



Secretary,  
Legislative Scrutiny Committee,  
GPO Box 3721,  
DARWIN NT 0801

19 February 2025

Dear Secretary,

**Re: AEUNT submission to the Committee's consideration of  
the Territory Coordinator Bill.**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Territory Coordinator Bill.

The AEUNT opposes the proposed Territory Coordinator Bill as The Coordinator is designed to expedite fracking and Middle Arm, both of which are projects that our membership have been clear they do not want. We urge The Committee to recommend that this Bill not be passed.

The evidence that The Coordinator position is about facilitating gas projects is two-fold. Firstly, these are among the most significant projects the NT is trying to execute at present. Furthermore, Stewart Knowles is an ex-INPEX executive who has been selected for his knowledge of the gas industry.

The AEUNT presented the below recommendations as part of its submission to the public consultation on The Bill. Unfortunately, these recommendations were not heeded and were even acted against.

**Why the AEUNT Opposes The Territory Coordinator Bill**

Teachers across the Territory are united by a love for teaching and learning which is an inherently future-focused endeavor. That is, we are nurturing and shaping the children we work with to be the future generation of the Territory. But successive governments which have been unduly influenced by the gas industry continue to threaten the future of children in the Northern Territory and that is why teachers are speaking out.

In May 2024 the Australian Education Union NT passed a motion at its annual conference condemning the NT Government's decision to frack the Beetaloo and build a petrochemicals processing hub at Middle Arm. This motion was in response to the direct health impacts that these projects will have on teachers and students, while worsening the effects of climate change which is projected to undermine educational outcomes and the wellbeing of future generations.

The motion was preceded by an open letter to then Chief Minister Fyles, signed by over 330 individual teachers and the AEUNT on World Teacher's Day in October 2023. The letter urged her government to not proceed with fracking and Middle Arm.

### **Critique of the Bill**

If The Coordinator position is to be enshrined into law it must be held by someone with more impartial standing on fossil fuel projects. It should also not be held by someone with linkages to a company which has paid as little as 0.03% tax in recent years. These companies operate in contempt of Territory taxpayers and their representatives are unlikely to be the sort of people who will make decisions in the best interests of the NT community.

The AEUNT made this recommendation as part of public consultation period on The Bill, although unfortunately the Government has strengthened its position on this by removing provisions which prevented people with conflicts of interest occupying the role. A core tenant of a strong public service is avoiding conflicts of interest, so this development is highly concerning.

The AEUNT also notes the highly undemocratic nature of The Coordinator position, which has extraordinary powers to exempt a project from any Territory legislation - keeping in mind that the Territory's legislation is the set of rules our community has agreed to through legitimate democratic process. No single person should be able to say that these rules are no longer important and should not apply.

If such a position is to exist it must only be in the form of a limited "one-stop shop" for regulated entities. This could offer legitimate streamlining of government processes without compromising their integrity. The advice of relevant departments and the approval of relevant ministers are essential components of such processes and should not be waived in such a one-stop shop.

### **Recommendations**

Given the above, we, the teachers of the Northern Territory, urge the Committee to recommend that this Bill not be passed.

However, in the spirit of constructive feedback, we note that some legitimate streamlining of complex government processes could be made easier by a regulatory one-stop shop. We make two recommendations in this regard.



1. The position must not be held by anyone with linkages to the gas industry.
2. The position must not bypass the approval of a relevant minister or any necessary consideration and advice from departmental officials.

We trust The Committee will seriously consider the above recommendations for the sake of strong democratic institutions, and for the future of the children we work with.

Sincerely,



Michelle Ayres  
Branch President  
Australian Education Union NT