



Pat Hutchens/TC

Labor's edge over the government in the polls has seen the party stay united. But it has not stopped speculation about whether frontbencher Anthony Albanese would be a better fit as leader of the party.

Albanese dismisses Coalition jibes about him being the alternative leader. He tells Michelle Grattan it's the government who has internal issues. "The government are I think more divided than I've seen a political party for a very long time – and I've seen a bit of division," says the deputy prime minister in the second Rudd government.

As shadow minister for infrastructure and transport, Albanese says there are significant differences between Labor and the government in this portfolio.

"We established Infrastructure Australia to recommend the right projects to the government that would provide the biggest economic boost. We've seen the government effectively walk away from that strategy and remove funding from projects that had been approved by Infrastructure Australia, particularly public transport projects.

"Malcolm Turnbull likes riding on trains and taking selfies but he hasn't funded any new public transport projects," he says.

After coming under threat from the Greens in his own seat at the last election, Albanese sees weaknesses in his opponents to the left.

"I think they're struggling with their identity, of whether they're a protest party and a movement, if you like – which is the view of many in the New South Wales Greens – or whether they're a parliamentary party.

Politics podcast: Anthony Albanese on Labor's approach to infrastructure

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

"For many in the Greens, the protest is the end in itself. It's a sophisticated view I guess. It says: that is how people are politicised, and how from their perspective of wanting revolutionary, if you like – rather than reformist change – you need that momentum from the bottom and from social movements.

"I'm about making a difference to people's lives and making lives better. That's why I'm in politics and that stands in stark contrast to many in the Greens who advocate that sort of view," he says.

Despite his strong personal advocacy for marriage equality, Albanese maintains that members of the Labor caucus should be able to vote with their conscience on the matter – in contrast to the ALP conference policy of a bound vote from 2019.

"I've supported the conscience vote for a considerable period of time on a range of issues where essentially people are in a position whereby they believe that they have to choose between their loyalty to their party and their loyalty to their faith."

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