

# Where wild may trump

IF there is a wild card in the Nunawading Province re-election, Roger Smith would like to think it is the Australian Conservation Foundation.

Mr Smith, 34, bearded, blue-eyed and intense behind rimless spectacles and a full-time forestry and land management project officer for the ACF, thinks the 3000 primary votes the group hopes to deliver to the Democrats could decide the election.

The Democrats are getting the ACF's first preferences, Labor its second.

"ACF preferences could be crucial in what was, after all, a tied election the first time around," Mr Smith said.

"This time, it could be a coup. The Democrat vote could seal the election."



By TOM PRIOR

Surely not for the Democrats, who are given little chance of getting close to to the major parties in primary votes?

If not, was the ACF a Labor Trojan horse, rather than a chance influence, a so-called wild card in the crucial Upper House re-election?

"We are determined to make conservation principles count, although it is extremely unlikely the Democrats will win outright," Mr Smith said.

"If Labor does not control the Upper House, there may not be an Alpine Country Na-

tional Park. That is what is important to us. We are very happy to see conservation groups developing political clout.

"The Democrats have strong conservationist policies, so we support them.

"This means something in Nunawading.

"We have 3000 known members of conservation groups here in the leafy eastern suburbs — the Society for Growing Australian Plants and similar concerned bodies."

Mr Smith emphasised, however, that Nunawading conservationists were not Greenies.

"We don't want that image at all," he said. "We adamantly opposed the Errinundra Plateau demonstration.

"We don't need, or want, long-haired hippies standing in

front of bulldozers. We seek and deserve a clean image. We are making a stand on local issues, creeks and streams, our strong opposition to free-ways.

"We act locally and we think locally. There are binding ties between us and the people here."

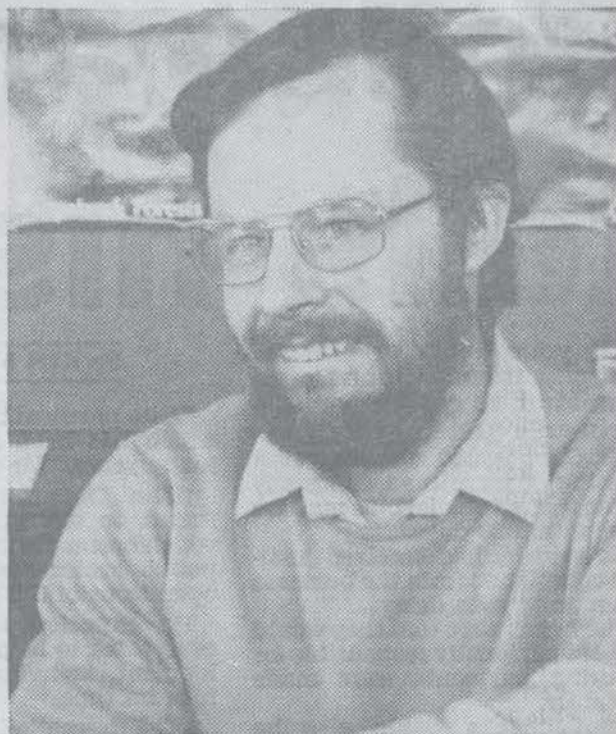
Mr Michael Nardella, the Democrat candidate for Nunawading, was happy to agree.

"Democrats are independent," Mr Nardella said.

"Personally, I am a strong conservationist. I was born in the country and have a small holding on a ridge above Heathmont."

Mr Nardella, director of a real estate company, said that to him "freeway" was a dirty word.

"I would prefer 'compatible road systems,'" he said.



● Roger Smith . . . directing first preferences to the Democrats in the Nunawading poll.