

to cost Crutchfield

Labor to miss preferences

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THE Australian Greens' decision not to direct preferences in South Barwon may cost Labor the seat, a leading political analyst said yesterday.

Labor candidate and Geelong councillor Michael Crutchfield needs a swing of about five per cent to oust Liberal MP Alister Paterson on November 30.

However his chances have been dealt a severe blow by the Greens' decision to single him out as the only Labor MP in the Geelong region not to receive its preferences, Monash University's politics expert Dr Nick Economou said.

Dr Economou said Greens preferences would be "critically important" in the seat, which he predicted may return the closest result in the region on November 30.

Greens' members decided on a non-preferential ticket in South Barwon, but gave their preferences to Labor candidate Lisa Neville in Bellarine and

Labor MP Ian Trezise in Geelong.

"What we intended to happen was not to give Labor an absolute green light (because) they have got an appalling environmental record," South Barwon Greens candidate Iain Lygo said.

"So one of the seats was going to miss out and unfortunately for Mr Crutchfield it was his."

He was unable to say why the party singled out Mr Crutchfield from other local Labor candidates to feel its wrath.

"You would have to ask each individual member," he said.

However Mr Lygo expected South Barwon Greens' voters would direct their preferences to Labor, an assessment at odds with Dr Economou.

The academic said the distribution of Greens preferences could be as tight as 55 per cent to Labor, 45 per cent Liberal.

In seats where Greens directed preferences to Labor, he expected the flow to Labor to be as high as 70 per cent, he said.



HOT TOPIC: Michael Crutchfield, Alister Paterson and Iain Lygo debate the Greens preferences at The Pulse yesterday

Photo: PHILLIP STUBBS.

"Their decision (in South Barwon) helps Alister Paterson greatly," Dr Economou said.

"It is a bad outcome for Crutchfield."

Dr Economou said he expected the Greens to poll about 6 per cent of the vote in South Barwon, despite his belief people were starting to tire of the party.

"The opinion polls are suggesting the Greens have

overplayed their hand," he said.

"They are starting to sound like everybody else, never satisfied with policy concessions and playing games with preferences."

Mr Crutchfield yesterday dismissed the Greens' standing as an environmental party, and said Labor was the only party in South Barwon which supported national parks.