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New minister to pit his wits on coal & nuclear

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THE man tipped to be Australia's new Resources Minister is a passionate advocate for "clean coal" power stations and the latest nuclear reactors.

As the Coalition struggles to contain increasing internal strife over climate change policy, Keith Pitt (pictured) is set to assume one of the most sensitive roles in the Morrison government.

A former electrician, university-trained engineer and cane farmer, Mr Pitt would replace at the Cabinet table fellow National Matt Canavan, who quit his portfolio on Mon-



day night to support Barnaby Joyce's failed bid for the party's leadership.

"I'm obviously keen to take on more responsibility," Mr Pitt told The Daily Telegraph yesterday.

Like Senator Canavan, he is a big believer that high-efficiency, lower-emission coal-fired power stations have a role to play in reducing the nation's carbon footprint.

"We need to consider every available technology," the MP for the Queensland seat of Hinkler said.

"Any reduction is better than no reduction."

Mr Pitt has also been pushing for an end to the ban on

nuclear power and the contemplation of small, prefabricated reactors.

With an electorate stretching from Hervey Bay to Bundaberg, Mr Pitt represents the people with the lowest average incomes in the nation.

"They can't afford to pay any more for electricity," he said.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison is expected to announce his new-look ministry today after the resignation of embat-

tled former Agriculture Minister Bridget McKenzie forced a minor reshuffle of positions held by Nationals members.

Veterans Affairs Minister Darren Chester is a strong contender for a promotion to Cabinet and has already indicated an interest in the emergency management portfolio held by Minister David Littleproud. This could free up Mr Littleproud to return to Agriculture, a position he previously held before he was given oversight of a number of contentious policy areas including drought, water resources and the bushfire response.

"That's at the discretion of the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister – I'll just be humbled to be in the Cabinet," Mr Littleproud told ABC radio.

If Mr Chester is promoted, his replacement would be Australia's eighth veterans affairs minister in seven years — a prospect Mr Morrison said was not an issue when asked.

"I don't think the political

issues ... are going to present a challenge for the government or for veterans," he said.

The outer ministry position is supposed to go to a Nationals member, meaning an untested junior would lead the government's commitment to create a permanent commission on veterans suicide.