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Highlight: Penny Wong has rebuked senator Fatima Payman for crossing the floor, with the foreign minister pointing out she had had to vote against same-sex marriage before Labor changed its position.

Body

Penny Wong has slapped down first-term Labor senator Fatima Payman for crossing the floor, with the foreign minister pointing out she had had to vote against same-sex marriage before Labor changed its position.

In a thinly veiled warning to Payman, who [this week voted with the Greens](#) on a motion to recognise Palestinian statehood, Wong said she understood why her Labor colleagues were upset and that Prime Minister Anthony Albanese had shown "great restraint" by only [suspending Payman](#) from one caucus meeting.

Wong, who this year married her long-term partner Sophie Allouache, voted against the Greens' attempt to [legalise same-sex marriage in 2008](#) and in 2010 [argued publicly against legalising same-sex marriage](#), which was the party's official position at the time.

[Link to Image](#)

Alex Ellinghausen

At the same time, she worked behind the scenes for years to successfully help secure the historic shift in Labor's official position.

Labor MPs are bound by a formal pledge to support the collective decisions of their caucus and risk expulsion from the party if they break that commitment.

Asked on Sky News about being forced to vote in line with the party's position, Wong said she did so "because I believed in the power of the collective".

"I can understand why colleagues are upset [about Payman's action]. I can understand how they feel because there is trust between colleagues as well. What I would say is our expectation is that the senator abide by decisions of the caucus. On this occasion, the prime minister has shown restraint," she said.

"We understand the importance of caucus solidarity. It is very rare for a Labor person not to respect that. It's a principle which has served us well."

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Early Childhood Education Minister **Anne Aly**, who has [previously spoken out](#) on the Israel-Hamas conflict and who, like Payman, is Muslim, also questioned the West Australian senator's decision to cross the floor, saying her vote on Tuesday night was "inconsequential to the people of Gaza".

"The world woke on Wednesday morning and children were still being starved, the conflict was still happening - nothing has changed. My approach to this is that we do things that make a material difference on the ground," she told the ABC.

[Link to Image](#)

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There is a growing expectation among Labor MPs that the Greens will test Payman - and Labor solidarity - again when parliament returns next week by moving another motion in support of Palestine.

Payman declined to answer questions from this masthead about whether she would cross the floor again but several of her colleagues said they were preparing for her to do so. Some argued it was time to "rip the Band-Aid off" and expel Payman before this happened, but others said the MP needed to be kept in the fold and should not face further sanction.

Her decision to cross the floor is the first time a Labor MP has done so since 2005.

Tuesday's vote came in the ninth month of Israel's military campaign in Gaza. On October 7, Hamas fighters crossed into Israel, killing 1200 people and taking more than 200 hostages, according to the Israel Defence Force. Gazan health authorities report more than 37,000 people have died during the subsequent invasion.

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Graphic

Senator Fatima Payman and Leader of the Government in the Senate and Foreign Affairs Minister Penny Wong during question time earlier this year.

Minister for Early Childhood Education **Anne Aly** said senator Fatima Payman's vote on Tuesday night was "inconsequential to the people of Gaza".

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