



Just four days after his appointment, the man chosen to run the Royal Commission into juvenile detention in the Northern Territory has resigned

Reporter: David Lipson
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EMMA ALBERICI, PRESENTER: Just four days after his appointment, the man chosen to run the royal commission into juvenile detention in the Northern Territory has resigned. Former judge Brian Martin says the perception of a conflict of interest meant his involvement could compromise the inquiry. But there are already questions about the impartiality of one of two new commissioners who'll replace him. Our political correspondent David Lipson looks back at a tumultuous week.

MALCOLM TURNBULL, PRIME MINISTER: We will establish, in cooperation with the Northern Territory Government, a royal commission. ... And to appoint Mr Brian Ross Martin AO, who is here on my right, as the royal commissioner.

BRIAN MARTIN, FORMER NT JUDGE: I feel privileged to have been asked to undertake this important task.

JOURNALIST: Are you concerned there may be any perception of conflict of interest?

BRIAN MARTIN: I don't think so. I can't see how that would arise.

???: Well Mr Martin's part of the cliquey boys club up here.

OLGA HAVNEN, DEPUTY CHAIR, AMSANT: Aboriginal people here in the Northern Territory have been, you know, largely excluded from this process. We've certainly not been consulted.

MALCOLM TURNBULL: I said we would get on with it speedily and we have. Now job now is for Mr Martin to get on with it.

BILL SHORTEN, OPPOSITION LEADER: This royal commission has to be done with Aboriginal people, not to Aboriginal people.

SCOTT RYAN, SPECIAL MINISTER OF STATE: Bill Shorten's confected outrage on a daily basis on some of - on some issues is a bit like a grey sky in Melbourne in July - you just have to get on with the job and ignore it.

PAT DODSON, LABOR MP: There's concern that's mounted over the appointment of the particular relevant royal commissioner and obviously there was concerns that Aboriginal co-commissioners should be appointed.

BRIAN MARTIN: I have decided in the public interest that I should not continue as the commissioner.

DAVID LIPSON, REPORTER: It took less than a week. Initially praised for his swift and decisive action, Malcolm Turnbull's royal commission is derailed over a perceived conflict of interest.

BRIAN MARTIN: There is a perception and I suspect a belief that there is a conflict. Now in those circumstances, it undermines the effectiveness of the commission right from the outset.

DAVID LIPSON: Central to his decision, revelations his daughter worked for the NT's Attorney-General during some of the period to be investigated.

BILL SHORTEN: This is what happens when you rush and you bungle, you create confusion, you cause problems and you put people into corners.

DAVID LIPSON: Having been told of Mr Martin's decision on Saturday, the Attorney-General was ready with not one, but two replacement commissioners - former Queensland Supreme Court Justice Elizabeth Martin and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda.

GEORGE BRANDIS, ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Now, I know both Justice White and Mr Gooda. I have dealt with them in different capacities over the years. I have very high regard for both of them.

DAVID LIPSON: They are indeed highly and broadly respected, but already there are questions about whether Mick Gooda can impartially judge the Northern Territory Government's actions, having sent this tweet on Tuesday calling for it to be sacked entirely.

MICK GOODA, ROYAL COMMISSIONER (Twitter, @MickGooda): The Federal Government has to intervene and sack the NT Government.

JOURNALIST II: Do you still feel that way?

MICK GOODA: Oh, we'll wait and see. Um, I think - I said on the Tuesday, you know, it was a day of emotions and, you know, people had all sorts of emotional responses. In the clear light of day, I probably wouldn't think that, but at the moment, I've got a job to do.

DAVID LIPSON: The question is: will any adverse finding he delivers against the Northern Territory Government now be seen as preconceived? So far there's been minimal resistance to the appointment of both new commissioners. If they can now get on with the job and deliver a good result, well this first week will be largely forgotten as just a glitch. But there is a lot at stake and Malcolm Turnbull's first major move since the election has gone terribly so far, all the more so because of the importance of getting such a serious issue right.