

BUURABALAYJI THALANYJI ABORIGINAL CORPORATION — MATTHEW SLACK

56. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs:

When did the minister first become aware of allegations made against the former CEO of Buurabalayji Thalanyji Aboriginal Corporation, or BTAC, and did he discuss them with the Premier or any of his cabinet colleagues?

Mr B.S. WYATT replied:

Are there any particular allegations the Leader of the Nationals WA is worried about?

Ms M.J. Davies: The allegations that were raised in Parliament last week.

Mr B.S. WYATT: There were a range of allegations, because over time a range of concerns have been raised.

Ms M.J. Davies: When did the minister first become aware of allegations made against the former CEO?

Feel free to elucidate the member.

Mr B.S. WYATT: In *The Australian*, at the time, Andrew Burrell was writing about this. I think it was over the last 12 months and at least throughout 2019. So I have been aware of those reports. Indeed, I had a range of conversations, from memory, with a range of different Thalanyji people, both those in the pro-Matthew Slack camp, let us call it, and those in the against-Matthew Slack camp. The reality is—as I do when I receive complaints about the operations of prescribed body corporates—I refer those on to the commonwealth government because, unfortunately, as much as I would like to have some regulatory role in them, I do not. Whether it is any of them around the state, some operate well and some, unfortunately, do not. What we have seen with Thalanyji is something we have of course seen before around CEOs who perhaps misuse—I noted with interest the credit card commentary made by the member for North West Central. Again, I remember when this happened at the Western Desert Lands Aboriginal Corporation and the frustration that people had with the Office of Registrar of Indigenous Corporations, which has responsibility to appoint administrators and to go in and respond to complaints. Generally, the view is that it is slow, the time it takes is frustrating and during that time people manage to rip-off corporations until something is done. As I said, it happened to WDLAC. That is fresh in my mind. Now, of course, unfortunately, Thalanyji is going through that as well.

When did I first become aware? I suspect it would have been whenever that first article in *The Australian* was published—maybe then or thereabouts. I know I had a range of conversations with people at Yule River bush camp. It may have been 2018, but I suspect it was more likely 2019, when people raised these issues with me. As I always do, I refer them on to ORIC or the federal minister whose jurisdiction it is to investigate and in the end appoint administrators over PBCs.