

Herbert poll saga is over

Marginal seat's result to stand

KIERAN ROONEY

THE Liberal National Party will not to challenge the federal election result in Herbert, ending months of uncertainty.

The party spent two months considering an appeal to the Court of Disputed Returns over voting irregularities but yesterday announced it would not pursue the case.

Labor's Cathy O'Toole beat incumbent Ewen Jones by just 37 votes, making the Townsville-based seat Australia's most marginal electorate.

Mr Jones, who was expected to retain his seat, said the result proved politics could catch anyone by surprise.

"The party took a huge punt by going with me in 2010, as an unknown, and in the end serendipity had a bit to do with it all," he said.

"I was lucky to win out in that first election and ended up being unlucky to lose the seat this year when I probably should have held on."

Mr Jones said that Labor's

 I owe
Malcolm
Turnbull and the
party a great deal

EWEN JONES

"Mediscare" campaign was a deciding factor in the result.

"When you lose by 37 votes to what I consider the most disingenuous and lying campaign Australia has seen, you have every right to be disappointed," he said.

"If you watch how the postal votes came, we were winning 59 to 41 per cent and it got worse later on as the votes were influenced by Medicare.

"But I can look back and be proud of what we've been able to achieve.

"I'm proud of the legacy including the stadium, the City Deal, the Singapore arrangement and plenty more.

"Those things will stand this city in great stead. The building blocks I've helped put in place are the building blocks on which the city will prosper."

Mr Jones also did not rule out a return to politics.

"Never say never. At this stage I feel I owe Malcolm Turnbull and the party a great deal for the confidence they showed me and this city," he said.

"If I can contribute in any way to making sure they continue to deliver, I will."

Senator Ian Macdonald said he was disappointed by the decision not to appeal.

"There were so many irregularities and so many voters of Herbert I am aware of who were denied their right to vote," he said.

"In such a close vote, the reports of hospital patients, university students and Defence personnel missing out seems particularly important.

"Apart from those there were many irregularities in the count that I hoped would be tested in court."