

Barton Deakin Brief – New Victorian Shadow Ministry

30 November 2025

Overview

Newly elected Leader of the Victorian Liberal Party, Jess Wilson MP, has announced her first Shadow Cabinet.

Jess Wilson becomes both the youngest person and the first woman to lead the Victorian Liberal Party, instantly changing the visual contrast with Jacinta Allan and giving the Coalition a powerful claim on generational change and gender representation heading into 2026.

The new frontbench signals a decisive shift toward economic management and generational renewal, with Wilson taking the unconventional step of serving as both Opposition Leader and Shadow Treasurer.

With the State Election now less than a year away (28 November 2026) the new lineup aims to present a sharp, unified economic alternative to the Government, with a specific focus on the cost of living, housing accessibility, and digital innovation.

Strategic Analysis

- **The "Economy First" Strategy:** The most significant structural change is Jess Wilson's decision to serve as both Opposition Leader and Shadow Treasurer. This consolidates the Opposition's messaging, ensuring that every attack on the Government –whether on health, housing, or infrastructure –is framed through the lens of financial management. It signals to the business community that economic reform is the central tenet of the new leadership.
- By retaining the Treasury portfolio herself, Wilson is deliberately replicating the successful model used by Labor premiers who won from opposition while

holding Treasury (Steve Bracks 1999, Mark McGowan 2017–2021, Peter Gutwein 2014–2022). It guarantees absolute message discipline: every health, crime, or infrastructure failure will be sheeted back to Labor’s debt and interest bill, which is now on track to hit \$12–15 billion annually by 2028–29. This is the sharpest economic differentiation the Victorian Liberals have had since 2010.

- **Housing and Demographics:** The explicit separation of ‘Home Ownership and Housing Affordability’ (Nicole Werner) from the traditional Planning/Building portfolio (David Southwick) is the clearest electoral pitch to under-40 voters the Victorian Liberals have made since the 2010 campaign. It recognises that supply-side reform alone no longer resonates with younger cohorts who feel permanently locked out.
- **Modernization:** A newly created portfolio for Richard Welch—Shadow Minister for AI and the Digital Economy—indicates a focus on productivity and modernizing the Victorian economy, opening new lines of engagement with the tech and innovation sectors.
- The proposed ministry currently exceeds the constitutional limit of six ministers from the Legislative Council, meaning at some upper-house MPs would need to be demoted if the Coalition wins government – a potential complication in ministry negotiations with the Nationals.

The New Shadow Cabinet

Jess Wilson MP	Leader of the Opposition Leader of the Liberal Party Shadow Treasurer
Danny O’Brien MP	Deputy Leader of the Coalition Leader of the Nationals Shadow Minister for Regional Development and Liveability Shadow Minister for Emergency Services Shadow Minister for Roads and Road Safety
Sam Groth MP	Deputy Leader of the Opposition Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party Shadow Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events

	Shadow Minister for Trade and Investment
Emma Kealy MP	Deputy Leader of the Nationals Shadow Minister for Agriculture Shadow Minister for Mental Health
Bev McArthur MP	Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council Leader of the Liberal Party in the Legislative Council Shadow Minister for Local Government Shadow Minister for Small Business
Evan Mulholland MP	Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party in the Legislative Council Shadow Minister for Transport Infrastructure Shadow Minister for Multicultural and Multifaith Affairs
Melina Bath MP	Leader of the Nationals in the Legislative Council The Nationals Whip in the Legislative Council Shadow Minister for Public Land Management Shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Shadow Minister for Outdoor Recreation
James Newbury MP	Manager of Opposition Business Shadow Attorney-General Shadow Special Minister of State Shadow Minister for Equality
Brad Battin MP	Shadow Minister for Police and Corrections
Hon. Tim Bull MP	Shadow Minister for Disability, Ageing, Carers and Volunteers Shadow Minister for Racing Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Georgie Crozier MP	Shadow Minister for Health Shadow Minister for Ambulance Services Shadow Minister for Medical Research
Hon. David Davis MP	Shadow Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction Shadow Minister for Resources Shadow Minister for Arts and Creative Industries
Hon. Matthew Guy MP	Shadow Minister for Public Transport

	Shadow Minister for Ports and Freight
Renee Heath MP	Liberal Party Whip in the Legislative Council Shadow Minister for Youth Justice Shadow Minister for Crime Prevention and Victim Support Shadow Minister for Bay Protection
Tim McCurdy MP	Shadow Minister for Water Shadow Minister for Gaming and Liquor Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs
Nick McGowan MP	Shadow Minister for the Environment Shadow Minister for Fire Rescue Victoria
Cindy McLeish MP	Shadow Minister for Women Shadow Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence Shadow Minister for WorkSafe and TAC
Brad Rowsell MP	Shadow Minister for Education Shadow Minister for Industrial Relations Minister for Government Services
David Southwick MP	Shadow Minister for Planning Shadow Minister for Housing and Building
Bridget Vallence MP	Shadow Minister for Finance Shadow Minister for Jobs and Skills
Richard Welch MP	Shadow Minister for Industry Shadow Minister for Manufacturing and Innovation Shadow Minister for AI and the Digital Economy
Nicole Werner MP	Shadow Minister for Home Ownership and Housing Affordability Minister for Youth Shadow Minister for Children
Joe McCracken MP	Shadow Cabinet Secretary

Further Information

For more information, please contact [Matthew Harris](#) on 0410 839 586.

To stay up to date with the affairs of Coalition Governments and Oppositions around Australia, you can follow Barton Deakin on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).