

Greens deal blow to Labor's Brand bid

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The election hopes of Labor's star candidate for Kim Beazley's old seat of Brand, former ALP national secretary Gary Gray, have taken a blow after the Greens decided against preferencing him in retaliation for his support of mining and exporting uranium.

Instead, the Greens have recommended supporters preference who they think are the "lesser of two evils".

Greens candidate in Brand, Dawn Jecks, said Mr Gray, who quit his job as a senior executive with Woodside Energy to contest the seat for the ALP, was "notably supportive" of the uranium industry.

"This is especially worrying since Mr Gray will be heading up Labor's resources group if elected, as foreshadowed by Julia Gillard in the local paper earlier this year,"

Ms Jecks said. "Voters cannot give any support to the Howard Government," she said, citing the Tampa incident, the Iraq war and WorkChoices. "And yet our members have difficulty supporting the ALP, which has a 'me too' attitude regarding too many of these same issues."

The ALP holds Brand by a margin of 4.7 per cent. This makes it technically a marginal seat, although it is understood that the ALP has not treated Brand as a marginal seat during preference negotiations with the Greens.

Mr Gray was not troubled by the development, saying that parties could only ever suggest preferences anyway to voters.

"Throughout my career as national secretary of the Labor Party and before it while working in the Northern Territory and getting very familiar with the uranium industry, I have always supported

uranium mining," he said. "Provided it is done with the proper environmental controls and approvals and consistent with Australia's international obligations under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, I have no problem with it."

Other than Brand, the Greens have decided to preference Labor ahead of the Liberals in every marginal seat except in Tasmania, where they are not directing preferences because both major parties support the Tamar pulp mill.

The preference decision in Brand comes as a preliminary analysis of Senate preference deals by WA Democrat Senator Andrew Murray shows the ALP has not done as well as the Liberal Party in gaining support from the minor and "micro" parties in WA.

His analysis also indicates the sixth Senate spot on offer in WA would probably go to the Democrats or the Greens.



Uranium fallout: Labor candidate Gary Gray says he is not worried by the Greens decision not to preference him