

## Preferences in NT election

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**Reporter: John Taylor**

MARK COLVIN: In the Northern Territory election campaign, five One Nation candidates are running for the first time and the ruling Country Liberal Party has decided to put One Nation ahead of Labor. But has it run the risk in doing so of alienating the ethnic communities it's traditionally been able to woo?

John Taylor reports from the campaign trail in Darwin.

JOHN TAYLOR: The Country Liberal Party is the best Party in the nation at winning consecutive elections. For 26 years it's kept an iron grip on power in the Northern Territory. Labor has rarely come close to loosening a pinkie finger. Not since 1980 has Labor taken a seat from a sitting CLP member.

This election the CLP is giving its preferences to five One Nation candidates ahead of Labor. For Chief Minister Denis Burke, it's political common sense if his Party wants to win.

DENIS BURKE: What we don't intend to do in the Northern Territory is to allow the Labor Party to use One Nation to flop over the line and either win Government or win a minority Government. We're not that stupid.

JOHN TAYLOR: Mr Burke believes the recent Queensland and West Australian elections demonstrate not preferencing One Nation only helps Labor into office.

DENIS BURKE: The Labor Party have done that in Queensland. They've effectively done it in Western Australia and we don't intend to allow them to do it here. The One Nation vote in the Northern Territory will not get one One Nation person into Parliament, but we don't intend to use -- to allow Labor Party to use One Nation to get themselves in.

JOHN TAYLOR: For Labor, it's a political fault line to target. Not so much in the seats, the One Nation candidates are standing, but in Darwin. The five One Nation candidates are all contesting either rural or remote seats, barring Katherine which is described as urban. The seats all have smaller ethnic populations than those around Darwin.

Darwin itself is a cosmopolitan city. Regular food markets around the city demonstrate the diversity of the people who call it home. Labor hopes voters discontent about the preference decision will affect voters in marginal Darwin seats. Labor leader Clare Martin made special mention of the preference decision at her campaign launch in Darwin last night.

CLARE MARTIN: With the CLP delivering votes to Pauline Hansen's One Nation in five seats, the only way to vote against One Nation influence is to vote Labor.

JOHN TAYLOR: The 1998 Queensland election saw the coalition put One Nation ahead of Labor. It cost them dearly. The Coalition lost seats and crucial support amongst seats with high ethnic populations.

Chief Minister Denis Burke though, doesn't believe preferencing One Nation will cost votes

in the Northern Territory.

DENIS BURKE: Well the mere fact that we are such a cosmopolitan community. The mere fact that we strongly support the ethnic communities in the Northern Territory. They understand what's going on.

They can see through this sort of stuff and the reality is that One Nation is not an issue in the Northern territory but we don't intend for the Labor Party to use it to help them into Government.

MARK COLVIN: Northern Territory Chief Minister Denis Burke, with John Taylor.