

Shorten provides Kim Carr with life raft

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

Opposition Leader Bill Shorten has intervened to save left ally Kim Carr from being dumped from the shadow ministry by expanding his frontbench.

The move, which is seen as Shorten sandbagging his leadership because Carr and his several followers voted for him in 2013, has infuriated the ALP left. The left held firm in refusing to put up Carr on its ticket, leaving the right to back him.

Shorten's intervention followed Carr responding to the left move against him by setting up his own breakaway faction of himself and three others to demand a position.

The accommodation of Carr has cost frontbencher Andrew Leigh a \$40,000 pay cut.

Under the arrangement, two extra frontbench positions have been created, of which one has gone to Leigh and the other to up-and-coming senator Sam Dastyari.

But the maximum number of shadow ministers who can get extra pay is 30 so Leigh, who was shadow assistant treasurer in the last parliament, drops money and Dastyari does not get a rise.

There are five new faces in the shadow ministry including Linda Burney, the first Aboriginal woman to be elected to the House of Representatives and a former member of the NSW parliament. The others are Ed Husic (NSW), Clare O'Neil (Vic) and Carol Brown (Tas), as well as Dastyari (NSW). Brown's inclusion reflects the strong Labor showing in Tasmania.

Two former shadow ministers have been dropped: Sharon Bird and David Feeney. Feeney was an embarrassment to Labor in the election campaign – first when it emerged he had failed to declare a \$2.3 million house and then during a television interview when he could not answer questions about Labor policy.

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The factions put up nominees for the shadow ministry who are then elected by caucus. All the left leadership, including Deputy Opposition Leader Tanya Plibersek and Anthony Albanese, were adamant that they would not include Carr on their ticket.

Carr tweeted: “Thank you for the support from citizens, Trade Unionists across Australia, party members & particularly those comrades in VIC.”

Earlier this week Carr got backing from the Socialist Left executive in Victoria.

Those who have followed Carr into the new faction are senator Gavin Marshall, Lisa Chesters and Maria Vamvakinou. The left wants to strip Marshall of his position of deputy Senate president, but a vote on this post was deferred.

While caucus elects the shadow ministry, the leader allocates portfolios and also chooses the shadow parliamentary secretaries. The portfolio allocation will be announced on Saturday.

Michelle Grattan does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond the academic appointment above.

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