

Dutton flags Coalition push for nuclear power

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Page 4 | Section: News The new Labor era

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Energy

The federal opposition is gearing up for a fight with Labor over nuclear energy with the appointment of leading proponent Ted O'Brien to the climate change and energy portfolio.

The deliberate move by Opposition Leader Peter Dutton was part of an overhaul of the Coalition frontbench in which the Nationals flexed their muscle against a weakened Liberal Party by wresting back the trade portfolio.

The junior Coalition partner has a record six members in the shadow cabinet, including former leader Barnaby Joyce.

Announcing his new shadow ministry yesterday, Mr Dutton said his 24-member shadow cabinet, which is one more than the 23 in Anthony Albanese's cabinet, would include 10 women, the same number as Labor's cabinet.

"We want to win votes back from

women who supported the Greens," he said.

Former education minister Alan Tudge, who stood aside last year after allegations of bullying by a former staffer with whom he had an affair several years before, returns as education spokesman.

During the last term of parliament, Mr O'Brien, a Queensland Liberal, chaired a parliamentary inquiry into nuclear power. He came down strongly in favour of small, modular reactors.

"Australia should say a definite 'No' to old nuclear technologies but a conditional 'Yes' to new and emerging technologies such as small modular reactors," he said.

"If we're serious about reducing greenhouse gas emissions, we can't simply ignore this zero-emissions baseload technology."

With the nation mired in an energy crisis, the government struggling for an immediate solution and Mr Dutton planning to wage war with Labor over the effect of its climate policy on power prices, Coalition sources said Mr O'Brien's appointment from the back-

bench to the shadow ministry was deliberate.

In a shake-up full of tacit messages, avowed Scott Morrison supporters Alex Hawke and Stuart Robert were dumped or demoted to the outer shadow ministry, respectively. Saying many voters who deserted the Coalition on May 21 would soon experience "buyers' remorse", Mr Dutton said Angus Taylor as shadow treasurer and Jane Hume as finance spokeswoman would play a lead role in restoring the

Coalition's fortunes. "The reality is we are already seeing from this government excuse after excuse, they didn't know the numbers, they didn't know their economy would be difficult, they didn't know energy would be an issue," he said.

"They told the Australian people before the election that they were a party with the answers to all of these problems, but it turns out that they don't have the answers."

The Liberals lost a net 18 seats, but the Nationals held all of theirs, meaning they were entitled to a greater presence on the frontbench.

The party increased its shadow cabinet representation from five to six, but the big prize was winning back trade. The Nationals had held the portfolio since 1956 but it was taken from them in 2013 when Tony Abbott won power.

Following a hard bargain driven by new Nationals leader David Littleproud, NSW MP Kevin Hogan has taken back the portfolio from the Liberals. The Nationals have also kept water, which has gone to deputy leader Perin Davey, a former irrigation lobbyist.



Shadow cabinet

Peter Dutton's new-look frontbench

■ **Peter Dutton** Opposition Leader

■ **Sussan Ley** deputy leader, small and family business; women; industry skills and training

■ **David Littleproud (Nat)** Nationals leader, agriculture

■ **Perin Davey (Nat)** Nationals deputy leader; water; emergency mgmt

■ **Angus Taylor** Treasury

■ **Alan Tudge** Education

■ **Marise Payne** Shadow cabinet secretary

■ **Jane Hume** Finance; public service; special minister of state

■ **Andrew Hastie** Defence

■ **Dan Tehan** Immigration and citizenship

■ **Simon Birmingham** Foreign affairs, Senate leader

■ **Kevin Hogan (Nat)** Trade and tourism

■ **Barnaby Joyce (Nat)** Veterans affairs

■ **Karen Andrews** Home affairs; child protection; prevention of family violence

■ **Paul Fletcher** Science, digital economy and government services

■ **Michael Sukkar** Social services; NDIS; housing and homelessness

■ **Sarah Henderson** Communications

■ **Bridget McKenzie (Nat)** Infrastructure, transport and regional development; deputy Nationals Senate leader

■ **Julian Leeser** Attorney-General; Indigenous Australians

■ **Ted O'Brien** Climate change and energy

■ **Jonathon Duniham** Environment, fisheries and forestry

■ **Michaelia Cash** Employment and workplace relations, deputy Senate leader

■ **Anne Ruston** Health and aged care; sport

■ **Susan McDonald (Nat)** Resources; Northern Australia

Outer Shadow Ministry

■ **Stuart Robert** Assistant treasurer; financial services

■ **Luke Howarth** Defence industry; defence personnel

■ **Angie Bell** Early childhood education; youth

■ **James Paterson** Cybersecurity; countering foreign interference

■ **Andrew Gee (Nat)** Regional education; regional health; regional development, local govt and territories

■ **Jason Wood** community safety; migrant services and multicultural affairs

■ **Michael McCormack (Nat)** International development and the Pacific

SOURCE: FINANCIAL REVIEW

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Ted O'Brien, opposition spokesman on climate change and energy