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# IN THE SHADOWS

## THE SHADOW CABINET IN AUSTRALIA

Joel Bateman
2008 Australian Parliamentary Fellow

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# Presiding Officers' foreword

Since its establishment in 1971, the Australian Parliamentary Fellowship has provided an opportunity for academic researchers to investigate and analyse aspects of the working of the Australian parliament and parliamentary processes. The work of Dr Joel Bateman, the 2008 Australian Parliamentary Fellow, examines the Shadow Cabinet as it operates in the federal sphere in Australian politics.

Dr Bateman discusses the roles, functions and procedures of the modern Australian Shadow Cabinet. In so doing he aims to redress the shortage of material on the Shadow Cabinet, and provide the reader with a better understanding of what the Shadow Cabinet does and how it operates. He examines some of the issues arising from the Shadow Cabinet's role in the parliamentary system. He also considers factors that affect Shadow Cabinet's primary roles of organising the Opposition, providing an alternative government and serving as an arena for the training and testing of potential future Cabinet ministers. His monograph makes a valuable contribution to this little-studied political institution.

HARRY JENKINS
Speaker of the House of Representatives

JOHN HOGG
President of the Senate

May 2009

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# Acknowledgments

thanks and love to Ngaire, who has provided support, encouragement, motivation and inspiration throughout this—and every other—year.

Joel Bateman
February 2009

# Introduction

It is not difficult to argue that Cabinet is a key institution of Westminster politics. The central decision-making body, the branch of government comprised of the leaders of the government, site of a specific form of political conflict and the political home of the prime minister: Cabinet is each of these things. Yet its mirror, the Shadow Cabinet, occupies a far less certain place in the political system. For a group which functions as the alternative government, and which plays a significant role in the democratic process, the Shadow Cabinet is an institution which has been curiously under-studied, particularly in Australia. In this monograph, I will discuss the roles, functions and procedures of the modern Australian Shadow Cabinet as it operates at the federal level. In so doing, I will begin to address the shortage of material on the Shadow Cabinet available to date, by providing an outline of what the modern Australian Shadow Cabinet does and how it operates. In addition, I will examine some of the issues which arise from the Shadow Cabinet's place in the system and procedures, and how these affect its roles in the broader Australian parliamentary system.

The Australian Shadow Cabinet is a body often referred to, and its members occupy identifiable roles. Yet the functions, roles and practices of the Shadow Cabinet are far less clear than those of the Cabinet. The institutional basis of Cabinet is relatively well-defined and understood. Cabinet meets on a regular basis in a room designed for the purpose, operates with formal procedures and has the administrative support of the public service. Cabinet papers are produced to a set template, circulated by specific deadlines and discussed at meetings which run according to established procedures. While these practices vary from government to government, to a large extent because of the preferences of prime ministers or the party holding government, they remain fairly consistent.

Much less is known about the processes and practices of the Shadow Cabinet. Does it meet regularly, like Cabinet, or are its meetings conducted on an as-needed basis? How formal are these meetings: are minutes taken; are papers circulated beforehand? In its capacity as the alternative government, to what extent does the Shadow Cabinet focus on proposing and refining new policies? To what extent is its focus on reacting to the government's actions? Perhaps most fundamentally, to what extent can Shadow Cabinet be regarded as an institution in the Australian political system?

While the Shadow Cabinet exists as a recognised component of the parliamentary system, it can be argued that it is little more than a party committee for whichever party

(or coalition) forms opposition. Paid scant attention by most textbooks on the Australian political system, Shadow Cabinet is usually passed over entirely in discussions of Australian political institutions. Factions in the Australian Labor Party (Labor) and the Liberal Party are typically described in such texts. The role of the Opposition in Westminster parliamentary systems is frequently described, with special focus on the importance of a constitutional, organised and identifiable alternative to the office-holders of government. But the roles and practices of the leaders of the alternative party or coalition, that is, those directly responsible for countering the government's policies are ignored.

Unlike Cabinet, there are no formal procedures for the release of Shadow Cabinet documents. Under the thirty-year rule, each January some of the highlights of past Cabinets are revealed. Without an equivalent release of Shadow Cabinet materials, the nature of the meetings of the Opposition front bench remains unclear. Thus, a strange irony exists: Cabinet is surrounded in conventions of secrecy, yet its papers are released to public view, while the Shadow Cabinet actually operates under much greater secrecy.

Only some of this is intentional, however. As noted above, most introductory texts on Australian politics barely mention the Shadow Cabinet. At most it is discussed as a component of the parliamentary opposition to the government. Related topics, such as parliamentary party organisations, the roles of oppositions in Westminster parliamentary systems and Cabinet's procedures and functions, are all common topics for introductory textbooks. Yet even when these topics touch directly on Shadow Cabinet-related matters, such as the importance of party structures and systems on the appointment of ministers or shadow ministers, there is little in-depth consideration of Shadow Cabinet as a political institution. In the recently published *Oxford Companion to Australian Politics*, Shadow Cabinet does not rate an entry. It is only fleetingly mentioned in the two-page section on opposition and not at all in the longer entry on Cabinet.[1] Most dictionaries of Australian politics comply with the definition of Shadow Cabinet found in the *Penguin Macquarie Dictionary of Australian Politics*:

> [Shadow Cabinet comprises the] parliamentary leaders or front bench of the Opposition. They are assigned the task of criticising and suggesting alternatives to

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1. B Galligan and W Roberts, *The Oxford companion to Australian politics*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2007.

government performance in particular ministerial portfolios. They are known individually as shadow ministers.[2]

In short, the Shadow Cabinet in Australia is a body deemed unworthy of scholarly attention. Is Shadow Cabinet ignored because it is, by nature, not in power? Is it ignored because it tends to be dominated by leaders of the opposition? Are its practices too unclear to merit in-depth academic study?

This shortage of material on the Australian Shadow Cabinet is in stark contrast to the range of studies and other materials on the Cabinet itself. The *Cabinet Handbook*, for instance, readily available on the website of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, provides a useful starting point for studies of the institutional basis of the Australian Cabinet. Additionally, academics such as Patrick Weller have written extensively on the roles and functions of Cabinet within the Australian system. [3] Weller has looked at Cabinet over time as well as how specific Cabinets have functioned under the leadership of individual prime ministers.[4] Cabinet is also discussed on a regular basis in the news media, which means that members of the public can have at least a basic grasp of when it meets and what purposes it serves. On these three levels, information about and analysis of Australia's Cabinet system is readily available. In many ways this disparity makes sense, since Cabinet has a firm institutional basis as a central convention within Westminster politics, and as the de facto holders of executive power in the Australian system, whereas Shadow Cabinet's position, as already argued, is much less clear. Compared to Cabinet—where clear records are kept and, after thirty years, released and reported on by the news media, and where executive decisions are made—Shadow Cabinet may seem like a body not worthy of examination.

Much of what we do know about the Shadow Cabinet comes from memoirs of its former members. At the same time most of these memoirs focus on intra-party politics: the Leader of the Opposition, of criticism and challengers or the mood of a party new to opposition or stuck in the long-term political wilderness. Memoirs offer only brief glimpses of the Shadow Cabinet, however. For example, while Barry Jones (ALP, Lalor, 1977–1998) comments, '[d]iscipline and concentration on policy formulation

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2. *The Penguin–Macquarie Dictionary of Australian Politics*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1988, p. 12.

3. See P Weller, *Cabinet government in Australia, 1901–2006,* University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2007.

4. See P Weller, *Malcolm Fraser PM: A study in prime ministerial power in Australia*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1989.

was important in the Hayden Shadow Ministry', Jones does not discuss the process of policy formulation within that Shadow Ministry.[5] In a characteristically different opinion, former Opposition Leader Mark Latham (ALP, Werriwa, 1994–2005) argues:

> My original goal coming into the Parliament was to make better public policy according to Labor principles. I've now concluded that the Shadow Ministry process is external to this process.[6]

Yet despite this opinion, Latham, like Jones discussed the earlier time, provides little information on how the Labor Shadow Cabinet operated during this period. In discussing his tenure as Opposition Leader, Billy Snedden, (Lib, Bruce, 1955–1983), describes the system he installed as one under which each shadow minister acted as chair of a committee in a portfolio area. The committee formulated party policy on that topic, and responded to the Government's policies.[7] Snedden considered that some of these committees worked quite effectively, but some were all-but-ignored by their chair.[8] Snedden also describes the way votes were taken:

> When I was Leader I would not have votes in either the Party Room or the Shadow Cabinet. From Menzies I learned that the trouble with votes is that the person who came into Parliament yesterday has a vote equal to that of the Prime Minister – which is absurd because the Prime Minister has been there longer, gained wisdom and has responsibility. For that reason we took a 'sense of the meeting'.[9]

Snedden does not elaborate on this process, and his description raises one immediate issue: he makes the point that there were differences between 'party room' and 'Shadow Cabinet' votes but gives no indication of what types of matters were discussed and resolved by a 'sense of the meeting' in each forum. What issues were discussed at Shadow Cabinet meetings and which at party room meetings? By distinguishing between the types of questions discussed and resolved at the two types of meetings, Snedden could have illustrated the role the Shadow Cabinet played during his leadership of the Liberal Party. That he does not do so leaves the question unanswered. Snedden notes further that after the 1972 election, with the status of the coalition between his party and the Country Party still undetermined, he appointed 'spokesmen'

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5. B Jones, *A thinking reed*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2006, p. 335.

6. M Latham, *The Latham diaries*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2005, p. 10.

7. BM Snedden and MB Schedvin, *Billy Snedden: An unlikely Liberal*, McMillan, Melbourne, 1990, p. 150.

8. ibid.

9. ibid., p. 147.

on various portfolios, rather than a Shadow Cabinet.[10] What the difference between these two positions was remains unclear.

In summary, indications as to what various Shadow Cabinets did, or how they operated, seem unimportant even to many of those who spent time in high-ranking positions, even leadership, within them. The Shadow Cabinet also remains overlooked and understudied as far as academic studies of Australian politics are concerned. Yet this does not mean that the Shadow Cabinet can be disregarded as a topic for study and analysis. Indeed, the very uncertainty of its nature and operation makes the Australian Shadow Cabinet worthy of investigation.

In order to address this shortage of research into, and analysis of the Australian federal Shadow Cabinet, this monograph will explore its roles, processes and functions. In so doing, the monograph will begin the process of understanding how the Shadow Cabinet fits into Australia's overall political system. As will be argued throughout this monograph, the modern Shadow Cabinet is closely modelled in many of its practices on the Cabinet. However, with fewer resources, the Shadow Cabinet relies for its information and organisation on less formal means than the Cabinet. Some of these will be discussed in the final chapter of the monograph.

## Method

Because there has been little research undertaken on the nature of the Shadow Cabinet, the conclusions of this project are to a large extent the result of primary research.

In June 2008, I requested interviews with current federal parliamentarian who had Shadow Cabinet experience—in all 56 parliamentarians. I was granted interviews with twelve of the parliamentarians as well as with Peter Hendy, chief of staff of the then Leader of the Opposition, Brendan Nelson (a list of those who were interviewed for this project is included at Appendix). Six of the twelve parliamentarians interviewed were from the Coalition, six from the Labor Party. Interviews were conducted between June and October 2008, in Parliament House. Most interviews, which were similar in structure, lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. The interviews were noted but not recorded. In two cases, advisers to the shadow ministers attended.

Not all the interview subjects were happy to be identified and quoted, therefore I have chosen not to identify subjects by name or position. However, where it is relevant, I

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10. ibid., p. 143.

have identified the party to which a shadow minister belongs. I have also referred to subjects as 'a shadow minister' rather than 'a current shadow minister' or 'a former shadow minister' to de-emphasise the party to which they belong. Unless explicitly stated, references such as 'a shadow minister' should not be read to indicate that the person in question is a current shadow minister.

## Outline

In this monograph, I will investigate the role, practices and process of the Shadow Cabinet in modern Australian federal politics. The first chapter provides an overview of the institution, beginning with an outline of the historical development of the Shadow Cabinet in British politics and in Australia. Following this, I will discuss the three roles most commonly ascribed to the Shadow Cabinet: organising the Opposition, providing an alternative government and serving as an arena for training and testing potential future Cabinet ministers. The second chapter considers the modern Australian Shadow Cabinet as an institution. It begins with a description of the formal processes of running Shadow Cabinet, including how meetings are structured and the use of Shadow Cabinet submissions. The second section of the chapter discusses the appointment of shadow ministers, including the extent of guidance they are given by party leaders and the resources available to them. In the third section, I examine the Shadow Cabinet's policy-making function. The chapter concludes with a section focused on the roles of individual shadow ministers.

The final chapter discusses some key practices and functions of the recent Australian Shadow Cabinet. In this chapter, I draw heavily on the interviews conducted for this project, and the chapter therefore reflects the themes which arose in those discussions. The first is the distinction between the Shadow Cabinet and the broader Shadow Ministry. The second is the various other groups which operate in and in conjunction with the Shadow Cabinet. In the third section of this chapter, I expand on an issue raised in Chapter two: the resources available to shadow ministers. The next section discusses an important, if often overlooked, component of the shadow minister's role: building relationships with stakeholders from his or her portfolio area. The final section examines the paradox of autonomy and centralisation for shadow ministers.

# Chapter one: the background and roles of Shadow Cabinet

As with most other components of the Australian political system, Shadow Cabinet evolved from an informal process in the British Parliament. From the mid-nineteenth century in Britain, a distinct and organised opposition began to emerge; a leadership group to coordinate its strategy soon followed.[11] In the latter half of that century, the Shadow Cabinet became a recognised entity within British politics, though British academic D.R. Turner notes that 'its use was still limited and its full potential unrecognised'.[12] Over time, the Shadow Cabinet slowly solidified its position in the British system, marked most notably in 1937, when the position of Leader of the Opposition began to carry a salary.[13] This same development, however, had already taken place in Australia, 17 years earlier, following an initiative of Prime Minister Billy Hughes.[14] As academic, Ian Ward notes, this remains the only formal recognition of Shadow Cabinet in Australia; shadow ministers' salaries are set at the same rate as backbenchers, but they are usually given an allowance—around one-fifth of that allocated to ministers—for researchers and other staff.[15]

In this chapter, I briefly examine the evolution of the British Shadow Cabinet and how that has impacted the Australian equivalent. I then examine the three roles most commonly ascribed to the British Shadow Cabinet and discuss the extent to which they are evident in the modern Australian Shadow Cabinet. These roles are: organising the Opposition, providing an alternative government and serving as a training ground for future ministers.

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11. DR Turner, *The Shadow Cabinet in British politics*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1969, p. xiv.

12. ibid*.,* p. 18.

13. RM Punnett, *Frontbench opposition: the role of the Leader of the Opposition, the Shadow Cabinet and Shadow government in British politics*, Heinemann, London, 1973, p. 77.

14. G Maddox, *Australian democracy in theory and practice,* fifth edn, Pearson, Melbourne, 2005, p. 237.

15. I Ward and R Stewart, *Politics one*, third edn, Palgrave, Melbourne, 2006, p. 235.

## 1.1 The British system: the origins of Shadow Cabinet

In 1969, Turner published *The Shadow Cabinet in British Politics*, which he believed to be the first serious study of the development of the institution in that country.[16] Four years later, British academic R.M. Punnett published *Frontbench Opposition: The Role of the Leader of the Opposition, the Shadow Cabinet and Shadow Government in British Politics*, and it is from this latter work that most of the argument in this section is drawn. Both Turner and Punnett make the same two points about the development of the Shadow Cabinet. First, that originally it was an informal gathering of senior opposition members which met to discuss government's actions and possible responses to these.[17] Second, the most important step in the formalisation of Shadow Cabinet was the recognition that a vital role of an opposition was to present clearly a viable alternative to government. This included indicating who would hold ministerial positions after a change of government.[18] Punnett commented on the British Shadow Cabinet that, in many ways its was 'more akin to the way the Cabinet operated in the nineteenth century than to the way it functions today [in 1973]'.[19] At that time, unlike Cabinet, Shadow Cabinet had no sub-committees, an informal secretariat, few formal submissions and a much more informal atmosphere overall.[20] Punnett described the tone of Shadow Cabinet meetings as 'more conversational' than Cabinet, even though these meetings were regular (for both parties, 5pm Tuesdays during sitting weeks) and were minuted.[21] Punnett noted also that it was common for British shadow ministers to hold secondary, part-time employment outside of parliament. This was because they only received a backbencher salary and their Shadow Cabinet duties essentially found them busy only during parliamentary sitting periods.[22]

## 1.2 The development of Shadow Cabinet in Australia

Despite the early financial recognition of the Leader of the Opposition in Australia, the development of Australia's system of Shadow Cabinet is not well documented. The

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16. Turner, op cit., p. xiii.

17. Turner, op cit., p. 1; Punnett, op cit., p. 36ff.

18. Turner, op. cit, p. xiv; Punnett, op. cit, p. 71.

19. Punnett, op. cit, p. 248.

20. ibid., p. 258.

21. ibid., pp. 222–25.

22. Punnett, pp. 380–81.

primary problem with tracing its history is the paucity of material available. Furthermore, there also remains a lack of clarity, even among available sources. For instance, historian L.F. Crisp states that in May 1965, the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party resolved to increase the Opposition Executive from 14 to 25, creating a broader Shadow Ministry, with the Leader of the Opposition allocating portfolios to each member.[23] S. Scalmer, writing in the edited collection *True believers: the story of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party*, seems to agree with this account. He notes that in May 1965 Caucus established the Shadow Ministry, 'so as to mirror the structure of government and heighten preparations for executive power'.[24] Yet, in the same volume, political commentator Paul Kelly attributes this change to Gough Whitlam (ALP, Werriwa, 1952–1978) upon his election as Labor leader two years later:

> The first decision Whitlam made as leader was designed to bring the Caucus into line with the demands of ministerial power. He apportioned shadow portfolios to the Labor frontbench as elected by the Caucus. This had two consequences – it increased the leader's authority, since he had shadow portfolios to bestow, and it promoted Party discipline since it meant that each portfolio had only one shadow minister and not a dozen. The system has prevailed ever since.[25]

Contemporary sources bear out Scalmer's account. A newspaper article from May 1965 discusses the changes—and the controversy within the Labor Party that they entailed:

> The Federal Parliamentary Labour [sic] Party, after a bitter debate today, voted 38–26 in favour of the appointment of a full 'shadow Ministry' of 25 members. Opponents of the scheme criticised it as one of the most dangerous things which has happened in the Federal Parliamentary Labour Party in many years. They claimed that it would

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23. LF Crisp, *Australian national government*, fifth edn, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1983, p. 302. Note, however, that a system similar to the modern federal Shadow Cabinet arrangements had existed in the New South Wales parliament for three decades by this time: 'a 'shadow cabinet', that is, opposition leaders identified as spokesmen of their party in relation to the subject-matter of specified portfolios – a practice initiated by the Labor Opposition in the 1930s' (from RS Parker, *The government of New South Wales*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1978, p. 230). That such a system had functioned for so long at the state level makes the federal Labor Party's division over the matter and the history of the development of Australia's Shadow Cabinet system, even less clear.

24. S Scalmer, 'Crisis to crisis: 1950–66', in J Faulkner and S Macintyre, eds, *True believers: the story of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2001, p. 102.

25. P Kelly, 'Caucus under Whitlam: 1967–75', in Faulkner and Macintyre, ibid., p. 107.

> result in undue pressure on the party leader, Mr A. A. Calwell, to appoint unsuitable men to 'shadow' portfolios and that this would harm the party in the public mind.[26]

Within the Liberal Party, similar concerns were held. While the Coalition held government for most of the time in which the Australian model of Shadow Cabinet was developed, party founder and long-term leader Robert Menzies (Lib, Kooyong, 1934–1966) strongly opposed the system. It is worth quoting his rationale, expressed in his 1970 memoir *The Measure of the Years*, at length:

> I have noticed with interest that both in London and in Canberra the practice has arisen for an Opposition to have a 'Shadow Cabinet'. This has no appeal for me. True, I can see that there is some advantage in having some member of the Opposition who acquires special knowledge of some individual ministry or department. But there are two disadvantages. The first is that when the Opposition comes home at a General Election, the Leader, the new Prime Minister, will suffer a painful embarrassment if Shadow Minister for X is left in the shadows, and another member preferred. The greater the victory and therefore the greater the numbers to choose from—quite a few having had earlier ministerial experience—the more likely the embarrassment. An Opposition Leader who wins needs a free hand when accepts a commission as Prime Minister. He should not be handicapped by too many personal promises made when in Opposition.
>
> The second disadvantage is, in my opinion, even more significant. One of the advantages of Opposition is the chance it gives to many members to become all-rounders, well informed on a wide range of topics, competent as flexible debaters, and able to make useful contributions to the formulation of general policy.[27]

Menzies' objections counter the two major benefits of a Shadow Cabinet as argued by the system's Labor proponents. Supporters of the Shadow Cabinet considered it an asset for individual members of the Opposition to gain experience and public recognition within a particular portfolio area.

The May 1965 article discussed above also explains the existing system. Before 1965, the executive of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party in opposition consisted of 14 members: the four parliamentary leaders (the Leader, Deputy Leader, the Opposition Leader in the Senate and Deputy Leader in the Senate) plus ten members elected from Caucus. 'This Caucus executive, the 'shadow Cabinet', governs the parliamentary party and processes business.[28] In addition, 17 policy committees existed to formulate policy across the various portfolios. By contrast, the new system of a 'Shadow Ministry' was

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26.　'Shadow Ministry vote stirs Caucus anger', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 May 1965, p. 4.

27.　RG Menzies, *The measure of the years*, Cassell, Melbourne, 1970, pp. 17–18.

28.　'Shadow Ministry vote stirs Caucus anger', op. cit.

proposed on the basis of two arguments. The first was that it would allow for greater specialisation and training for individual members in preparation for their roles as ministers after a change of government. The second was that it would more effectively counter the government: 'Every Minister in the Federal Government would feel the impact of the new Opposition specialisation on his portfolio, Mr Johnson [the motion's mover] claimed'.[29] These two roles—of training future ministers and providing an identifiable alternative government—became two of the most significant functions of the Shadow Cabinet.

Mostly, however, the history of Australia's Shadow Cabinet remains unwritten. It is not within the scope of this project to provide an exhaustive chronology of the Shadow Cabinet's development in Australia, but it is important to note the extent to which this topic remains under-researched.

## 1.3 The roles of Shadow Cabinet

Three primary roles for the Shadow Cabinet can be seen through its development since the mid-nineteenth century. The first is to organise the parliamentary tactics of the Opposition; the second is to facilitate the Opposition's position as the alternative government; and the final role is to provide experience and training for potential future ministers. These three roles can all be seen as reasons for the evolution of Shadow Cabinet from its informal beginnings in Britain to the modern Australian version. In this section, I will examine how each of these roles came to be and what they contribute to our understanding of the functions of the federal Shadow Cabinet in Australia.

### Organising the Opposition

The first, and most basic role filled by the Shadow Cabinet is one of organisation. Punnett highlights this component:

> The modern [British] Shadow Cabinet can be defined as a group of leading figures of the Opposition … who meet together as a committee on a regular basis to assist the Leader of the Opposition in the task of managing the business of Opposition.[30]

It is noteworthy that Punnett argues for the primacy of 'managing the business of Opposition', rather than formulating policy alternatives or other tasks of opposition, such as keeping a parliamentary check on the Government. This is echoed later in his

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29.   ibid.

30.   Punnet, op. cit., p. 35.

book, when he discusses the meetings of Shadow Cabinet. He notes that while long-term strategies and policy directions were discussed and debated in Shadow Cabinet, the majority of time (between two-thirds and three-quarters) was spent on organisational matters, such as who would speak in response to introduced Bills, and questions for Question Time.[31] He argues therefore:

> To this extent, then, the title 'Shadow Cabinet' is a misleading one, implying too close a parallel to the real Cabinet. Labour's term 'Parliamentary Committee' is much more appropriate, as it describes accurately what the Shadow Cabinet really is–a committee to organise the day-to-day *Parliamentary* affairs of the party in opposition.[32]

This definition of Shadow Cabinet's functions describes a fundamentally mechanical body, utilised primarily for housekeeping matters. It is a definition which is at odds with the notion of the members of Shadow Cabinet acting as the leaders of the alternative government. Such a description is less applicable to the Australian version of the Shadow Cabinet. The proliferation of other groups within the Opposition has reduced the Shadow Cabinet's role as an organising committee of the Opposition's parliamentary business.

## The alternative government

The primary reason for the development of the Shadow Cabinet, as discussed above, is relatively straightforward. By virtue of holding office, governments have a natural advantage. Not only do they have the capacity to effect change and enact their policies (within the realms of constitutionality and other limiting factors), but they also hold the secondary benefits of power. Chief amongst these include: access to the public service for advice, research and analysis; a higher place in the public's consciousness and a superior agenda-setting capacity, as a result of its greater access to the news media. These tools allow the Government to make a considerable advantage of its incumbency.

In contrast, and in addition to its other limitations, an opposition is frequently under-resourced. It is therefore less able to present itself on terms of equality with government. One way of making up this unfavourable contrast is for an opposition to organise itself in ways that bear comparison with government. Most notably, to present itself as an alternative government; it can do this by modelling its structure on that of the Government by allocating portfolios to frontbench members. There are two

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31.    ibid., p. 220.

32.    ibid., p. 221.

components of acting as an alternative government: arguing the case against the incumbent party and providing an alternative policy vision.

As Turner indicates, the primary task of the earliest incarnations of Shadow Cabinet were mostly mechanical, in terms of organising the Opposition's positions on issues and deciding matters of parliamentary strategy.[33] However, as the concept of Shadow Cabinet evolved, the idea of appearing as an alternative government became the most important task for oppositions. At this point it is worth noting the difference inherent in the conceptual distinction between an opposition and an alternative government. An opposition is principally concerned with countering the government's policies and ideas. This can take place in a variety of ways, ranging from political terrorism to the constitutional form of parliamentary opposition. The latter form is the type of opposition usually meant by the term in Westminster-style democracies. However, even in the second instance the term 'opposition' essentially only describes a reactive body; one which disagrees with the Government.

The term 'alternative government', conversely, implies something quite different—namely, a group whose purpose will include putting forward a policy set to provide choice to voters (often, of course, this goes hand in hand with the broader notion of opposition). Within a stable democracy like Australia, there will only ever be one group which can be described as the 'alternative government', regardless of the number of groups who position themselves in opposition to the government. Minor parties in Australia do not serve the role of, nor would they see themselves as, or be perceived as alternative governments, since they do not reasonably expect to win the requisite number of seats to form a government. Thus, their role is different to that of the major party in opposition.

The development of the Shadow Cabinet has much to do with the recognition that opposition members needed to present themselves as an alternative government. Most immediately, by mirroring the structure of the government by having shadow ministers for the various portfolio areas, oppositions are able to demonstrate how Government would appear should it change hands. Punnett succinctly notes the dual role of an opposition, which must:

> … lead the attack on what the Government is currently doing, but it also has to appear as the alternative Government, demonstrating that it is sufficiently responsible to do a better job than the current Ministry. In short, it has to 'conduct a war' against the

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33.    Turner, op. cit., p. 1.

> Government while at the same time considering the problems that it will itself face in the task of 'post-war reconstruction'.[34]

This rationale can be seen clearly in the arguments made by the proponents of Labor's Shadow Ministry changes in 1965, as discussed above. The primacy of placing one-on-one pressure on ministers, whilst also focusing on its own plans, should it win government, was a key argument.

A related reason for the development and formalisation of the Shadow Cabinet has been the increasing complexity of government work since the mid-twentieth century.[35] This necessitated a greater specialisation amongst opposition members. It became implausible for all members to comment knowledgeably on all issues, particularly given that they were unable to access the public service to provide advice and research. To avoid confusion, contradiction and ill-informed answers to media questions, oppositions began appointing an official spokesperson for each portfolio area. By so doing, they were able to ensure that the media could identify which opposition member to contact for comments on government announcements and for details of the alternative government's policies. In this way, the link between Shadow Cabinet and the Opposition as the alternative government was apparent—the approach of having one person from opposition identifiable as responsible for a particular issue mirrors that of the Cabinet's role in government.

The centrality of an identifiable Shadow Cabinet in the Opposition's presentation of itself as an alternative government has been illustrated by recent federal elections. In addition to the leaders' debates, these campaigns have featured debates between ministers and shadow ministers in various high-profile portfolios, such as health, industrial relations and finance. This development signals the importance of these clear-cut shadowing positions. Despite the argument that there has been, and continues to be a rise in 'presidential' politics in the Australian system, a more accurate way of characterising the contest between the major parties is that it is a competition between two teams.[36] After being elected Labor leader in December 2006, Kevin Rudd issued a press statement outlining his 'team', arguing that it 'would give the people a clear

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34.    Punnett, op. cit., p. 214.

35.    Punnett, op. cit., p. 71.

36.    D Jaensch and P Weller, *Responsible government in Australia*, Drummond, Melbourne, 1980; R Lucy, *The Australian form of government: models in dispute*, MacMillan, Melbourne, 1993.

choice at the next election'.[37] Similarly, after his election as Opposition Leader in September 2008, Malcolm Turnbull referred to his new Shadow Ministry as a 'team [which] will provide the leadership demanded by the great challenges facing our nation'.[38] Media responses to these two statements can be seen in the following media excerpts: the first following Rudd's Shadow Ministry announcement, the second Turnbull's:

37.  K Rudd, *Kevin Rudd's new Shadow Ministry*, media release, Parliament House, 11 December 2006.

38.  M Turnbull, *Appointment of Shadow Ministry*, media release, Parliament House, 22 September 2008.

# Facing off

| CABINET MINISTERS | | SHADOW MINISTERS |
|---|---|---|
| **John Howard** | LEADER | **Kevin Rudd** |

MR Howard is the foremost politician of his generation yet, once again, is under threat from Labor's generational change.

The ministerial reshuffle is an attempt to freshen the Government's agenda after almost 11 years in office.

Mr Howard will not be complacent in an election year, particularly with a Labor resurgence.

MR Rudd has revived Labor's fortunes and restored its chances of winning the election expected to be held in the second half of this year. However, his challenge is to continue Labor's improved fortunes once his leadership honeymoon inevitably ends.

Mr Rudd is disciplined and tough.

He must, however, ensure his team follows this example.



| **Malcolm Turnbull** | ENVIRONMENT AND WATER RESOURCES | **Peter Garrett** |
|---|---|---|

THE rising star of the Liberal Party who will increasingly be mentioned as a future prime minister.

Mr Turnbull's promotion to the Cabinet after less than three years in Parliament earmarks him as a future leader.
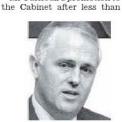
His election-year task of overhauling Australia's water supply system and the River Murray will test his mettle.

THE former Midnight Oil frontman oozes credibility on the environment after years as a campaigner.

His passionate song lyrics and stint as Australian Conservation Foundation chairman add to his CV.

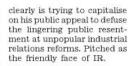But Mr Garrett's public standing might be undermined when Labor loosens its uranium policy in April.



Ref: 26061873

## Joe Hockey

## EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS

## Julia Gillard

KNOCKABOUT bloke who has built strong media profile through appearances with Labor leader Kevin Rudd on the popular *Sunrise* breakfast TV show. Mr Howard clearly is trying to capitalise on his public appeal to defuse the lingering public resentment at unpopular industrial relations reforms. Pitched as the friendly face of IR.

ONE half of Labor's leadership double act. Determined and consistent politician who has risen rapidly despite close links with failed former leader Mark Latham. Her attacking skills probably forced the removal of Kevin Andrews and replacement with Mr Hockey in this portfolio. Strong policy skills despite Medicare Gold's failure.

## Kevin Andrews

## IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP

## Tony Burke

CONSISTENT performer who gets the job done without stirring great levels of excitement. Introduced contentious industrial relations reforms amid strong opposition, from the union movement in particular. Has been able to counter claims of workplace disaster with historically low unemployment rates. Safe pair of hands.

RISING Labor star who has now scored Amanda Vanstone's political scalp. Has made a big impact since entering Parliament at the 2004 election. Skilled and enthusiastic media performer who benefited from a series of scandals in immigration, headlined by Cornelia Rau's detention. Former NSW Upper House member.

## Tony Abbott

## HEALTH

## Nicola Roxon

ONCE viewed as a strong leadership contender, his fusion of religious beliefs and policy issues have weakened his public and party standing. But Mr Abbott remains a devastatingly effective communicator with surprising personal appeal. He neutralised health as an issue at the 2004 election with some clever politics.

HANDED one of the biggest challenges by Mr Rudd – health is a key portfolio for Labor and a tough job. She is opposing Mr Abbott, who is one of the Government's hitmen, but has plenty of experience despite her relative youth. Will have to deal with legacy of Medicare Gold, which failed despite some merit.

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17

**Peter Costello**   **TREASURY**   **Wayne Swan**

LEADERSHIP prospects are dimming, yet remains critical part of Government team. Economic management is a key plank of the Government's 11 years in office, and Labor must erode this to have a chance of victory. The Treasurer is Parliament's strongest performer and has seen off a succession of opponents.

RETAINED by Mr Rudd in top economic portfolio despite strong backing for former leader Kim Beazley. Interest rate rises present opportunity to dent Government's credibility. Will face difficult challenge to weaken his rival, particularly on the parliamentary floor. Vital policy area for Labor's election chances.

**Mark Vaile**   **TRANSPORT**   **Martin Ferguson**

NATIONALS leader switched from Trade in September last year to concentrate more on the home front.

FORMER ACTU president is one of Labor's most experienced frontbenchers, having been in shadow cabinet since 1996.

**Brendan Nelson**   **DEFENCE**   **Joel Fitzgibbon**

POTENTIAL leadership successor who has recognised importance of strong links with defence industry.

FAILED former leader Mark Latham's closest associate is a risk in this key portfolio. Has been rewarded for backing Mr Rudd.

**Phillip Ruddock**   **ATTORNEY-GENERAL**   **Kelvin Thomson**

GOVERNMENT stalwart who has performed commendably, without excitement, as Attorney-General.

FORMER public servant and political staffer whose relatively dour personality and safe pair of hands is suited to the portfolio.

**Alexander Downer**   **FOREIGN AFFAIRS**   **Robert McClelland**

A PILLAR of the Government who has built credibility in foreign affairs and is still a long shot as a future leader.

THE former lawyer and defence shadow now faces the tough job of replacing his leader, Kevin Rudd, in foreign affairs.

Source: 'Facing off', *Advertiser*, 24 January 2007, p. 21.

## PARTY FACE-OFF
How the frontbenchers match up

**LABOR** | **LIBERAL**

**Kevin Rudd, 51 – Prime Minister**
STRENGTHS
- Experienced
- Strong grasp of fine detail
- Experienced in diplomacy and commonwealth-state relations
- Has a clearly laid-out platform of promises
- Secure in his leadership

WEAKNESSES
- Prone to waffle
- Reputed control freak
- Lacking in charisma

**Malcolm Turnbull, 54 – Opposition Leader**
STRENGTHS
- Confident
- Strong commercial background
- Good grasp of economics
- Carries a little Howard-era baggage

WEAKNESSES
- Seen as arrogant
- Relatively inexperienced in politics
- Can struggle with political tactics

**Julia Gillard, 47 – Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Social Inclusion**
STRENGTHS
- Labor's best parliamentary performer
- Hard worker with a firm grasp of the big reform program

WEAKNESSES
- Sometimes impulsive

**Christopher Pyne, 41 – Education spokesman**
STRENGTHS
- Confident style
- Experience in government

WEAKNESSES
- Could be challenged by first major portfolio

**Michael Keenan, 36 – Employment and workplace relations spokesman**
STRENGTHS
- No Howard government baggage

WEAKNESSES
- Has little experience and could struggle at this level

**Wayne Swan, 54 – Treasurer**
STRENGTHS
- Experienced
- Good political mind
- Is improving his parliamentary performance

WEAKNESSES
- Short on charisma

**Julie Bishop, 52 – Treasury spokesman**
STRENGTHS
- Is confident
- Has cabinet experience

WEAKNESSES
- Carries Howard-era baggage

**Linday Tanner, 52 – Finance and Deregulation**
STRENGTHS
- Strong on policy
- Very good parliamentary performer

**Joe Hockey, 43 – Finance, competition policy and deregulation spokesman**
STRENGTHS
- Popular and affable
- Has ministerial experience

WEAKNESSES
- Carries Howard-era baggage

**Anthony Albanese, 45 – Infrastructure**
STRENGTHS
- Funny, strong parliamentary performer who is very political

WEAKNESSES
- Left-wing factional heavyweight who politicises everything

**Andrew Robb, 57 – Infrastructure, COAG and emissions trading scheme spokesman**
STRENGTHS
- Smart Liberal Party strategist credited with Liberals 1996 win as campaign director
- Strong business community links

WEAKNESSES
- Not articulate, lacks charisma

**LABOR** | **LIBERAL** | **LABOR** | **LIBERAL**

**Nicola Roxon, 41 – Health**
STRENGTHS
- Steady parliamentary performer

WEAKNESSES
- Jury is still out on ministerial ability

**Peter Dutton, 37 – Health spokesman**
STRENGTHS
- Confident and experienced

WEAKNESSES
- Sometimes loses his head in enthusiasm to attack opponents

**Stephen Smith, 52 – Foreign Affairs**
STRENGTHS
- Cautious and diplomatic
- Hard-working

WEAKNESSES
- Nervous parliamentary performer
- Often attacked as a colourless Labor machine man

**Helen Coonan, 58 – Foreign affairs spokeswoman**
STRENGTHS
- Experienced
- Diplomatic

WEAKNESSES
- Inexperienced in this portfolio

**Joel Fitzgibbon, 46 – Defence**
STRENGTHS
- Level-headed and calm

WEAKNESSES
- Lacks killer instinct

**David Johnston, 52 – Defence spokesman**
STRENGTHS
- Showed a good grasp of national securities issues as customs minister

WEAKNESSES
- Little known and lacks experience at top level

**Jenny Macklin, 54 – Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs**
STRENGTHS
- Is consultative and inclusive with indigenous groups, carers and pensioners
- Has a sharp policy mind with a long history in social policy

WEAKNESSES
- Too cautious and slow to act

**Tony Abbott, 50 – Family and community services and indigenous affairs spokesman**
STRENGTHS
- Sharp, strong parliamentary performer, smart and quick on his feet

WEAKNESSES
- Ill-disciplined, impatient and is considered to be uncompassionate

**Peter Garrett, 55 – Environment**
STRENGTHS
- Committed to the environment

WEAKNESSES
- Inexperience, particularly within the Labor Party

**Greg Hunt, 42 – Environment spokesman**
STRENGTHS
- Limited Howard-era baggage
- Confident parliamentary performer

WEAKNESSES
- Tends toward overconfidence

Source: 'Party face-off', *Australian*, 23 September 2008, p. 4.

These remarkably similar articles resemble comparisons of two teams in a big match. Even the titles—'Facing off' and 'Party face-off'—contain more than a suggestion of a series of direct one-on-one competitions.

The 2007 federal election campaign highlighted this function of Shadow Cabinet, in that much of the Coalition's advertising focused on the Labor frontbench. Most explicitly the criticism was that Labor lacked experience and that its membership was heavily union-based and unrepresentative of the electorate at large.[39] That the Government was prepared to debate Labor, but not minor party spokespeople demonstrates the difference between being an opposition and being an alternative government. Indeed, by simultaneously engaging shadow ministers in debates and building an advertising campaign around the frontbench's unsuitability to form government, it can be argued that the Coalition Government served to legitimise their opponents as a serious alternative. Commenting on the Coalition's use of this comparison as an electoral tactic, journalist Laurie Oakes notes that:

> Almost all governments—particularly when they have been in office for a while—mount this case at election time, and the reason is obvious. Ministers make headlines throughout the electoral cycle and achieve high name recognition. Opposition frontbenchers find it much harder to gain attention, and the public gets little opportunity to evaluate them. Therefore, ministries almost always look stronger than shadow ministries. Every opposition, Coalition or Labor, faces the same hurdle.[40]

Another example of the focus on Shadow Cabinet and the way this makes election campaigns a contest between a government and an alternative government, was Kevin Rudd's public statements regarding the central economic portfolios of a Rudd Labor government during the campaign.[41] By specifying that, should Labor win the election, Julia Gillard would be Deputy Leader and Minister for Industrial Relations, Wayne Swan would be Treasurer and Lindsay Tanner Minister for Finance, Rudd signalled the importance of presenting a clear, cohesive 'team' as the alternative government. This

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39. See, for instance, John Howard's campaign launch speech: 'If we elect the wrong people, if we put the Government of this country in the hands of a Ministry 70 per cent of whose members will be former trade union officials …', in which the importance of the membership of the alternative government's Shadow Cabinet is clearly highlighted by the prime minister. The Coalition's media supporters also emphasised this point, with articles such as P Ackerman's 'Rudd will dance to union tune should he win office', *Sunday Mail* (Adelaide), 3 June 2007, p. 82.

40. L Oakes, 'The A(LP) Team', *The Bulletin*, 2 October 2007, p. 14.

41. G McManus, 'Key trio to stay as Rudd backtracks', *Herald-Sun*, 28 September 2007, p. 12.

also had the effect of providing a comparison with the Coalition's 'team' of Prime Minister John Howard and Treasurer Peter Costello, a strategy designed to counter perceptions of discord between the two senior Liberals. Thus, an overt message of the 2007 federal election was the contest between two teams, the government and the alternative government, centred on the Cabinet and its shadow. In this way, the 2007 election offered as one of its most prominent themes a demonstration of the role for which Shadow Cabinets were developed—namely, giving the Opposition a clear and identifiable way to present itself as the alternative to the government.

Most shadow ministers spoken to in the course of this project considered keeping a check on, and providing an alternative to the Government were the primary reasons for the existence of Shadow Cabinet. One shadow minister described the Shadow Ministry as having a two-pronged role. This was first, to develop the Opposition's policies and respond to those of the Government; and second, to hold the Government to account, through critique of its legislation and via debate and questioning in the parliament.

## A training ground for Cabinet?

One of the most interesting points Punnett makes in his examination of British frontbench opposition is that the skills which make a good shadow minister are not necessarily the same as those which make a good minister in government.[42]The difference, he argues, is between strong debaters (as shadow ministers need to must be) and strong administrators (as ministers need to be).[43] This is an important distinction, in that by defining the central requirements of the two positions, Punnett illustrates the differences between them.

Shadow ministers, in their dual role as both critics of the Government and potential future government ministers, have the public as their primary constituency. In parliamentary, public and media appearances, shadow ministers have one main goal: to persuade the electorate that the Government is not performing well and that the Opposition could do better. While ministers also have the goal of convincing the electorate of their own merits and the Opposition's shortcomings, many of their main interactions are internal. Ministers are focused on working within their department to formulate ideas and within Cabinet to get those ideas adopted as party policy (or vice versa). As Punnett argues, people with debating skills do not necessarily also have administrative ability. This means that opposition leaders or the parliamentary party—

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42.   Punnett, op. cit., p. 148.

43.   ibid., p. 150.

depending on the method by which shadow ministers are appointed—need to decide which to prioritise. Should shadow ministers be chosen on the basis of their capacity as a shadow minister, or their potential as a future minister?[44] Despite the different focus involved in being a shadow or a minister however, most of the current and former shadow ministers interviewed for this project believed that their experience in the Shadow Ministry had been helpful in preparing them for executive leadership.

The practical differences between Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet are illustrated by the experience of parliamentarians who make the transition from Shadow Cabinet to Cabinet, for instance, those who made the change after Labor's election in 1983.[45] Former Senator John Button (ALP, Victoria, 1974–1993) described how the incoming ministers suddenly had vastly-increased workloads and responsibilities, for which Shadow Cabinet membership had not prepared them.[46]Fellow new Minister Senator Susan Ryan (ALP, Australian Capital Territory, 1975–1988) also discussed the nature of the transition. Ryan placed particular emphasis on the ways in which her experience in Shadow Cabinet had not proved to be an adequate grounding for holding executive power:

> In the swift and glorious transition from Opposition to Government, I had been flooded with optimism. Shadow ministry is, however, only a partial preparation for the reality of wielding power. Initial Cabinet experiences are daunting; the sense of power is weighed down by responsibility.[47]

Button also pointed out that new ministers had to learn to deal with counterparts overseas, the media and the public service:

> Oppositions have little to do with the public service. Ministers consult with public servants, and engage with them on a day-to-day basis. And then there are the media.

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44. It needs acknowledging that factors other than past or potential ability as a shadow minister or minister also go towards determining the Shadow Cabinet's composition. These include party factions, geographic and gender distributions and internal party political matters such as, dealing with supporters or potential rivals.

45. The election of 1983 remains at this point the most recent change of government about which much is known. Several key members of the Labor frontbench of the time have published memoirs, including the leader, Bob Hawke and those quoted in this section, in addition to the other works focusing on that period. Equivalent material from the Coalition's frontbench of 1996 has yet to appear.

46. J Button, *As it happened*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 1998, p. 199.

47. S Ryan, *Catching the waves: life in and out of politics*, HarperCollins, Sydney, 1999, p. 226.

> Except at election times, the media are not much interested in opposition spokesmen [sic].[48]

Former Opposition leader Bill Hayden (ALP, Oxley, 1961–1988) made a similar point about the different levels of importance attached to the Cabinet and its Shadow:

> Opposition has no executive power. When it speaks on policy it is discussing the equivalent of a wish list … What Government says and does is sought-after news. To gain attention, Opposition has to create news angles; yet the artifices and gimmicks needed to be fashioned to attract media attention to a policy, given the imperatives of television coverage, can be risky. The dividing line is fine.[49]

Focused on parliamentary performance and primarily working within the system of their own party, shadow ministers gain little experience in the key elements of ministerial activity, particularly in administration. Punnett argues from a British perspective that membership of parliamentary committees gives shadow ministers a better idea of the workings of government and the responsibilities of ministers, than holding a shadow portfolio.[50] He also argues that Shadow Cabinet is more likely than Cabinet to see alliances form between like-minded members, since competition for money and policy priority is less marked.[51] Susan Ryan describes the different atmosphere present in Cabinet, which supports Punnett's claim:

> Cabinet is competitive; all of us were quite touchy when our early submissions were shot down in flames. Survival skills, aided and abetted by the cream of the public service, develop fast. Arguments for submissions become stronger, costings more precise, data more telling, political implications more clearly signalled. Ministers become hardened to having their submissions 'knocked off.'[52]

Cabinet differs from Shadow Cabinet in terms of skills required, access to power, accountability, workload, media attention and relationships with public servants, counterparts from other jurisdictions and colleagues. The range of areas of expertise, skills and experience central to Cabinet, but unnecessary for the Shadow Cabinet, suggests that membership of the latter may be poor preparation for a career in the former.

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48.  Button, op. cit., p. 200.

49.  B Hayden, *Hayden: an autobiography*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1996, p. 313.

50.  ibid., p. 381.

51.  ibid., pp. 225–27.

52.  Ryan, op. cit., p. 226.

However, this view is not one shared by the subjects I interviewed who have experience in both Shadow Cabinet and Cabinet. Parliamentarians from both major parties believe that membership of either Cabinet or Shadow Cabinet increased one's ability to work in the other. The primary way in which Cabinet ministers found their Shadow experience to be useful relates to the similarity of processes. As will be discussed in the next chapter, many of the Shadow Cabinet's procedures are based on those of Cabinet itself—most particularly in the way meetings are run, and the system of reviewing and responding to government legislation.

In effect Shadow Cabinets tend to operate as scaled-down versions of Cabinet. One current Minister, with considerable experience in the Shadow Ministry during Labor's term in opposition, noted that the main changes noticed upon moving into government were those of degree and quality: Cabinet meetings are more formal than Shadow Cabinet meetings. They involve more people and they discuss papers of significantly more detail which are given more scrutiny than those of the Shadow Cabinet. As an illustration of this difference, the minister noted that a typical Shadow Cabinet meeting lasts between two to three hours, depending on the issues, while a Cabinet meeting would be between three and three and a half hours during parliamentary sitting periods and could frequently last all day during parliamentary recesses. A Liberal shadow minister made similar comments, citing the involvement of the public service departments in Cabinet processes as a driving factor in these differences. Bureaucratic involvement means more time is spent on preparing Cabinet papers and these are contributed to by numerous departments and ministers, in a far longer process, with more rigorous analysis than occurs in a Shadow Cabinet equivalent. So while experience as a shadow minister may not prepare one for the scale and depth of activity which accompanies Cabinet membership, it does provide people with familiarity with some of the forms and processes used in government.

One current Minister considers his time spent in opposition to have been invaluable. Like several others interviewed for this project, this minister felt that the high-pressured, poorly-resourced position of the shadow minister was an excellent training ground for the ministry itself. He described the shadow ministerial environment as being 'sink or swim'. The question of shadow ministerial resources will be discussed in later sections of this monograph, but it is important to note that other parliamentarians with shadow ministerial experience concurred with the view that the shortage of Shadow Cabinet resources had its advantages. One current minister identified the biggest challenge after Labor's election to government as having to manage a much larger office—a more subtle indication of resource discrepancy between resources

available in opposition and government. Another Labor minister added that a further benefit of shadow ministerial experience was the opportunity to build up relationships with portfolio area stakeholders. In opposition, such relationships provided a base of advice and feedback and in government these could be used as a supplement to one's department. This minister further noted that experience in the Shadow Ministry gave a good insight into how to put together a policy, including the costing component. The minister felt that this experience provided excellent training for government.

As noted earlier, the Shadow Cabinet/Cabinet experience can work in both directions. A Coalition shadow minister commented that experience gained as a minister during the Howard Government gave the parliamentarian an understanding of what ministerial actions would and would not work. For shadow ministers in a new opposition, with more experience in executive government than their opponents, this perspective can prove useful in anticipating how a new government's policies will work. According to this shadow minister, this experience helps shadows to perceive flaws in legislation and in some cases, to work to improve Bills through amendments.

In these ways, it was argued by the shadow ministers interviewed for this project that this experience has served them well. Punnett may be correct in asserting that Shadow Cabinet service is of limited value in preparing for Cabinet membership, but at the same time it appears it has some benefits. While the skills required to be a successful minister or shadow minister are not exactly the same, there is considerable overlap. As well, there are several areas in which shadow ministerial experience can be of significant benefit to Cabinet ministers.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have laid the foundation for the discussions of Shadow Cabinet's procedures and functions which will follow. As has been evident in this chapter, the history of Australia's system of Shadow Cabinet has not been well documented. I have identified three functions considered to provide the traditional reasons for Shadow Cabinet's development, and have discussed how these work in the context of contemporary Australian Shadow Cabinets. The first, organising the parliamentary business of the Opposition, has largely been moved from the realm of the Shadow Cabinet to other bodies within an opposition. The second, providing an alternative government by proposing a different policy agenda and by using parliament to keep the Government accountable, remains the most notable role of the Shadow Cabinet. Finally, despite some limitations, Shadow Cabinet serves as a training ground for future ministers, preparing them for executive government by giving them experience in

putting together policies and having these subject to review by colleagues and the media, as well as in allowing them the chance to develop relationships with stakeholders in the area. In the next chapter, I will focus on the procedures of Shadow Cabinet—how it operates, what it does, and the roles of individual shadow ministers.

# Chapter two: the institution of Shadow Cabinet

## Introduction

Like the Shadow Cabinet, the institution of Cabinet is based more on unwritten convention than on constitutional provisions. However, the de facto executive branch of Australia's political system has a solid formalised, institutional, basis. As Patrick Weller argues, 'Cabinet is an institution, in the sense that it is a forum structured by a series of rules, norms and behaviours that alter over time'.[53] In 1926, the first edition of the *Cabinet Handbook* was produced, outlining the processes and rules governing the operation of Cabinet. In the 1980s this handbook was made publicly available and now it appears on the Internet.[54] The relative openness of Cabinet about procedural practices stands in contrast to the less-formalised, more elusive Shadow Cabinet. No Shadow Cabinet Handbook exists, and in effect, each new opposition in the Australian federal parliament has to reinvent what the Shadow Cabinet does, and how its party's version operates.

In this chapter, I will discuss the operational aspects of Australian Shadow Cabinets. I will begin by discussing the form and functions of Shadow Cabinet, including meetings and the appointment of, and resources allocated to shadow ministers. I will then examine the policy-making role of the Shadow Cabinet, as well as the duties and roles of individual shadow ministers.

## 2.1 Meetings

Recent Australian federal Shadow Cabinets have tended to model their meeting structure on that of the Cabinet. This is largely a product of the similar work done by each, with the important difference that Cabinet discusses new legislation the Government will introduce, while the Shadow Cabinet considers the Opposition's response.

A notable difference between Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet meetings is their relative scale. Shadow Cabinet meetings may run in many of the same ways as Cabinet meetings, but on a smaller scale. Labor Shadow Cabinet meetings tend to be what one

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53. Weller, *Cabinet Government in Australia*, op. cit., p. 214.

54. Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Cabinet Handbook*, The Department, 2000.

member described as 'a middling level of formality', with formal minutes taken and motions put to a vote. Coalition meetings, on the other hand, rarely proceed to a vote, and decisions are instead usually based on a 'sense of the room'.

One shadow minister noted also that the Shadow Cabinet parallels the actual Cabinet, but without the bureaucratic support. Minus this support, Shadow Cabinet submissions face considerably less scrutiny, than their Cabinet equivalents. A shadow minister with ministerial experience also commented on this aspect, noting that Cabinet submissions tend to go back and forwards between multiple departments before they are presented to Cabinet. They are therefore more rigorously analysed and detailed as a result. Shadow Cabinet submissions, while they will be the result of some consultation between colleagues, are seen by far fewer people by the time they are submitted to the Shadow Cabinet for discussion.

The current Coalition Shadow Ministry—including all shadow ministers, but not parliamentary secretaries—meets on the Monday of every sitting week, with additional special meetings called as required (Labor, when in opposition, followed the same schedule). They are joined by Brian Loughnane, Federal Director of the Liberal Party, and Brad Henderson, Federal Director of The Nationals. These extra-parliamentary members, however, are present in an observer's role; they participate only when asked to do so. Under Brendan Nelson's leadership (December 2007–September 2008), Shadow Cabinet meetings were also attended by Peter Hendy, Nelson's chief of staff, who acted as the official record-keeper. During Nelson's leadership, the position of Shadow Cabinet Secretary was filled by a Shadow parliamentary secretary, Don Randall (Shadow Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Cabinet Secretary). After Malcolm Turnbull became Leader of the Opposition, he appointed Special Minister of State Senator Michael Ronaldson to the 'new role' of Shadow Cabinet Secretary.[55] This appointment reinforces the argument made in the previous chapter about the Shadow Cabinet modelling itself directly on the Cabinet. By having a shadow minister also serve as the Shadow Cabinet Secretary, the Coalition followed the Labor Government's organisation. Upon the election of the Rudd Government, Senator John Faulkner became the first Cabinet minister also to serve as Cabinet Secretary—a dual role which attracted the interest of Coalition Senators in Estimates Committee hearings during May 2008.[56] Later that year, in the first Shadow

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55.  Turnbull, op. cit.

56.  See, for instance, Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration, Budget estimates, Prime Minister and Cabinet portfolio, *Debates*, 26 May 2008, pp.102–104.

Cabinet reshuffle after the election, the Coalition followed Labor's lead by having a Shadow Minister also fill the Shadow Cabinet Secretary position.

The Leader of the Opposition's office serves as the Shadow Cabinet secretariat. An example of the flexibility of Shadow Cabinet procedures occurred when the Liberal-National Coalition was last in opposition (pre-1996), the official record-keeper was a senior member of the federal Liberal Party Secretariat. In contrast, the Labor Party, when most recently in opposition, had its Shadow Cabinet meetings attended only by shadow ministers, as well two members of the Leader's office in a note-taking capacity. No representatives of the Federal Secretariat regularly attended these meetings, and briefings from the National Secretary were more likely to occur at full caucus meetings. Each of these aspects illustrates the ways in which the operations of the Shadow Cabinet can be modified to suit the preferences of the party in opposition or its leader, or to align itself with the practices of the Cabinet.

For the current Opposition, a member of the Leader of the Opposition's staff organises the logistics of Shadow Ministry meetings, including setting the agenda in consultation with the Leader of the Opposition and his or her chief of staff. This agenda is then sent to all shadow ministers, with a request for relevant papers for the upcoming meeting to be submitted to the Leader's office by close of business the Thursday before the meeting. These papers are then circulated by mid-Friday, giving members the Friday afternoon and weekend to read them. Meetings start at nine am Monday and generally run for about two to three hours. This compares with an average of three to three and a half hours for Cabinet meetings during a sitting period, or day-long meetings during parliamentary recesses.

## Leader's report

The first part of a Shadow Cabinet meeting consists of the leader's report. This is a general political overview which can vary in length depending on the situation. The Leader outlines the Opposition's critique of the Government, as well as the Opposition's own ideas, and a sense of how these are faring in a political sense. The notion of a political 'narrative' is one which several shadow ministers referred to when describing the leader's report. The report gives the Leader of the Opposition an opportunity to reflect on recent successes or failures.

General political discussion of the topics raised in the leader's report follows the Leader's presentation. One shadow minister with Cabinet experience noted that being in opposition allowed much greater capacity for a broad discussion at this time of

political issues than does the more time-consuming demands of government. The 'frank and fearless' nature, as one shadow minister described it, of this portion of the meeting was a quality emphasised by many of those I interviewed. For that reason, the importance of confidentiality was one of the themes most frequently raised by current and former shadow ministers. Without the official conventions of Cabinet secrecy, the Shadow Cabinet relies on the personal confidence and discretion of its members to safeguard the content of its meetings—especially these discussions. As several shadow ministers argued, without this personal trust and confidentiality allowing robust debate and the airing of differing viewpoints, these meetings would be diminished in value. Times when the Opposition or Shadow Cabinet is troubled or divided often result in an increase in Shadow Cabinet leaks as different groups or members seek to continue in public these arguments. The leader's report and the ensuing discussion usually last for around an hour and together they serve one of Shadow Cabinet's most important functions, by emphasising the Opposition's political position.

## Consideration of proposed legislation

The leader's report is followed by what many shadow ministers describe as the primary purpose of the meetings: consideration of the Government's proposed legislation. Each Bill introduced by the government is responded to by a Shadow Cabinet submission by the relevant shadow minister. These submissions are similar in structure to standard Cabinet submissions and are preceded by a one-page covering note. This consists of the name and portfolio of the responsible shadow minister, an outline of the objectives of the government's proposal and a summary of the opposition's position, including the shadow minister's recommendation on how to proceed. A typical Shadow Cabinet submission is comprised of the following sections:

1.  background (around one page)

2.  issues (one page)

3.  consultation (a short list of relevant stakeholder groups consulted in the formulation of this response)

4.  recommendation (the Shadow Minister's recommendation for the Opposition's policy position on the issue)

5.  chamber tactics (an outline of how the Opposition should respond in the two houses of parliament).

The chamber tactics section is the only notable change from the template of Cabinet submissions. Shadow ministers noted that the current Opposition found particular use for this section during the first seven months of the Rudd Government, when the Coalition held a majority in the Senate and thus had considerable capacity to influence the passage of Bills through parliament. As of July 2008, however, when the composition of the Senate changed in line with the results of the October 2007 election, that capacity was correspondingly diminished.

The Shadow Cabinet's role as a policy-making centre will be discussed further below, but it is important to note that this section of the meeting, coordinating the Opposition's response to legislation introduced by the Government, forms the heart of the Shadow Cabinet's purpose. As one shadow minister noted, reacting to the Government and responding to its legislation, is the minimum the Shadow Cabinet has to do—'it clearly takes the majority of time, but not the intellectual grunt'. For each Bill introduced by the Government, the Opposition must decide whether to support, oppose or seek to amend its provisions. A Coalition Senator argued that the Coalition's recent experience in government gave current shadow ministers a good idea of what would or would not work in a legislative sense, and that therefore they considered it part of their role to work with the Government to improve legislation proposals, seeking to amend those Bills which they broadly support. In these discussions of government policy, there is serious consideration and debate about the Opposition's response, which sometimes results in a turnaround in the party's, or coalition's, policy. An example from the current Opposition is that of its abandonment of the WorkChoices policy, which occurred, according to both Liberal Party Shadow Ministers interviewed for this project and media reports, as part of the Shadow Cabinet discussion in response to the Labor Government's industrial relations legislation.[57]

## Policy initiatives

The final stage of Shadow Cabinet meetings is discussion of the Opposition's own policy initiatives. Unlike the first two components of the meetings, this does not occur every time, but only when needed. During this part of the meeting, general opposition policies can be discussed, as well as specific measures such as Private Member's Bills. As with responses to government legislation, Shadow Cabinet submissions prepared by shadow ministers outline the policy, from background information through to possible

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57.  See, for instance, K Murphy, 'The day they brought old WorkChoices down', *Age*, 20 February 2008, p. 9, and M Farr, 'Nelson rolled on IR strategy', *Daily Telegraph*, 20 February 2008, p. 2.

courses of action. These policies can be reactive, for example, by outlining a Private Member's Bill that a shadow minister will introduce to counter a recent legislative change. They can also be entirely independent of government-introduced Bills. In this part of Shadow Cabinet meetings, its role as the alternative government is most readily apparent. By discussing policy measures the Opposition would introduce the Shadow Cabinet seeks to outline an agenda to differentiate itself from the Government.

As can be seen, the Shadow Cabinet in many ways presents itself as the alternative government. With no formal guidelines as to how it should operate, each Shadow Cabinet has a reasonable degree of flexibility in its arrangements. Yet because its role so closely mirrors that of Cabinet, it makes sense for the Shadow Cabinet to model itself on its executive counterpart. In the two key areas of meetings and papers, the Australian Shadow Cabinet, under either of the major parties, operates in large as a scaled-down version of the Cabinet.

## 2.2 Appointments and resources

In mid 2008, Senate Estimates Committee hearings focused briefly on the question of charter letters, and whether or not new ministers had received one from Prime Minister Rudd.[58] These letters were, in theory, supposed to outline to new ministers their responsibilities and identify some 'performance benchmarks'. Prompted by these events, I asked members of both the Coalition and Labor what sort of process their appointment as a shadow minister had taken. All of them noted that they had received only minimal instruction upon taking on their duties. In most cases, they were simply told which portfolio areas they would be responsible. They were left to establish for themselves what issues they should prioritise and how they should go about the process of shadowing in that portfolio. This was true for shadow ministers of all levels of experience, from those facing their first such position to those who had served in a variety of roles in government and/or opposition. A small minority of those I interviewed reported receiving some general instruction from their leader, or meetings organised with other shadows with similar portfolios in order to discuss responsibilities; fewer still mentioned receiving a handover briefing from their predecessor. None reported having received any formal outlining of duties, priorities or responsibilities from their leader or party. Yet none had considered this a disadvantage, and few voiced any complaints about lack of guidance.

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58.    See, for instance, Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration, op. cit., pp. 82, 85–87.

For shadow ministers, this minimal initial guidance to some extent dictates the shape of their term. Most, as is the case with many ministers, come to their portfolio without specialist knowledge of that field. This means that the initial period after their appointment is spent coming to understand the issues involved, as well as getting to know the stakeholders concerned. At the time of my interviews, the Coalition had been in opposition for less than a year but several former Labor shadow ministers told me that it took them a year to come to grips fully with their area's demands.

With limited staff resources, shadow ministers are frequently left essentially to work within their portfolio area with a high level of autonomy. The Nelson Opposition was allocated 70 advisers, of whom approximately 20 were given to The Nationals, with the Liberal Party retaining the other 50.[59] These were to be divided amongst the Shadow Ministry, which comprised 20 Shadow Cabinet ministers, 13 shadow outer ministry members and 13 shadow parliamentary secretaries (a total of 46). The actual distribution of staffing levels to individual shadows, however, is left to the discretion of the Opposition Leader. This process does not always work smoothly, as was illustrated in early 2008 when concerns were reported about Opposition Leader Brendan Nelson's decision to allocate nearly 30 of the available 50 advisers to his own office.[60] In describing this arrangement, academic Peter Van Onselen, also notes that Kevin Rudd centralised in much the same way upon his election as Labor Party leader in late 2006, but argues that in the lead-up to an election, this decision made strategic sense. In addition to the standard electorate office entitlement of four staffers received by all members of parliament, the shadow ministry is allocated further staffing resources.[61]

Shadow ministers are paid at the same rate as backbenchers; only the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition earn an additional allowance—an extra 85 per cent and 57.5 per cent of the base annual allowance, respectively. This is compared with 160 per cent and 105 per cent for the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister respectively.[62] As with shadow ministerial staffing allowance, this topic was raised in the media in early 2008 as some senior shadow ministers made informal advances to

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59. P Van Onselen, 'Nelson's Army', *The Bulletin*, 15 January 2008, p. 8.

60. ibid.

61. For further detail see N Horne, *The Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984: framework and employment issues*, Research paper, no. 26, 2008–09, Parliamentary Library, Canberra, 2009.

62. L Manthorpe, *Parliamentary allowances, benefits and salaries of office*, Background Note, online 1 July 2008, updated 26 November 2008.

the Government proposing that shadow ministers should be paid extra. Journalist Annabel Crabb commented:

> One shadow minister yesterday described the system as a 'historical anomaly'. He pointed out that other jobs—like the chairmanships of parliamentary committees—brought extra pay, while hard-working shadow ministers were forced to subsist on backbench salaries… The Coalition's new-found interest in the issue of fairer pay for opposition frontbenchers has coincided precisely with its arrival on the Opposition benches. The Howard government was always firm in its refusal to recommend any adjustment to the system—a stand now regretted by some Opposition figures.[63]

A Liberal with shadow ministry experience echoed these comments in an interview for this project, also describing the situation as an anomaly and arguing that it was important to pay shadow ministers at a higher scale than backbenchers. In part, this would be recognition of the amount of work and long hours which come with a shadow portfolio. It would also rectify the situation whereby whips and deputy chairs of parliamentary committees earned more than shadow ministers. While no change has been made to this pay system, it will no doubt remain a topic of interest. One member with experience in both the Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet noted, even though shadow ministers do have a significantly greater workload than backbenchers, 'you should keep them hungry—it's bad for democracy if you can make a career as an opposition member'.

How shadow ministers are appointed and the resources allocated to them affects the way in which they undertake their roles. The shadow ministerial role is largely an informal one, as is indicated by the appointment process common to both major parties, as well as by the low level of recognition afforded it in terms of salary and staffing allocation. The absence of formal guidelines or responsibilities allows considerable scope for shadow ministers to approach the position in a variety of ways. 'It's what you make of it', a shadow minister commented. At the same time, while this autonomy is a central theme of shadow ministerial experience, a corresponding theme is that shadow ministers' priorities are directed by those of their corresponding minister. In that sense, it can be argued that it is not their leader, but the minister whom they shadow, who exerts the greatest influence on shadow ministers.

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63. A Crabb, 'Opposition campaigns to cushion its benches', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 March 2008, p. 6.

## 2.3 Shadow Cabinet as a policy-making body

The Shadow Ministry has a significant function as a policy-making body. One of the key issues which came out of the interviews I conducted was that of the autonomy of shadow ministers in terms of policy formulation. This applied to members of both major parties. It can first be seen in the comments reported above in which few, if any, were given much policy direction by their leaders. In general, shadow ministers are left to work within their portfolio with only minimal guidance from their leader or the Shadow Cabinet. Shadow Cabinet meetings operated mostly to approve, amend or reject policy ideas brought by individual shadow ministers, rather than formulating these policies. However, shadow ministers will almost always seek to work with their leader (or the leader's office, at least) and frequently with fellow shadow ministers whose portfolios are also relevant to their policy area. Aside from the advantages of collaboration in formulating policy, this also serves to ease the passage of policy proposals through the formal process of Shadow Cabinet approval. One Liberal shadow minister noted that since the Leader of the Opposition has near-veto capacity, it is important to involve his or her office in the preparation of policy submissions. Within the Leader of the Opposition's office, regardless of party, each portfolio area is represented by an adviser responsible for liaising between the Leader and the relevant shadow minister. In this way, each shadow minister has a ready contact in the leader's office.

Policy-making, for the Opposition, comes in two forms, in a way it does not usually for the Government. Like the Government, the Opposition will announce policy ideas—putting forward discussion papers, introducing Private Member's Bills into parliament and releasing policy documents. However, the Opposition must also respond to the Government's legislation and other policy announcements. The Government can choose to respond to the Opposition's announced policy in any way it sees fit, but most opposition policy is not introduced into parliament as bills, whereas most government policies are. Opposition must therefore decide whether to support, amend or oppose each bill the Government produces. Additionally, media pressure and the expectations of relevant stakeholder groups, amongst other things, essentially force the Opposition to react to every move of the Government. All of this means that the Opposition in general—and the Shadow Cabinet, which spends much of its meetings considering Government legislation, in particular—does have a considerable role in policy-making, even if most of this is in the type of work generally described as reactive.

However, the extent to which Shadow Cabinet as a body actually develops policy is much less obvious. The first reason for this is possibly the autonomy of individual shadow ministers to develop their party's policies in opposition. While they may have direction from, and certainly will have consultation with the Leader of the Opposition's office, shadow ministers for the most part have the freedom to respond to government initiatives and statements on their own. If the minister they shadow makes a statement, suggests a new policy or otherwise publicly releases a policy direction, most shadow ministers interviewed for this project felt that their duty would be to respond as quickly as possible. This would be without necessarily consulting with their leader, let alone the Shadow Cabinet as a whole. Longer-term reactions would certainly involve Shadow Cabinet discussion, but initial responses are usually left entirely in the hands of the shadow minister. Primarily, this is a pragmatic approach, since when responding to a government announcements, the shadow minister will always try to get a response into the same news cycle. This means that shadow ministers must be ready to put forward the Opposition's case when journalists contact them, which in most cases precludes much consultation with colleagues. Further, governments rarely make entirely unexpected policy announcements, which mean that in most instances the shadow ministers will know what their party's position is on the issue and will not need to check that with their leader or other colleagues.

Another reason why Shadow Cabinet's role as a policy-making body is sometimes unclear is the existence of parallel policy-building processes within the Opposition. The most notable of these are the Policy Review Committee, the leadership group, and party policy committees. These all will be discussed at greater length in the following chapter, but their role in the process of policy development has an impact on the ways in which Shadow Cabinet works.

Additionally, while a shadow minister is typically given considerable autonomy when it comes to short-term responses to government policy and in the day-to-day operation of his or her portfolio, longer-term policy agendas are mostly driven in consultation with the Opposition's policy committees.

The Shadow Cabinet's major policy role is one of approving or amending submissions brought from the shadow ministers. While policy positions—such as Private Members' Bills—can be debated and considerably altered within a meeting of the Shadow Cabinet, its role as a policy-making body is often removed from the process itself. There can be exceptions: one example is the Coalition Shadow Cabinet meeting of 19 February 2008 which decided to abandon the WorkChoices industrial relations

programme. Media reports noted that two lengthy meetings debated the Coalition's policy in responding to the new Labor Government's industrial relations legislation, with the result that several members, including party leaders, altered their publicly-stated positions.[64] According to a member of that Shadow Cabinet, this policy turn-around could only have happened in the context of a Shadow Cabinet, rather than Shadow Ministry or entire party-room, meeting. Such a politically sensitive decision required the conditions which are unique to Shadow Cabinet meetings. While this type of significant policy change is uncommon, it demonstrates the capacity for Shadow Cabinet meetings to alter policy directly. In that sense, therefore, the Shadow Cabinet has a significant role in the process of opposition policy development.

## 2.4 Individual shadow ministers

While the dominant focus of this project has been the role of the Shadow Cabinet as a group, it is important also to consider the functions of individual shadow ministers. Most shadow ministers, past and present, report that duties relating to their own portfolio and to the Shadow Cabinet more generally, take up the majority of their working time. Sometimes, several reported, this was to the detriment of their duties as a member of parliament representing an electorate. For shadow ministers, like their government counterparts, the position entails spending more time in Canberra and elsewhere around the country than in their own electorate. Some of those with Cabinet experience, however, noted that life in opposition allowed them considerably more time to fulfil their role as a local member than did their time in government. Ministers are even more constrained, with members of both parties estimating that they could afford an average of about two days per month acting as a local member owing to their responsibilities.

For the most part, a shadow minister's day-to-day duties are based on those of his or her opposite number in the Government. The clearest example of this is seen through the Opposition's response to legislation introduced to parliament by the Government. For each Bill introduced by the Government, the shadow minister of the relevant portfolio is responsible for coordinating the Opposition's response. The primary component of this is to prepare the Shadow Cabinet submission dealing with the legislation. Yet since the Government's introduced legislation is not evenly spread over all portfolios, for some shadow ministers this will comprise a greater commitment than it does for others. Nonetheless, all shadow ministers are expected to have read and

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64. See, for instance, K Murphy, op. cit., and M Farr, op. cit.

understood submissions brought to Shadow Cabinet meetings, so even the workloads of those whose portfolios do not generate as great deal of legislative activity are dictated by the Government's legislative agenda. One shadow minister, whose portfolio fell into this category, noted that he considered his role in commenting on other areas, based on his experience in government and in multiple portfolios, to be almost equal in importance to attending to his own portfolio.

Another way in which the activities of the minister will influence those of his or her shadow is through media appearances and announcements. One Labor former shadow minister recounted how this sometimes works in unexpected ways: the minister he shadowed appeared on the *Sunday* television programme, and announced an entirely new initiative. Consequently the shadow had to spend the day with advisers and in conference with the Leader of the Opposition to put together a detailed response as quickly as possible. This is undoubtedly a common occurrence and one that reflects a simple truth about the work of shadow ministers—much of the job is dependent on the actions of the minister being shadowed.

A further duty of shadow ministers is to prepare for parliament and most particularly for Question Time. Question Time is one of the few opportunities for shadow ministers to challenge their opponents directly, and the only regular one, although other instances include media interviews/debates and community forums. Question Time however, is the most visible part of the parliamentary process and the best opportunity for shadow ministers to appear on the evening news bulletins making a case against their government counterparts. Preparing for Question Time each day during parliamentary sitting periods is therefore an important part of the shadow ministerial role. The extent of each shadow minister's capacity to question the minister he or she shadows is, of course, dependent on a range of factors, including political issues, the visibility of each portfolio and the political strategies of the Opposition. Furthermore, many shadow ministers have responsibility for additional portfolios beyond their own during parliament sessions and especially during Question Time. This is primarily the case when the minister and shadow minister for a particular portfolio area sit in different chambers. In this instance, another shadow minister takes responsibility in the relevant chamber, although it is still the shadow minister who prepares briefing notes and suggested questions.

The final major responsibility of shadow ministers is to work on their own party's policies, particularly in the lead-up to an election. An integral part of the shadow ministerial role is dealing with portfolio stakeholders. This will often involve meeting

with competing groups and working to both sell their party's message to the various sides, as well as receiving input on policy discussion papers. Several shadow ministers identified working with stakeholder groups as the main part of their policy-development role. This is partly a reflection of the need for shadow ministers to ensure that the Opposition's policies are well-received, and partly on their acknowledgement that many stakeholder groups have better access to resources, including research, than shadow ministers. This aspect of the shadow ministerial role will be further discussed in the following chapter.

Such consultation is only one component of the shadow minister's role in developing party policy, however. With the limited resources afforded shadow ministers, the task of drafting portfolio policy statements falls largely to the shadow ministers themselves. While less visible than the role of responding to government ministers, or questioning ministers in parliament, or even the role of consulting with interest groups, developing policy positions is one of the major responsibilities of shadow ministers.

Across these main areas of activity for shadow ministers the extent to which their job is dependent on the actions of the minister they shadow can be seen. In responding to government legislation, in putting forward the Opposition's case in public, including through the media and in parliamentary duties, such as Question Time, shadow ministers undertake a variety of roles, most of which are directly related to those of the Minister they shadow. However, developing their own party's policy is the one significant area where shadow ministers act independently.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the various procedures and practices of the modern Australian Shadow Cabinet. As has been argued many of these can be compared directly to those of the Cabinet. Partly, this is a consequence of the similarity of work undertaken by both bodies. The main differences between the Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet can be seen as consequences of the comparative lack of resources inherent to oppositions. Without the support of the public service, and with considerably fewer resources available, the Shadow Cabinet operates as a scaled-down version of the Cabinet.

In the following chapter, I will discuss some of the key issues facing the Shadow Cabinet and shadow ministers, many of which arise from themes outlined in this chapter.

# Chapter three: the practices and functions of Shadow Cabinet

## Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss some of the practices and functions of the modern Australian Shadow Cabinet and the issues which these raise. Most of the material in this chapter is drawn directly from the interviews conducted for this project and therefore reflects the matters raised by former and current shadow ministers. In the first section, I examine the differences between the Shadow Cabinet and the Shadow Ministry, discussing the advantages and disadvantages of each. The second section outlines other bodies within modern Australian oppositions—groups which have various roles in supporting or complementing the work of the Shadow Cabinet. Section three picks up a theme discussed in the previous chapter that of the relative shortage of resources available to shadow ministers, and examines some of the effects of this. Following this, I look at one of the most significant, if under-appreciated components of the shadow minister's role: consulting and building relationships with stakeholders in their portfolio areas. The final section of this chapter also considers in more detail the question of the autonomy afforded individual shadow ministers and the constraints upon that autonomy. Throughout this chapter, the focus is on representing the views of Australian shadow ministers, noting the themes common to a number of shadow ministers from both sides of politics and also discussing matters of contention.

## 3.1 Shadow Ministry and Shadow Cabinet

One of the major differences between the Coalition and Labor regarding the Shadow Cabinet is the Coalition's use of a separate shadow outer ministry. As in outer ministries in government, the shadow outer ministry consists of junior shadow ministers, which are usually defined as those with minimal legislation in their portfolio area. In general, shadow junior ministers do not attend Shadow Cabinet meetings, unless a topic relevant to their portfolio area is to be discussed. Meetings of the full Shadow Ministry are also held, although on a less frequent basis than those of the Shadow Cabinet.

This is not always the case, however, even for the Coalition. The current Opposition operates with a full Shadow Ministry at most meetings. This decision was described by Liberal Party Shadow Ministers interviewed for the project as one taken in order to

facilitate greater participation amongst the Coalition in the early period after their loss of government in late 2007. It was felt to be important, in the aftermath of the electoral loss and move to opposition, to extend the decision-making process to a larger group. Therefore, for all but the most sensitive topics, meetings are attended by all shadow ministers (although not shadow parliamentary secretaries). This was in part recognition of the belief that the previous Government's electoral loss was a consequence of its having become controlled by small group of senior ministers.

The Coalition's Shadow Ministry under Brendan Nelson as leader consisted of twenty Shadow Cabinet ministers, 12 shadow outer ministers and 13 shadow parliamentary secretaries. From September 2008, when Malcolm Turnbull became Leader of the Opposition, the numbers changed slightly: the Shadow Cabinet incorporated an extra two members, taking it to 22 members. The shadow outer ministry correspondingly was smaller, with ten members. The number of shadow parliamentary secretaries remained at 13. The intention of Coalition leadership in 2008 was to move to a more traditional inner and outer Shadow Ministry at a later point in the electoral cycle. According to members of that Shadow Cabinet interviewed for this project, the likelihood that larger groups are more likely to result in leaks to the news media was regarded as an unfortunate corollary, but not one which invalidated the decision. Yet it was still deemed important for some discussions to be limited to the Shadow Cabinet rather than the full Shadow Ministry. The most notable example of a Shadow Cabinet meeting from the early period of Coalition Opposition was in February 2008 to decide the parties' attitude to the WorkChoices legislation. For such a politically-sensitive discussion, it was felt that the smaller group of opposition leaders was preferable.[65]

The Labor Party's usual process of having no designated 'inner' and 'outer' ministry has also been varied. For a period during Simon Crean's party leadership (2001–2003), until after the unsuccessful challenge posed by Kim Beazley in June 2003, Crean operated a distinct inner Shadow Cabinet. The full Shadow Ministry consisted of 29 members and the Shadow Cabinet the 17 most senior of those. The rationale for this change, according to Labor members interviewed, was to deal with what had been seen as the inefficiency of meetings of the entire Shadow Ministry. It was believed that by reducing the number of participants the meetings would be more focused and streamlined. Labor shadow ministers from the Crean period remain divided on the success of this strategy; shadow junior ministers noting that they felt isolated from the

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65. It is, perhaps, worth noting that details of this meeting were still made public shortly after its conclusion, demonstrating that reducing the number of participants in a meeting does not necessarily prevent leaks.

decision-making processes of the party. Given also the importance of the party caucus in approving all Shadow Cabinet decisions, members from the shadow outer ministry felt removed from both groups; catered to by neither the Shadow Cabinet meetings nor those of the larger party-room. Some of those interviewed for this project went so far as to attribute part of the reason for Labor's general instability in the period to this system and the unhappiness it caused for some shadow ministers. Indeed, as Latham notes, it was immediately after facing the leadership challenge from Kim Beazley that Crean reverted to Labor's usual full Shadow Ministry system.[66]

Other shadow ministers of the time, however, argue that a distinct inner shadow ministry tends to evolve, even when formally none exists, since the size of the full Shadow Ministry makes decision-making and the practicalities of running a productive meeting, difficult. Yet among those of this opinion, there is still some variance about how this should work. Some prefer a formal distinction between the inner and outer Shadow Ministry, as was established by Crean, and as commonly used by the Coalition. Others argue for a full Shadow Ministry, with a smaller, inner leadership or strategy group. This distinction is essentially one of who should attend meetings, with advocates of the latter position making the point that a full Shadow Ministry is the best way to include people, but that not all decisions should be made by the same group.

To an extent, this difference is the most significant one between the Labor Party and the Coalition in terms of how each uses the Shadow Cabinet when in opposition. As argued throughout this monograph, in many ways the parties are similar in their operation of Shadow Cabinet. In their approaches to this question, the differences between Labor and the Coalition are reflective of the parties' overall ideologies and organisation. Yet, as noted, the flexibility of opposition means that there have been exceptions to the normal routines, as different leaders and different political circumstances have made an impact on how an opposition will arrange its Shadow Cabinet.

## 3.2 Parallel processes

Throughout this monograph, mention has occasionally been made of the other bodies within the Opposition. The foremost among these is the leadership group, but there is also the Policy Review Committee, other party policy committees and other, less formal groups within the Opposition. While both major parties use these groups in Opposition, the functions and operations differ a little between the parties. All serve to organise aspects of the Opposition's parliamentary, political and policy business. In

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66.    Latham, op. cit., p. 208.

doing so, the existence of these groups demonstrates that the Shadow Cabinet does not have a monopoly on the ways in which an opposition operates; to ignore the roles of these bodies is to misunderstand the Shadow Cabinet's role.

## Leadership group

The leadership group is the Opposition's body which meets most often, including every morning during parliamentary sitting weeks, and frequently during recess periods. For both the Coalition and Labor, the leadership group (however named) typically consists of the party leader, deputy leader (both of whom by convention are members of the House of Representatives) and the party's leader and deputy from the Senate. In the case of the Coalition, The Nationals' leader and deputy are also part of this group. Upon the Coalition's return to opposition in late 2007, this group was expanded to include Shadow Treasurer, Malcolm Turnbull and Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs, Andrew Robb. According to interviews with members of the Liberal Party's leadership team at the time, the former was included in recognition of the close result of the Liberal Party leadership ballot following the party's electoral loss, in which Brendan Nelson defeated Turnbull by three votes. Nelson also argued that he included Turnbull on the basis of managing the latter's ambition. Robb was included primarily to represent Victoria on the leadership group, since this period marked the first time that not one of the Liberal Party's four parliamentary leadership positions was filled by a Victorian.[67]

Meetings of the leadership group are also attended by the Managers of Opposition Business in both chambers, as well as by an adviser from the Leader of the Opposition's office. Shadow ministers whose portfolio is relevant to a particular meeting are also sometimes co-opted to meetings.

During sitting periods leadership group meetings essentially decide upon the day's agenda, strategy and parliamentary tactics for the Opposition, including which themes it will emphasise. Questions for Question Time are confirmed by the group by around one pm to ensure that the Opposition delivers a consistent message.

During parliamentary recess periods, the leadership group can meet (often by conference call when the members are scattered around the country) to decide on matters of urgency. One example of an Opposition policy position formulated in such a

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67.   M Grattan, 'Nelson looking over his shoulder as he names his team', *Age,* 7 December 2007, p.8.; D Shanahan, 'Tensions sure to resurface', *Australian*, 7 December 2007, p. 1.

manner, according to a Liberal Shadow Minister, was the Coalition's call in September 2008 for an increase to the pension.[68] In this instance, it was felt that a rapid response to publicly expressed concerns about financial pressure on pensioners was required and that a quick decision by the leadership group was more desirable than waiting for the next scheduled Shadow Cabinet meeting. According to this shadow minister, those shadow ministers not included in the leadership group generally understood the need for quick decisions to be taken in some circumstances, although they stressed that this was not normal or desirable. However, members of the leadership group must consider the position of the rest of the Shadow Ministry, and indeed the rest of the Opposition, when making significant policy decisions, since those groups could ultimately overturn the leadership group's position.

The Opposition's leadership group is responsible for some of the functions once central to the work of the Shadow Cabinet. Most notably, this group organises the Opposition's parliamentary and day-to-day political strategies, including the most visible role of shadow ministers, parliamentary Question Time. Question Time serves as the Shadow Cabinet's best opportunity to influence news media reports of political activity. Therefore, its management is of the utmost importance to the Opposition's political strategy. That such matters are organised by the leadership group is an illustration of the roles and priorities of the larger Shadow Cabinet in contemporary Australian politics. Where once, as was discussed in the first chapter of this monograph, the organisation of opposition parliamentary business was the primary role of the British Shadow Cabinet, its modern Australian counterpart essentially no longer undertakes that function.

This suggests two things about the operation of recent Australian Shadow Cabinets. First, that they are organised with an eye towards efficiency, although at the expense of the Shadow Cabinet's influence on Opposition strategy. Smaller bodies such as the leadership group are a more efficient way of organising strategies such as Question Time tactics. These need to be decided on a daily basis, reflecting each day's news media concerns, just-released reports and other factors which have arisen since the previous day's Question Time. It is inefficient and unnecessary, for the entire Shadow Cabinet to deliberate on these matters on a daily basis during parliamentary sitting weeks. Yet the consequence of this change is to reduce the influence that shadow ministers outside of the leadership group can have over parliamentary strategy. In this

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68. E Chalmers, 'Coalition trumps PM with pension promise', *Courier-Mail*, 11 September 2008, p. 4.

way, one of the key operations of the Opposition—questioning ministers in parliament—has been centralised to a small group.

The second theme notable from the Australian Shadow Cabinet's move away from its traditional organising role is that it emphasises the other functions which the Shadow Cabinet now undertakes. The primary attention of recent Australian Shadow Cabinets is on policy and political issues, rather than on the management of the Opposition's business. Chief among the policy issues which form the majority of the Shadow Cabinet's work is that of responding to the Government's proposed legislation, as was discussed in the previous chapter. In this way, it can be seen that the principal focus of Shadow Cabinet is on the discussion of, and judgement on the Opposition's support or otherwise of Government policy.

However, it is important not to overstate the Shadow Cabinet's role as a policy-formulating body as much of the longer-term policy formulation in opposition is undertaken by the party's Policy Review Committee.

## Policy Review Committee

The Opposition's Policy Review Committee, a sub-committee of Shadow Cabinet, consists of a few senior members of the party. In late 2007, the Policy Review Committee consisted of Deputy Leader and Shadow Minister for Employment, Business and Workplace Relations, later Shadow Treasurer, Julie Bishop, who chaired the committee; Shadow Treasurer, Malcolm Turnbull; Shadow Defence Minister and Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, Nick Minchin; Shadow Education, Apprenticeships and Training Minister, Tony Smith; Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Marise Payne and former Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Kevin Andrews. As with the Shadow Cabinet of the time, Nelson's chief of staff Peter Hendy served as secretary. Even when in coalition with the Liberal Party, the Nationals have a separate policy committee system.

The Policy Review Committee meets at least once every week during parliamentary sitting periods and more frequently during recesses. The role of the Policy Review Committee is to serve as a parallel function to Shadow Cabinet proper, developing the Opposition's policy positions over the course of the parliamentary term. The Committee does this by discussing policy directions with each shadow minister, providing overarching frameworks for each portfolio which also combine to form the party's complete policy platform. Each shadow minister will then eventually take the policies developed in his or her portfolio, with the assistance of the Policy Review

Committee to Shadow Cabinet for approval. This process allows individual shadow ministers to develop the party's medium and long-term policies, as opposed to the more immediate concerns of the Shadow Cabinet or the leadership group. This also provides policy development guidance, and therefore can be seen to both encourage policy consistency across the Shadow Ministry and provide some constraints on the autonomy of individual shadow ministers.

Labor in opposition also engages in a process of review via its Shadow Economic Review Committee and Priority Review Committee. Much like its government equivalent, the role of the Shadow Economic Review Committee has been to coordinate the budgetary side of the party's policies. A largely mechanical process, the Shadow Economic Review Committee has overseen the costing of Labor's policies, ensuring that the proposals brought forward by shadow ministers have been accurately estimated. Having there established the cost of shadow ministerial proposed policies, the Priority Review Committee determined how money should be spent—the Priority Review Committee decided whether or not that proposal is of sufficient importance to be allocated money to implement the policy if they won government. If so, the proposal became part of Labor's platform for the next election; if not, the shadow minister needed to revisit the area to formulate a more acceptable policy.

## Party policy committees

In opposition both the Coalition and Labor have established party policy committees, in which shadow ministers and party backbenchers develop and refine policies in specific portfolio areas. As opposed to opposition bodies discussed so far, these committees incorporate junior members of the parliamentary parties thus allowing for a broader representation.

Membership of a party policy committee provides a learning environment in policy-making for less experienced parliamentarians. Several shadow ministers interviewed for this project identified this experience as a useful precursor to later shadow ministry positions. In particular, membership of party committees taught some future shadow ministers much in relation to dealing with the processes of developing and costing policy ideas. Most shadow ministers considered the requirement to report to their relevant committee, and the corresponding feedback to be useful, especially given the general shortage of resources which they faced. One commented that shadow ministers were more reliant on their portfolio committee as a shadow minister than when in government. This was because in opposition, the committees were considerably more collaborative than in government.

However, some shadow ministers suggested that the commitment of colleagues to the party committee system was mixed; with some underestimating the benefits which could arise from use of the committees to develop or refine party policies. Others suggested that while they thought the party committee process was useful in principle, the reality was less so. Time prevented much consultation with these committees before a submission needs to be taken to Shadow Cabinet for approval and release. As a consequence, the extent to which these party policy committees can influence policy development varies, depending on the portfolio, shadow minister and committee members involved.

In different oppositions, and at different points in the electoral cycle, groups such as the leadership group, the Policy Review Committee and party policy committees will have varying levels of input into the ways in which an opposition works. Yet the existence, and in some cases the quite significant influence of these groups, demonstrates that Shadow Cabinets in the modern Australian political system work in ways quite removed to the original model derived from Britain. These groups both supplement the work of the Shadow Cabinet and reduce its policy-making role. That such groups are considered necessary in modern Oppositions signifies a change in the business of the shadow cabinet. The effect, in theory, of these groups is both to broaden and narrow the business of opposition. So it is that some decision-making power, as well as issues of parliamentary tactics and organisation, is centralised with a small group of party leaders. At the same time, backbenchers gain the chance to work in party committees on specific policy areas.

## 3.3 Resources, workloads and structures

As was discussed briefly in the previous chapter, shadow ministers have access to considerably fewer resources than their government counterparts. In this section I consider in more detail the issues which arise as a consequence. The first, and most important, area in which shadow ministers' resources compare poorly with those of government ministers is that of staff allocations.

Shadow ministers are entitled to employ one staff member more than backbenchers. This additional adviser's position is at executive assistant level. Several shadow ministers reported difficulty in finding suitable candidates for ideally they sought advisers with knowledge in the portfolio area. The comparatively low salary offered, long hours worked and the necessity for the advisers to cover a wide range of duties often made filling the position difficult. One shadow minister reported having spent a year in which this position was either vacant or filled by someone with no experience or

knowledge of the portfolio. While such a case is an extreme example, staffing allocation was of constant concern to many shadow ministers from both major parties. As several commented, the direct result of this is that staff and shadows are always busy and aware that some things are not being responded to as well as they could be or that other things are missed entirely.

On the other hand, some shadow ministers felt that lower staffing allocations in opposition are not entirely problematic. One noted that there was a trade-off involved, in that having a smaller staff and fewer formal responsibilities gave one a greater sense of control compared to the more tightly structured office of a minister. Additionally, this shadow minister noted, oppositions can operate in a more meritocratic fashion than governments. This is because with no public service departments or large offices of advisers to support them, under-performing shadow ministers are more likely to be noticed and less likely to be tolerated, than poorly performing ministers. Several others, as noted in the previous chapter, expressed the view that forcing shadow ministers to take a more active role in the drafting of policy papers and Shadow Cabinet submissions and undertaking other duties proved to be a useful preparation for future Cabinet membership.

For almost all shadow ministers with Cabinet experience, however, the biggest and most often identified challenge in moving from government to opposition was the lack of access to information and advice. This is due to the shortage of advisers and the shadow ministers' lack of access to a public service department. Despite having only these limited resources shadow ministers still need to produce policy documents, in this context they regularly turn to the Parliamentary Library which provides much of the research work upon which opposition policies are based. Indeed, many shadow ministers identified the Parliamentary Library as their most reliable source of information. One went so far as to describe the Library as 'the Department of the Opposition', another described it as their 'most valuable relationship'. However, even with the Parliamentary Library, a direct effect of having fewer advisers is having less information.

Yet a further lack of information issue identified by a shadow minister is the increased distance of lobbyists, who often do not wish to compromise their relationship with the Government by being seen to be too close to the Opposition. Alternatively, other shadow ministers identified portfolio area stakeholders as useful providers of information in the absence of public servants, indicating that different individuals (both lobbyists and shadow ministers) may interpret these roles differently.

Most shadow ministers consider that the position is generally under-resourced, and many further argue that this limits their capacity to do their job properly. Given that shadow ministers need to respond to all government legislation, hold their counterparts to account and develop party policies, some expressed the concern that the levels of support they were afforded did not match the quantity or variety, of work their position entailed. To counter that, other shadow ministers, particularly those with ministerial experience (either prior or subsequent to their shadow ministry membership), felt that the difference in workloads justified the disparity in resources.

One shadow minister estimated that the position took about a third as much time as did Cabinet membership. Another noted that while 'being a shadow minister eats into your time to do your electorate work as a member of parliament', the demands of being in the Cabinet were still far greater, and that for Cabinet ministers, flexibility in scheduling simply did not exist. A third described the difference between the two in terms of the level of responsibility involved: Shadow ministers have fewer areas for which they are responsible, and as a result there are fewer consequences to making mistakes in Shadow Cabinet. This shadow minister suggested that this difference may lead to those with prior Cabinet experience failing to take their Shadow Cabinet duties as seriously as they should do.

On a related note, another argued that shadow ministers can be more selective. They can choose which issues to get involved in, so therefore can be more focused than in government, where ministers' attention is divided between many responsibilities at all times. (It is worth noting, also, that shadow ministers, like government ministers, are exempt from membership of parliamentary committees.) The much smaller administrative burdens of the Shadow Ministry alone allow for much more time to be spent on other tasks. To this extent, the smaller workload and staffing allocation can cancel each other out.

Thus, shadow ministers have less access to resources than ministers. Some find this a constraint on their capacity to respond adequately to government legislation and hold their ministerial counterpart to account. However, shadow ministers with Cabinet experience were less likely to point to this factor as a detriment to their position. While the workload of a shadow minister is intense, it nonetheless remains significantly less than that of Cabinet ministers. Some shadow ministers also saw advantages in the less-resourced position, as it gave them opportunities to develop skills and experience, as well as a greater sense of freedom and flexibility.

The other significant area in which the contrast between Cabinet and its Shadow is apparent is that of the formal structures of office. As was noted in Chapter one, Cabinet's practices and procedures are fairly rigid, laid out in the publicly available *Cabinet Handbook.* The practices of the Shadow Cabinet are largely the choice of the party and leader in opposition at any time, and are therefore harder to define or describe. As argued in the first chapter of this monograph, this is a consequence of both the relatively informal nature of the Shadow Cabinet in Australia and the general disinterest in exploring its roles, functions and procedures by both outside observers and internal participants. Yet this absence of formal guidelines or procedures should be a matter of interest, since it allows Shadow Cabinets—and, more particularly, their leaders—considerable flexibility in how they choose to operate. As noted in Chapter one, for the most part Shadow Cabinets from both major parties have tended to follow the examples of Cabinet itself, structuring their meetings, papers and other practices on the lines of those of the Cabinet equivalents.

Yet Australia's tendency towards lengthy periods of one party in government (there having been only five changes of government since the development of the modern Shadow Cabinet in the mid-1960s) means that new oppositions find themselves with few templates from which they can draw. As Brendan Nelson's chief of staff Peter Hendy commented:

> When oppositions win government, they slot into an apparatus. This is not so for governments who move into opposition; there is no apparatus, no system, and everything has to be re-written.

One shadow minister summed up the position by noting that 'there is no machinery of opposition'.

So as the first Coalition Opposition Leader in over 11 years, Brendan Nelson essentially had a blank slate from which to work, with very few members of the Coalition's previous Shadow Cabinet (under John Howard, 1995–96) still in parliament. Therefore, one of the first duties of Nelson and Hendy was to establish the Coalition's structures for Shadow Cabinet. To some extent, they could draw on, or at least compare with what the Coalition had done in opposition during the 1983–96 era but they were not bound to follow those practices. Even the few references the two made to that period were by way of contrast. Hendy noted that the Shadow Cabinet record-keeper in the Coalition's previous term in opposition had been a senior member of the Liberal Party's national secretariat, a model not followed by the current

Opposition.[69] Nelson, who was elected at the 1996 election which saw the Coalition win government, confessed uncertainty as to whether the previous Coalition Opposition had employed a policy review committee or equivalent.

A particularly illustrative example of the extent to which it was necessary for the new Opposition to establish basic procedures was the question of where the Shadow Cabinet would meet. Nobody from the Leader of the Opposition's office knew where the meeting should be held. Ultimately, Peter Hendy contacted Prime Minister Rudd's office, to enquire where the Labor Shadow Cabinet had met—a first-floor committee room in Parliament House was duly booked.

In many ways, this illustrates the informal nature of Shadow Cabinets in Australia, with some key operational decisions made based on informal contacts or preferences. Oppositions, and particularly Shadow Cabinets, in Australia are fundamentally malleable institutions. Shadow Cabinets and their leaders can exercise flexibility, to a far greater extent than their Government counterparts, over basic elements of their operational processes. Given this capacity, it is interesting that, in many respects, Shadow Cabinets mirror the processes of Cabinet itself. The reasons for this, as discussed in earlier chapters, are largely to do with heightening the comparisons with, and therefore preparations for executive government and because much of the work of the Shadow Cabinet is in responding to the legislative agenda of the Government. That this is so signifies that the modern Australian Shadow Cabinet's similarity in processes to the Cabinet itself is the result of deliberate strategy.

## 3.4 Relationships with stakeholders

A key theme which emerged from the interviews conducted for this project was that a large part of the shadow minister's role is based on building relationships with stakeholders in his or her respective portfolio areas. In particular, more experienced shadow ministers emphasised the importance of this aspect of the position, identifying it as a component which could not be ignored. As discussed earlier, for shadow ministers with limited resources, specialist stakeholders can provide access to research and information. That facet of the relationship between shadow ministers and stakeholders is only one reason for its importance. In this section, I discuss further reasons why shadow ministers cultivate these relationships.

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69. Peter Hendy did serve as an adviser to some senior Liberal Shadow Ministers during the 1983–1996 Opposition period, and therefore did have opposition experience prior to December 2007.

The first reason, already mentioned, is the access some stakeholder groups have to high quality research in areas relevant to shadow ministers. Compared to the poorly-resourced Shadow Cabinet, many interest groups—such as unions, industry groups and other associations, religious or community groups—have high levels of resources and are professionally run. Shadow ministers can therefore utilise these groups and their information, bearing in mind the political slants of both the stakeholder group and the shadow minister.

Another reason shadow ministers develop relationships with stakeholder groups in their portfolio areas is to develop a deeper understanding of the area, and in particular to establish which issues to prioritise. Since most shadow ministers come to their portfolio area with little experience or specialised knowledge of the issues involved, the input of experts can be vital in understanding the area.

The political persuasion of both the shadow minister and the various groups within the portfolio area will, to an extent, determine which groups are more heavily utilised. As one shadow minister commented, some groups will seek out the shadow minister from their area in order to set up meetings, whereas other, less politically-sympathetic groups might still be interested to meet with a shadow but the minister will have to take that initiative. Ultimately, most stakeholder groups will want to meet with the appropriate shadow minister, if only to hear about the opposition's policy, without expecting to be able to influence it.

Many shadow ministers interviewed for this project considered that one of their first priorities in a portfolio was identifying and getting to know the bodies and organisations with an interest in the area. In part, this serves to provide an understanding of the portfolio area overall, since the relationships between the various stakeholder groups and the politics of the area are in many ways just as important as policy details. Furthermore, through this process, shadow ministers can begin to develop their relationships with those stakeholder groups with which they will deal more frequently in the future. Not all groups will be equally deserving of a shadow minister's attention, and one of the roles of a shadow minister taking up a new portfolio is to establish with which groups or individuals it is worth developing positive relationships. One shadow described part of the role being to work with the sector's stakeholders to help those groups decide their own priorities—what they wanted the Government to undertake. By working through this process, shadow ministers can provide some direction for their party's policies, and gain the support of their portfolio area's stakeholders.

One shadow noted that his area was one in which the sector had traditionally been aligned with the other side of politics. Therefore his greatest achievement was in working with representatives of the sector, gaining their respect and neutralising the issue as a political contest. In this regard, stability in the shadow ministry can be a strong asset for the Opposition—if one shadow minister is responsible for a particular portfolio for an extended period, that shadow can build up strong support for his or her party within the groups in the area of responsibility, which can translate into increased electoral support from voters with a particular interest in that area. Similarly, shadow ministers can use various interest groups to apply public pressure to the responsible minister, and the Government overall. Some stakeholder groups have considerable access to the news media and can make use of this to respond to government initiatives and statements. Shadow ministers, in turn, can use these stories to attack the government during Question Time or other public appearances.

Another form of engagement with portfolio area stakeholders involves the shadow minister's relationship with state parliament party colleagues. Particularly when the same party holds government at the two levels, shadow ministers can make the most of their relationship with their state counterparts. One Labor shadow minister commented that they were able to coordinate policy positions with their party colleagues who held government to send a unified message to the sector. In addition, when that situation exists, federal shadow ministers can sometimes use their party's greater access to information at the state level to supplement their own shortage of information and resources.

Working within a portfolio area with interest groups does bring responsibilities. One shadow minister referred to the 'huge responsibility' to consult with stakeholders before developing the Opposition's policy position on any given topic. Another noted that having worked with various groups in formulating a party policy there is a further burden to ensure that the policy is released and well-publicised, particularly in the lead-up to an election. To consult with stakeholders and then not release a policy was considered a betrayal, one that might even cost the party votes. The importance attached by shadow ministers to their relationships with stakeholders from their portfolio area can be seen in that attitude.

The complexity of managing relationships with stakeholders was one of the major themes to emerge from the interviews for this project. Unlike the Shadow Cabinet, the roles and influence of interest groups of various kinds on the Australian political system

has been extensively studied.[70] There is, however, considerable scope for study into the relationship between the Shadow Cabinet and interest groups, since their connections can prove beneficial to both, and can therefore have an impact on the policy platform taken by the Opposition into an election campaign. The importance placed by many shadow ministers on maintaining positive relationships with stakeholders from their portfolio areas illustrates the ways in which the Opposition, and in particular the Shadow Cabinet can find these informal procedures useful in responding to the highly-structured and well-resourced government. As in many other areas of Shadow Cabinet operation, political necessity creates procedures where formal rules do not.

## 3.5 Autonomy versus centralisation

The final key theme of the Shadow Cabinet in modern Australian politics to be explored in this monograph is the paradox of shadow ministers' autonomy and the centralisation of decision-making. As is evident from some of the discussion in this monograph, there is a constant contrast between the relative autonomy under with which shadow ministers work, and the tendency to centralise key decision-making power within the Leader of the Opposition's office. Throughout the interviews conducted for this project, these two themes were raised frequently.

I begin this section by outlining some of the ways in which shadow ministers are able to experience considerable autonomy in their allocated areas, as well as in public debate. I then discuss the opposite situation, whereby particular decisions and responsibilities stem from the Leader of the Opposition's office, leaving individual shadow ministers removed from the process.

As was discussed earlier, for the most part shadow ministers are given little policy direction from their party's leader upon being assigned to a portfolio area. Afterwards, however, shadow ministers are subject to direction from the variety of other opposition bodies, as outlined in the first section of this chapter. For the most part, this guidance occurs on a large, long-term scale, rather than dealing with day-to-day matters. Most shadow ministers reported that, overall, they were afforded considerable autonomy in their work. One noted that shadow ministers typically have a lot of control over their portfolios' issues, with broad scope to develop policies, as well as react to those of the government. As this shadow minister described it, the position is 'completely discretionary', and all shadow ministers use that flexibility differently, including some

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70.  Including by a previous Parliamentary Fellow; see K Abbott, *Pressure groups and the Australian Federal Parliament*, AGPS, Canberra, 1996.

who approached it 'very passively'. For those who adopted a more active style, however, there is some latitude for each shadow minister to bring an individual personality and approaches to the position. Another described the position in similar terms, noting that each shadow minister is 'to a large extent, master of their own destiny'.

Primarily, this reflects the much greater flexibility of oppositions as compared to governments. Governments and ministers, as was discussed above, have many more responsibilities than their opposition counterparts, with the result that ministers have significantly less capacity for autonomous acts than shadow ministers.

One consequence of the different level of time commitments required of shadow ministers compared to government ministers is that the former have more time available in which to work together, or to consult with their leaders. Yet despite this greater capacity for consultation, most shadow ministers found that it did not necessarily lead to greater involvement by the Leader of the Opposition in their portfolios. Their submissions in response to government legislation were only subject to party involvement once they were brought to Shadow Cabinet meetings.

As elections draw near, however, some shadow ministerial autonomy is ceded to the Leader of the Opposition's office, in a process of centralising decision-making. It is during such times, campaigns proper and the period which immediately precedes them, that most policies are announced yet during this time the process of releasing policies is more coordinated than it is during other periods. This generally involves shadow ministers being considerably more restricted in their capacity to make comments publicly or otherwise respond to government initiatives. Decision-making processes are therefore centralised, and a greater emphasis is placed on the idea of all members of the Shadow Cabinet being 'on message'.

A second way in which the autonomy of shadow ministers is restricted is through the respective parties' policy committees as discussed in the first section of this chapter. Both of these factors are important ways in which consistency of policy can be maintained throughout the entire Shadow Cabinet. In the same way that it is implausible for the entire Shadow Cabinet, or sometimes even the Leader of the Opposition, to be consulted before a shadow minister makes public comments on any given issue, it is also infeasible for each shadow minister to be allowed too much autonomy when it comes to developing policies. Membership of the Shadow Ministry is fundamentally a party position, and this must be reflected in the constraints upon each member.

However, another factor in the extent of shadow ministerial autonomy is the way in which roles are determined by the minister being shadowed. Several shadow ministers made the point that their role changed significantly depending on who held the equivalent portfolio in the Government. One shadow minister, who faced several different ministers over a number of years in the same portfolio, noted that the contrasting styles of those different ministers forced a corresponding variety of approaches in response. Overall, some ministers take an active approach to their portfolios, while others prefer a low-key approach, acting only when strictly necessary. This can also be a factor of the specific portfolio itself, since the level of legislative action or public/media interest varies significantly from one area to another.

Furthermore, the nature of the relationship between ministers and shadow ministers can also fall anywhere on a wide spectrum. Some ministers generally ignore their opposite numbers and choose not to react to the shadow minister's actions or public comments. Others engage with their shadow, sometimes in positive and sometimes in negative ways. Returning to the resources theme, Ministers can choose whether or not to have the daily file of media clippings relevant to their portfolio sent also to the Shadow Minister; some, indeed, elect not to allow this, in a small example of the disparity of resources between Ministers and Shadows.

In general, most Shadow Ministers agree that the position allows considerable flexibility and autonomy. In most instances, Shadow Ministers are able to work with only minimal guidance or supervision from party leaders. This is particularly true for day-to-day duties, including responding to government comments or newly announced policies, as well as longer-term undertakings such as building relationships with stakeholders. To a large extent, it is also true of the shadow minister's role in policy development. The system overall does impose some restrictions on this capacity, particularly during the lead-up to election periods, when shadow ministers have to work under the control of the Leader of the Opposition's office and the party's campaign strategy teams. Yet it may be that the single greatest determinant of shadow ministers' jobs is not their own style, or their party's priorities, but the actions and styles of the ministers they shadow.

## Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have drawn on information gathered from the interviews with shadow ministers conducted for this research project to discuss some of the key themes and issues relevant to modern Australian Shadow Cabinets. In the first two sections, I discussed some organisational matters, including the division between

Shadow Cabinet and the Shadow Ministry, and how that affects the ways in which each Opposition works. I then looked at some of the parallel processes in oppositions, groups that undertake other roles complementary to those of the Shadow Cabinet. While the Shadow Cabinet is in many ways the peak body of the Australian Opposition, these other groups and committees serve important roles which supplement and complement those of the Shadow Cabinet.

In the remaining three sections, I examined the factors affecting the roles and performances of shadow ministers as individuals and as a collective. I discussed the relative shortage of resources, especially in relation to information and advice, available to the Shadow Cabinet; the critical, if rarely discussed, role of shadow ministers in liaising and consulting with and ideally gaining support from, relevant stakeholder groups in their respective portfolios. I also looked at the extent of and constraints on shadow ministers' autonomy in responding to the Government and in initiating policy development.

## Conclusion

Australia's system of Shadow Cabinet remains an under-studied research area. While the Cabinet itself rests on constitutional convention, it nonetheless has a strong institutional basis, and has received considerable attention from both researchers and participants.[71] Shadow Cabinet, however, has largely been ignored by both groups to date. It seems likely that this is first and foremost a reflection of the fact that the Cabinet is, by virtue of its role as the de facto executive branch of Australia's system of government, is considered more worthy of study than the Shadow Cabinet. 'Cabinet is about decision-making', commented a shadow minister interviewed for this project, 'but Shadow Cabinet is more like opinion-forming'. Therein is perhaps the primary reason for the dearth of material on Australia's Shadow Cabinet system.

This may appear counter-intuitive, since the Shadow Cabinet is a group frequently referred to in discussions of Australian politics and its basic functions are fairly straightforward. To an extent, though, the Shadow Cabinet is more often mentioned than it is understood. People with an interest in Australian politics probably know less about the Shadow Cabinet than they think they do. An indication of this is the fact that many introductory books on Australian politics do not even mention the Shadow Cabinet and most of those that do, describe it in the broadest possible terms. It is not so much that basic questions about the details of Shadow Cabinet remain unanswered as that they have rarely, if ever, been asked. Little attention is paid to the questions of what it actually does, in practical terms, how it goes about doing it and what constraints or limitations Shadow Cabinets face.

Therefore, the first tasks for this project were to understand the fundamental roles and to describe the basic functions, of the modern Australian Shadow Cabinet system. Three central roles for the Shadow Cabinet have been discussed: organising the Opposition, providing an alternative government and training and testing potential future ministers. As has been argued, for the most part, the Shadow Cabinet, regardless of which party or coalition is in Opposition, operates along lines similar to those of the Cabinet itself. This is a consequence of the similarity of the work done—the difference being that the Cabinet is deciding Government policy, while the Shadow Cabinet debates how the official Opposition will respond. It is also a reflection of the way in which the Shadow Cabinet serves as the alternative government. Given that the highest priority of an opposition is to win government, this is a not insignificant goal.

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71.    Weller, *Cabinet government in Australia, 1901–2006*, op. cit., pp. 8–10.

Therefore, many of the processes of Shadow Cabinet are modelled upon those of the Cabinet, albeit usually in a scaled-down form.

I have argued in this monograph that the Shadow Cabinet is only one component of the Opposition's approach to building policy ideas. By its nature, the Opposition must consider all policy ideas introduced by the Government—from those made in media interviews or public speeches to legislation introduced into parliament. Therefore, a large component of the policy decisions made by any opposition is in the form of considering their parliamentary response to legislation. Shadow Cabinet sits at the top of that process, and ultimately all policy decisions made by the Opposition are approved by the Shadow Cabinet.

However, the existence of other bodies, such as the leadership group or policy review committee, as well as party policy committees, means that the Shadow Cabinet plays only one role in the process of the Opposition's policy development. Further, initial public responses to announcements made by government ministers are often solely the work of individual shadow ministers, as the demands of ensuring that the Opposition's response is part of the same news cycle as the Government announcement usually preclude much consultation. In such cases, the Leader of the Opposition will quite likely be the only colleague a shadow minister will be able to consult with before outlining the Shadow Cabinet's position. For these reasons, it is clear that the Shadow Cabinet, as a body, does have an important role in development of the Opposition's policy, but also that there are several other groups which contribute to policy development.

It can be argued also that the modern Australian federal Shadow Cabinet is the peak Opposition policy body, while the various aspects of opposition business are dealt with by specific groups. Primarily, there is the leadership group, which organises both the day-to-day running of the Opposition during parliamentary sitting periods, including deciding upon strategies and coordinating Question Time. When quick decisions are required on policy issues, this group can take on a significant role in determining Opposition policy. Policy-focused bodies are also significant components of modern Australian Oppositions, with groups such as the current Opposition's Policy Review Committee, or Labor's Shadow Economic Review Committee, operating to guide Shadow Ministers in the development of party policy on a medium or long-term basis. Both major parties also provide opportunities for backbench members to contribute to the development or refining of party policy through specific policy committees for each portfolio area. The extent to which these backbench committees are actually able to

shape their party's policy is highly variable, however, since Shadow Ministers can choose to essentially by-pass this process. In all these ways, some of the roles considered to be responsibilities of the Shadow Cabinet can, in fact, be overseen by other groups, parallel processes to the Shadow Cabinet within the organisation of the Opposition.

In addition to discussing the Shadow Cabinet as a body, in this monograph I have investigated the roles of individual shadow ministers. To a large extent, the day-to-day experience of a shadow minister depends on his or her opposite number. Different ministers approach their job and engage with their shadows, in a variety of ways. The shadow minister's role can change dramatically depending on the style of the minister opposed. While most shadow ministers agreed that the role is nowhere near as demanding as a position in the Cabinet, they agree that a Shadow Minister has limited time to focus on electorate matters. Many felt that their role as local members was restricted by their shadow ministerial duties. A further component of the shadow minister's role is to contribute more broadly to the work of the Shadow Cabinet. Aside from attending meetings and producing their own papers, shadow ministers need to read their colleagues' submissions in preparation for meetings. Shadow ministers can also serve a more general role as senior figures of the Opposition and may choose to participate in public debates in that capacity, rather than merely on areas directly relevant to their portfolio areas.

The demands of modern politics, often require shadow ministers to respond to the Government within tight timeframes, which frequently makes consultation with the rest of the Shadow Cabinet and sometimes even with the Leader of the Opposition, impossible. To that extent, shadow ministers have a reasonable amount of autonomy and discretion afforded them when responding to positions taken by the minister whom they shadow. As several Shadow Ministers interviewed for this project noted, politics is rarely surprising, most government initiatives or positions develop over time, rather than as sudden, shock announcements. Thus, most shadow ministers generally would be able to state the Opposition's position on any given topic if a response to the Government was required. Most shadow ministers also felt that they had considerable autonomy for longer-term purposes as well, having extensive capacity to shape their party's policies in their own portfolio areas. However, all such policies are ultimately subject to the approval of the Shadow Cabinet as a whole and guided by the party's various forms of policy and expenditure committees. Particularly towards the end of the electoral term, oppositions tend to focus on centralising the processes of finalising policy priorities and announcing the platforms for election. Thus, when it suits an

opposition to do so, it can limit the autonomy of individual shadow ministers, reinforcing the fact that shadow ministers are primarily party appointees.

Another key theme of this monograph is the resources available to shadow ministers. Most significantly, shadow ministers receive a fraction of the staffing allowance allocated to government ministers. Consequently, many of the shadow ministers interviewed for this project described their difficulty in staying on top of all their duties. Lack of access to information and advice was also an area of concern to many of these shadow ministers; without either public service departments or the number of advisers allocated to ministers, their ability to respond to the Government is limited. However, several shadow ministers argued that this was not entirely a negative experience, since it does force shadow ministers to do their own work, which in turn can prove useful if they become government ministers. Nonetheless, the issue of access to resources— most particularly, advisers—was one of the most persistent themes of the interviews conducted for this research project. Particularly for those with experience in both Shadow Cabinet and Cabinet itself, this disparity was identified as a challenge.

Interestingly, while the topic of shadow ministerial pay was one discussed in the news media in early 2008, only two of this project's interview subjects raised it. One made the case that an additional allowance for shadow ministers should be introduced in recognition of the level of work involved when compared to a backbencher or to committee chair (which position does include an allowance above that of backbenchers and shadow ministers). The other shadow argued that such an increase could create a situation whereby shadow ministers were less 'hungry' for government. This issue, therefore, seems less important to shadow ministers than that of staffing allocation.

The final area of interest, and one which arose regularly in the interviews conducted for this project, is that of the shadow ministers' relationships with stakeholders in their portfolio areas. For many shadow ministers, particularly those with more experience, this was regarded as one of the key components of the position. There are several aspects to this relationship. The first is that of consultation, of working with the portfolio area's constituents in developing the Opposition's policy platform. Some shadow ministers also noted that interest groups within their portfolio area would produce research reports which could be used either to support the Opposition's policy ideas or to attack government initiatives or statements. The extent to which this is true, however, is dependent on the political persuasion of both the shadow minister and the groups within the portfolio area. For some shadow ministers, the majority of the stakeholders with whom they deal will be traditional supporters of another side of

politics, in those cases, the shadow minister's role is to try to neutralise these groups as much as possible. Yet regardless of the political persuasions of stakeholders within their portfolio areas, most shadow ministers consider the establishment and ongoing maintenance, of these relationships to be one of the central duties of the shadow minister.

## A starting point

This monograph has investigated the processes, functions and roles of the modern Australian Shadow Cabinet. In doing so, some light has been shed on this little-studied political institution. The monograph has investigated the primary roles of the Shadow Cabinet, how it goes about undertaking these, the limitations and priorities faced by individual shadow ministers and some key issues facing modern Australian shadow ministers. However, the dearth of work to date on this topic means that much more research is needed on Australia's system of Shadow Cabinet. The limitations of this project meant that the historical development of the Australian Shadow Cabinet could not be traced in any great depth, yet this history would prove useful to future students of Australian politics. Comparisons between Australia's system and those operating in the states and territories, or in other Westminster-derived parliamentary systems would also be interesting, as would in-depth research projects on a specific Shadow Cabinet. While this monograph has begun the process of understanding the federal Shadow Cabinet in Australia, it must be emphasised that this work is only a starting point.

# Appendix: list of interview participants

### Tony Abbott (Liberal Party)—Member for Warringah (NSW)

- Shadow Minister for Families, Community Services, Indigenous Affairs and the Voluntary Sector from 6.12. 07

- Minister for Health and Ageing from 7.10.03 to 3.12.07

- Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations from 26.11.01 to 7.10.03

- Minister for Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business from 30.01.01 to 26.11.01

- Minister for Employment Services from 21.10.98 to 30.01.01

### George Brandis (Liberal Party)—Senator for Queensland

- Shadow Attorney-General from 6.12.07

- Minister for the Arts and Sport from 30.1.07 to 3.12.07

### Martin Ferguson (Australian Labor Party)—Member for Batman (Vic.)

- Minister for Resources and Energy from 3.12.07; Minister for Tourism from 3.12.07

- Shadow Minister for Transport, Roads and Tourism from 10.12.06 to 3.12.07

- Shadow Minister for Primary Industries, Resources and Tourism from 26.10.04 to 10.12.06

- Shadow Minister for Regional and Urban Development; Shadow Minister for Transport and Infrastructure from 25.11.01 to 26.10.04

- Shadow Minister for Regional Development, Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Services and Population from 3.10.99 to 25.11.01

- Shadow Minister for Employment, Training and Population from 20.10.98 to 3.10.99

- Shadow Minister for Employment, Training, Population and Immigration and Assistant to the Leader on Multicultural Affairs from 26.8.97 to 20.10.98

- Shadow Minister for Employment and Training from 20.3.96 to 26.8.97

## Peter Hendy

- Chief of Staff, Office of the Leader of the Opposition, December 2007 to September 2008

## Greg Hunt (Liberal Party)—Member for Flinders (Vic.)

- Shadow Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Water from 22.9.08
- Shadow Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Urban Water from 6.12.07 to 22.9.08

## Kate Lundy (Australian Labor Party)—Senator for the Australian Capital Territory

- Shadow Minister for Local Government from 10.12.06 to 3.12.07
- Shadow Minister for Sport, Recreation and Health Promotion from 10.12.06 to 3.12.07
- Shadow Minister for Sport and Recreation from 24.6.05 to 10.12.06
- Shadow Minister for Manufacturing and Consumer Affairs from 26.10.04 to 24.6.05
- Shadow Minister for Information Technology and Sport from 25.11.01 to 26.10.04; and the Arts from 2.7.03 to 26.10.04; and Recreation from 8.12.03 to 26.10.04
- Shadow Minister for Sport and Youth Affairs and Shadow Minister Assisting the Shadow Minister for Industry and Technology on Information Technology from 20.10.98 to 25.11.01

## Ian Macfarlane (Liberal Party)—Member for Groom (Qld)

- Shadow Minister for Trade from 6.12.07
- Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources from 26.11.01 to 3.12.07
- Minister for Small Business from 30.1.01 to 26.11.01

## Jan McLucas (Australian Labor Party)—Senator for Queensland

- Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing from 3.12.07
- Shadow Minister for Ageing, Disabilities and Carers from 24.6.05 to 3.12.07
- Shadow Minister for Ageing and Disabilities from 26.10.04 to 24.6.05

## Bob McMullan (Australian Labor Party)—Member for Fraser (ACT)

- Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance from 2.12.07

- Shadow Minister for Federal-State Relations from 10.12.06 to 3.12.07

- Shadow Minister for International Development Assistance from 10.12.06 to 3.12.07

- Shadow Minister for Finance and Shadow Minister for Small Business from 8.12.03 to 22.10.04

- Shadow Minister for Cabinet and Finance and Shadow Minister for Reconciliation and Indigenous Affairs from 2.07.03 to 8.12.03

- Shadow Minister for Treasury, Finance and Small Business from 25.11.01 to 2.07.03

- Shadow Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs; Shadow Minister for Reconciliation and Shadow Minister for the Arts from 5.9.00 to 25.11.01

- Shadow Minister for Industry and Technology from 20.10.98 to 5.9.00

- Shadow Minister for Industrial Relations, Finance and the Arts from 7.10.97 to 20.10.98

- Shadow Minister for Industrial Relations from 20.3.96 to 22.4.97

- Assistant to the Leader of the Opposition on Public Service Matters from 20.3.96 to 27.3.97

- Shadow Minister for Industrial Relations and the Arts from 22.4.97 to 7.10.97

- Minister for Trade from 30.1.94 to 11.3.96

- Minister for Administrative Services from 30.1.94 to 25.3.94

- Minister for the Arts and Administrative Services from 24.3.93 to 30.1.94

## Brendan Nelson (Liberal Party)—Member for Bradfield (NSW)

- Leader of the Opposition from 29.11.07 to 16.9.08

- Minister for Defence from 27.1.06 to 3.12.07

- Minister for Education, Science and Training from 26.11.01 to 27.01.06

- Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence from 30.01.01 to 26.11.01

## Tanya Plibersek (Australian Labor Party)—Member for Sydney (NSW)

- Minister for Housing from 3.12.07; Minister for Status of Women from 3.12.07
- Shadow Minister for Human Services, Housing, Youth and Women from 10.12.06 to 3.12.07
- Shadow Minister for Work and Family, Child Care and Youth from 26.10.04 to 10.12.06; Shadow Minister for Women from 26.10.04 to 10.12.06
- Shadow Minister for Community from 26.10.04 to 24.6.05

## Nigel Scullion (Country Liberal Party)—Senator for the Northern Territory

- Shadow Minister for Human Services from 22.9.08
- Shadow Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry from 6.12.07 to 22.9.08
- Minister for Community Services from 30.1.07 to 3.12.07

## Lindsay Tanner (Australian Labor Party)—Member for Melbourne (Vic.)

- Minister for Finance and Deregulation from 3.12.07
- Shadow Minister for Finance from 24.06.05 to 3.12.07
- Shadow Minister for Communications from 25.11.01 to 22.10.04
- Shadow Minister for Community Relationships from 29.01.04 to 22.10.04
- Shadow Minister for Finance from 20.10.98 to 25.11.01; Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs from 28.10.98 to 25.11.01
- Shadow Minister for Transport from 20.3.96 to 20.10.98

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