

Dutton pushes role for gas power amid blitz on Labor seats

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Dec 6, 2024 - 5.41pm



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Opposition Leader Peter Dutton says a Coalition government will build more gas-fired power stations to firm up renewable energy, in addition to his proposed seven nuclear power stations [<https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/coalition-nuclear-policy-relies-on-coal-for-longer-than-experts-expect-20240923-p5kcma>], the details of which will be unveiled next week.

Speaking amid a campaign-style blitz on Labor seats this week, Mr Dutton confirmed the Coalition's modelling will say nuclear power is cheaper over the long run than Labor's plans to achieve 82 per cent renewable energy in the grid by 2030.



Opposition Leader Peter Dutton. **Dominic Lorrimer**

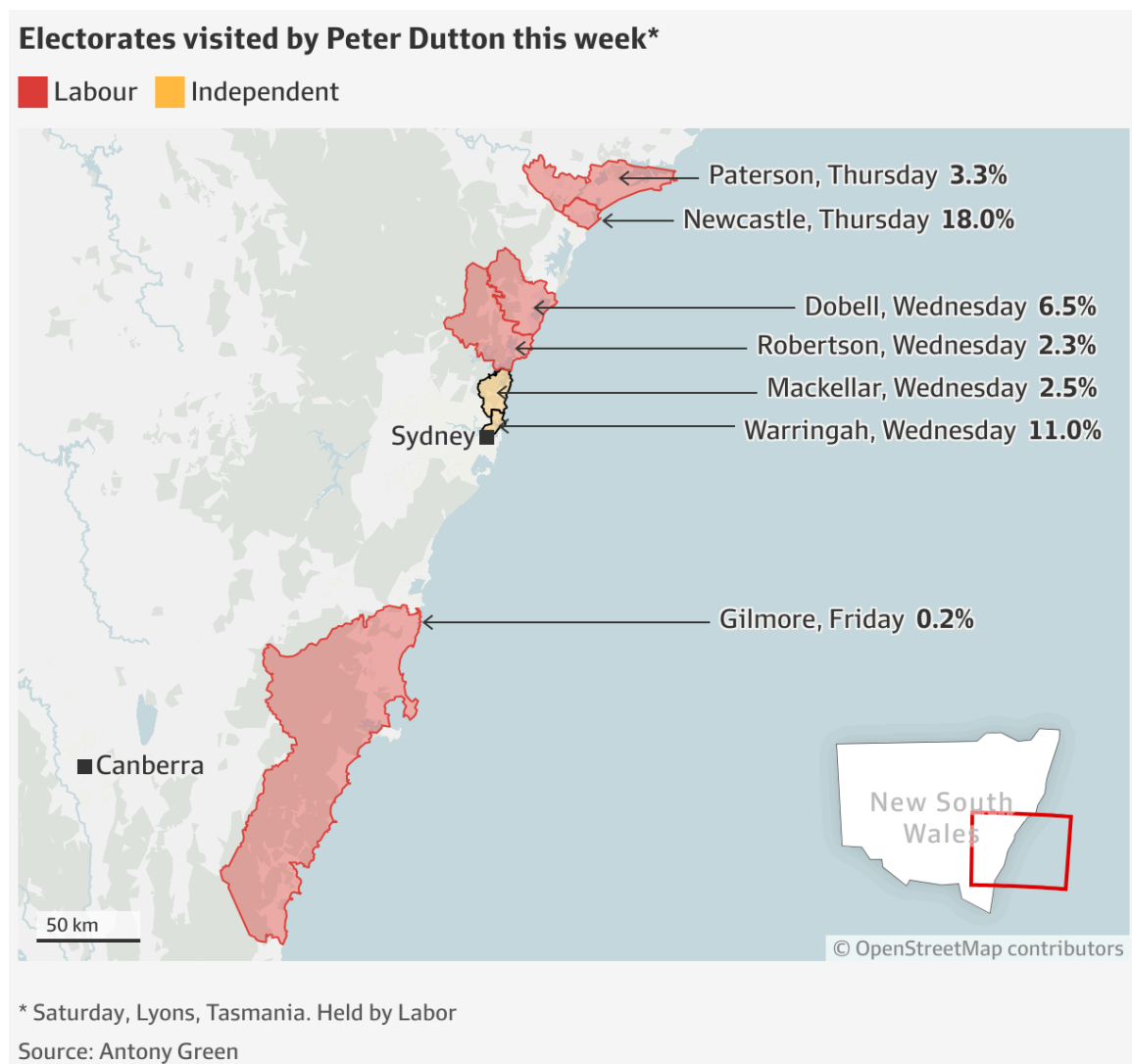
Despite his pledge to veto three of six proposed offshore wind farms, he said renewable energy would remain an important part of the energy mix, and that would require gas peaking plants as back-up.

The previous Coalition government commissioned a new gas peaking plant at Kurri Kurri near Newcastle, and Mr Dutton said more would be needed, given coal would disappear from the system before nuclear came online.

“If we’re going to keep the lights on, and we’re going to have stability in the network, then we do need reliable baseload power because on current projections, 90 per cent of baseload power goes out of the system by 2034,” he told radio 2HD.

Under his nuclear plan, the first power station would not be operational until 2035 if it was a small modular reactor, of which he has pledged to build two, or 2037 if a full-scale power plant, of which the Coalition has pledged to build five.

Mr Dutton has blitzed through five Labor seats in the past three days and plans to hit more over the weekend in a clear indication the Coalition is increasingly confident of holding its own seats, and is on the hunt for more.



On Thursday, he used a visit to the NSW seat of Paterson to announce he would veto the giant Hunter offshore wind farm if elected [<https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/dutton-axes-third-wind-farm-ahead-of-nuclear-pitch-20241205-p5kvzv>]. He has already pledged to do the same to the Illawarra wind farm, also off the NSW coast, and one off the West Australian coast. This means he will veto three of the six wind farms Labor has proposed.

This contravenes the Coalition's own policy when it was last in government, when it legislated to establish offshore wind zones.

Labor MP Meryl Swanson, who holds Paterson, acknowledged the wind farm was a polarising issue in her electorate but described Mr Dutton's decision as "revolting".

"Peter Dutton, I'm calling him risky Pete for a reason. He just dropped into our electorate yesterday, sprinkles nuclear fairy dust around and said we don't want offshore wind, but we do want a nuclear reactor," she said.

"We can't tell you how much will cost, but we will get it on the never-never.

"When he was in government he was all for offshore wind, now he wants to shut it down and build a nuclear reactor. It is fanciful and really quite revolting, in my opinion."

As public polling continues to show the Coalition has an outside chance of forming minority government, Mr Dutton's movements indicate the internal polling is reflecting a similar sentiment.

In a sweep of NSW, which began on Wednesday, he has visited the teal seats of Warringah and Mackellar, followed by the Labor seats of Robertson, Dobell, Paterson, Newcastle and Gilmore.

On the weekend, he will be in Tasmania with a special focus on the vulnerable Labor seat of Lyons.

By contrast, Mr Albanese's focus on Friday was managing Labor seats, starting in the Perth seat of Pearce where he promoted the production tax credits to encourage green hydrogen production and the extraction and processing of critical minerals.

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