

## MEET THE PRESS

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### INTERVIEW WITH ANTHONY ALBANESE

TONY ABBOTT: And from today I declare that Australia is under new management and that Australia is once more open for business.

KATHRYN ROBINSON, PRESENTER: Tony Abbott claiming victory in the 2013 election campaign. Welcome to Meet The Press. I'm Kathryn Robinson. The PM-elect isn't letting his landslide win get in the way of his daily routine, starting the first day in the top job with an early-morning bike ride. When the dust settles it is expected the Coalition will have won 88 seats, giving it a clear majority. Labor's only solace, the loss wasn't as bad as predicted, especially in Queensland and Western Sydney. It did, however, record its lowest primary vote in well over 100 years. Labor is today without a Party leader after Kevin Rudd vowed to step down. Today we ask senior Labor MPs and strategists how things were able to go so horribly wrong, who the next Leader will be, and how the Party can claw its way back from this bitter defeat. Well, less than two months after he became Prime Minister for a second time, Kevin Rudd has once again lost the top job. As he conceded defeat last night, Mr Rudd announced he would stand down as leader. One of the men considered a favourite to take over is outgoing Deputy PM Anthony Albanese, and he joins us this morning. Our panel, fresh from a long night of electorate-watching – Ten's political editor, Hugh Riminton, News Corp Australia's political editor, Samantha Maiden, and News Corp Australia's political writer, Steve Lewis. Good morning to you all.

STEVE LEWIS: Good to be with you.

KATHRYN ROBINSON: Mr Albanese - at the moment you are acting ALP leader. Are you going to put your hand up and say, "Yes, I would like to be the leader of the ALP?"

ANTHONY ALBANESE: Well, my ambition has never been for myself. It's for the country. And I believe one of the lessons of yesterday is very clear, which is that we need to be a united Party. So we will have discussions over the coming days. We've just suffered a defeat. And I acknowledge that, and I congratulate Tony Abbott and his team on their election victory yesterday. What is important, though, is that we discuss the way forward for us as a team rather than just any individual.

HUGH RIMINTON: So, are you saying there won't be - you will not be part of a contested leadership race?

ANTHONY ALBANESE: No. I'm saying that I – I, up until yesterday at 6:00pm, put every ounce of my energy into maximising Labor's vote. I didn't think about post scenarios. There is time to do that now.

SAMANTHA MAIDEN: Is it fair to say that there have been people that have urged you during the campaign to consider taking over the leadership?

ANTHONY ALBANESE: Any time those issues were raised I certainly indicated what I have said publicly, is the same as what I have said privately, which is my focus was on the election result. And I believe we certainly didn't get a good result yesterday. There is no point gilding the lily. But we also did not get the result that many were predicting. There are many additional members in the Parliament who will sit on the Labor side in the House of Representatives who had been written off before yesterday's result.

SAMANTHA MAIDEN: On that result, there was debate leading up to it about whether it was right to switch to Kevin Rudd – would have the result been better or worse under Julia Gillard. Do you think that the Labor Party made the right choice going through that leadership change again so close to the election?

ANTHONY ALBANESE: Oh, look, I stand by the decisions that I made. I certainly have always acted in the interest of the Party. I don't think there is anyone who would think or suggest that I did anything other than provide absolute loyalty to Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard when I served them. Both of them, I believe, were good Prime Ministers. We have a legacy that we must ensure we defend. The National Broadband Network, the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The better schools plan. Our economic record.

HUGH RIMINTON: What about the carbon tax? Are you going to defend that?

ANTHONY ALBANESE: Well, we are absolutely going to defend taking action on climate change. I could not – I could not look my son in the eye and walk away from taking action on climate change. Some things are absolutely vital, not just for now, but for future generations. There is a cost to carbon. There is a cost. The question is - do we pass it on to future generations or do we, as this generation, take responsibility? I believe we have to do that. We have supported an emissions trading scheme for a very long time. And certainly I was elected on a mandate again yesterday with a swing to me on the issue of taking action on climate change.

STEVE LEWIS: So on carbon tax, on other big policy reforms that Tony Abbott wants to get through, can he expect the same sort of treatment from Labor and from the Greens that he dished out? I mean, he was a hard as nails Opposition Leader. He sought to block a number of your key reforms, unsuccessfully because you could get the Greens' support. Are you saying that Labor would take that similar attitude on things like the carbon tax and the mining tax?

ANTHONY ALBANESE: Well, we will certainly take a different attitude towards parliamentary democracy and towards our institutions. We will respect them. Tony Abbott didn't respect the decision of the people in 2010 by his behaviour. That's not about taking a policy position. He is entitled to do that. But he set out to wreck the Parliament and to be negative each and every day. We respect parliamentary institutions, and we will do that. But we also have a mandate. We have a mandate for strong action to protect jobs, strong action to roll out programs like the National Broadband Network, like make sure that we take action on climate change. We have that mandate. And I see no reason why we should walk away from our legacy. In terms of the campaign - one of the things that's interesting about Tony Abbott's so-called mandate, is on a range of issues he sought to blur the difference. The better

schools plan being a good example. He said he supports the same thing. They kept saying it. Well, we will see. Six years' funding. They are going to be there and have to produce Budgets. Will they put the money for the better schools plan in there over six years? Will they honour those agreements with State and Territory governments, the Catholic education system, and the independent schools?

HUGH RIMINTON: Do you accept that he has a mandate at the very least on the paid parental leave scheme?

ANTHONY ALBANESE: He certainly has a position that he has put forward. But I would really say that this is someone who has said that there was a Budget emergency. But what he is going to do is cut taxes for the miners. What he is going to do, or seek to do, is to then put a whole waft of money, up to \$75,000, to people who least need it, while taking away money-

HUGH RIMINTON: Because I'm looking at-

ANTHONY ALBANESE: - from 1.3 million Australians through the schoolkids bonus.

HUGH RIMINTON: Sure. So these are arguments – these are arguments we've heard. But what really strikes me is I'm looking at a man who looks like you're up for a fight. You're not looking like a defeated man today. Are you in play to be the leader? I know you don't want to commit yourself. But you're certainly not appearing to rule yourself out of play, to stay on as-

ANTHONY ALBANESE: I have been elected as the member for Grayndler, yesterday, and I intend serving as the member for Grayndler each and every day. What I will do-

HUGH RIMINTON: You're dodging the question.

ANTHONY ALBANESE: What I will do is take up the fight. That's what I do. I will argue Labor's cause in a passionate way. One of the mistakes – I sat there after the 1996-

HUGH RIMINTON: You are still dodging the question, Albo.

ANTHONY ALBANESE: I was elected after 1996. One of the mistakes I think we made was to walk away from some of Labor's legacy in terms of the Hawk-Keating Governments. I believe history will judge the Rudd and Gillard periods very favourably – particularly our economic record. Tony Abbott says that there is a Budget emergency. The truth is he inherits a strong economy with low inflation, low interest rates, high jobs growth, high work force participation, less industrial disputes, and a AAA credit rating.

STEVE LEWIS: Bill Shorten says he is considering the leadership, he will consult with his family. Do you think Mr Shorten would make a good Labor leader going forward?

ANTHONY ALBANESE: Bill, of course, would make a good Labor leader. There's a number of people who will, I think-

STEVE LEWIS: Would you be happy to serve with him as leader?

ANTHONY ALBANESE: I'd be happy to serve with whoever the caucus chooses, and be loyal to them. The fact is that we have a number of talented people in the Labor Party caucus. Bill Shorten, Tony Burke, Chris Bowen, Tanya Plibersek. There are a range of good, experienced people who can serve the Party. What is important is that the Labor Party serve as a team, that it's united, that we defend our legacy, and that – and that we take up the arguments to Tony Abbott and the Coalition. I mean, he slipped through an election campaign. Does anyone know what his education policy is, or his health policy? I don't, because I didn't see anything during the election campaign about it.

KATHRYN ROBINSON: Mr Albanese, I'm afraid we are out of time. We will let you go to go and have some much-deserved rest, I would imagine. Thank you for joining us on Meet The Press today.

ANTHONY ALBANESE: Thanks very much.

KATHRYN ROBINSON: Well, next, he was brought in to take Labor to election victory – ALP National Secretary George Wright tells us what went wrong. But first, we asked punters in Sydney why they were voting for the Coalition.

MAN: Well, because the Labor Party has ruined this country. Clearly. It's quite obvious. I mean, you look at all of the policies they've done over the last six years and it's just disgraceful. I mean, where has all our money gone? Let's be honest. I mean – anyway, I'm glad I'm here to be honest. It's good to be able to show something, to get this country back on its feet, I hope.

REPORTER: So, you'd consider yourself a staunch Liberal supporter?

MAN: Oh, yeah, to a degree, yeah. But, I mean, look at what John Howard and Peter Costello did in this country. It was - we had money and were giving tax cuts and everything. It was terrific. So, yeah.

REPORTER: So do you support the Liberal Party or do you support Tony Abbott?

MAN: I support the Liberal Party in general. Tony Abbott is the leader. That's who they have chosen. They think he is the best one for the - candidate for the position. So, yeah.

WOMAN: I voted for Tony Abbott.

REPORTER: Why?

WOMAN: Um, because he's fit. Yeah. Yeah. Can I say that? Is that alright? He's fit, that's cool. I like that.

WOMAN: Guys, I forget his name. What's his name?

REPORTER: Tony Abbott.

WOMAN: I just like Tony Abbott.

REPORTER: Are you sure you like Tony Abbott and not Kevin Rudd?

WOMAN: I don't really like Kevin Rudd as much as Tony Abbott.

REPORTER: What do you like about Tony Abbott?

WOMAN: He is just more straight to the point than Kevin Rudd. And, I don't know. I just like his rules and regulations more.