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Picture: GRAHAM TIDY

Alexander Downer: a pledge "to do everything I can to restore hope and a bright future for Australia"



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Picture: RICHARD BRIGGS

Carolyn and John Hewson: 'I'm happy about his decision to stay

Carolyn stands by her politician

By MARGO KINGSTON

At drinks, for the last time in the Opposition Leader's office, Carolyn Hewson looked to the future of her partner John.

She will go to work in her merchant bank tomorrow, and then consider a holiday for a time, but she wholeheartedly accepts her husband's decision to continue in the Liberal Party game.

It is well known that after the election loss, Carolyn Hewson wanted John Hewson to do something else. Now, she knows better — about him and what drives him. And she knows all about the numbers, and where they came and went. She is passionately loyal to her partner and was intensely involved in his last stand.

"He has an enormous amount to contribute to policy development. The obvious areas are finance, treasury, or trade. And he has a new passion for arts (which he took on post-election). He really enjoyed that.

"His success in broadening party policy at the last election to include all women's issues, especially child care and superannuation packages for women, including those working part-time or having to leave work for a period was a great achievement. I hope he continues his work in this area.

"I was always upset that he wasn't given recognition for social policy before the last election. He moved the party's position dramatically in the areas of women, Ab-

original reconciliation, and education for those not necessarily able to pay."

She makes it clear that the decision on what portfolio to take will

sion on what portfolio to take will be his, and that he won't take whatever is offered.

Asked if they had discussed his future before the ballot she says no. "We thought he'd win."

"I'm happy about his decision to stay. He has got a lot to offer. He has enormous abilities as a policy developer.

"John is an ideas person. His mind is crowded with ideas, he has a brain that won't stop throwing them up and the party has benefited from that.

"The other thing about John is that he has lived what the Liberal Party stands for. It's about giving everyone a choice, giving everybody an opportunity to succeed, everyone a chance to grow.

"John is a living example of someone who has taken advantage of opportunity and built himself and grown as a person through that process."

She says that, as a child, Hewson would never have been picked as a potential politician. "He never had the confidence to be one of these people who let garbage roll out of their mouths. He was always thoughtful, clear thinking. He epitomises what the Liberal Party stands for."

Carolyn Hewson refused last night to be publicly bitter about Hewson's downfall.

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Carolyn backs her politician

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But she did say she was concerned "that we can't as a nation concentrate on the issues: we seem to be getting bound up with personality and style and reputation on the back of it."

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bound up with personality and style and presence or the lack of it.

"Some of that blame lies with the media, and some with a constant focus on mindless and often unscientific polling."

Hewson joked that what he regretted most about the week's trauma was the Cannonball Run, this week's wild car race from Darwin to Alice Springs. That was where he would have been had other events not intervened.

A quick look at the TV reports, some chat about what had happened and what could have been, and the Hewsons flew to Sydney.

They will join staff and supporters for dinner in Canberra tonight. To say thanks.

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