

Legislative Scrutiny Committee

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Submission: The Territory Coordinator Draft Bill

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the decision-making process for the Territory Coordinator Draft Bill. I have lived in Darwin and northern Australia for more than 20 years and love living here. I write to express my concern about the proposed Territory Coordinator legislation because I care deeply about good governance in the Northern Territory and want to see our unique lifestyle and natural and cultural values protected.

I oppose the proposed Bill for the following reasons:

Retrospective changes to project conditions (Clauses 70-73): This would permit previously approved conditions for major projects, such as safeguards for fracking wastewater management, to be altered or removed after approval.

Forced access to private or pastoral land (Clause 31): The Bill enables access to freehold or pastoral land for the development of a Territory Development Area (TDA) plan without the landowner's consent. It also allows for fast-tracked compulsory land acquisition (Schedule 1, Land Acquisition Act 1978).

Exemptions from environmental protections (Clauses 64-69): Companies could bypass key environmental requirements, such as submitting Environmental Management Plans for fracking or obtaining Water Extraction Licences.

Removal of community rights to challenge decisions (Clause 62): Communities would lose the ability to challenge fracking projects in the NT Civil and Administrative Tribunal, particularly in relation to water and environmental impacts—contradicting the recommendations of the Pepper Inquiry.

Excessive power for the Territory Coordinator (Clauses 56-63): The Territory Coordinator could override critical decisions typically made by regulatory bodies such as the Department of Planning, Lands and Environment or the NT Environmental Protection Authority.

This Bill would empower large corporations to disregard the rights and interests of Territorians, putting our water, environment, and livelihoods at serious risk. It introduces excessive changes that would fundamentally reshape how high-risk projects, such as large-scale fracking, are evaluated and approved. This Bill demonstrates that the NTG is representing the interests of big business and not the local community.

In opposition, Lia Finocchiaro committed to upholding all 135 recommendations of the Pepper Inquiry into NT fracking. However, this Bill undermines those recommendations, representing a significant breach of trust and a failure to honor commitments made to the people of the Territory.

This Bill, in its current form, poses an unacceptable threat to the rights and protections of Territorians and the Territory, and must not be passed without substantial revisions.

Regards

L. Harrison

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