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Legislative Scrutiny Committee

Territory Coordinator Bill 2025

To the Legislative Scrutiny Committee of the NT Parliament

:

Climate Action Darwin (CAD) is a 1600-strong group of Territorians seeking a safe, secure and prosperous future for the Territory. As such, CAD is strongly opposed to the Northern Territory abandoning established effective regulatory and legislative regimes with collective ministerial oversight for the aggressive pursuit of economic projects with enormous externalities far exceeding potential short term benefits to Territorians.

Overview

The Territory Coordinator Bill threatens democratic processes and institutions in the Northern Territory. The powers vested in the roles of Chief Minister and Territory Controller by this bill represent an enormous overstep, centralising decision-making authority in two individuals and circumventing critical legislated processes. Not only does the proposal concentrate hands in the power of the Chief Minister as an individual, but also in the hands of an unelected bureaucrat. This bill goes far beyond what is proposed in other jurisdictions in Australia and represents a unique and dangerous attempt to override due deliberative process and concentrate power.

The Climate Context

As is well-known, the Northern Territory is now experiencing climate impacts in significantly elevated temperatures, greater humidity, more extreme weather, more frequently and severely disrupted supply lines and consequent infrastructure

damage.¹ These effects are impacting with average temperatures now at 1.5 degrees hotter than long term averages. As temperatures rise to the 3 degrees above long-term averages this century projected by scientific modelling, severe economic, health and environmental consequences for all Territorians can be expected.

The related insurance crisis that has seen the industry abandon sections of the United States of America and the east coast, is in its early stages in the NT.²

Workplace practices and employment are already being negatively impacted.³ In economic terms, the cost of inaction (as currently proposed by the NT Government), is far less than the cost of action.⁴ Rather than mitigate the developing climate impacts outlined above, the economic projects currently mooted for fast-tracking under the Territory Coordinator Bill, exacerbates them.

In light of deteriorating economic, environmental and political conditions expected by the United Nations, the World Bank and the World Meteorological Organisation, transferring responsibility to one (or two) individual(s) for the future security and prosperity of the NT population is risky in the extreme.⁵ The separation of powers is integral to a western democratic system of government. Considered in its entirety, the Territory Coordinator bill serves to severely restrict evidence-based policy decision-making and regulation. No supposed justification for this survives scrutiny.

1

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-03-19/bulk-carrier-crashes-into-south32-manganese-wharf-groote-eylandt/103604700>
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-03-06/flooding-logistics-freight-issues-nt-wa-food-supplies-rail-road/102057556>
<https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/nfscs--nt-department-of-infrastructure-planning-and-logistics.pdf>

2

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-01-22/nt-home-strata-insurance-premiums-cyclone-reinsurance-pol/104841354>
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-01-22/darwin-homeowners-experience-significant-increases/104846092>
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/aug/14/fears-many-australians-will-abandon-home-in-surance-as-premiums-jump-50-in-high-risk-areas>
<https://www.wusf.org/politics-issues/2025-01-12/central-florida-homeowners-join-rising-trend-opting-out-of-property-insurance>
<https://www.cnbc.com/2024/07/02/florida-california-insurance-crisis-spreading-your-state-next.html>

3

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-07-05/heat-stress-in-the-northern-territory-climate-change-dry-season/102552772>

4

<https://www.deloitte.com/an/en/about/press-room/deloitte-research-reveals-inaction-on-climate-change-could-cost-the-world-economy-us-dollar-178-trillion-by-2070.html>

⁵ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/research/publication/long-term-growth-prospects>

In short, the supporters of Climate Action Darwin strongly oppose the Territory Coordinator legislation on clear economic, environmental and governance grounds, the evidence for which is provided above.

The Committee's Reporting Points

Specifically, regarding the Committee's responsibility to report to the Assembly on the following:

- a) whether the Assembly should pass the Bill

No.

- b) whether the Assembly should amend the Bill

It should be rescinded in its entirety.

- c) whether the Bill has sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals

The legislation dramatically exaggerates the rights and liberties of two public officers at the expense of the Assembly, the Public Service and the population at large. It does not show sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals but diminishes them.

- d) whether the Bill has sufficient regard to the institution of Parliament.]

The Bill not only fails to give sufficient regard to the institution of Parliament, it undermines Cabinet and numerous regulatory bodies and associated legislation.

Climate Action Darwin thanks the Scrutiny Committee for subjecting this legislation to review.

Yours Sincerely,

Christine Cox and Grusha Leeman

(on behalf of Climate Action Darwin)