

Julie Bishop's farewell appearance as foreign minister set some hares running about her future, but the real message is that Australia's highest profile female politician is ready to move on to a post-political life.

When she called a news conference on Tuesday, Bishop had been expected to announce she'd leave parliament at the election. But instead she said she was remaining the member for her Western Australian seat of Curtin. What she avoided saying was for how long.

Teasingly, she even indirectly left open the possibility of seeking the leadership post election. When she was asked about that, she said: "It's far too early for me to even contemplate what I might do. But I will certainly have plenty of time to consider my options and reflect on what has been an extraordinary time".

In reality, the chances of Bishop being in the next parliament seem minimal. As for the leadership - which would be opposition leadership because if the government won there would be no vacancy - that's not a job she would want. Or indeed that, as a moderate, she would get, given the conservative direction of the Liberal party.

Bishop could presumably expect to receive some attractive job offers in the next few months, and if the right one came along, domestic or international, she would be taking it.

Her seat is safe as houses – she won more than 70% of the two-party vote in 2016 - so she mightn't even feel inhibited about leaving before the election if the incentive were there. If she departed relatively close to the election, a byelection could be avoided.

With Governor-General Peter Cosgrove's term due to end early next year, there has been speculation Bishop might be appointed as his successor.

This has prompted Bill Shorten to write to Scott Morrison asking that Cosgrove's term be extended for six months, to September 2019, so that the next government appoints the new

incumbent at Yarralumla.

Given the timing, Labor has a reasonable point.

But if we are talking appropriateness for the role, Bishop would surely have all the qualifications. And there is the precedent of Bob Hawke appointing Bill Hayden, who had been foreign minister.

In last week's leadership ballot Bishop scored only 11 votes, and none of her fellow WA Liberals voted for her. Nationally, moderates were urged to vote for Scott Morrison in the first round, as the best tactic to defeat Peter Dutton.

When she saw Tuesday's Essential poll, Bishop would have had her anger with colleagues fuelled. Asked who would make the best Liberal leader she was on 23%, followed by Malcolm Turnbull on 15%, and Morrison on 10%. But the leadership battle was not about electoral attractiveness.

Bishop could have stayed as foreign minister if she'd wanted. She might have chosen to do so if Morrison had been more persuasive.

It would have served his own and the government's interests for the new PM to have pressed her much harder.

Continuity in foreign affairs for the next few months would have been useful, especially since this is not Morrison's forte and he won't have a lot of opportunity to get to grips with it, given an election bearing down.

Morrison is going to Indonesia this week, but he is missing next week's Pacific Islands Forum in Nauru. In light of the concerns about growing Chinese influence in the Pacific, this is a meeting the Australian Prime Minister should be at. Instead his place will be taken by Marise Payne,

View from The Hill: Julie Bishop will be open to post-politics offers

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

Bishop's replacement as foreign minister.

One of the issues at the Nauru meeting will be climate change, just when question marks hang over the Morrison government's climate policy.

In domestic terms, Bishop's high profile as a minister, even without her deputy role, would have been helpful to the Liberals' pre-election fund-raising and campaigning. "Obviously, as a back bencher, I am somewhat constrained," she said. Indeed.

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 their academic appointment.

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