



The Secretary
Legislative Scrutiny Committee
GPO Box 3721
DARWIN NT 0801

17 February 2025

Dear Legislative Scrutiny Committee members,

Re: [Draft Territory Coordinator Act]

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the draft *Territory Coordinator Act 2024*.

Jesuit Social Services is a social change organisation working with some of the most marginalised individuals and communities, often experiencing multiple and complex challenges. Jesuit Social Services works where the need is greatest and where we have the capacity, experience and skills to make the most difference.

We have been working across the Northern Territory for nearly 20 years, and during this time have worked with those who are the least responsible for ecological and economic risks and threats, yet are most affected by their emergence. We deliver local services and advocacy on a range of social and environmental issues and have provided community development support to a number of communities and organisations. We deliver Element Two of the Back on Track program in Katherine, Youth Justice Group Conferencing across the Territory and are a consortium member of the Justice Reinvestment Project in Katherine.

Jesuit Social Services holds deep concerns about the proposed *Territory Coordinator Act 2024*, for the following reasons:

1. The proposed Act grants unprecedented and undemocratic power to a select few people, including the Territory Coordinator and the Chief Minister. This includes power vested in the Territory Coordinator to bypass independent statutory regulators, as well as the power to override 32 laws. This represents a significant overreach of power and runs counter to democratic principles.
2. The proposed Act deliberately places the economy before social and environmental considerations. The principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development – ie. balancing social, environmental, and economic concerns – have informed policy around the globe since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. We urge the Northern Territory Government not to abandon this critically important global principle, which was enshrined to *prevent* the deliberate prioritisation of the



economy over the wellbeing of our society and the environment. As Pope Francis [reminded us last December](#), ‘The pursuit of a sustainable and integral human development is critical for ensuring and promoting the universal common good’. For this reason, he continues, ‘it is essential to place the human person at the heart of all our concerns and activities’.

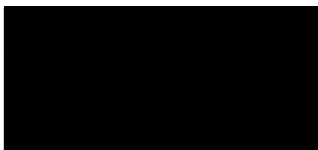
While laws and regulations slow down development processes, this is critical to ensure equitable sustainable outcomes. We are concerned about the removal of such processes, particularly given that regulations are already lacking in some areas in the Northern Territory – for example around native vegetation.

3. In elevating the economy as the ‘primary principle’ above the wellbeing of people and communities, the proposed Act takes further power away from concerned citizens. The legislation threatens to undermine community consultation processes by ‘fast-tracking’ developments. The Northern Territory is already characterised by significant and widespread disadvantage, as our own [Dropping off the Edge Report](#) details. This proposed legislation threatens to further disenfranchise people and communities who may already be marginalised, and who often depend on the checks and balances of independent statutory authorities and processes. Removing citizens’ rights to engage with democratic processes is another dangerous overstep of authority.

The proposed Act’s intention is to boost economic prosperity. While this is needed in the Northern Territory, we note that taking away the decision-making power of communities, especially the most marginalised, runs counter to this aim.

Thank you for taking the time to review our concerns. We trust that you will consider our position carefully. Please do not hesitate to contact John Adams, General Manager Northern Territory Programs, on john.adams@jss.org.au for further discussion.

Yours sincerely



Stephen Ward
Acting CEO

Jesuit Social Services acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of all the lands on which Jesuit Social Services operates and pay respect to their Elders past and present. We express our gratitude for First Nations Peoples' love and care of people, community, land, and all life.