

Nova Peris quits parliament after single term

Written by The Conversation USA

High-profile Indigenous Labor senator Nova Peris is quitting after just one term in parliament.

Peris was Julia Gillard's "captain's pick" to be Labor's Northern Territory Senate candidate for the 2013 election. This forced out then-Labor senator Trish Crossin, who was bitter about her treatment, and caused a major controversy in the ALP at the time.

Peris has been reported to be a candidate to be senior Indigenous affairs advisor at the AFL but sources said she was not a frontrunner for the job.

In a Tuesday statement she did not give a reason for quitting.

She said: "As the first Aboriginal female in federal politics as well as the Labor party's first Aboriginal member in federal parliament I certainly had challenges, but none that I couldn't handle or was not prepared for, having already lived a very public and documented life."

During her time in parliament Peris received intrusive publicity about her personal and family life.

Peris said she had made her decision after "careful deliberations with my family".

"I had never envisaged myself becoming a career politician," she said. "I'm now moving on and personally looking forward to the next chapter and journey of my life."

Peris was deputy chair of the parliamentary committee on constitutional recognition of Indigenous people.

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The Peris decision is very awkward for Labor, especially because of the timing, apparent lack of warning, and confusion surrounding it when Opposition Leader Bill Shorten initially could not reach her to clarify the situation.

Shorten told a news conference Peris had been a “trailblazer” both on the athletics track and in the Senate.

Peris said that as a “champion of change I will continue to fight racism and prejudice”. She noted that Labor had six Indigenous candidates contesting the election.

Labor now has to move quickly to get a replacement candidate for the NT Senate spot.

Michelle Grattan does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organization that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond the academic appointment above.

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