

Labor frontbencher Anthony Albanese, a senior minister in the last Labor government and briefly deputy prime minister, is preparing to “hit the ground running” if the ALP wins next year’s election.

But meanwhile the opposition is concentrating on staying focused and on message, fully aware that things can always go wrong.

Speaking to *The Conversation*, Albanese wouldn’t comment on Bill Shorten’s unpopularity with voters, arguing instead that it’s a matter of whether the Labor team is “seen as worthy of election”.

Albanese predicts next week’s ALP national conference will be “very constructive”, dismissing concerns about divisions over boat turnbacks.

The debate is not focused on that, he said – rather the emphasis is on settling people from Nauru and Manus in third countries, dealing with those needing medical assistance, and co-operating in regional processing.

Asked about the ALP last week capitulating to the government over the encryption bill, Albanese said he wasn’t involved in the decision, which was “made by the leadership group”.

Always under pressure from the Greens in his own seat of Grayndler, Albanese predicts a “schism” in the “dysfunctional” party is imminent. A conflict between two tendencies in the NSW Greens could lead to a split “as soon as the March state election ... two parties essentially running against each other trying to claim the same ground”.

*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.*

## Politics with Michelle Grattan: Anthony Albanese on Labor's road ahead

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