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## Brown feels wrath of Brethren

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LUKE SAYER

November 22, 2007 12:00am

### **THE Exclusive Brethren religious sect has entered the federal election debate with a scathing attack on Greens senator Bob Brown.**

The normally secretive group has launched a statewide letterbox campaign endorsed by 51 members.

It says the church has been subjected to a sustained campaign of vilification by Senator Brown.

But the senator says the Brethren are reaping what they have sown.

"They were attacking the Greens for years before we stood our ground and exposed them," Senator Brown said.

"They are responsible for their own behaviour and when they enter the political arena they must be accountable.

"The question is, if they are not voting, what are they doing this for?"

"Maybe Mr Howard is so desperate he needs the 10,000 votes of the Brethren," he said

Senator Brown said he believed a huge amount of Brethren money was being poured into the Coalition's campaign.

"They can put in \$10,500 a person and nobody will ever know because this Government changed the laws," he said.

Brethren spokesman Tony McCorkell said Tasmanian members felt Senator Brown's comments had to be responded to.

"They are saying enough is enough," Mr McCorkell said.

"Senator Brown seems to be obsessed, and our members have got together to put this out.

"But I wouldn't call it a political advertisement against the Greens or Senator Brown.

"It's not a campaign activity really, as much as a written public response to Senator Brown."

The Brethren leaflet is also of concern to a businessman whose address was listed as part of the authorisation.

Ardern's Crash Supplies owner Brian Pope said the leaflet had nothing to do with his business at 15 Devon St, South Burnie.

"It's a mystery to me, and certainly has nothing to do with my business," Mr Pope said.

"I want them to do another mail-out to tell people my company has nothing to do with this."

Mr McCorkell said Brethren member David Urquhart owned property at 15 Devon St.

But Greens senator Christine Milne says the mail-out may have breached electoral laws.

Senator Milne said the law required the address where the person endorsing the material could usually be contacted.

It also required the name of the printer, with breaches attracting a fine of \$1000 a person or \$5000 for a group.

The Brethren, a "non-voting" group, ran ads in the 2006 Tasmanian election urging people to vote against the Greens.

It was alleged the Liberal Party played a role in the advertising, with confusion over invoicing to the party account.

Prime Minister John Howard and his senior ministers have denied any link with the sect.

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- [Exclusive Brethren](#)

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