

Submission to Oppose the Territory Coordinator Bill

I would like to formally submit my opposition to the proposed Territory Coordinator Bill. As a local Territorian, I care deeply about our precious home, lifestyle and democratic process. The Territory Coordinator role threatens these values and I fear it will lead to the degradation of our natural environment and cultural heritage.

In December I attended the public consultation with the interim Territory Coordinator Stuart Knowles. I was even more distressed than before when I saw that the person put forward for this position was unwilling or unable to answer any questions in relation to environmental checks that he would be able to override. It seemed to me that this position has been created specifically so that this government can bypass the environmental checks to approve fracking in the Beetaloo and will conveniently approve other major industrial projects speedily before scientists have the ability to contribute expert opinion. If fracking is to proceed, it is imperative that it is done transparently and with the confidence that it is safe for our precious water table. The same can be said of other big projects such as cotton and the Middle Arm Precinct, which also raise important environmental and health impact concerns. We deserve to be guided by experts in their fields around how best to mitigate environmental risks. Instead the Territory Coordinator Bill means these informed perspectives will never be heard or will be overridden by an unelected man with no expertise or interest in the environment or human health.

Our rich diversity of Indigenous cultures is one of the Territory's greatest assets. It would be incredibly damaging to not only the peoples whom get overridden, but to Australia's human rights record and our attempts to "close the gap" if we are to be the only jurisdiction to interfere with Commonwealth laws, the Sacred Sites Act, Native Title Act, Heritage Act or Aboriginal Land Act, as the revised bill allows. No government should hold this power, particularly not one that unashamedly prioritises short-term economic gain above human rights.

The most concerning aspect of the proposed bill, in my opinion, is the 'primary principle' described by Stuart as the elevation of economic considerations above all others. This means our health, safety, cultural heritage, environment and lifestyle are all subject to degradation in the name of projects that enhance short-term economic gain. There are so many ways to protect our environment and way of life whilst boosting long-term economic prosperity, but it seems this bill is about only projects that will work

against these things, otherwise it would not be a necessary position. Furthermore, the vast majority of Territorians are not likely to benefit economically from the large scale projects that will be run by multinational companies that pay little to no tax, minimal royalties and employ almost exclusively fly in fly out (FIFO) workers.

I am grateful for the opportunity to voice my concerns to a committee that I trust will listen and strive to remove or drastically modify this bill so that the CLP can govern with transparency and accountability as they promised.

Yours sincerely,

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