

## John Setka resigns from ALP, attacks Albanese

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

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Opposition leader Anthony Albanese has finally seen off John Setka from the ALP, with the militant construction union leader capitulating and quitting the party.

Setka, who lost a court case he brought in his fight against expulsion, had launched an appeal to try to thwart Albanese's determination to remove him.

But he withdrew the appeal and announced his resignation in a vitriolic statement on Wednesday attacking Albanese, seizing in particular on Labor's support for the government's free trade deals.

"Just when I thought Mr. Albanese couldn't betray the Labor Party's principles, workers and their families any further, he sided with the Morrison government on new free trade deals with Indonesia, Hong Kong and Peru.

"I ask Mr. Albanese, what has happened to a Fair Go for all Australians?

"These agreements are a disaster for Australian jobs and living standards. Talk about sending a signal to unions and workers on where the party stands," he said.

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**Read more:** [\*\*CFMMEU's John Setka set to be expelled from ALP after attack on Rosie Batty\*\*](#)

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Setka's resignation came ahead of the ALP executive being set to expel him on Friday.

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It is a significant victory for Albanese, who had a good deal of credibility invested after repeatedly saying the rogue unionist would be ousted from the party. Albanese had Setka suspended from the ALP but the expulsion process was delayed because of the court action.

Setka said his decision to resign had “everything” to do with Albanese.

It was a personal decision which would not affect “the CFMEU VIC / TAS branch’s ability to advocate within the Labor party,” he said.

The union, however, won’t be able to send Setka as a delegate to ALP conferences.

Setka remains an official in the union despite pressure from the ACTU for him to stand down.

Albanese said the outcome was “a very satisfactory result in the interests of the Labor party and, might I say, in the interest of trade union people everywhere.”

He said he had moved against Setka because “I thought over a long period of time through his actions, he demonstrated values that were not consistent with the values which the Australian Labor Party holds dear.”

Pressed later on the ABC about whether the Labor party would continue to accept money from the union, Albanese dodged the question but said it was affiliated with the ALP, implying Labor would take funds if they were forthcoming.

Setka said the “smear campaign” against him followed his announcement the CFMEU would no longer financially back the ALP.

He accused Albanese of “a very public campaign to have me expelled from the party, based on

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false allegations motivated by old-fashioned political payback”.

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**Read more:** [\*Albanese one step closer in long march towards John Setka's expulsion\*](#)

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He was resigning because “I cannot continue to be a member of the Labor Party while Anthony Albanese is its leader.

“Mr Albanese is selling out Australian workers and turning his back on the values that underpin both the party and the union movement.

“Under his leadership, the Labor party has lost its spine. Worse still, it is in danger of losing its soul,” he said.

“Mr. Albanese claims I have brought the ALP into disrepute. Notwithstanding my flaws, nothing has hurt the ALP’s reputation like Mr. Albanese’s leadership over the past five months.”

Because of legal complications the ALP recently started to deal with Setka’s expulsion under Victorian party rules, as well as under national rules.

In a Wednesday statement, Setka’s lawyers said: “It was our advice that once the ALP agreed to deal with Mr. Setka under the Victorian rules then pursuing the [legal] appeal was inappropriate. This is because the ALP was now acting under the Victorian rules as Mr. Setka has always argued they should.”

The statement said the ALP national executive had refused Setka’s request for a short

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adjournment of Friday's meeting. "Given that decision it is our view that the ALP was not intending to provide him with procedural fairness."

*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.*

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