

Cherrio Kim, hello Gary

By **YVONNE THOMPSON**

IT will not be until all votes are counted and the poll declared early next week that the man waiting to sit in retiring Kim Beazley's seat of Brand will be able to call himself the MHR for Brand.

But, Gary Gray is already making moves to represent the area he worked hard to comfortably retain for Labor in a well-run race against Liberal Party candidate Phil Edman and the less high profile candidates.

Mr Gray thanked his campaign team, supporters and volunteers and said the local campaign had been a great experience. He also acknowledged opponent Mr Edman and his campaign team and volunteers for wishing him well in the future.

Mr Gray's first day preparing for his new role as a Member of the House of Representatives included meetings with the mayors of Kwinana, Rockingham and Mandurah.

He emphasised that he was keen to be the Member for Brand, whatever else the pundits were saying about his possible elevation to Kevin Rudd's new front bench, which he said was just speculation and no more.

He said he was just happy to "learn the ropes" as a backbencher despite his former experience as ALP national secretary and his position as a Woodside executive.

Mr Gray travelled to Canberra this week for new Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's first meeting with his new team.

"We should find out what's happening on Thursday," he said on Monday.

Mr Gray said he was aware of the need for more infrastructure across Brand — in particular roads and schools. Infrastructure had not kept pace with many other areas of development. "More needs to be done quicker," he said.

Mr Gray stood by his previous comments about not wanting to establish an Australian Technical College in the region saying he felt the needs for education and training were best met by existing infrastructure of Challenger TAFE and schools.

"There is no need to duplicate what we already have," he said.

"Trade training is best delivered by TAFE, but I am prepared for discussion and debate at all times."

Mr Gray said that at no time did he take any outcome for granted during the election campaign.

But he liked people and he enjoyed getting out and meeting them.

"My electoral office will open soon in Rockingham, and my work to best serve all the people as the Federal Member for Brand will begin in earnest."



Gary Gray, new ALP member for Brand. Picture: Neil Mulligan d266115