

MINISTER FOR ENERGY — MINISTERIAL PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT

Motion

HON KATE DOUST (South Metropolitan — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [10.36 am] — without notice: I move —

That this council condemns the Minister for Energy; Training and Workforce Development; Indigenous Affairs for his inability to properly manage his portfolios.

It is not often that we would move such a motion condemning a minister. But it has been done out of frustration. I will focus essentially on the energy portfolio, and I am sure other members will focus on the other areas that are mentioned in the motion. What we have seen with this minister is a man who, once put into cabinet, has never really got over his frustration and loss at not becoming the Minister for Education. The minister sings and dances and tells us all how important this portfolio is. The energy portfolio is actually one of the most essential portfolios that a minister can have in this state. Energy and energy infrastructure is one of the key and most significant issues to our industry and our community in Western Australia. But unfortunately, this minister, because of his lack of real engagement with his portfolio, has not hooked into this; and although he might talk about it, he does not deliver on it.

We have seen over the last few years that a number of things that should have happened in the energy portfolio have not happened. We now know this week, as a result of freedom of information documents, that the minister certainly has tried to cover himself very well. I might say that although the minister might not be very familiar with the phrase “Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned”, when the minister misleads a journalist, God help him! That has been evidenced this week, and I look forward to the journalists continuing to provide some payback to the minister for misleading them on the issue of the solar feed-in tariff.

We have seen over the last few years a repeated failure by this minister to deliver energy infrastructure for this state. We have seen the minister fail to deliver on time and on budget the 330-kilovolt line from Perth to Geraldton. That project has just been dragged out and dragged out, with dollars changed and plans changed. We have seen the frustration from the iron ore industry and all of the other players, and from the Town of Geraldton and all the local towns along the way. Yet this minister has just kept fobbing it off and he has been waiting, waiting and waiting, and nothing has happened. We have seen the power cost blow out, and does the minister not do a fine song and dance whenever that issue comes up? He reverts to the blame game; it is always somebody else’s fault with this minister. He will not be held to account. He will not say, “I am the minister. I did not do my job.” It is always somebody else’s fault, and we have seen that again this week with the solar tariff blow-out. Again he has blamed someone else. Who does he blame for the cost blow-out? He always blames the former government. But he has been the minister for the last three and a half—nearly four years—and he has to be held to account for the very negative and dramatic impact that his decisions have had on Western Australian households. We have seen an outrageous increase in the number of people who have had to seek financial assistance just to pay their power bills. We have seen a significant change in lifestyle behaviour. People are so concerned about how they manage their lifestyle and whether they can afford to flick the switch that they have had to radically change what they use in their house and when they use it. Yet this minister says that sometimes that is the cost and that sometimes that has to be done, but he has not put in place the appropriate measures to support those families in need. Today we anticipate further increases in the budget that will drive the nail into the coffin of those families that are finding it tough. Every day we hear stories in the media about the impact of this hardship on families, about how that is dragging them down and how they are finding it harder and harder to pay their bills.

We have also seen this government oversee a 53.2 per cent increase in the price of gas since 2009. One of the other failures of this minister is that whenever there is bad news such as this, the Premier is wheeled out. This minister does not talk about gas price increases—it is the Premier. In fact, I think the Premier is the real Minister for Energy, because he takes the running; he makes the real decisions. It is a clear failure of this minister that he cannot make a decision; it is the Premier who has to do the work. We have seen the Premier take the lead again this week with the renewable feed-in tariff. In fact, the Premier has said that Hon Peter Collier is not really a natural fit as an energy minister. If that is a sign that the Premier has real concerns—he said that on radio yesterday—and if I were the minister, I would be thinking about what I was going to do. I know that if the Liberal Party is successful in gaining government in 2013, he will not be the energy minister. I think all his colleagues know that he will not be the energy minister. I will explain at the end of my speech why he will not be the energy minister, because I think some of his colleagues will be interested to know what will happen there.

We have had issues with the 330-kilovolt line, power increases, gas increases and the solar feed-in tariff bungle. The minister has always blamed it on us and said that it was our fault, but he never really got what Labor was

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going to do—what its commitment was. I note from the documents that the minister did not give me in my freedom of information request—he deliberately withheld them from my FOI requests—that it is very clear from the exchanges between his spin doctors that they were trying to find the ALP commitment but they could not. If they had bothered to lift the phone, we would have given it to them. Just so the minister is very clear on our election commitment—nothing said that he had to do it—our election commitment was that a gross residential photovoltaic feed-in tariff of 60c a kilowatt hour would be payable for systems of one to 10 kilowatts until the cost of installing the panels was paid back. That was a very clear election commitment. The minister cannot blame us for his decisions. It took him more than two years after the election before he introduced his feed-in tariff, and he backflipped and introduced a net feed-in tariff. It was the minister's decision. He was in the chair for two years, and he had two years of expert advice and analysis, before he made that decision. Every decision he made once he introduced it turned to—I do not know whether I can say this word—crap. Every decision he made after that just turned to dirt.

Hon Simon O'Brien: What an elegant phrase!

Hon KATE DOUST: I know, but it just popped into my head.

There is no-one else to blame but himself. He cannot blame Synergy or the former Office of Energy for conflicting information. I know through my own conversations and meetings with the Office of Energy and from evidence given during committee hearings that he was advised at every step of the way; he was kept up to date every step of the way. Although he may not have communicated information to the industry or to the community, we now know from these documents that he was advised every step of the way. He has failed to do his job and now he is trying to cover his backside.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Slippery Pete!

Hon KATE DOUST: I will not go that far.

I know it has been really difficult for the minister and that this is not the portfolio he wanted. But he is not in the classroom now charming boys to try to get them to do their work. He is oversighting a multimillion-dollar energy industry. He is responsible to the people of Western Australia. He has failed on every count. He has not done his job. Based on the report on Western Power by the Standing Committee on Public Administration, which is titled “Unassisted Failure”, I now doubt the veracity of some of his answers. Quite frankly, that report should have been called “Assisted Failure by Peter Collier”, because that is how it has been for the past three and a half years; he has assisted the failure of Western Power in this state. Documents have not been provided in FOI requests, so I will trawl through in detail some of the answers I have received because I am starting to wonder about the advice that the minister has provided to this house on a whole range of issues. Because the minister has no spine and no capacity to stand up to his boss, the Premier, who constantly throws out thought bubbles about energy—I do not think the Premier discusses these with the minister beforehand—he has been caught out. He has not stood up to the Premier. He has not done his job as a minister on behalf of the people of this state. He has allowed all these things to fall away, and we are now reaping the benefit of his poor work, if you like, and people are paying the costs.

I know that when the minister responds, he will do his song and dance and give a history lesson, because that is what he does. He does not answer questions. He does not provide a clear pathway of how he will resolve things. He says, “I fixed Western Power and napalmed the board.” It did not work and we know that because there are still issues there. The minister has not articulated what he is doing to change the culture. It is not just about cutting off the head of the CEO; what is the minister doing about changing the culture of Western Power entirely? He has had three years to address that. This is not an issue that he just woke up to find in the newspaper one morning; there have been years and years of problems.

I think that the power pole inquiry by the Standing Committee on Public Administration resulted in an excellent report and the detail that the committee went into is superb. It is a real disappointment that, although the committee tabled the report in January, the minister cannot even table his response. I know that his response is due this Sunday, but I do not understand why he has not tabled that response today. I look forward to seeing it on Tuesday. We want to go into that report in detail, because it will give us another opportunity to call the minister to task over his failure to do his job.

We also have the minister's oversight of Western Power's cost blow-out in the AA3 bid. I think it was \$8.6 billion. The Office of Energy has essentially disappeared and been absorbed into Treasury in the Public Utilities Office. If that is not a clear sign that the Premier and Treasurer have no confidence in the minister to manage the Office of Energy, I do not know what is.

Hon Peter Collier: It was my decision.

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Hon KATE DOUST: I do not think that is how it came out in the media. Why would the minister give that away? It is because he is not capable of managing it. That is why he gave it away.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I know that Hon Kate Doust is very capable of delivering her own speech, and she does not really need assistance from both sides of the chamber to make her points.

Hon KATE DOUST: Thank you, Mr President; it is very sweet of you to say that.

The key piece of this minister was the state energy initiative. For two years in succession at the state energy conference he announced that the government was going to do it. We are still waiting for it. The final document was meant to be made public mid-2011. Guess what? It is mid-2012 and nobody knows where it is, so it must be either on the Premier's desk or hidden away on the minister's desk with a pile of other reports that have not yet been finalised or tabled. We had to wait for the final report into the gas tariff review, the final report into the commercial feed-in tariff review—I guess we can forget that one now—and the tariff and concession framework report, and all we got out of that report was that the minister did not think that that would work so he shelved it. There was also the Treasury review into electricity tariffs and the Strategic Energy Initiative. The SEI has consumed so much of taxpayers' dollars and so much time and promise, yet we have got nothing. I do not know whether the minister is going to roll it out as an election commitment, but I tell you what—it is the most long-anticipated document that we will never see.

The other issue that has been hanging around for the last three and a half years, which the minister has not shown any spine on at all, is the proposal of the re-merger of Synergy and Verve. The Minister for Energy commissioned Mr Oates to do the inquiry. He announced in 2009 that the government would not be going down that path again. He has had a constant battle with the Premier who, every time he wants to distract us, throws it out that the government might be reconsidering the re-merger. We have not heard all that much from the minister. The Premier has been leading the charge to the point that in today's *The West Australian* the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia has finally come out with boots kicking and told the government that it is wrong. The Premier has said that he will ignore the advice of the Economic Regulation Authority, which has been consistent in its approach towards the negative impacts on the state of a re-merger. The Chamber of Minerals and Energy has been consistent. The CCI has been consistent, as have all the energy players. The utilities have been consistent; indeed, we have them on record in the estimates hearings. They have all been consistent about the negative impacts. But, no, the Premier has said that the government might do it. He will ignore all that good, sound economic advice and will go ahead and do it. Why? Because the best economic head in this state, the Premier—on his own word—has said that that is the best way forward. The Premier is reported as saying that the only person he took advice from was the member for Cottesloe. He is willing to ignore all the good and solid advice. I note that the Minister for Energy has changed his language. Last year he got up at the Independent Market Operator's birthday and said that somebody needs to "take a Bex and lie down" on the issue of Synergy and Verve. I remember him saying that because I was standing behind him. Everyone at that venue knew that he was referring to the Premier. He has changed his lines. He is now saying the government might look at it, might consider it and that it might be on the books. He has said that the government has not written it off. It changed the market rules and it changed the vesting. That is all good; nobody had an issue with Synergy and Verve. There is nothing wrong with tweaking the parameters. But now the Minister for Energy is slipping into his language the possibility that he is considering the re-merger of Synergy and Verve against all the good advice of everybody else in the state. I can think of only one person in this state who wants to see that happen, and that is the Premier. The Minister for Energy is going to roll over and allow that to happen because he does not have a spine and he is not engaged in his job totally. He is distracted and he is still locked into his own personal gain of becoming Minister for Education. I will tell members why he is distracted.

I picked up an opinion piece by Gary Adshead about a week or so ago. It was an interesting piece. Gary Adshead and Gareth Parker wrote it on 3 May. It was all about the preselection for Churchlands. I know that the journalists probably thought that it was quite salacious and exciting for a preselection, but I think they have missed some of the more salacious stuff in this story. I understand that Mr Richard Wilson, whom the minister spoke so highly of yesterday, was one of the contenders.

Hon Peter Collier: A top bloke.

Hon KATE DOUST: That is right. In the minister's own words, he is a top bloke. I understand that Ms Jane Timmermanis is also another candidate. A raft of other people are listed in the story. I know that the Premier is very keen to get Miss Lamont up as the candidate, because he wants to keep the Minister for Education, Hon Liz Constable, happy. Let us face it—she does not want to have a real dyed-in-the-wool Lib; she wants her own person in there. The Premier is trying to accommodate her. How has he done that? He persuades the current

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Minister for Energy to get his chief of staff to withdraw. Mr Richard Wilson withdrew and whilst Mr Collier may be supporting Ms Timmermanis, she will not get the gig either. From what I understand, the Minister for Energy is on a promise. The Premier has said that if he does this, he will become the Minister for Education. The Minister for Energy can stand up and deny that he will not get that portfolio. He has sold out his colleagues in his party on the altar of his own ambition. We all know that he will do whatever he needs to do.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! One at a time.

Hon KATE DOUST: Thank you, Mr President.

What I am trying to say is that this minister is so distracted —

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! I did not mean interjections one at a time. I meant the member on his or her feet making the speech.

Hon KATE DOUST: I will do that one at a time, Mr President.

The minister is so distracted by internal faction Liberal politics and so determined to look after himself that he is failing in his day job—he is failing to deliver for the people of Western Australia. I look forward to the minister denying that he has not done a deal with the Premier, that he will not become the Minister for Education and that he has not sacrificed Ms Timmermanis or Mr Wilson so that the Premier gets his pick-up. We all know that the Premier is not capable of pulling his own numbers and getting what he wants in his own party preselections—God forbid! That is one of the reasons the minister has been distracted. He is trying to look after himself by getting the portfolio that he really wants, the thing that he really enjoys doing. He certainly does not enjoy the energy portfolio, because he has not delivered. He keeps failing. When I talk to industry members they say that he sounds like he can talk about it, but he does not get it. He is neither engaged, nor interested. I talk to people who have worked in the industry and they have said that despite reading the minister's press releases, they know that what they say is not what is really happening and that it is not the truth. They say that the contents of his press releases are a different reality from the one they are working in.

Energy is a key portfolio. On each of those things the minister has either failed to deliver on time and on budget or he has caused extreme hardship for the people in this state—and he will continue to do so. He has not held the utilities to account, changed the culture or addressed the problems. He says that he has, but he has not. We see that every day when we see media reports about fines, customer complaints and critical reports from the ERA. The minister is not doing his job. He is failing on every account. He needs to focus on his job. He must forget about the internal party bickering and his own future. He should think about the future of the state. He is really missing a great opportunity. I know the Minister for Energy will get up now and sing a song and do a dance. That will mean nothing. He has to address all the problems that have been raised. He is not doing that efficiently—indeed, he is not doing it at all. He is failing. I really look forward to hearing him deny that he has done a deal with the Premier to get the education portfolio. It will be quite interesting to see Ms Timmermanis' response when she realises she has been shafted in preselection so that the Premier gets what he wants. Mr Wilson stepped aside so that the minister can get what he wants.

Hon Michael Mischin: What did you get for shafting your leader?

Hon KATE DOUST: I did not shaft him. I supported Mr Ripper on every count.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! I think we are straying from the subject matter, which is energy.

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Minister for Energy) [10.58 am]: Unfortunately, I have only 15 minutes so I will not be taking interjections. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition asked for a categorical declaration and commitment that there has been no deal. Of course there has been no deal. I cannot believe—I thought she was better than this—that the deputy opposition leader spent three or four minutes of her speech talking about there being a deal in the Churchlands preselection. There has been absolutely no deal whatsoever. The preselection in Churchlands is an open affair. We have very good candidates.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! I mentioned to the last speaker that we were straying into areas that have nothing to do with the motion. I am sure the minister will concentrate on the subject matter of the motion.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I certainly will; I am really looking forward to it.

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This motion is completely without foundation. It is a beat-up on the part of the opposition. I could spend an hour talking about what we have achieved in each portfolio. Unfortunately, I cannot do that. I really love the energy portfolio. I absolutely love the energy portfolio.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Do you mind?

I absolutely love the energy portfolio. It is a very vibrant and dynamic portfolio and we have made significant inroads.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Will you be quiet! The only positive thing about Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich is that she does not represent the North Metropolitan Region!

Hon Simon O'Brien: There is a deal going down!

Hon PETER COLLIER: Until next Monday, apparently.

I inherited an absolute balls-up with the energy portfolio. I remind members and the community that we ran out of electricity in 2004. The disaggregation process was flawed, particularly the displacement process in which we still have hundreds of megawatts of power in Kwinana and Cockburn doing nothing—state-owned assets—while we are paying hundreds of millions of dollars in capacity credits. Verve Energy was losing hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayer money. There was a backlog of 100 000 pole inspections. I said “pole maintenance” the other day, but I actually meant pole inspections, so I would like to clarify that. Contracts with the chief executive officers were completely flawed and included a 37 per cent bonus payment, which year in year out was going to create problems, not just for the government but also for the CEOs. There was a gas explosion at Varanus Island. There was no contingency plan whatsoever for the gas explosion. The only thing we had was the then Premier going on television telling everyone to turn their gas heaters and gas stoves off—that was the Labor government’s contingency plan! Industry was told to turn off their motors and plant. That was the Labor government’s contingency plan! There had been no tariff increase for that entire period, which was putting an enormous financial burden on the community. This government has done an enormous amount over the last three years to overcome most of those deficiencies.

I initiated the Gas Supply and Emergency Management Committee. Is that doing nothing? It is doing an enormous amount. We identified those issues. As a result of this government and of my decisions on gas supply, we have endorsed all of the recommendations from the Gas Supply and Emergency Management Committee. All of the gas industry was involved in formulating those recommendations and we have adhered to every one of those recommendations. Now, as a result of a contract with Verve Energy and APA Group, the Mondarra gas storage facility will deliver 120 terajoules of gas a day, which will provide a supply for 30 days in the event of another gas disruption. This government has implemented that contingency plan under my jurisdiction. This Parliament passed the Gas Services Information Act, which the opposition supported. This act provides for the gas bulletin board and statement of opportunities. The gas industry had been calling for that for years and years. Why did the opposition not do something about it? I did. We have done it; it is there.

We have developed an emergency management response plan. I can tell members that that has been used over the past two years to ensure that we have secure supplies of gas. As far as Verve Energy is concerned, the vesting contract between Verve and Synergy was fatally flawed. Under my jurisdiction, I changed that vesting contract. That has saved Western Australia about \$1.5 billion. The Premier said yesterday, on exactly the same program that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was talking about, that I do not get credit for this, and I do not. But I do not expect it. I do not expect accolades in this portfolio. People do not wake up in the morning and say that it is great their lights are on, but they do say something when they wake up in the morning and their lights are off, which happened under a Labor government. They are not going to wake up and say, “Isn’t it great the Minister for Energy changed the vesting contract and saved us \$1.6 billion.” Of course they are not, because they do not really know about it. We have put it out there but, as members opposite would know, it is not the sort of thing that will get front-page stories.

I refer to executive salaries. I froze the base salaries of those managing directors for two years. In addition to that, I was very stringent with the bonus component. Now, they all have different contracts and those contracts ensure that what they will get now is significantly lower than they would have got under the contracts that were signed by the previous government. There is greater financial oversight over major projects. Again, that is one of the criticisms that has been levelled at me. Now, as a result of changes that I made and introduced as minister, major projects must now have a major business case that is submitted for rigorous analysis by the Public Utilities

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Office, which I initiated, and the Treasury. I have done that. Now, ministerial approval must be gained for all overseas travel. That was not the case under a Labor government; it is under me.

Hon Kate Doust: Only because we raised it and embarrassed you last year!

Hon PETER COLLIER: No, I did it. Interstate travel of more than five people must now get approval from me. I did that.

As a government, we have done an enormous amount of work with renewable energy. There has been an 85 per cent increase in the south west interconnected system since we have been in power. We have the \$1.5 billion Collgar wind farm with 206 megawatts and 111 turbines. I put the first panel on the 10-megawatt solar farm in the midwest last week; \$12.5 million for the Carnegie Wave Energy Ltd project; \$5.4 million for the Green Rock Energy project; \$2 million for Aurora Biofuels. The list goes on and on of projects that I can talk about in the energy sector; unfortunately, I have only 15 minutes. I have got through one page of my notes on our achievements in energy and I will have to leave that, but I have no problem talking about that at any time. In energy, we have the runs on the board. As I said, I inherited a balls-up. We have overcome most of those deficiencies in the area. I would love to talk about Verve-Synergy, I just do not have time.

I will move on to training.

I should have mentioned the strategic energy initiative. For the first time since 1979 we will have vision in energy. It is fantastic!

Hon Kate Doust: Where is it? Is it on the Premier's desk?

Hon PETER COLLIER: It is very close. That is because we have engaged with industry.

Hon Kate Doust interjected

Hon PETER COLLIER: Do you mind!

Hon Kate Doust: That is what you said last year!

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Col Holt): Order, members! Minister, I suggest you keep directing your content to me and that will be the way to go.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I am sorry; I will.

I just love this portfolio and I really want to make sure that we get through to the community. With the SEI, the government has engaged with industry. The opposition criticised us for this.

I will move on to training, even though I could keep on about energy.

Hon Kate Doust interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Mr Deputy President, it is becoming very repetitive over there.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Keep directing your comments to me and I will listen very intently, and I am sure members on opposite sides will be listening as well.

Hon PETER COLLIER: We are on the crest of a wave with training. I can tell members that I never get any negative comments from anyone, even former members from the other side, about what we are doing in training. We have gone on to a different level with training. I acknowledge that the former government did make some significant inroads with training. The skills formation task force was initiated under Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich and was a very good initiative. One thing members opposite did, which was a fatal error, was to remerge training and education. I know that some members opposite did not approve of that and did not want it. I made a conscious decision to separate them—I did it!—so that we can give training the profile that it so richly deserves. We now have our own, brand spanking new department that is responsible for training and workforce development. We are cognisant that the labour force shortage in Western Australia is the single most significant issue that we face as a government and as a community. That new department is going gangbusters; it is engaging with industry and training providers throughout the community. I have released the Training WA, Skilling WA and WA Skilled Migration Strategy plans and the public-private partnerships document, and we are working hand in hand with industry to make sure we get the message to the community that a career pathway through training is a treasured possession. I have rebranded and given more autonomy to the state training providers than they have ever had before. The TAFE brand no longer exists in Western Australia. They now have their own autonomy and they are rebranded. We have West Coast Institute of Training, Polytechnic West, Challenger Institute of Technology, Central Institute of Technology, Durack Institute of Technology, and I could go on. I am about to announce our eleventh state training provider, which will go out into the regions. We are doing great things in ensuring that they can interact with the community as a whole.

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We also have ensured that we engage directly with industry. We have 10 industry training councils. It is not the gospel according to Pete; I listen to industry. They come back to me and say, “This is where we need a specific training set. This is where we need changes in particular training packages.” Those industry training councils are working extremely well. I meet with them all the time. I met with the high level strategic group last Friday, in fact. There is an abundance of enthusiasm and dynamism, within that group in particular. There are 14 workforce development centres throughout Western Australia. Again, we are interacting with industry to ensure that we can meet the labour force needs of Western Australia. There are eight of those centres working out in the regions. This is absolutely vital. There are six in the metropolitan area, including one for culturally and linguistically diverse members of the community, and one for ex-offenders. We are broadening the range. Training is not just for school-age members of the community, but for all members of the community. It is for those who are marginalised and for those with disabilities. It is for those who have never had training or been in the workforce before or for those, perhaps, who are disenchanted with their jobs or are mature-age members of community. We are providing that training.

Aboriginal people are my highest training priority. I have a deep personal regard for Aboriginal people and when I first took over the portfolio, I told the department that they were my top priority. I initiated the “Training together — working together” initiative, which has been phenomenally successful. We went right throughout the community to ask what it wanted. I travelled with the co-chairs of the “Training together — working together” committee, Keith Spence, who is also chair of the State Training Board, and Sue Gordon. We accessed the views, right throughout the community, of Aboriginal people, Aboriginal communities, industry, local government and the community at large. We asked what they wanted. We asked how we could help to reduce the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Of course, one of the best ways is to provide training because that provides a pathway into employment. As a result of that, we have great runs on the board.

I say to members opposite that they have an open invitation: I will personally take them to look at the Aboriginal Workforce Development Centre in Murray Street and then they can tell me that it is not working. It is doing magnificent things in providing linkages between training and employment. We are not just sitting in Murray Street; in addition to that we have centres in Broome, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie and Bunbury, all working intimately with Aboriginal communities to make sure that we can provide that linkage between training and employment opportunities. We are also accessing views about and have put in place a comprehensive mentoring program—a program that is working through the community. There is no point training Aboriginal people and telling them to go and get a job. We have to ensure that we provide mentoring support mechanisms to assist them with job applications, curriculum vitae and drivers’ licences, which is exactly what we are doing through the institution of a comprehensive mentoring system for Aboriginal people. In addition to that, the Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee is now operational. It is now dynamic. We are now seeing all levels of government working hand in hand collectively. We are making sure that each area of government is working together, and not in isolation.

We have also seen a great uptake in training in Western Australia. An extra \$58 million has been injected for another 21 000 training places. We now have more people in training than ever before in the history of the state. Over 140 000 people are in training. It has been phenomenally successful.

I refer now to the Department of Indigenous Affairs. Much in the Indigenous affairs space has been positive, and at last DIA is getting the profile it so richly deserves. When I first took over, I told the then CEO, Patrick Walker, that we had to give DIA the profile it so richly deserves. In the next few weeks, I will be releasing a mapping policy that will show exactly how we have done that—how we have brought it all together. I could talk on and on about what we are doing to provide a framework to ensure that we do not have these silo effects in Aboriginal affairs; that we do not have duplication of resources; and that we do not have the left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing. We are working towards ensuring that DIA is the principal policy-making body for Indigenous affairs throughout Western Australia, and at the same time provides valuable insight in the implementation of those policies.

As an example of our commitment, in last year’s budget we gave \$2.143 million over two years to the Aboriginal community patrols, which have been very well received; \$2 million to build the Indigenous student hostel at the Clontarf Waterford campus; \$13.1 million to the Kimberley and Pilbara expansion of the regional youth justice strategy; \$1.7 million to provide support for the Clontarf colleges to maximise school attendance—in addition to the other \$2 million; \$300 000 to support the transition of Western Australia’s Indigenous tourism operators committee to a self-sustaining model; and, \$3.3 million to the north west drug and alcohol support program. There is a whole pile of them. Suffice to say, this notion that my portfolio is in disarray is abject nonsense! We have hit the ground running. We do not reflect on the negative aspects that are continually perpetuated and we are succeeding in each and every one of those portfolio areas.

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HON ROBIN CHAPPLE (Mining and Pastoral) [11.13 am]: I rise to speak because this motion goes to two of the portfolio areas that I cover. Firstly, I will deal with energy. Energy in this state currently is truly a basket case; however, it must be said that it is a complex portfolio area, particularly when read in the context of our open-door policy on mining and resources development, that can often retain the legacy of previous governments. In many cases, such as that of the recent 8.3 per cent increase in the cost of retail gas, the reality is that consistent moves to privatise and encourage overseas investment in our energy market over time have had a dire impact on energy pricing. When the Liberal government moved to privatise gas supply in 1999, it opened the door for the producers to set the cost of supply to the retailer, which then had no choice but to pass on those costs to the consumer, or be forced to absorb them. However, it must be remembered that these outcomes are not necessarily the direct responsibility of this minister.

Over the past two decades, successive state Liberal and Labor governments have corporatised and privatised the energy sector. In 1995, the then Liberal government carved up the State Energy Commission of Western Australia into separate gas and electricity utilities—AlintaGas and Western Power. In 2001, one of the first major undertakings of the Gallop-led government was to again restructure electricity services and divide Western Power. Escalating price rises have been the inevitable result of this disaggregation of state-owned utilities, impacting directly on the most vulnerable sections of the population. Therefore, neither party is blameless in the drive towards our current dysfunctional energy system.

I quickly remind members of the debate on the Electricity Corporations Bill, the Electricity Industry Bill and the Electricity Legislation (Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Bill in 2003. It was the National Party, the Greens (WA) and the then One Nation Party that opposed disaggregation. Although the Liberal Party supported disaggregation—so the egg is on your faces!—it must be remembered that Hon George Cash argued long and hard against disaggregation, only to be rolled at a cabinet meeting that he referred to in *Hansard* on Tuesday, 9 December 2003.

Hon Norman Moore: We didn't have a cabinet in those days. Get your facts straight.

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: Does Hon Norman Moore want me to read it out in full?

Hon Norman Moore: You are talking about the cabinet that George Cash was in in 2003—there was no such thing.

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: I am sorry—the party room. I apologise. It is not the cabinet. Let us move on.

The government would now appear to be considering a re-merger, which I think is another ill-fated and costly move to rescue a failing state-owned energy corporation. Instead of investing in renewable energy technology or investing to ensure that the current energy distribution infrastructure can cope with a move towards clean energy, governments over the past nearly 20 years have been more concerned with artificially restricting energy costs. This has been to the direct detriment of the state's capacity to manage its infrastructure and has enabled the fossil fuel industries to dominate our energy landscape. This has now come back to haunt both the government and the opposition, with a legacy to the people of Western Australia of consistently rising energy costs across the board, which will only continue to increase to service the lack of future-proofing in our isolated energy market.

However, one comment I would like to make is that there needs to be balance in this debate. The situation that has likely led to this motion is the allegedly botched solar subsidy scheme. I want to say in the minister's defence that the call for condemnation of this process is falsely based. It is important to note that, although the state's household solar subsidy scheme could be argued to have been less than adequately administered, there is no doubting that the limited support that it has offered to the renewable energy industry was both necessary and highly utilised.

I will now quickly move to the other portfolio area that I cover, which is Indigenous affairs. In May 2011 the minister announced the appointment of an Aboriginal cultural heritage consultant, Dr John Avery. The press release stated —

Dr Avery will report to senior officials within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and DIA.

The consultancy's terms of reference included the promotion of —

... early decision making as a way to minimise conflicts over the protection of Aboriginal sites in the rapidly developing economy of WA.

According to the press release, the consultant will report to senior officials of Western Australian departments and be supported by department resources.

I have had the opportunity to meet with Dr John Avery on three occasions. The first was in July 2011, when it was identified that proponents who achieve native title heritage agreements do not need to apply for section 18

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approvals under the Aboriginal Heritage Act. Dr Avery said he would look at adopting some of the approaches of the Northern Territory legislation and reform the Aboriginal Cultural Material Committee process so that this assessment work would be directly undertaken by Department of Indigenous Affairs staff. At that meeting he also talked about a legislative arrangement.

I subsequently had a meeting with Dr John Avery at the National Trust of Australia (WA), during which he quite clearly indicated that there were going to be no legislative changes and that he thought the amendments to the legislation would not be supported by either industry or constituents, and he would therefore be recommending that there be no legislative changes. We had a meeting on 12 April at which the roles were reversed and we had already started talking about legislative amendments again. That has all gone through, and I have been very concerned about the lack of information I have had from any of those meetings about what was proposed.

On Tuesday, 1 May 2012 the minister announced that the state government had identified seven proposals to improve the operation of the Aboriginal Heritage Act, and that there would be a five-week public comment period. For the Indigenous community of Western Australia, a five-week public comment period is an appalling dereliction of understanding of how Indigenous people need to be consulted and/or worked with within this state.

Hon Peter Collier: There has been a lot of consultation up to this period.

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: I do not have a lot of time, similar to the minister.

I will refer to comments made by the representative bodies in Western Australia in letters to the minister, where they state things like —

There has been no formal process of consultation, until the recent release of a discussion paper detailing proposed priority reforms to the Aboriginal Heritage processes. The Discussion Paper ... sets out seven proposals for comment in written submissions within five weeks.

Although the proposals are not clear, we consider that the proposals further water down the already inadequate protection of Aboriginal heritage ... and do not recognise the well established Native Title processes ... It also appears that the proposed reforms have been heavily influenced by the mining sector in responding to their concerns about expediting heritage approvals processes, and do not reflect Traditional Owner concerns about heritage ...

So, if the minister does indeed represent Indigenous people in this state, I think he needs to start showing it by actually engaging in meaningful debate with them.

I have seen many reviews of the proposals, but I suppose the most striking point was the comments made by the Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia, in which it totally supports all the recommendations although none have been clearly articulated in the release of the Aboriginal Heritage Act review.

HON NORMAN MOORE (Mining and Pastoral — Leader of the House) [11.23 am]: I want to very strongly oppose this motion and very strongly support my colleague. I have no doubt that this week he has displayed the sort of courage and intestinal fortitude needed when there is a bit of pressure around. During questions without notice last Tuesday the Labor Party decided that its strategy would be to all ask a question without notice of the Minister for Energy and he would not be able to answer them. It may as well have been a dorothea dixie session, because he batted every question back, answered every question in great detail, and demonstrated very clearly to everybody listening that he was across his portfolio and he understood the issues, and made absolutely clear what was going on in the energy portfolio and how he was dealing with the issues that are very important to all of us. The most important issue as far as people are concerned in respect of the energy portfolio is the price of electricity.

The Minister for Energy has displayed, in my view, a very, very courageous approach to the problem he inherited. He could have just left it like it was, let the state go down the gurgler financially and not raised the price of energy. But as he has explained to the house on many occasions, he inherited an absolute mess, and the mess was brought about by the previous Labor government. The Labor Party has to accept the blame for this. It made the decision to disaggregate Western Power, and it told us—we were then in opposition—that by disaggregating Western Power we would get cheaper energy; that the price of electricity would go down. I think Hon Eric Ripper, the then Minister for Energy, said it would go down eight per cent.

Hon Peter Collier: It was 8.5 per cent.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: It would go down 8.5 per cent. We said, “Rubbish; it can’t do that. Having four statutory authorities instead of one is not going to bring down the price of energy”, and Mr Ripper said, “Of course it will; it will introduce more competition and that competition will drive prices down.” So we said, “Okay, if that’s the case, why don’t you give a commitment to keeping the price of energy at the same level for four years without increasing it?” Mr Ripper said, “Yes, fine, we’ll do that. I can guarantee that the price of

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energy is going to come down, so we can always give a commitment to keeping the price at the same level because it won't make any difference." But what happened? What we predicted would happen. The price went through the roof, and continued to go through the roof to the point that when we became the government the then Premier, Alan Carpenter, had a report that said, "You're going down the tube to the tune of billions of dollars. If you keep going along the same path you're going along now, you'll see the state in absolute and total dire straits." Then he decided, of course, on the 10 per cent per annum increase over the next period of time, which would have seen us going further into the mire by \$6 billion—I think that was the prediction—over five years. That was the debt that would be incurred by the state of Western Australia to pay the difference between the cost of producing energy and the revenue being returned. That was the situation that Hon Peter Collier found himself in when he became Minister for Energy, and he had to do something about it. Had it been up to Alan Carpenter, or Eric Ripper as Minister for Energy, we would now be in terrible financial circumstances. This minister, together with this government, took the courageous decision to raise electricity prices in a way that we would find politically very difficult to get away with or to sell. That is what has happened, but it had to happen and the minister should get credit for that, not be criticised by the Labor Party which created the problem. It is interesting that the minister who created the problem is no longer the Leader of the Labor Party, so perhaps it has also worked out that he did not know what he was talking about when he was Minister for Energy.

I listened to 6PR this morning; the energy issue is titillating the airwaves and people like Paul Murray think it is interesting to talk to people about it. He was talking to the chief executive officer of the energy producers association, who was being critical of Hon Colin Barnett in respect of disaggregation and reaggregation, but he spent a fair bit of time also telling Paul Murray how this particular government has made the hard decisions. He was highly complimentary of the government in respect of the way in which it has responded to the mess it inherited. He gave it credit for the fact that it had made some hard decisions in respect of the energy market in order to do something about the mess it inherited—a mess that would have sent the state broke. If members want some indication of the sort of dollars that would have been involved, \$6 billion is more than all the royalties received by this state each year. If the opposition is suggesting we should be using that sort of money out of the consolidated fund to subsidise the energy price, then it is living in cloud-cuckoo-land. So, here we have an industry spokesperson who is critical of the Premier in respect of reaggregation, but at the same time he is complimenting this minister and this government on making the hard decisions in respect of the price of energy.

When it comes to training, this minister, in my view, is the most enthusiastic Minister for Training and Workforce Development I know—with the exception of one who had the job in the 1990s!

Hon Robyn McSweeney: Who would that be?

Hon NORMAN MOORE: "Equal enthusiasm" is perhaps a better way to put it!

Hon Ken Travers: The one in the 1990s got sacked, didn't he?

Several members interjected.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: I did not lose the training portfolio, so Hon Ken Travers' recollection of history is very average. I lost the education portfolio.

Hon Ken Travers: I didn't say "you".

Hon NORMAN MOORE: In fact, I kept the training portfolio because training and education were split. In fact, Peter Dowding split the two and, for some reason, the Gallop government brought training and education together again. I am sure Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich would agree that the decision by this government to separate the two again was a very good decision because training now has the credibility and the standing in the community that it deserves. When it was mixed up with education, it got lost; nobody knew it was there. It was always the Department of Education and Training, with "training" on the end. Training is a very, very significant component of government in Western Australia because it delivers the training that people need for our industries. Hon Peter Collier has done an enormous amount of work dealing with another significant problem. He has dealt with the energy problem in a courageous way and he is dealing with the training problem in a courageous way too because we have a shortage of trained staff in Western Australia. By changing the direction of the Department of Training to focus on workforce development, he has put in place programs that are delivering what is needed for the resources sector. The resources sector desperately needs skilled tradespersons as we go through this period of sustained growth. I want to congratulate Hon Peter Collier on the work he has done as a minister. I am delighted to stand in this place and support him. He deserves support because he has a backbone.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich interjected.

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Hon NORMAN MOORE: It was suggested that he did not have a backbone. I think it is quite the opposite. When members are ministers and take hard decisions, they are required to have backbone. The problem with the Labor Party is that it spent four years refusing to take a hard decision on energy. Maybe that is one of the reasons Eric Ripper is no longer the leader. Maybe Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich can tell me why he is no longer the leader.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: You know everything.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: I do not know why he was sacked. Was it because he made a mess of energy?

Hon Ken Travers: Can you tell us? Why did you sack Troy Buswell?

Hon NORMAN MOORE: I know exactly why he lost the job; everyone in Western Australia does. But we do not know why Eric Ripper got shafted by members opposite. Why did members opposite shaft him? Was it because he could not manage energy; or was he just a bad leader of the opposition? Which one of those?

Hon Ken Travers: We did not shaft him.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: Of course you did. The lefties got together and got rid of him. He was the former minister who left us in a dreadful position with energy prices and became the Leader of the Opposition. At last the opposition woke up to the fact that he could not manage energy. He could not manage the opposition, so he was shafted.

HON LJILJANNA RAVLICH (East Metropolitan) [11.32 am]: I rise to support the motion. Even the Leader of the House does not believe what he has just said about the Minister for Energy; Training and Workforce Development; Indigenous Affairs. We have here a minister who is clearly not across his brief. I listened with some interest to the contribution made by Hon Kate Doust. Like everyone else, I read the newspaper. A minister cannot be across his brief when sitting on his hands results in a \$500 million bill over a 10-year period for Western Australian taxpayers. There are other issues whereby taxpayers will end up footing the bill for the incompetence of this minister. My words of advice to the minister are that he should perhaps consider staying home because it seems to me that every day he is on the job, it costs the Western Australian taxpayers about \$1 million a day. If the government wants to make real savings, perhaps he should just not come here; he should wake up in the morning and not come to work.

Hon Norman Moore: It is a serious case of the pot calling the kettle black.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I listened in silence whilst everyone else made their contribution —

Several members interjected.

Hon Norman Moore: You have never ever listened in silence.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I expect the same. We have here someone who is arrogant and incompetent and not prepared to listen at all. He is totally unaccountable.

Several members interjected.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: He will not accept responsibility for anything. I find it breathtaking that the Leader of the House said that the minister has dealt with the energy problem. Goodness gracious me!

Hon Norman Moore: He's dealing with the energy problem that you created. You should be embarrassed about what you did as a government.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Even the Leader of the House does not believe that. Let me talk about the area of training.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Col Holt): Order, members!

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: First and foremost, the minister claims that his great contribution to training is the separation of training from the Department of Education. We have never seen the full amount it has cost the government to take training out of a government department and establish it in the Optima Centre at above market value, as I understand it, at a phenomenal cost to Western Australian taxpayers.

Hon Peter Collier: Did you agree with it?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I want the minister to provide the costings; we have never seen them. Once again, it is an example of total waste. His next big contribution in this area was to change the signage of TAFE colleges. I have to say that it is another great waste. The only things he does not talk about are the training numbers.

Hon Peter Collier: They are great; the highest ever.

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Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: That is what he does not talk about, and when he talks about them, they are wrong.

Hon Peter Collier: No, they're not.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The other day the minister was making a contribution to the debate on apprentices and trainees. I am referring to *Hansard* dated 3 May 2012, when he spoke on apprenticeship numbers and said —

Let us have a look at apprenticeships. I do not know where the honourable member got her figures from. We are sitting at about 40 000 at the moment.

Hon Peter Collier: And trainees.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: That is not what he said; he said apprentices.

Hon Peter Collier: No; apprentices and trainees.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: He said apprentices. He misled Parliament.

Hon Peter Collier: No, I didn't mislead Parliament.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Yes, he did mislead it. This is exactly what he said. In fact he refers to 18 927. When we look at his record on training numbers, since 2008, based on National Centre for Vocational Education Research data, we can see that the number of apprentices and trainees in training has increased by only 1 900.

Hon Peter Collier: After the GFC; that is much higher than the national average.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I do not care. If we divide 1 900 by three, we can see the annual increment. I think that is an absolute disgrace. We also know that the number of commencements is down. In 2011 it was 9 589; that is 581 down on last year's figure of 10 170 and only a mere increase of 809 more than when Labor was in office in 2008 when the number of commencements was 8 780. But do members know what? The minister made a statement in this place yesterday about the great work he is doing in training for Aboriginal people. Earlier he spoke about the great achievements he has made in the training area. I looked at his training figures. His quick stats summary data from his own department's website clearly states that as at 31 December 2010, there were 613 Aboriginals or Torres Strait Islanders in apprenticeships. When we compare that with 31 December 2011, we see that there were 594, so it has gone backwards, and the minister cites that as an achievement. When we look at school-based apprenticeships, which also include Aboriginal school-based apprenticeships, we see that in December 2010 there were 168. Now there are 130 across the whole state, and that is supposed to be some sort of great achievement. When we look at Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander traineeships as at March 2010, we see that there were 1 223, and as at 31 December 2011 there were 1 261. I say to the minister that he ought to be hanging his head in shame. He says that we have had a global financial crisis. I say this to the minister: he did nothing during that global financial crisis to stop apprentices from losing their jobs; he did absolutely nothing. He sat on his hands and watched thousands and thousands of them have their apprenticeships cancelled and trainees turfed out the door; he did nothing because he did not care. He did not even bother to implement his own department's Priority Start policy, which would have seen hundreds and hundreds of Western Australian young, and not so young, people pick up training and job opportunities. The minister did nothing. He needs to explain to this house why he did nothing and why he presided over this situation.

The minister has also recently made the claim that he does not think that the resources sector contributes its fair share to training in this state. After three and a half years, the minister has still done nothing. He is an absolute embarrassment when it comes to training. He has no positive relations with the people whom he works with in his department. We know that the relationship between the minister and his director general is absolutely poisonous, and we know that in the minister's office he has a revolving door and no-one stays. This instability feeds in to the minister's own lack of knowledge and understanding of the training agenda. The minister has done an appalling job and people are sick of his spin. We want to see real opportunities for Western Australians and we want to see the minister deliver proper policy and proper opportunities and not continue the spin that he has been relying on since he got into this position.

HON MAX TRENORDEN (Agricultural) [11.43 am]: The motion calls on us to make a decision about the competency of the minister in three portfolios: energy; training and workforce development; and Indigenous affairs. I want to make it very clear that I am speaking for the National Party and I want to make it very clear that we will support the minister; we will not support the motion. I would love to speak on this issue for a long time, but I have made a few notes and I will flick through the issues that I wish to talk about on behalf of the National Party.

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If we go to the issue of power, which has been the subject of most of the noise for a week or so, or even a longer period, the Labor Party says that we should condemn the failed minister for the government's failed policy. But I have to say that it is the Labor Party's failed policy, not our failed policy. In particular—I do not want to be too harsh on my colleagues to my left—the National Party voted against it from day one. We fought it. I was Leader of the National Party in the other chamber at the time, and we fought very hard on that issue. It was as clear as a train coming down the tunnel. People say, “Where is the light at the end of the tunnel?” In this case, the light was a train coming down the tunnel. It was clear to those who wanted to look at that issue, but Labor wanted to pursue its disaggregation policy. I want to speak about that for a moment, because members opposite cannot duck it. The Labor Party cannot come into this chamber and duck it, having initiated the disaggregation process. It told us, as we had already been told a couple of times before, that this would take the pressure off cost increases; this would be of benefit to the taxpayers of Western Australia. It is 100 per cent clear that that has not happened, and it was never going to happen.

As the Leader of the National Party in the other place, I moved a motion that Western Power not pay a dividend. People opposite—members of the Labor Party—voted that motion down. We wanted the dividend of Western Power to remain in Western Power because of a very long list of failures by successive governments to put the infrastructure into Western Power. That was voted down. What happens now? Western Power actually borrows the money to pay the state a dividend. Do members understand that? Western Power borrows the money to pay the state a dividend. How ridiculous is that! We did not get the support of the Australian Labor Party at the time, and the much-needed infrastructure for Western Power just did not go ahead.

I will go to the question of costs now. Because of the honoured position I have on the Standing Committee on Public Administration, along with four other members of this house, I have had the capacity to go to the eastern states and other places to talk about power. One of the things we did on one such trip was visit the Australian Energy Regulator. The Australian Energy Regulator pointed out clearly that the cost pressures on its grid, which we are not a part of—it is the grid for the eastern part of Australia—were the cost of infrastructure and the cost of transmitting power. The main reason that the base underlying cost has risen, without going into the debate of freezing fees, is that the cost of delivery has gone through the roof, and will continue to go through the roof. For the Labor Party to not accept that at the time, and for the Labor Party to do absolutely nothing about that issue, was a crime. It is one of the great disasters of the previous Labor administration. We can proudly say that we fought that every step of the way, and I point out that we were right. Members can go back over *Hansard*, look at what the National Party was saying at that time and come back and tell us that we were wrong. They will not be able to do that. I might add that Hon Eric Ripper, who got into me personally on a fair few occasions during these debates, has never come to me and said, “Max, I'm sorry; you were right”—not once. I am in politics; I do not really expect him to. But the fact is that he was wrong and we were right, and I want to put that clearly on the record.

There is another thing about the freeze, which we opposed as well. We were told by the Labor Party at the time that what would happen once the disaggregation occurred was that Synergy would get a mass of activity and competition would start. The fact is that at the top end of the game—at the wealthy end of the game where the money flows freely—that is very true. Competition is rife in Western Australia at the top end of the market, but in the middle of the market and at the residential end of the market, there is no competition. When was disaggregation? Was it eight years ago, seven years ago?

Hon Peter Collier: In 2006.

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: There is still no competition.

Hon Kate Doust interjected.

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: With all due respect, I am not having a go at Hon Kate Doust personally in this debate.

Part of the problem was freezing the tariffs because it did not grow the market. How basic is that? The Labor Party froze the market and said that it was going to grow. It said that it would freeze the market and that it was going to introduce competition. What a load of nonsense! It is totally irresponsible for the Labor Party to come into this chamber and tell us that for some reason the government that we are a part of is at fault, or this minister is at fault. We appreciate this minister. We get access to his office. We get access to him. We do not have any complaint against this minister. We understand the really bad problem that he inherited.

The other great thing that I loved about Hon Eric Ripper when he was Minister for Energy is that we kept being told about this mythical and terrible beast—this 500-pound gorilla—that would be Verve. Verve would be a 500-pound gorilla that would be running around the toy shop, out of control, tearing the place to pieces. Well, six years later, or whatever it is, what is Verve? It is a chimpanzee on welfare! That is what it is! Verve has all the bad generation, and it has no prospects. That was an inheritance that came directly from the disaggregation. We

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were told that the around 300 megawatts a year that will be required in extra generation as this state grows will come from competition. Well, to this day, it has. We have seen what has happened with Bluewaters power station in recent times. That is not a public activity. It is a private activity. But there is still doubt about whether, when the need arises, private enterprise will step in, because there is still the problem that private enterprise has to put up capital for some years before it can get any revenue from that capital, because it takes some time to build a power station. In the meantime, Verve is meant to hold the line. Verve is meant to come out with a high-cost process. However, the taxpayers have to pay for that, and the taxpayers are rightly saying—I do not argue about that—“We do not like our power bills”. But we were given that by the Labor Party. All those structural matters were clearly built into the disaggregation of Western Power, and we are now trying to live with that.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Brian Ellis): Order, members!

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: I am not going to slow down, Mr Deputy President, because I have one minute to go.

I was there when the lights went out—I was there, and so were all other members, I presume. The lights went out, and we had the terrible situation in which the Premier of the day had to go on the media and plead with people not to turn on their air conditioners and not to turn on their lights, and go home, or whatever. We were 700 megawatts away from meeting the capacity that we needed to meet.

In the training and workforce development portfolio, we have no argument with the minister either. In the Indigenous affairs portfolio, I have to say that none of us in this house can claim a lot of success in that area. I have no complaint about the minister in his Indigenous affairs portfolio. I would like to know what the solutions are, but we need to continue to struggle on with that issue.

I make it clear that there is no point in the Labor Party coming into this chamber and telling us that this minister is not doing his job in the energy portfolio, when the problem is of its own making.

HON SALLY TALBOT (South West) [11.55 am]: What we are talking about this morning in this motion is the extreme hardship that has been caused by, and inflicted upon, the community of Western Australia because of this minister’s staggering incompetence across the range of his portfolios. I am sure the minister is hugely relieved to know that he has the support of his leader. Indeed, it would be strange if Hon Norman Moore had not stood up and said what he said—we could have written those sorts of things. The minister is probably also very relieved that he has the support of the National Party—surprise, surprise! But I can tell members that the minister does not have the support of the Western Australian community. One of the things that Hon Peter Collier has never understood, from the moment he walked into this place, is that it is not enough just to stand up and dance around and say, “I’m right, I’m right, I’m right.” The minister has to go into the community and listen to what other people are saying. The community of Western Australia is saying to the minister, “You’re wrong, you’re hopeless and you’re useless, and you should be sacked from your portfolios”.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Members, I think your colleague is on her feet and trying to continue her speech.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: It is not the Western Australian Labor Party that is saying this. It is the community of Western Australia that is saying this. I will give members a flavour of those comments. I could talk about any number of things to do with this minister’s three portfolios, but I will focus specifically on the Indigenous affairs portfolio. Hon Robin Chapple has talked extensively about the minister’s failure in the heritage section of that portfolio. I could talk about the minister’s abysmal failure to handle the processes of the Indigenous Implementation Board and the three superb reports that are in his office. I could talk about the minister’s handling of remote communities. The whole mess of Oombulgurri will come back and hang like a noose around this minister’s neck. But what I want to talk about is the minister’s total failure on the issue of the stolen wages. I want to give members some of the stakeholder comments about what the minister has done on this issue. The minister calls the whole stolen wages issue a saga. That is the term the minister used in his press release. He calls it a saga. He calls it an unfortunate matter. Once before, in response to a question that I asked the minister about his handling of his Indigenous affairs portfolio, he said, “It is an endless piece of string”. What on earth does that mean? I will tell members what the community thinks about what this minister is doing. The community uses words such as “cruel” and “heartless”.

Point of Order

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Mr Deputy President, I take exception to Hon Sally Talbot pointing her finger at members. Hon Sally Talbot has complained in the past about my having done so, as she will recall, and I would appreciate it if she behaved according to the standards that she expects from others.

Hon Kate Doust; Hon Peter Collier; Deputy President; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Norman Moore; Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich; Hon Max Trenorden; Hon Dr Sally Talbot

Government members: Hear, hear!

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Brian Ellis): There is no point of order. I am sure that Hon Sally Talbot will uphold the conventions of the house.

Debate Resumed

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Thank you, Mr Deputy President. You have a fine appreciation of the rhetorical device of the pointed finger.

Dennis Eggington from the Aboriginal Legal Service calls the minister cruel and heartless. Mark Bin Baker calls the minister disgraceful, disrespectful and hurtful. I am glad the minister is smiling. I can tell the minister that the people who have read the minister's stolen wages response are not smiling. They are in tears about what the minister has done to them. They call it petty, pathetic and insulting.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.