

## THE HANSARD MONOLOGUES: A MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE



A simple stage greets you as you enter: three lecterns, three chairs at the back, a screen above them. What follows is simple only on the surface: a verbatim play based on *Hansard* – three years of politics, speeches and various antics compressed into a two-hour play with just three actors taking on all the roles.

You can only imagine how much work must have gone into this. Digging through the transcripts covering the period from September 2010 to June 2013, Katie Pollock and Paul Daley have condensed the verbatim record of the 43rd Australian parliament into an engaging, enraging, fascinating piece of theatre that lets us reflect on the past three years in federal politics.

Conceived by Peter Fray, former *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist and co-founder of PolitiFact Australia, *The Hansard Monologues* is a co-production of the Seymour Centre, Merrigong Theatre Company, the Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre and the Department of Performance Studies at Sydney University.

The play begins with the federal election on 21 August 2010 that gave Australia a hung parliament and a minority government under Julia Gillard, and ends on 27 June 2013 with Gillard having just been replaced by Rudd.

The sequence of events is roughly chronological, often focusing on themes rather than a strict order. The refugee debate, as topical as ever, receives much attention, but *The Hansard Monologues* also takes us back to the marriage equality debate, the war in Afghanistan, the Craig Thomson and Peter Slipper affairs, and of course Gillard's globally acclaimed misogyny speech.

David Roberts, Camilla Ah Kin and Tony Llewellyn-Jones give voice and life to politicians from right to left, with the name of the current speaker displayed on the screen at the back. In a clever ploy, the display is delayed, keeping you guessing for the first few sentences: Who is this? Which side of the room is the person from? Sometimes of course you can tell, such as when Camilla Ah Kin does her skilfully understated impersonation of Julia Gillard or when Llewellyn-Jones takes on

the role of Christopher Pyne with palpable gusto.

Framed by politicians' assurances that 'this', the 43rd, or 'the next' – the 44th – parliament will be 'different', the play is also a comment on the frequent hypocrisy found in politics and on the many ways in which it is a performance, is theatre. Yet *The Hansard Monologues* never loses sight of the effects of politics on real people: refugees, Australian soldiers, taxpayers, the parliamentarians themselves and their families all have a voice in this carefully balanced play. Stay for the Q&A afterwards if you can to get the actors' and a politician's take on the events of the past three years and on parliament in general.

*The Hansard Monologues* does not take sides, but when Camilla Ah Kin states at the beginning 'These are their words, but it's our story,' this is true in more ways than one. It's the writers' story through the transcripts they selected for the play, it's the actors' story in how they chose to interpret individual politicians, and of course it's our story as Australians, as citizens, as the audience in the daily theatre of federal politics and as viewers of this 'best of' of the last three years of federal politics.

*The Hansard Monologues* is smart, engaging, at times surprising – and frequently very, very funny. No wonder that more than one audience member requested another show like it after the 44th parliament. Yes please!

**Rating: 4 ½ stars out of 5**

**Seymour Centre, Murrumbidgee Theatre Company and Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre present**

***The Hansard Monologues: A Matter of Public Importance***

**A verbatim play by Katie Pollock and Paul Daley**

**Directed by Tim Jones**

**Starring David Roberts, Camilla Ah Kin and Tony Llewellyn-Jones**

**York Theatre, Seymour Centre, Sydney**

**23, 26 & 27 July**

Each performance is followed by a Q&A with a political guest from Canberra who will take questions and reflect on the 43rd parliament:

**23 July: Geoff Gallop AC – Former Labor Premier of Western Australia and current Professor and Director, Graduate School of Government, University of Sydney**

**26 July: Alex Hawke MP – Federal Member for Mitchell**

**27 July: Rob Oakeshott MP – IND – Federal Member for Lyne**

