keating government was exactly two years old. A sizeable group had 3-5 years experience. Most advisers interviewed had only worked for one minister (58%) and in one or two portfolios (80%). However a small group had had more wide ranging experience: five of the sample had worked for three or four ministers; and eight advisers had worked in three or four portfolios.

### Number of ministers worked for

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>58.5%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**n=41**

### Number of portfolios worked in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**n=41**

However there was a core of relatively very experienced advisers within minister's offices at the time of the interviews. Fifteen of the sample group (37%) can be classed as 'long term' advisers, defined as having worked as an adviser for four or more years. Some of these advisers contributed a wealth of experience to the sample and could be influential individuals in their policy areas. As many as 29% of the sample (12 subjects) had advised ministers on one policy area for between three and six years. The group of long term advisers will be discussed in detail later.

### Career background

The advisers interviewed had a wide range of backgrounds and many had multiple former careers. Seventy per cent had a public service background (as
state or federal public servants). Just under half of the sample had previously worked as an adviser to a state or federal minister (46%). None had worked in trade unions. Only one respondent had no career background in the sense he had come to work as an adviser straight from university. He alone fitted the image of the 'party hack' who has no other experience except working for the party organisation (he had briefly worked as an electorate officer while at university). Ministerial advisers in this group appear to be a quite separate cadre from those working for the party organisation.

The eight advisers who had worked in private sector or private practice had been lawyers, economists and consultants. Seven advisers had worked in the community sector. Five had been or were currently academics. Five came directly from lobby groups. The table below shows the number of respondents who nominated each career background.

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2 However only 12 of the 23 current public servants listed their background as solely 'public service'. Career combinations included: community sector/public service; private sector/public service; academia/public service; teaching/public service; and journalism/public service. Six public servants (26%) had also worked in parliamentary positions such as Parliamentary Liaison Officer and Departmental Liaison Officer and in the parliamentary library.

3 Former trade union officials did not feature highly in earlier studies: 3% of advisers had worked for unions under Whitlam and none under Fraser (Forward 1977:163). Walter gives no comparable figures for the Hawke sample.
Career backgrounds of advisers in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career background</th>
<th>no of advisers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public service positions:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth public servant</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State public servant</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private sector positions:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance sector / economist</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultant</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyer (private sector)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adviser positions:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adviser to another federal ALP minister</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adviser to a state ALP minister</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Party positions:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electorate officer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade union</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party bureaucracy</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community sector</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activist</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=41. The number of careers listed exceeds 41 as some listed multiple former careers.

Around half of the sample group were policy specialists (51%), defined as advisers who, before taking their present job, had been working in a similar policy area to that on which they were now advising.

Partisanship

There are great difficulties in measuring partisanship, as it is complex and has many aspects. Being or having been a party member is the clearest measure of partisanship, but it is also a minimum measure. Apart from party membership, partisanship can be seen in attitude and behaviour and presents as a range rather than a clear set of categories.

Of the respondents who were not party members, the vast majority identified themselves as either 'party supporters' or 'party sympathisers'. Most ministers were comfortable with that level of commitment to the party amongst advisers.
More important to them was loyalty to them personally. Commitment to the government and to the party was assumed to flow from personal loyalty. (Indeed, in a highly unusual case, one minister in the study employed a committed member of the Liberal party as an adviser; he felt completely confident about the adviser's personal loyalty to him).

To explore partisanship, the sample can be divided according to two criteria: whether the adviser was a current or former member of the ALP and whether the adviser was currently a federal public servant employed under the MOP(S) Act.

**Public service status and party membership**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Public servant</th>
<th>Non Public Servant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Party Member</strong></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non Party Member</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=41

a defined as those who were currently or had formerly been members of the ALP
b defined as those who were current members of the Australian Public Service employed under the MOP(S) Act.

The two largest groups were those who were party members and public servants, and those who were party members but not public servants. Each of these sub-groups constituted 30% of the total group. More than half the public servants were committed partisans in the sense they were or had been party members (56.5%). The non public servants tended to be more partisan than the public servants: 71% were party members.

**Non Public Servants**

Looking first at the non public servants, there was a major distinction between those who were party members and those who were not party members. The party members were highly partisan in their attitudes and approach, whereas the non party members displayed lower attachment to the party. The party

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4 It was important to include those who were former members because there were many reasons for people being 'in and out' of the party: moving cities, being too busy, and frustration at ACT branch politics. (One stated 'going to ALP branch meetings in the ACT would drive any normal person completely mad'.) Having joined the party at any stage showed a higher level of commitment than those who had never joined the party.
members consisted of three activists, two academics, one private sector consultant and six people who had been recruited though party channels and often had responsibility for important party political work in their offices (such as liaising with the party organisation, back benchers, factions and local branches).

By contrast the non public servants who were not party members were all policy specialists and displayed low levels of attachment to the Labor party. Two were academics, two were activists, one was a specialist lawyer and one was a specialist journalist. Often these people had very strong attachments to certain policy agendas, which they pursued vigorously, and these agendas coincided with the government's policy agendas. Their attachment to the party flowed from their attachment to its policies. However they did not have a direct attachment to the party beyond this. They had all been advisers for less than two and a half years.

**Public servants**

The partisanship of the public servants was more complex than the distinction between party members and non party members suggests. The party members had strong and often long standing attachments to the party. Yet amongst those who were not party members, there were only two who took a consciously non partisan approach, and distanced themselves from party political work. These two acted as if they had been 'seconded' to the minister's office. One described his job as 'a pseudo-departmental position in the office'. Though they took a critical approach to the department's work and pursued the minister's interests, these two advisers saw themselves ultimately as departmental officers.

However there were few differences between the other eight non party members and the 13 party members. All were partisan in their approach and attached to the party and its ideology. All of these 21 public servants said that they would never have worked for the Coalition as an adviser. Several of both groups had long term attachments to the party and had worked as Labor advisers for many years. Indeed, two of the non party members went on to work as advisers for the Labor party in Opposition after 1996. A non party member was one of the inner group of political strategists who planned

---

5 in the traditional sense that public servants were seconded to ministerial offices prior to 1972.
question time and parliamentary strategy. In other words, public servants could be highly partisan without being party members.6

Excluding the two consciously non partisan public servants mentioned above, the remaining 21 public servants can be seen as constituting one group - 'partisan public servants' - though within that group there was variation in levels of attachment to the party.

Warriors, professionals, bureaucrats and experts: Types of advisers

Four different types emerged within the sample and have significance for institution of the ministerial office. Membership of each type was not distinct - the four types overlapped each other to some degree.

1. 'Political warriors'

Nine of the sample were described by other advisers as 'politicos' or 'political warriors'. They had specific responsibility for party political work such as liaising with party units and backbenchers, factional manoeuvring, parliamentary and media strategy and local politicking within the minister's electorate or state branch. This highly political group were a minority of advisers in the sample, and they were not homogenous.

Five of them were non public servants, who were recruited through party channels, because of their skills and experience in working within the party. However, as mentioned earlier, only one was an inexperienced 'party hack'; the others had experience in a range of different careers.

Four were public servants, who had worked as advisers for many years. Though not originally recruited in such roles, over time they had developed the political skills and close relationships with ministers that enabled them to do this work. One of these advisers was unusual in that he was not a party member, but he worked as senior adviser for a very senior minister, and had a close personal relationship with him. It was his personality, his position and his relationship which had created this highly political role for him.

6 There could have been good reasons for them not joining the party. One stated that he did not join the party for fear of retribution in his career as a public servant; he said he had seen others suffer for being Labor party members in the past.
This type is important because it reveals that only a minority of the adviser sample had specific party political responsibilities, and that it would be wrong to make assumptions about who these people were.

2. Long term or 'professional' advisers

While most advisers worked for relatively short periods before resuming their main careers elsewhere, there was an important cohort of advisers of long standing who had worked for ministers for four or more years. Fifteen (or 37%) of the sample were classed as long term advisers. It is not clear what proportion they represented of the entire group of advisers working at this time. Yet it indicates that there was a core of relatively very experienced advisers within minister's offices at the time of the interviews.

Their average period as an adviser was six years. Some had had continuous experience as advisers over many years (for 10 years in some cases) while others had been in and out of adviser jobs over a long period. Three of the sample interviewed in 1995-96 had worked in the ministerial offices of the first Hawke government in 1983. Three more had first been employed as advisers in 1985. Ten had worked continuously as advisers and five had had breaks between periods of employment with ministers. They had moved in and out of adviser jobs, combining it with work in the public service, the private sector and academia.

The subgroup of long term advisers was older than the total sample group and more likely to be public servants and party members. Their average age was 40 years 10 months. All except one worked for senior ministers at the time of the interview. However 60% had also worked for junior ministers at some stage in their careers. Long term advisers had usually worked for more than one minister, in more than one portfolio.

The fact that two-thirds were public servants is significant - it suggests that the security provided by the MOP(S) Act had made long term careers as advisers possible or practical.
Comparison of long term advisers and total respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>long term advisers&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>total respondents&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>public servants</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>party members</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>average age</td>
<td>40 years 10 months&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>38 years 4 months&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>worked for &gt;1 minister</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>worked in &gt;1 portfolio</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> defined as those respondents who had worked as advisers for four or more years (n=15)
<sup>b</sup> n =41
<sup>c</sup> n=14 (1 did not disclose)
<sup>d</sup> n=39 (2 did not disclose)

While none of the long term advisers were at the rank of assistant adviser, it is interesting that they otherwise were not dissimilar in rank to the total sample and were evenly spread amongst the remaining three positions (adviser, senior adviser, consultant). While it might be expected that the experienced advisers would be concentrated at the higher ranks, there was a sizeable number of advisers of long standing employed at the adviser rank.

The long term advisers interviewed were not generally the type of adviser who was closely linked to one minister and stayed with that person for long periods of time. Only four of the group fitted this mould. The majority (11) had worked for more than one minister. Two of them had worked for four different ministers.

It is important not to overstate the ease of creating a long term career as an adviser. Advisers in the study stressed the difficulties of the long hours and family and life sacrifices involved in the job, factors which usually led to 'burnout' after two or three years. They also commented on the difficulty of maintaining a long term close relationship with a minister. It was a minority of the sample who desired, or had made, long term careers as advisers.

3. Partisan public servants

Another significant type which emerges in the sample is the partisan public servant. As discussed earlier, partisanship is difficult to measure, and at its minimum is indicated by party membership. That the majority of the public servant advisers in the sample were or had been party members (56.5%) is
significant; this appears higher than in earlier studies.\textsuperscript{7} Public servants who were or had been party members comprised almost one third (32.5\%) of the total sample of Keating advisers. However, as discussed earlier, party membership understates the partisanship of public servants in the sample: the vast majority were partisan in their approach.

Only two of the 23 public servant advisers displayed the non partisan approach of a seconded officer. The rest expressed a range of levels of attachment to the party, from a willingness to promote the party in government, to strong sympathy for the party and its ideology, to identification with the party and party membership.

Another indicator of the changing nature of public servant advisers is whether they came from their minister's department. Over 60\% of public servants in the sample did not come from their minister's department. Though comparisons with earlier surveys must be approached with caution, this suggests a marked difference from earlier cohorts: only 27\% of Whitlam public servant advisers and 34\% of Fraser public servant advisers did not come from the same department as their minister was responsible for (Forward 1977:163).\textsuperscript{8} This suggests different types of recruitment: public servants who did not come from the same department often had independent connections with the minister, either through the party or through their previous work as an adviser.

4. Policy experts: specialists and generalists

The majority of advisers in the sample reported that they were recruited for their policy expertise, either as specialists or generalists. (Only eight advisers felt they were recruited for other reasons). Fifty-one per cent of the sample were policy specialists - defined as those who, before taking their present job, had been working in a similar policy area to that on which they were now advising. These policy specialists were public servants, activists and academics with deep knowledge of specific policy issues. Some had had many years' experience working on the policy issues on which they were now advising the minister.

\textsuperscript{7} The proportion of public servant advisers classified as 'political' in earlier studies were: 41\% Hawke ; 10\% Fraser and 36\% Whitlam (derived from Walter 1986:122). Party membership was only one criterion in this classification.

\textsuperscript{8} Walter does not provide these figures for the 1983 sample.
Generalists could also bring considerable policy expertise to ministerial offices. Many generalists were practitioners experienced in the processes of policy making, either as public servants (not from their minister's department) or as long term advisers.

That there were a considerable number of advisers in the sample who brought policy expertise to their jobs indicates the increasingly technical nature of the adviser position. Many ministers were looking for technical skills, relating to specific policy areas or to policy making more generally, when recruiting their advisers. While there was often a mix of skills in an office, policy skills were clearly valued by many ministers in recruiting staff at this time.
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