

# Australian Greens bid for power-sharing arrangement with right-wing Labor Party

Oscar Grenfell  
19 April 2022

In an address to the National Press Club last week, Greens leader Adam Bandt emphasised, over and over again, that his party's campaign is directed towards establishing a power-sharing arrangement with the Labor Party in the wake of the election on May 21.

Amid a major crisis of the ruling Liberal-National Coalition and Labor, there is a real prospect of a minority government or a hung parliament resulting from the election. Under these conditions, the Greens' entire pitch is that they will hold the "balance of power" in the Senate and potentially the House of Representatives.

While Bandt peppered his address with threadbare populist rhetoric, the speech was an appeal to Labor and the corporate elite that the Greens would be "responsible" partners in a minority Labor government.

Bandt's address, no less than the statements of Albanese and Prime Minister Scott Morrison, was a complete cover-up of the real political issues facing working people and the dangers they confront. The unprecedented economic, social and geopolitical crisis of capitalism did not rate a mention.

- Bandt said nothing about the eruption of conflict in Ukraine and the open US preparations for a direct war with Russia and China. The Greens have cheered on the US-NATO proxy conflict against Russia in Ukraine, demanding that Australia impose even greater sanctions targeting Moscow.

The Greens have promoted the bogus US "human rights" pretexts used for provocations against China, openly supported Washington's regime-change operations in Libya and Syria, and back an expanded Australian military presence in the Pacific, which they refer to as "our backyard".

- Bandt did not mention the COVID-19 pandemic which has claimed an estimated 20 million lives worldwide. Nor did he say a word about the "let it rip" policies imposed by Labor and the Coalition governments that have resulted in millions of infections and thousands of deaths in Australia over the past four months. This program, of profits before health and lives, has proceeded without the slightest

opposition from the Greens.

- While he referenced the cost-of-living crisis in Australia, Bandt had nothing to say about the deepening global economic turmoil, with inflation around the world pushing hundreds of millions of people into extreme poverty.

Bandt's silence on these issues was a clear signal to big business and Labor that his party will support the program of war and social austerity that is being demanded by the corporate elite of whichever party comes to power.

His exclusion of the key international issues was tied to a fairytale of national exceptionalism. If only the Greens secured enough parliamentary seats, it would be possible to pass "progressive" policies and to ensure "the future of Australia's social democracy." Bandt said nothing about how this would be done in Australia as the world economy sinks further into crisis.

The Greens leader pointed to some of Labor and Albanese's right-wing measures, including support for sweeping tax cuts for the rich, massive business subsidies and its refusal to institute any policies addressing the climate crisis.

But this aside, Bandt repeatedly declared that the main task was to "kick the Liberals out." He stated: "I am sure Anthony Albanese will be better than the current PM." All that was needed was "someone to keep Labor on track," i.e., the Greens.

In reality, Labor is seeking to outflank the Coalition from the right. If anything, it has been more bellicose in its support for US-led aggression against Russia and China. In a clear pitch to the US administration of President Joe Biden, Albanese is arguing that Labor is best placed to oversee Australia's ever-greater integration into the American war machine.

Labor is likewise presenting itself to the corporate and financial elite as a better vehicle to implement the sweeping budget cuts and further pro-business restructuring. This is not the result of Albanese's personal proclivities, or of errors that can be corrected as Bandt suggested. It expresses Labor's decades-long role as a party of the banks and big

business with no connection to the working class.

In line with his appeals to the corporate elite, Albanese is running what has been described in the press as a “small target campaign” with only a handful of policy announcements.

In his press club address, Bandt effectively aped Albanese, advancing only a few policy demands, which even on their face value fell far short of the sweeping “progressive change” that he touted.

On the issue of climate change, all Bandt raised was an end to the opening of new coal and gas mines, which does nothing to address Australia’s existing emissions. Under conditions of the greatest breakdown of the healthcare system, his only proposal was for dental care to be added to the publicly-funded Medicare program.

Amid a soaring cost of living crisis that is already pushing millions of people over the edge, all Bandt offered was the construction of a million “affordable” homes—over the next two decades—and the cancellation of student debts.

Bandt said nothing about raising wages. While calling for a “progressive” taxation system, all he outlined was a 6 percent increase on the tax of billionaires.

In the question-and-answer period, some reporters pointed to the “modest” character of the policy measures. Was the Greens only election policy on climate an end to new coal and gas mines, one asked? In response, Bandt outlined the Greens’ calls for a reduction of net emissions to zero by 2035, but then declared the “priority” if the party held the “balance of power” would be to block new mines.

In other words, the various policies listed on the Greens website are a cynical ploy to win popular support, especially from young people concerned about climate change. Bandt and the Greens know that in practice, a Labor-Greens government will do nothing to address soaring emissions, or to resolve any of the other pressing issues facing working people.

This is not a hypothetical question. Bandt touted a series of previous power-sharing arrangements as models to be emulated.

Chief among them was the de-facto coalition between the Greens and the minority Labor government of Prime Minister Julia Gillard from 2010 to 2013. The only concrete measure of that government that Bandt could refer to was an expansion of dental care for children.

In fact, Gillard’s government, propped up by the Greens, carried out an agenda of war abroad and war against the working class at home. This included Australian participation in Obama’s murderous troop “surge” in Afghanistan and the country’s alignment with his “pivot to Asia,” a sweeping military build-up aimed at preparing for war with China.

The Greens-backed government joined the US-led persecution of WikiLeaks publisher and Australian citizen Julian Assange for his exposure of US war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan and intensified attacks on refugees.

On the social front, the Gillard government kicked 100,000 single parents off their benefits and onto the sub-poverty unemployment allowance. It implemented cuts to public education and healthcare, opening up both to the full forces of the market. On climate change, its carbon tax was explicitly modelled on a continuing rise in carbon emissions for the foreseeable future.

Bandt also hailed the Greens’ record in a coalition government with Labor in the state of Tasmania that was brought to office in 2010. It introduced sweeping public sector cuts. Greens education minister Nick McKim presided over an attempt to shut 20 public schools, a move that was only abandoned in the face of mass public opposition.

Bandt noted that the Greens are currently in a coalition with Labor in the Australian Capital Territory. As part of the extra-constitutional National Cabinet, that “stable and effective” administration has joined in the homicidal “reopening” policies that have resulted in soaring COVID infections, illnesses and deaths.

The Greens, in other words, are no alternative. They are a pro-capitalist party that represents the interests of an affluent layer of the upper middle-class that is hurtling to the right on every question, from war to austerity and the assault on democratic rights. Far from pressuring Labor to adopt progressive policies, the Greens will not hesitate to ditch their election promises to join a right-wing Labor-led government.

*Authorised by Cheryl Crisp for the Socialist Equality Party, Suite 906, 185 Elizabeth Street, Sydney, NSW, 2000.*



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)**