

19 February 2025

Secretary
Legislative Scrutiny Committee
L.A.Committee@nt.gov.au

RE: TERRITORY COORDINATOR BILL

I welcome the Scrutiny Committee's opportunity to review the *Territory Coordinator Bill 2025 (Bill)* recently presented to the Northern Territory (NT) Parliament. As an NT resident who has been living in Darwin the past 11 years, I write to express my concerns about the proposed Bill. I draw attention to the Committee's impartial role to inquire and report on:

- (i) whether the Assembly should pass the Bill;
- (ii) whether the Assembly should amend the Bill;
- (iii) whether the Bill has sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals; and
- (iv) whether the Bill has sufficient regard to the institution of Parliament.

This submission argues the Bill should not be passed by the Legislative Assembly on the grounds that the Bill:

- (iii) has *insufficient* regard for the rights and liberties of individuals and communities directly and indirectly impacted by this legislation; and
- (iv) through centralisation of power through the Chief Minister, the Bill has *insufficient* regard to the institution of Parliament

In lieu of an exhaustive submission, this response encourages the Committee to review all submissions received with a view to undertaking greater consultation through culturally-appropriate, public hearings across the Northern Territory.

Key concern with the *Territory Coordinator Bill 2025*

Centralising and fast-tracking decision-making for over 32 areas of legislation within the Chief Minister's portfolio in relation to this Bill risks insufficient moral and expert decision making.

At a minimum, decisions made under the Bill by the Chief Minister in relation to certain activities potentially risk irreversible harm to air, water, land and health.

For example, in decisions related to hydraulic fracturing (fracking) in the NT, fast-tracked and centralised decisions made under the Bill by the Chief Minister will not only risk irreversible harm to air, water, land, health, but also to public safety and long term economic growth.

I encourage the Committee to review the *Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing in the Northern Territory* final report, the 135 final recommendations as well as sections related to ecologically sustainable development. The Territory Coordinator Bill does not consider the principles of ecologically sustainable development. This is an important oversight with real risk of direct and indirect harm to individuals and communities.

Request to the Committee

As a matter of public record and accountability, I ask the committee in good faith to inquire into, report on and make the following publicly available regarding the *Territory Coordinator Bill 2025*:

- Complete timeline of engagement with all stakeholders in drafting and revising the Bill;
- Evidence of the application of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) in engaging with individuals and communities directly and indirectly impacted by the Bill;
- Consultation, timeline and decision making process into removing the limitation provision (previous Clause 14) that previously prevented the Territory Coordinator from intervening with an agreement between the Territory and the Commonwealth not to interfere with or modify specified Territory legislation that would in particular adversely impact Aboriginal persons rights under the following:
 - Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989
 - Heritage Act 2011
 - Aboriginal Land Act 1978
 - Pastoral Land Act 1992
- Complete timeline of engagement with all stakeholders concerning the addition of the infrastructure Coordination Areas and Plans;
- Complete timeline of engagement with all stakeholders concerning the decision to remove the step-in provision when making exemption notices;
- All of other relevant decisions and consultations relevant to the drafting and revising of the Bill.

I encourage the Committee to consider the requests in this submission as a part of wider call for public hearings into community concerns about the *Territory Coordinator Bill 2025* and to further consider these concerns in the Assembly not passing the *Territory Coordinator Bill 2025*.