Gerry Wood, the Independent Member for Nelson, says answers given by the CEO of the Department of Lands and Planning to questions (NT News 19th) Gerry had asked about the Rosebury School tender either were obscure, diversionary or related to questions not even asked.

The CEO says in his response to Gerry’s concerns about the contract that all companies received a copy of an ‘aerial impression’. Gerry didn’t mention an aerial impression; he mentioned a 3-D plan that was only available to one contractor even though at least one other contractor asked for it. That contractor was refused.

The CEO says that ‘at no stage was any minister involved’. Strangely, Gerry didn’t accuse any minister of involvement so why mention it. Gerry says that opens up the question, did the winning tender need approval from the Cabinet so the extra money could be allocated to cover the $6m extra required?

The CEO said that the original budget price didn’t have GST. Gerry says it should have as is normal with tenders but that is just a red herring. The problem is that Halikos was $6m above the lowest tender and still won the tender.

The CEO says that Halikos group received the highest score on the ‘value for money’ principle. What is surprising about this is that all the other companies that tendered have strong track records in construction including building schools. That means that the Halikos tender would have to have produced $6m of weighting more than the lowest tender, Laing O’Rourke (who bought Barclay-Mowlem a Territory company that has built many schools in the Territory).

Gerry calls on the Government to release the tender assessment criteria, the weighting given for each criteria category and the score given for each tender.

The CEO says, in response to Gerry’s question as to why it took only 3 days to make a decision that the shortened assessment time frame was to enable work to get under way this dry season. What he fails to say is how could each member of the assessment panel read the entire contents of thousands of pages of the tender documents of each of the 5 companies in 3 days –something that would normally, for a big contract, take weeks even months. And why the rush considering the job would take over a year and the school would be built in stages?
The facts are that the Halikos’ tender was $6m more than the lowest tender price and it does not make any sense to pretend that that is value for money especially when you see the quality of companies that tendered for the job.

Rural residents in Gerry’s electorate are entitled to ask why the lowest tenderer was not picked especially when the $6m could not have been used to upgrade Howard Springs School (the oldest school in the rural area) which last week had to close one classroom because of asbestos and a rotting floor.

Gerry says he will continue to ask questions about this tender until proper answers are received?