

Is this the man to fill Everingham's shoes?

"Some people think I have some resemblance to Paul Everingham but that's where the similarity ends," Shane Stone said adamantly.

By MICHELLE FOSTER

The CLP's acting chairman has an aura of enthusiasm and driving ambition about him as he talks confidently about the future of the CLP.

But the Alice Springs lawyer quickly dispelled any idea that he was like Mr Everingham.

"I'm Shane Stone — I have my own credentials. The only similarity is we're both members of the same profession."

Despite a week of political turmoil Mr Stone has come out on top of the heap.

He will head the party until elections are held for all vacant party positions at next month's CLP central council meeting.

He has taken over as chairman at a critical stage when settling down and stabilisation of the party is badly needed.

"It's been difficult — we've had warring individuals but there were never factions. It was individual personality clashes, and it had to stop."

"The Nationals coming onto the scene compounded the difficulties, but the Nationals are so insignificant they don't pose a real threat to the CLP."

And he is confident the settling down period will be brief.

"On Tuesday I made a conscious effort to contact every branch president," he said.

"I'm not a divisive figure. I came in with the support of all divergent individuals."

Mr Stone believed the problems within the party began earlier this year.

"There were minor eruptions and at times the press did exaggerate," he said.



● Shane Stone — confident about the CLP's future — and his own?

"But the party had its moments. It was fairly dramatic stuff with Tuxworth under attack, resignations, too many party personalities jumping into the arena.

"That is not my style. I'm not trying to compete with the Chief Minister. His job is matters of government and matters of policy.

"My job is to organise and structure the party."

As far as Barkly Member Ian Tuxworth is concerned, Mr Stone credited him with having done many good things for the Territory.

"Nobody is trying to take away what he has done and the party understood there would be people who would remain loyal to Mr Tuxworth," he said.

"But there is also a solid block of people who support the CLP because they believe the party is bigger than the individual."

Mr Stone said he could understand why so many of Tennant Creek's CLP supporters were standing by Mr Tuxworth.

Fortnightly, Mr Stone goes to the small town to visit his law practice.

He knows the town is a unique and enterprising community.

It is natural that many people would remain loyal to Mr Tuxworth — but four people stood their ground supporting the CLP.

"We'll call the branch together and they will have to fill the vacancies that have occurred. It will be business as usual.

"The Nationals are not Nationals. They adopted a name that is not their name to adopt — they have no affiliation with the Queensland National Party.

Having grown up amidst a political family background in Albury/Wodonga it is not surprising that Mr Stone joined the CLP when arriving in the Territory.

As he says: "It was the obvious choice."

His schoolteacher father Les Stone had been a staunch supporter of the Country Party and became the city's Lord Mayor in 1974. His mother became Lord Mayor last year.

Mr Stone left school after completing matriculation in 1969 and joined the army for a short time.

He then became a primary school teacher but even then rose quickly through the ranks. In five years he became a school principal and then a registrar of a College of Advanced Education.

But at the age of 26 he decided to pursue something he had always been interested in — the law.

Attending the Australian National and Melbourne universities, he graduated in 1980 from law school and became an associate to Sir Edward Woodward.

He got his first taste of the NT when he came with Justice Woodward in late 1981 for the Royal Commission on the meat industry.

For two months last year Mr Stone worked for Katherine Aboriginal Legal Aid.

Mr Stone and wife Josephine left Melbourne when a Darwin-based firm expressed interest in someone running an Alice Springs practice.

In court, he is pug-nacious but stylish, and evidently convincing.

A wistful look steals over his face as he explains the reason he left Melbourne — while happy as a barrister he did not like the hustle and bustle of a big city.

Mr Stone said he wanted to dispel the idea that he had only recently come to the Territory. He had been coming and going for two years before settling here in January.

He will not give away his political plans — whether, like Mr Everingham, he sets his sights on the top.

But, if he takes on politics as he has done most things, he is unlikely to be content with the backbench.

WE ONLY SERVE PRIME GRAIN FED BEEF

Dinner served from 6.00-9.00pm. Fully licensed. We cater for weddings and functions. Large groups welcome. Special Sunday Roast.

FOR BOOKINGS PHONE 52 2233

DOGE SPRINGS