

# Natt to plead case for CA pastoralists

*Today's Advocate*



Chris Natt

By NICK CALACOURAS

**DROUGHT** assistance for Central Australian properties is the goal of a lobby group, headed by the NT Government, going to Canberra next week.

Minister for Primary Industry Chris Natt said the Territory Government had declared 12 Central Australian properties as being in "severe drought", but they had not yet received "exceptional circumstance" status by the Federal Government.

This status gives property owners access to certain concessions and an interest rate subsidy valued at \$500,000 over five years.

## Delegation

Mr Natt said he would travel to Canberra next Tuesday with an industry delegation to discuss the application with Federal Minister for Agriculture Peter McGauran.

Mr Natt said: "The case I will put to Mr McGauran is that the current system of assessing whether a pastoral property is eligible for financial assistance needs to be changed to take into account the vast size of Territory pastoral properties.

NT Cattlemen's Association executive director Stuart Kenny is a member of

the industry delegation travelling to Canberra.

He said: "Part of the criteria is to show that the area has a severe downturn in farm income over a prolonged period.

"In a place like NSW, an area the size of an NT property would have 3000 people living, so it's easy to show a shared trend."

Mr Kenny said he was hopeful that the Federal Government would be receptive to their "very strong case."

He said: "There used to be very strict criteria for exceptional circumstance to be granted.

"That was relaxed about a month ago when the PM recognised that there were lots of other people who needed help."

Mr Kenny said the timing is right for the application which will give Central Australians access to exceptional circumstance status for the first time.

Federal Minister for Agriculture Peter McGauran said he received a letter from Mr Natt outlining the difficulties in qualifying for exceptional circumstance drought assistance.

He said: "I am currently considering these matters and will be having discussions with Mr Natt."



The Bushlight team at the Centre for Appropriate Technology Grant Behrendorff, Paul Coull, Tig Armstrong, Marcus McKay and Emma Chessell with the solar panel design and the trophy for the national Engineers Excellence Award for 2006. Picture: CHLOE ERLICH

# Excellence win