

Incoming Labor national president Wayne Swan has made it clear he will have an assertive voice in the role, as the party moves towards next year's election.

While many in the ALP would like action on party reform, Swan says bluntly it's not top of mind for him. "I made it very clear [in campaigning for the presidency] that party reform in the first instance was not my priority," he says. "My priority is winning the battle of ideas."

Looking to the rescheduled party conference in December, Swan acknowledges there will be battles on issues such as asylum seekers. But "we have to be mature about it – and I think the party will be". "I think you've seen from the Labor party for the last five years a degree of unity of purpose that has been very strong, and I think that will shine through what will be very passionate debates at the national conference".

Swan alleges that the Liberal party has been taken over by "tea party fanatics who are dedicated to actually trashing government as an institution". He stops short of calling Malcolm Turnbull a "tea party fanatic" but says the Prime Minister is "dancing to the tune [of them] at every turn ... people like Peter Dutton, people like the Institute of Public Affairs."

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

Authors: Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

**Read more** <http://theconversation.com/politics-podcast-wayne-swan-on-labors-byelection-victories-and-beyond-100896>