

Day flip flops about Senate future

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

Family First senator Bob Day, who announced last week he was quitting parliament after the collapse of his housing business, now says he may stay on because the prospect of a financial lifeline has arisen.

In a statement on Friday, Day said he had appointed McGrathNicol on October 17 to take charge of the Home Australia Group of companies. About 200 homes are unfinished and many trade contractors and other creditors are unpaid.

But now a new investor had expressed interest in reviving the group, and other offers had also been received, he said.

"If new investment revives the company, if houses are being completed and trade contractors and others are being paid, then I may continue as a senator. If not, my resignation will proceed and I will devote myself to assisting those affected by the group's closure," Day said.

Meanwhile Day, who usually supports the government, will attend the Senate when it resumes on November 7 "to ensure that South Australia and the Family First party has an active voice in the Senate for that sitting week.

"The votes are tight on the marriage plebiscite and the ABCC – and I support both. The backpacker tax must be fixed before the end of the sitting year, and I want to ensure the tax rate is satisfactory to farmers and the hospitality industry alike."

Day said McGrathNicol was assessing offers and a creditors' meeting would be held on November 4. "McGrathNicol makes decisions about the future of the group. I am doing everything I can to assist."

He said he was "deeply sorry for the anguish this situation is causing many people".

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There is a battle within Family First over the replacement for Day if he leaves. He wants his staffer Rikki Lambert to get the spot but it is also being sought by Family First's South Australian upper house member Robert Brokenshire, who would be a much more problematic crossbencher from the government's point of view.

After his initial announcement Day delayed his resignation as he tried to get his way over a successor.

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

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