

Gary Gray Rudd's pick to replace Beazley

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Kevin Rudd yesterday anointed former high-profile ALP national secretary Gary Gray as Kim Beazley's successor in the seat of Brand.

Mr Beazley, who was replaced as Opposition leader by Mr Rudd in December, confirmed this week that he would not recontest his seat in this year's Federal election.

Though speculation had mounted since before Christmas that Mr Gray was being courted for Brand, ALP State president and former Federal MP Sharryn Jackson recently emerged as another possible contender for preselection.

However, Ms Jackson confirmed yesterday that she would seek preselection for Hasluck, which she held from 2001-04.

Yesterday, Mr Rudd made it clear that he wanted Mr Gray for Brand.

"I want Gary Gray in the Federal Parliament and I want him to be part of the next Federal Labor government," Mr Rudd said.

"The reason I want him there is because he is a first-class candidate with first-class business credentials and strong links to the mining sector.

"He is also an excellent representative of his home State, Western Australia, and for all those reasons I have spoken to the national and State secretaries of the Labor Party and expressed my view that I want him to replace Kim Beazley in Brand — and I expect that to happen."

Mr Gray, who quit as national secretary eight years ago, is the director of corporate affairs for Woodside Petroleum and has confirmed he is considering seeking preselection for the ALP in WA.

He is credited with devising the strategy that helped Paul Keating win his "sweetest victory of all" election in 1993, but later fell out with the Labor prime minister and dubbed him "Captain Wacky".