10 July 2014

NHULUNBUY SUFFERS BLACKOUT – AGAIN

Member for Nhulunbuy, Lynne Walker, says today’s power outage in Nhulunbuy reinforces the need for Rio Tinto and the CLP Government to proactively work together to ensure the certainty and reliability of utilities in Nhulunbuy.

“It is not acceptable for Nhulunbuy and neighbouring communities of Yirrkala and Gunyangara to be suffering power blackouts for 12 hours today and over 24 hours last month,” Ms Walker said.

“The future of Nhulunbuy hangs in the balance in the wake of the curtailment of the Rio Tinto Alumina refinery, and if there is to be any future investment or infrastructure there will need to be certainty that utilities are reliable.

“We are in the middle of a transition from powering a large refinery which has now curtailed production, to powering just the mine and materials handling operations and the township. But Rio Tinto has an obligation as part of its lease conditions to provide power to Nhulunbuy and needs to ensure there is a plan in place to meet this obligation now and in the future.”

Ms Walker said she was concerned that with residents packing up and leaving Nhulunbuy their skills and expertise were going with them.

“Long term residents in Nhulunbuy have been packing up their families and leaving town since the announcement by Rio Tinto last November,” Ms Walker said.

“Many of these residents are experienced and skilled tradespeople who with their departure are leaving Nhulunbuy without the expertise it has relied on. “Is the loss of these skilled tradespeople contributing to the length of these power outages?

“Businesses, that are already struggling, will have lost trade because of today’s blackout and services have been severely disrupted.

“The people of Nhulunbuy deserve better.”

Ms Walker again called for clear planning for the future of Nhulunbuy and the surrounding region.

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