

Australia's opposition leader unveils Trump-oriented shadow cabinet reshuffle

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Last weekend, Australia's official opposition coalition took a further step to the far-right, seeking to outdo the Labor government in lining up with the Trump administration's fascistic agenda.

After weeks of delay, Liberal-National Coalition leader Peter Dutton unveiled a revamped shadow cabinet in the lead up to a federal election that must be held before May 17.

Media polls have shown the Labor government in a deep crisis. There is widespread disaffection with its pro-corporate assault on working-class living conditions and backing for the Israeli genocide in Gaza. Under those conditions, a Coalition government is a possibility, despite Dutton remaining a widely reviled figure.

The frontbench reshuffle featured the creation of a new "government efficiency" portfolio dedicated to gutting social spending and the promotion into the foreign affairs post of two vehement defenders of the US-backed Israeli onslaught on the Palestinian population.

Senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price was elevated to take charge of the new portfolio of Government Efficiency, while remaining the shadow minister for Indigenous Australians.

Price is a frothing right-wing indigenous politician, who has promoted vicious law-and-order attacks on impoverished Aboriginal communities and denounced pitiful government support to them as excessive.

Price fronted the Coalition campaign against the Albanese government's unsuccessful attempt to enshrine an advisory indigenous Voice to parliament in the Constitution. The Voice was a sham, aimed at integrating layers of the Indigenous elite further into the corporate and state establishment. The opposition of the Coalition and Price was from the right, with much of its campaigning centering on dog whistling against ordinary Indigenous people.

Former immigration minister David Coleman was promoted to be the shadow foreign minister with Julian Leeser, an outspoken Zionist, installed as his deputy. Both have accused the Labor government of not going far enough to support the Netanyahu government's agenda to totally reorganise the Middle East in the interests of imperialism, now clearly endorsed by Trump's call for Gaza to be "cleaned" of its Palestinian population.

On both the domestic and international fronts, the rearrangement in Australia reflects the violent realignment of the political system, not just in the United States but also globally, to match the ever-more naked domination of the economy and society by the wealthiest multi-billionaire oligarchs.

Price's new portfolio clearly echoes the establishment by Trump of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), led by billionaire Elon Musk, the world's richest individual. Musk has boasted of setting out to cut US government spending by one-third, or \$2 trillion a year. Given that nearly \$1 trillion is spent on the military and the same amount on debt interest payments to bond holders, that means eviscerating social services, health, education and other vital areas impacting the working class.

In making his "government efficiency" announcement, Dutton described the Labor government's spending as "wasteful," "unrestrained" and "out of control." He signalled mass sackings in the public service, targeting "the 36,000 additional Canberra public servants employed under this government."

Price accused Labor of implementing a "devastating amount of government waste" that had resulted in "increased spending by \$347 billion." She did not spell out where the cuts would be made.

Fearing popular opposition, Dutton denied that he was following Trump's lead. That flies in the face of all the evidence.

Just three days before the reshuffle announcement, mining magnate Gina Rinehart, Australia's richest billionaire and a prominent Trump supporter, reiterated her call for such an offensive. "If we are sensible, we should set up a DOGE immediately, reduce government waste, government tape and regulations."

Rinehart, who celebrated with Trump in Florida after his election victory, also held a meeting with Musk the morning after the election. She has made repeated speeches and public comments calling for Australia to adopt Trump-style policies, which she hailed in a full-page US newspaper ad, as did another Australian billionaire Anthony Pratt.

Interviewed by the Murdoch media's flagship *Australian* newspaper last week, Rinehart insisted: "Donald Trump has led an important movement with his policies—a movement that is growing and growing. I hope our country is not left behind."

That reflects the global reverberations of the return of the oligarch-backed Trump. He has vowed to "Make America Great Again" by threatening and bullying governments around the world and slashing corporate taxes to the lowest level internationally. That means a social counter-revolution to slash social programs and public services.

This is a naked expression of the demands of international finance capital, which regards all government spending, except on the military, as "waste" because it diverts resources, created by the

labour power of the working class, which would otherwise produce even greater levels of private profit and wealth.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and his Labor government have already embraced Trump's offensive, rushing to pledge to outdo the Coalition in working closely with the incoming US administration, as they did with the Biden-Harris Democrats.

The Labor government's main boast to the corporate elite has been that it has delivered "responsible economic management" since scraping into office in May 2022 by cutting government spending far more than the previous Liberal-National government of Scott Morrison in order to produce two consecutive budget surpluses.

That means inflicting further economic hardship on working-class households, which have suffered more than a historic 8 percent fall in real income, compared to soaring prices and housing costs, since Labor took office in 2022.

Labor's biggest spending cuts, compared to inflation and population growth, have occurred in health, education and housing, while hundreds of billions have been allocated for AUKUS submarines and other war preparations.

Similarly on foreign policy, the Albanese government has outdone the Coalition in its commitment to US militarism, from Ukraine and Gaza to the Indo-Pacific, especially Washington's plans for war against China to assert US global hegemony. That was underscored by Foreign Minister Penny Wong's eager participation in Trump's inauguration and subsequent meeting of the Quad, the anti-China alliance, with her US, Japanese and Indian counterparts.

The delay in Dutton's announcement appears to have been primarily due to an internal, Zionist-led, campaign against Liberal Party deputy leader Sussan Ley. A dirty tricks operation blocked her from exercising her assumed traditional right, as deputy party leader, to take any portfolio of her choice, including the foreign affairs post that was suddenly vacated by Simon Birmingham, a member of the party's supposed "moderate" faction, last November.

Party figures reportedly briefed journalists that Ley had failed to declare accommodation, meals and transport for a 2011 visit to the West Bank, paid for by the Palestinian Authority. Sky News aired the story in mid-January, framing Ley as a long-time pro-Palestinian advocate who had only come to support the Jewish state since becoming deputy opposition leader.

Alongside Coleman, Dutton named Leeser, one of the Coalition's most outspoken Zionists, as assistant shadow foreign minister. Leeser had quit the Coalition shadow ministry in April 2023 over his support, along with most big business leaders, for the Voice referendum as a means of further integrating an indigenous elite into the political and corporate establishment.

Dutton said Leeser "has been a staunch defender of our traditional allies and a powerhouse of support for Australia's Jewish community. He will work closely with David Coleman in this new role, and I know he will provide the moral clarity and courage in foreign and international affairs."

Coleman and Leeser have accused the Labor government of being "weak on antisemitism" and of "rewarding Hamas terrorists" by supporting essentially meaningless United Nations

general assembly motions for Palestinian membership of the UN and eventual "statehood" in enclaves surrounded by Israel.

In reality, the Labor government has provided unwavering support for the Israeli genocide of Palestinians. That has included spearheading a fraudulent campaign, conflating all opposition to the war crimes with antisemitism.

The Coalition's denunciations echo those of Netanyahu, who has accused the Labor government of an "extreme anti-Israeli position." They dovetail with Trump's call for the removal of Palestinians from Gaza—that is ethnic cleansing—as part of the US-backed effort to annex all the Palestinian territories and construct a "greater Israel" throughout the Middle East.

Corporate media commentators in Australia, including those employed by the government-funded Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), have sought to downplay the implications of these developments. "Dutton may want to use some of Trump's populist strategies, but any suggestion he will cut and paste the entire Trump playbook here is wrong," the ABC's Patricia Karvelas wrote on the weekend.

Since Trump's return to the White House, Dutton and Albanese have been in a competition over who would work best with Trump. Moreover, both domestically and internationally, the policies pursued by the Labor government have paved the way for the potential return of the Coalition just three years after the defeat of the hated Morrison government, just as the warmongering Biden-Harris administration opened the door for Trump.

As the Socialist Equality Party has warned, what is underway is "a dramatic change in the political forms of rule by the capitalist ruling class, not just in the US but globally. The financial-corporate oligarchy is attempting to reorganise the world, including Australia, by means of social counterrevolution and political dictatorship.

"That will provoke immense struggles by workers and youth on a global scale but to defeat the threat of fascism and world war there must be a corresponding shift in understanding what humanity confronts. What is required is the conscious, revolutionary intervention of the working class on the basis of a socialist and internationalist program to overturn world capitalism."



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