

State facing early poll

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EXCLUSIVE

MATTHEW DENHOLM
TASMANIA CORRESPONDENT

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bring down the Labor government when parliament is recalled.

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Greens MP Kim Booth said last night a plan by the Giddings government to recall parliament to

pass special legislation protecting the Tamar Valley pulp mill from a legal challenge amounted to "corruption and malfeasance".

He felt he had "no choice" but to move to bring down the government to prevent the legislation being debated and expected the Liberal Party — which has long demanded an immediate election — to support him. Mr Booth said he would move the no-confidence motion, which would trigger an early election, regardless of what his Greens partyroom decided.

"I will move a no-confidence

motion as sure as day follows night because that's the pledge I gave to the people of Tasmania," he told *The Australian*.

The Liberal Party said its partyroom would consider whether or not to move or support a no-confidence motion if parliament were recalled.

As forecast by *The Australian* last week, Premier Lara Giddings is today expected to dump Labor's power-sharing alliance and sack the two Greens ministers, while naming a March election date.

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might also recall parliament before the election to pass "doubts removal" legislation to kill any court challenge to the permit to build and operate the pulp mill.

She said the move might be necessary to maximise the chances of finding a buyer for the permit, for sale by KordaMentha, receivers of failed timber company and project proponent Gunns.

A no-confidence motion by Mr Booth, if backed by the Liberals, would trigger an immediate election and create a level of bitterness

between Labor and the Greens not seen since the parties' last accord ended in acrimony in 1992.

Mr Booth said he had promised his constituents he would move against Labor if it were guilty of serious misconduct.

Greens leader Nick McKim said his five MPs would meet to determine a stance on a no-confidence motion if parliament were recalled, but Mr Booth said he would move one regardless of the decision of his colleagues.

Labor and the Liberals each have 10 seats and the Greens five

in the 25-seat House of Assembly. It is unlikely that the other four Greens MPs would side with Labor in any no-confidence motion moved by Mr Booth.

The situation is less clear-cut for the Liberals, who support the pulp mill doubt-removal legislation, but have long demanded an immediate election, arguing the government is "dysfunctional".

A government spokesman said the legislation had been suggested by KordaMentha — not the ALP — last August and put in a formal written request to government in

September. "We said we would be prepared to look at it if there was demonstrated interest in the project, which there now is," he said.

Despite governing in a shared cabinet with the Greens for almost four years, Labor has decided to dump the alliance and distance itself as much as possible from the minor party ahead of the election.

The strategy aims to bolster Labor's traditional support base to minimise its losses at the election, which the latest opinion polls suggest could see it reduced to as few as five seats.