

To the Legislative Scrutiny Committee of the NT Parliament,

Regarding the proposed Territory Coordinator Bill 2025

My name is Sophie Collins. I am a practising medical doctor with four years' experience living and working in the Northern Territory, predominantly and most recently in the Braitling electorate. The NT's pristine natural environments and proud, strong First Nations cultures are but two of the unique and beautiful aspects of the NT that make it a great place in which to live.

Scrutiny Committee, **I am strongly opposed to the proposed Territory Coordinator legislation**, which is dangerous and anti-democratic. The proposed legislation poses an unacceptable risk to the interests of Territorians, bestowing upon an unelected individual powers that would allow for circumvention of essential laws and existing democratic processes that currently help to safeguard our treasured environment, including First Nations heritage and sacred sites. The proposed legislation concentrates far too much power in the hands of the Chief Minister and the unelected Territory Coordinator, in direct opposition to existing democratic processes, laws, specialist expertise, and strong community opposition.

The proposed Territory Coordinator legislation lists 32 Acts that may be bypassed when the Territory Coordinator elects to "step-in" to or "exempt" proposed projects. An unelected individual in the proposed position of Territory Coordinator, who cannot possibly have expertise in all areas covered by these Acts and departments, **should not be able to override the specialised expertise of government departments** through a proposed "step-in notice".

Acts such as the Environmental Protection Act, the Heritage Act, the Radiation Protection Act and the Water Act, which are all listed as potentially exempt under this proposed legislation, exist to protect the NT's unique and at-risk natural environments. **The granting of such broad powers to the Territory Coordinator and Chief Minister to ignore such laws with next to no accountability sets a dangerous precedent**, unfairly centralising power and negating existing legislation, safeguards, and expertise. The existing strong CLP majority in Parliament means that the Legislative Assembly is unlikely to prevent the passing of any proposed exemption notice. The Bill and circumvention of these Acts may also remove the need for community consultation, which is an essential part of any proposed 'significant projects and works' in a democracy.

Additionally, the Bill sets out a 'primary principle' of 'driving economic development'. This elevates economic prosperity above other serious health, safety, social, cultural, and environmental concerns, representing a threat to Territorians' wellbeing and interests. **The rights and liberties of individuals are placed under threat** by specific provisions of the proposed legislation, including the ability to enter land without a warrant – with any potential damages to be determined by the Territory Coordinator rather than the landowner or occupier.

Finally, we cannot discuss any sort of future development of the Northern Territory without mentioning the indisputable and pressing reality of climate change, and the need to transition immediately away from fossil fuels, including new gas projects. The complete absence of climate considerations from the proposed Territory Coordinator legislation – and the appointment of Stuart Knowles, former NT general manager of large oil and gas company INPEX, as Interim Territory Coordinator by the Chief Minister last November – suggests that the proposed Bill will not be used to heed scientific evidence or advice on this critical issue, placing lives and homes at risk.

In summary, the proposed Territory Coordinator Bill would place unacceptably broad and subjective powers in the hands of an unelected individual, bypassing existing, essential laws and democratic processes. There is strong community opposition to the Bill and it should **not** be passed by the Legislative Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Sophie Collins BMed MPH