Today’s announcement that an interstate company, Fast Ferries, has won the Mandorah ferry contract ahead of a local operator raises serious questions about process.

Shadow Attorney General and Member for Port Darwin, John Elferink, said in December last year the Member for Daly, Rob Knight, surveyed local residents about future options for the ferry service, of which only 79 of a possible 380 people responded.

"In February Transport Minister, Gerry McCarthy, wrote to Cox Peninsular residents announcing plans to establish a Mandorah Ferry Community Reference Group," Mr Elferink said.

"When the group was formed Gerry McCarthy appointed his colleague Rob Knight chairman.

"Part of the committee’s role was to ‘consult with ferry users, business operators and local Mandorah and Belyuen communities’ as well as to review ‘recently gathered survey data’.

"This process raises serious questions which should be addressed by Rob Knight, who has just been appointed Attorney General.

"One of the issues is that the current ferry operator has not been spoken to by Rob Knight or the committee, contrary to the terms of reference of the group. This has denied the current local operator any form of procedural fairness.

"I have spoken to a resident at Mandorah who expressed his concern that the Minister had an agenda to drop the axe on the current operator.

"Even if that is untrue the appointment of Rob Knight rather than the election of an independent local resident as committee chair was always going to raise eyebrows when the tender was let.

"In the absence of an election the appointment of Rob Knight was unjustifiable and he should not have accepted the appointment. The absence of procedural fairness by Rob Knight adds to public concern about what has occurred."

Further comment: John Elferink 0418 406 400