

## Barton Deakin Brief: Liberal Party Leadership Change: Angus Taylor Elected Leader of the Opposition

13 February 2026

### Summary

Angus Taylor has been elected Leader of the Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition following a party room ballot on Friday 13 February 2026, replacing Sussan Ley. Senator Jane Hume has been elected Deputy Leader, replacing Ted O'Brien.

### Background

Sussan Ley became the first female Leader of the Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition in May 2025, following Peter Dutton's defeat in his seat of Dickson at the 2025 federal election.

In early 2026, significant pressure mounted on Ley's leadership following a series of historically poor opinion polls. Recent Newspolls recorded the Coalition's primary vote at 17–18%, with Pauline Hanson's One Nation polling as high as 27%. Ley's personal approval rating fell to 23% with 62% dissatisfaction—the worst result for a major party leader in over two decades.

This followed a period of internal instability, including a nearly three-week split between the Liberal and National parties over hate speech laws—the second such split since 2025.

On 12 February, Angus Taylor resigned from the frontbench to challenge for the leadership, stating the party had "lost its way" and required "strong and decisive leadership."

At a party room meeting on 13 February Taylor won the leadership ballot 34 -17 against Ley.

### The New Leader: Hon Angus Taylor MP

**Electorate:** Hume (NSW)

**Previous Roles:**

- Shadow Minister for Defence (2025–2026)
- Shadow Treasurer (2022–2025)
- Minister for Industry, Energy and Emissions Reduction (2021–2022)
- Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction (2019–2021)
- Minister for Energy (2018–2019)

### Education and Career

Taylor holds economics and law degrees from the University of Sydney (University Medal) and a Master of Philosophy in Economics from Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar. Prior to politics, he was a partner at McKinsey & Co and Director at Port Jackson Partners.

### Implications

**Coalition Reset:** Taylor's election signals an attempt to stabilise the Coalition and reposition it ahead of the next federal election, expected in 2028.

**Policy Direction:** Expect renewed focus on economic management, cost of living pressures, defence, and energy policy. Taylor brings significant ministerial experience in the energy and industry portfolios.

**Parliamentary Dynamics:** The leadership change may provide an opportunity for improved relations with the Nationals following recent Coalition tensions.

**Government Response:** The Albanese Government will face a refreshed Opposition with an experienced economic communicator at the helm.

### What to Watch

- Announcement of the new Shadow Cabinet
- Taylor's first address to the National Press Club
- Coalition strategy on next parliamentary sitting fortnight (2<sup>nd</sup> March)
- Polling response to leadership change

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