

19.2.25

Dear Scrutiny Committee of the Northern Parliament and Kat McNamara MLA,

I am writing to voice my strong opposition to the Territory Coordinator Act and I urge the Scrutiny committee to recommend it is not passed. This legislation is an attack on our democracy and undermines due process and transparency.

I have lived in the NT for nearly 6 years and feel lucky and proud to call the NT home. As a training GP I know how important it is that we preserve the things that help keep Territorians safe and satisfied here- whether they be lifelong Territorians or newly arrived. Like myself, many of my colleagues (nurses, doctors and other healthcare workers) were drawn to the NT because of the incredible natural environment, the culture, the festivals, the community, and the Territory way of life. I am so proud to be an active member of our community, working to make it more just, more safe and ensure we all have a future here. But the Territory Coordinator Act terrifies me- it is a giant leap towards autocracy and erodes the community's trust in our government. Territorians want the NT to develop, evolve and be economically viable, but not at the cost of our democracy or the things that make the Territory an incredible place to live.

The Territory Coordinator Act is paving a way for the future of the NT to be dictated by large corporations with deep pockets and lofty aspirations for their own profits. The Territory way of life is under threat with this proposal.

The Territory Coordinator Act also threatens the very viability and power of our own Legislative Assembly. This proposal enables the Chief Minister to make captain's calls - going above the heads of all members of parliament and the public. It essentially has the power to make MLAs irrelevant. What's more, the Territory Coordinator is an unelected bureaucrat who will have similar powers. Territorians have not consented to have two people in charge of so many important decisions. That is authoritarianism - and it should make us all worried.

I want to highlight some of the things I am most concerned about:

- Step-in powers of the Coordinator for Government departments or ministers -
It stinks of the Scott Morrison era secret consolidation of power. Government departments and ministers hold specific and specialised knowledge which helps them to make decisions, it is impossible for one or two people to be across the details of many, many government departments in order to make well considered decisions.

- Powers to access land:
If Territorians were aware that it would be possible for large corporations to access their private land, bring machinery and install equipment without a warrant or the permission of the land owner - I'm sure it wouldn't pass the pub test.

- Protection from Liability:
The Act states "A person is not civilly or criminally liable for an act done or omitted to be done by the person in good faith in the exercise of a power or performance of a function as: (a) the Territory Coordinator; or (b) a member of the Coordinator's staff; or 15 (c) any other person acting for or on behalf of the Coordinator." (section 104-1). Governments and bureaucrats should be accountable to the public and the judiciary, exempting them from liability gives them a free pass to use their extraordinary powers with little oversight or repercussions.

- Ignoring of community voices:
The CLP may have a vast majority in the LA, however, less than 50% of Territorians voted for them. Considering alternative points of view is part the job of all members, as MLAs represent their entire

electorate, not just the people who voted them in. We elect a person who we believe will represent us all, and listen to our concerns. The Territory Coordinator Act ignores principles of good representation by failing to consider concerned community members.

Good governments, which have the trust of the community, must have proper oversight, and accountability to the people. Without that, our government is a farce. This government seems obsessed with rolling out the red carpet for large corporations who are looking to use the NT to make a quick buck. It's unsurprising in a way, given that the CLP is largely funded by these same mega corporations. The NT suffers the consequences of boom and bust industries, and yet our government continues to roll out policies which ensure Territorians don't see a fair share of revenue from megaprojects.

Sincerely,

Dr Maud Mussared

