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‘James C. Murphy et al. (Editors), Politics and Policies in Australia's States and Territories’

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James C. Murphy, Rob Manwaring, and Alan Fenna (Editors), *Politics and Policy in Australia's States and Territories* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2025), 398+xivpp. eBook. £87.50. ISBN: 978-3-0319-5071-1.

Australian politics has long attracted scholarly attention, yet individual states and territories that constitute the country have remained a 'neglected realm.' *Politics and Policy in Australia's States and Territories* aims to fill this gap. The work, co-edited by James C. Murphy, Rob Manwaring, and Alan Fenna, is a comprehensive volume that can serve as the standard reference for those seeking to understand how politics vary across Australia.

The authors argue that the Australian states and territories are not only administrative subsidiaries but consequential political actors in their own right, delivering essential health, education, and housing services to their communities. When the COVID19 pandemic struck, it was state premiers, not the Prime Minister, who exercised significant powers over daily life, prompting the *Australian Financial Review* to award its 2021 'most powerful person' ranking to state leaders. The editors use this instance to point to the broader governance structure: states retain strong policymaking authority and ignoring them means missing important actors in Australian governance.

Andrew Parkin and Alan Fenna provide an account of the states and territories within the federal system, which is essential for readers less familiar with Australian governance. Frank Bongiorno contributes a helpful history, tracking political trends from Federation to the present day and identifying patterns of Labor dominance and periods of conservatism. Todd Farrell's chapter traces how the states and territories have acted as 'pioneers and pariahs,' acting well before the Commonwealth on important policy matters such as advertising and donation reform. Meanwhile, Blair Williams and Katrine Beauregard's chapter on gender equality provides a valuable comparison of representation and leadership across all jurisdictions, documenting both genuine progress and sticky structural barriers.

James Murphy's chapter examines the Daniel Andrews era in Victoria through the lens of 'Absolute Danism,' asking whether Andrews truly transformed Victorian politics or simply highlighted certain existing advantages. John Phillimore and Alan Fenna's chapter on Western Australia points to the influence of the mining sector on state politics, showing how resource wealth simultaneously insulates the area from national economic pressures and distorts its political economy. The Northern Territory chapter by Will Sanders and Rolf Gerritsen outlines its unique constitutional status, socioeconomic challenges, and the central role of Indigenous policy.

The authors' excellent argument that state and territory politics are characterized by a blend of pragmatism, ideological variation, and localism is persuasive, and it is especially strong when it highlights how state-level political cultures have diverged despite operating under a shared constitution. Queensland's volatility, South Australia's Labor legacy, and Tasmania's decade-long Liberal ascendancy each tell unique stories about how geography, politics, and history shape what is possible in government. This work successfully acknowledges the political nuance between Australia's states and territories and can serve as a model for numerous future research avenues.

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