

Sabah-born Wong named Australia's finance minister
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Malaysian-born senator Penny Wong, 41, is the new finance minister in the newly-elected Gillard Labor Government.

Wong had been keen to move from the climate change portfolio, following her failure to have parliament's upper house (Senate) approve the government carbon pollution reduction scheme.

A hardworking minister, Wong's promotion nonetheless, came as a surprise when Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced her ministry today.

Penny Wong australia finance minister Born on Nov 11, 1968 in Kota Kinabalu, Wong takes over the finance portfolio left vacant by the high-profile Lindsay Tanner when he retired from federal politics in the Aug 31 election.

A former lawyer in Adelaide, Wong was elected to represent South Australia in the Senate in 2001 and was named minister in charge of climate change, energy efficiency and water when Kevin Rudd won office in 2007.

Wong, a lesbian, was the first sitting member of the Australian Labor Party to "come out" while still in parliament.

Gillard says, her new ministry delivers on a promise to establish a portfolio dedicated to regional Australia.

It will be headed by Simon Crean, previously responsible for education and workplace relations, and before that, trade.

Factional power brokers

The announcement on Saturday comes four days after her Labor Party secured the support of two rural independents to form minority government in the first hung federal parliament in 70 years.

Gillard earlier in the day announced former prime minister Kevin Rudd had been appointed foreign minister, replacing Stephen Smith, who moves to defence.

Greg Combet becomes climate change minister, a step up from his assistant role to Wong.

Mark Arbib, one of the factional power brokers responsible for bringing down Rudd, was not rewarded with a cabinet position.

- Bernama

