

The Greens mostly like to keep their party 'internals' internal. The [leadership transition](#) from Christine Milne to Victorian senator Richard Di Natale was marked by secrecy and tightly stitched up.

There were no leaks that Milne, who succeeded Bob Brown in 2012, was about to pull the pin. Within two hours of her Wednesday morning announcement that she wouldn't be contesting the next election and was quitting the leadership immediately, the party had a new team, all elected unanimously.

There are now two deputies, Scott Ludlam from Western Australia and Larissa Waters from Queensland, ensuring a woman is still in a leadership position.

Previously it had seemed likely that if Milne stepped down her deputy, Adam Bandt, who holds the seat of Melbourne and is the only lower house member in the 11-person party room, would be a strong contender to replace her. Now Bandt is no longer even deputy. To have two Victorian males as the Greens' face would never have been on.

Milne and Bandt have had a partnership of convenience and apparently he only learned of her planned resignation on Wednesday morning.

Sources close to Bandt insist he's not unhappy at how things have panned out. His partner is about to give birth to their first child. But whether or not he feels miffed by the process – on which neither Milne nor Di Natale would be drawn – Bandt's not likely to cause trouble. He has a seat to hang on to and Di Natale is popular in the party.

The leadership change is more than a generational one – it marks the end of the Brown-Milne era, that was born out of the environmental cause and centred in Tasmania.

Ben Oquist, a former adviser to both Brown and Milne, says they "have been the heart and soul of Green politics for a quarter of a century. Richard represents a great 'generation next' for the

Greens”.

Di Natale, age 44, is little known, and will have the challenge of establishing a public and national profile while defining directions for a party that the majors want and need to demonise.

He’s regarded as a good communicator – better than Milne, who has often sounded too shrill and uncompromising.

Like Brown, Di Natale was trained as a doctor and there’s a touch of the GP about him still. He’s the son of an Italian immigrant family, played VFA football, and lives at the foothills of the Otway Ranges on his farm, which includes an apple orchard and olive grove.

Di Natale told their joint news conference: “Christine and I are different people. I came at this through health. I came not from a political background. I spent a few years as a GP and a public health specialist working in places like Tennant Creek and north-east India.

“It became pretty clear to me that if you want to improve people’s health, you’ve got to start looking at the things that make people sick...

“If you want to know about my general philosophy, I’m not an ideologue. I’m not going to say we want small or big government ... We want decent government that looks after people...

“My view is pretty straightforward. People want access to health care, to education and they want the environment looked after. They want clean air and water for their kids, pretty basic things.”

With their critics branding the Greens as extreme, Di Natale talks up their appeal to the mainstream. “We are the natural home of progressive, mainstream Australian voters.”

From a working class background and an extended family of Labor voters, he said there was a good chance that if he'd been born earlier "maybe I'd be in the Labor Party right now".

But his eye is not just on picking up support from the Labor side. "I think there are a lot of people who are small-l Liberal voters who have got strong concerns about the direction of the country and I want to say to them as well that you can trust us with your vote ... We do have things in common and the values that those people care about are our values too."

One big question is whether the Greens will now be more amenable to negotiating with the Abbott government. Milne wanted to deny Tony Abbott "wins". Di Natale says he will talk with the Prime Minister however doesn't see many areas of common ground with "a deeply ideological government".

But he also strikes a pragmatic note: "I'm in this business to get outcomes, I want to get stuff done."

An obvious (although relatively easy) test for the Di Natale Greens will be over the reintroduction of fuel excise indexation. The government implemented this 2014 budget measure by regulation when it couldn't get Senate support, but has to validate it by legislation later this year.

Di Natale said he would not make "captain's picks" but agreed that new leadership gave the opportunity "to talk about a whole lot of things".

Now it is in operation, the Greens would be crazy not to support the fuel measure. It has been their policy – Milne was much criticised for her stand against it – and there is no way to return the money collected to the motorists.

Milne, who is about to turn 62 and who will leave the Senate before her term ends in mid 2017, has timed her handover well.

New Greens leader wants to send a message to those with 'mainstream values'

Written by The Conversation

There has been some concern within the Greens about her taking the party to the next election – which will be a challenge because of an eroding vote – and periodic criticism of her leadership style. Pressure on her could have increased as the election drew near.

As it is, she goes out at a time of her choosing, having increased the Greens parliamentary numbers from 10 to 11, and leaving her successor a sufficient period in which to establish himself before the expected time of the election. Most political leaders exit a lot less neatly.

Read more <http://theconversation.com/new-greens-leader-wants-to-send-a-message-to-those-with-mainstream-values-41370>