CRIME & MISCONDUCT COMMISSION
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VER wondered what a city council by-election is really like?

Not at the public meetings, where candidates wax lyrical about their hard working nature, their independence, and their ability to get the job done.

Not in your letterbox, where glossy brochures predict the wonderful things that will be achieved should the candidate be elected.

Not at the polling booths, where friends and public figures yell ringing endorsements and thrust how-to-vote cards at residents.

Ever wondered what really sees on behind the scenes?

Well folks, like most other election compaigns held on the Gold Coast, the fight for the council seat in Division 14 has got it all. Sledging, backstabbing, rumour-mongering, and scronning.

When it comes to this election battle, accusations have been flying about more wildly than at a regular council meeting. And it all started way too quickly.

Bofore most residents had even heard about the tragic death of popular councillor Sue Robbins, campaign plans were being hatched.

One candidate unbelievably started canvassing The Gald Coast Bulletin for publicity just hours after her death last November.

In another questionable display, a potential candidate ho didn't end up nominating rang up to claim a recent neardeath experience made him perfect for the job.

It only took a couple more days for the rumour mill to pump into overdrive.

And since the campaign really wound into gear, it's got much worse.

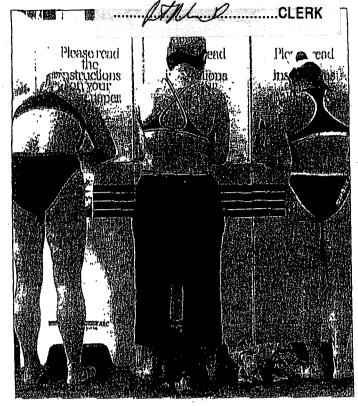
Bulletin reporters have received regular calls from candidates relentlessly pushing their own barrel. That's all part and parcel of any election.

But instead of focusing on the issues and solutions, some have focused on each other.

Malicious intent and masty rumous seem to rule the roost, rather than fact.

One aspirant rang up in a bid to reveal the candidates he claimed were part of the alleged council bloc, the candidates with dodgy business connections, and the candidates with political affiliations.

Surprise, surprise, he turned out to be the only true indepen-



Voters have been subjected to a barrage of accusations



dont with a clean state and impeccable reputation.

Dubious claims, especially considering that very same candidate failed to offer any decent policies, and hasn't ever since.

In the most mischievous performance of the election, an anonymous flyer entitled the Robbin's Roost was circulated around the division, disparaging all but a few candidates.

Returning officer Cec McPaul said it was the worst publication he had ever seen, which says something given the history of elections in this region. One hopes that residents would put it where it belongs in the bin.

Other candidates have brought fairly reasonable claims to the newspaper's attention, but unfortunately, without a shred of proof.

Two claimed they had been

offered thousands in election funding before Christmas, potentially from developers.

The accusations drew interest, until the pair refused point blank to say who they had been approached by. Cantlidates, put up or shut up.

Then again, with some of the policies that are out there, it's no wonder people feel they need to play the man (or woman), instead of the ball.

A few cycbrows were mised at a recent public forum when one candidate announced she would use the GST paid by Division 14 residents to fix roads in the aren.

Wonder what the Federal Government thinks about that?

Another candidate annonneed a plan to suspend development across the region for two years, a promise which is completely impractical, if not il-

legal. We couldn't quite a on the reporting of that issu

He spent 15 minutes arg (more like bellowing down phone), that the word 'mtorium' should be used, ins of 'suspension'.

"You're misquoting myou say suspension," he yel

Check out the Macque dictionary - it means the sithing.

No sooner had the pheall ended than the same caldate rang the boss to compabout dubieus journalistic tegrity, or something like the

The story hadn't even by published at the time.

This group of wanuabes s are quick to complain when chips don't full their way.

My chief-of-staff informs he has fielded several co of a similar nature, callinginy scalp.

One candidate scream down the phone line in an after he was labelled a fai candidate in an article.

The fact that he lost the last election may have caped his mind, but it has escaped mine.

Candidates have threaten legal action when stories abo their adversaries have appeare

They've even threaten to take articles to the precouncil.

All because of the audac shown by outlining the policiof candidates, their electional funding, their history in tarea, and, in some cases, the clouding of the truth.

Embellishments have ce tainly reared their ugly her during this campaign.

One candidate caused and ement when she insisted st was self-funded and total independent.

During a phone conve sation the next day, I was aske to hold the line.

"I've got the Bulletin on the phone and they want to know I'm self-funded, but I got \$50 from (inaudible)," she hissed to someone in the background trying in vain to cover the receiver with her hand.

She returned and I was as sured; "Yep, I'm self-funded."

She was promptly informed I'd heard every word she said and forced to admit she had received a donation.

We're just not hoodwinked THAT easily.

It's got some tough competition, but that one takes the cake.