The Leader of the Opposition has supported the Maritime Union of Australia’s involvement in the bullying of $1m from the contractors of the Blacktip Gas Project.

Treasurer David Tollner said the Northern Territory Parliament passed the censure motion following a week of pressure on the Leader of the Opposition over the payments made during the construction of the pipeline and supply of gas for electricity production in Darwin following the Royal Commission into Union Corruption.

“The Leader of the Opposition failed to speak during the censure and criticise the MUA and therefore failed the Northern Territory taxpayer and workers,” Mr Tollner said.

The Parliament heard that the MUA bullied the contractor and sub-contractors into paying $1 million into a union led training fund and eventually into the NT Branch of the MUA.

Questions and debate in Parliament highlighted that the Leader of the Opposition was the Chief of Staff to the Minister for Power and Water Corporation (PWC) and the Deputy Chief of Staff to the then Chief Minister during five years of contract negotiations and implementation of the project.

The Blacktip gas project takes gas from offshore northern Australia, which is used to generate electricity for Darwin and was developed by the Labor Government.

“The Labor Government struck a series of deals with private and public companies to source gas, build a pipeline and supply gas over a 25 year period, for electricity generation in Darwin,” Mr Tollner said.

“The total gas contract struck was for 740 petajoules over 25 years, which is 50% more gas than is needed and this deal also stipulated a take or pay arrangement.

“This equates to billions of dollars of liability over the next decade that Territory taxpayers have to pay for gas they don’t need and don’t use.”

The Leader of the Opposition Michael Gunner was also opposed to reforms of the Power and Water Corporation.

“The main reason the Government made these reforms of PWC was to align the Northern Territory with the national gas regulations of all other States,” Mr Tollner said.
“This in turn allowed the Giles Government to contract the private sector to build the gas pipeline to Queensland (the North East Gas Interconnector) to connect to the rest of Australia.

“The NEGI will allow the government to on-sell some of this gas, which we don’t use.

“This is another Labor mess that the Giles Government has fixed and more proof to Territorians that they cannot risk Labor returning to government.”

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