Media Statement

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**MP backgrounds may help Winston choose National-NZF coalition**

**National and New Zealand First have the most in common in terms of the employment backgrounds of their respective MPs, a new career analysis of New Zealand’s new Parliament shows.**

But a Labour-Green-NZ First coalition would bring together MPs with the widest range of capabilities and experience.

The authors of the 2017 MPs’ Careers Survey, Geoffrey Miller and Mark Blackham, said National and New Zealand First MPs had surprisingly similar skills and career experience.

Geoffrey Miller said the most common careers of both National and New Zealand First MPs prior to becoming MPs was in business, property and finance.

“Winston Peters and National are well known for their historically fractious relationship, but both New Zealand First and National MPs come from remarkably similar backgrounds.

“In the new Parliament, both National and New Zealand First can stake a claim to be the party of business. A National-New Zealand First government would include more MPs with business, education and agriculture backgrounds than a Labour-New Zealand First-Greens combination,” Miller said.

However, the pair, who have been analysing MPs’ employment experience since 2010, found that the differences of career backgrounds in a Labour-Green-NZ First coalition would deliver a group of MPs with broader skills, knowledge and experience.

“A Labour-led coalition would be more diverse in terms of MPs’ prior careers. Labour has significant groups of MPs who come from education, legal and media backgrounds.

“Labour’s caucus also includes a strong contingent of Maori MPs, who have often held senior leadership and governance positions within Maoridom. “New Zealand First would complement Labour’s employment experience in these fields, and would add representation of the business community, military and farming,” Geoffrey Miller said.

The dominant work experience in each party is:

* National: Business (25% of all jobs held by all party MPs) and government (19%)
* Labour: Government (26%) and business (14%)
* New Zealand First: Business (27%), Education (18%) and Police/Military (18%)
* Greens: Union and activism (43%) and Business (29%)

Blackham said the dominance of Labour MPs with experience in central government work and the Greens’ experience in activism was poles apart from the lines of work and everyday experiences familiar to New Zealand First MPs.

“But this difference could be a strength in a coalition as the parties’ combined work experience would cover the widest spectrum of New Zealand’s economic sectors.”

Career backgrounds were important because they shape MPs’ thinking and beliefs.

“We tend to align better with people who share our experiences and backgrounds. This suggests the National – New Zealand First caucuses would work more smoothly than other options.”

Both potential coalitions had no MPs with significant experience related to foreign affairs.

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**Contact**

Mark Blackham, Director, BlacklandPR – 021 891 042

Geoffrey Miller, Political Analyst - +968 71723971, [geoffreymiller@gmail.com](mailto:geoffreymiller@gmail.com)

**More about the study**

Geoffrey Miller and Mark Blackham have analysed the employment and education careers of MPs in the previous three Parliaments. The premise is that life experience gained through education and employment is strongly indicative of their ideology, interests and likely assessment of political issues and policy. The research records and categorises MP’s main careers, employment and education, taken from official and unofficial online sources. More detailed analysis of the new 2017 Parliament will be released soon.