

Greens dark on Labor in election

by JENNY D'ANGER

FOR the first time the Fremantle Greens won't be giving their preferences to the Labor party.

Instead in the November 24 federal poll, Greens voters in the port city will have to decide on their own who gets their preference.

"We are showing voters how to vote 1 for The Greens and then saying 'they are your preferences, you decide'," Fremantle candidate Stephen Walker said.

It's a safe way for the party to flex its muscles and move out of Labor's shadow, he added.

"The Greens are firming their position as the third political force in Australia ... [and] providing genuine opposition rather than the 'me too' policies of the other parties."

If Liberal candidate John Jamieson was any chance of winning, The Greens would not be taking the risk of not preferencing Labor's Melissa Parke, he said.

Ms Parke, who is giving her preferences to the Greens, said Labor was the only mainstream party with a green track record.

"It is disappointing that Steve Walker hasn't

seen fit to follow his stated inclinations on the issue of preferences," Ms Parke said, "but I am confident that the voters in Fremantle will recognise that Labor is the only party capable of forming a government that will get serious about climate change."

She added she hoped to be part of a Rudd Labor government that ratified Kyoto and set a mandatory renewable energy target of 20 per cent. Former federal Labor MP Carmen Lawrence said the two parties had always had a good working relationship, especially in WA where Dr Lawrence had supported The Greens' stance on refugees and rock art in the Burrup.

"Most people we know who vote Green will give their preferences to Labor, however symbolically [the Greens' decision] is disappointing because it suggests [the relationship] isn't likely to continue," Dr Lawrence said.

Mr Walker shrugged off suggestions the decision was made by a small group of Greens members saying the meeting where the preferencing decision was made was open to all members and had been well advertised. Three hours of debate had resulted in a unanimous vote in favour, he said.