



NORTHERN TERRITORY CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION INC.

Member - National Farmers' Federation & Cattle Council of Australia

MEDIA RELEASE

www.ntca.org.au

24 October 2008

VOTERS LEFT IN THE DARK

Voters in the Territory's new shire elections have been left in the dark over who they are voting for, with the result that some are voting informal, according to the NT Cattlemen's Association.

"People in the city are used to getting flyers about the candidates then showing up to a polling booth where they can talk to them," Executive Director of the NT Cattlemen's Association Luke Bowen said.

"In the bush, polling is by mobile booth or postal vote and, unlike Parliamentary elections, most of the candidates are as good as invisible," he said.

"A fundamental element of democracy is that all rate payers should get equal representation. To decide who can best represent your interests, you have to have information on the candidates and their policies," he said.

"Our members are telling us that all they received were ballot papers with a series of names and no information on the candidates or how to contact them. So people are expected to vote for candidates they have never heard of with no idea of their credentials, abilities, histories or policies, and no idea of what they want to achieve as shire councillors," he said.

"When people contact shires for clarification, they are being told information cannot be given out on the candidates.

"For example, in Rodinga Ward of the Macdonnell Shire, there are 10 candidates standing for four positions. Five are listed by name only. Only two have published home numbers and our members report these two candidates have not been returning phone calls. In some cases postal voting slips carry only a silhouette of the candidate, so visual recognition is no help either.

"The Shire cannot give out information on the candidates and the Electoral Commission will not release information without the consent of candidates," Luke said.

"This is not a good start to the brave new world of local government reform. We would have thought such a major Government experiment would have been better planned," Luke said. "It does little to restore our confidence in the handling of these reforms."

Media inquiries:

Luke Bowen, Executive Director, NT Cattlemen's Association, 08 8981 5976

Jane Munday, Michels Warren Munday on 0427 880 083