

SUBMISSION To TERRITORY COORDINATOR BILL 2025

Wednesday 19 February 2025

Secretary,
Legislative Scrutiny Committee
GPO Box 3721
DARWIN NT 0801

sent by email to: LA.Committees@nt.gov.au.

To the members of the Legislative Scrutiny Committee

My name is Monika Doepgen, and I like to make a submission to the Territory Coordinator Bill 2025 as an Australian citizen and private person having an interest in the matter as it involves our shared environment, global climate, and health as a nation.

I am strongly opposed for the Assembly to pass the bill, for the most pressing reasons as follows.

I am very concerned that with this bill there is too much power in the hands of only two people, being the Chief Minister and Territory Controller. Where the Territory Controller, who in this instance even has ties to the fossil fuel industry, is only overseen or accountable to the Chief Minister. The Territory Coordinator will have vast powers to step in, override, and exempt projects from existing processes under NT law. This bill goes beyond what is proposed in other jurisdictions in Australia such as SA and QLD and represents a unique and dangerous attempt to override deliberative process and concentrate power. I believe that this is a threat to democratic processes and institutions in the Northern Territory.

The NT already faces enormous risks and impacts to the environment, from the over-extraction of water to the expansion of the fossil fuel industry and its associated greenhouse gas emissions. This bill would jeopardise the little Environment protection that exists in the Northern Territory even more potentially removing the need for public consultation or environmental assessment processes that often represent the only chance communities have to engage with these projects and their potential risks. Sustainable development that genuinely benefits peoples' livelihoods requires appropriate scrutiny, evaluation, and assessment, not overarching powers that cuts the public out of engagement with these projects.

The 'primary principle' is ill-defined and represents a threat to Territorians' interests. The elevation of economic prosperity above all other considerations, such as health, safety, and environmental considerations, represents a dangerous provision that could lead to worse outcomes for people and the environment. It's well known that projects like fracking

and big agribusiness don't actually lead to better economic outcomes for the vast majority of Territorians – with its inadequate royalty regime meaning Territorians don't see a fair share of revenue from megaprojects, and the structure of these industries often relying on FIFO labour.

Beyond the immediate and obvious implications for fast-tracking and exempting from regulation destructive projects like fracking and land clearing, the Territory Coordinator bill 2025 has potentially far-reaching and unforeseen consequences for a wide range of activities and processes in the NT. The bill contains thirty-two laws, that the Territory Coordinator has the power to override: The total number of regulatory processes, safeguards, and checks and balances that could be overridden by the Territory Coordinator are staggering. Public health, workers' rights, occupational health and safety, urban planning, waste management, land access – the list of potential areas that could be overridden or undermined by the Territory Coordinator Office is extensive. Once this legislation is passed, with little checks in balances in place to moderate the power of the Chief Minister and Territory Coordinator, development activity across a whole range aforementioned spheres could be impacted.

Existing regulatory processes are already under-resourced; this bill undermines them further. Regulatory processes in the NT need to be better funded to do their job properly, allowing for independent decision making. This bill further undermines the jurisdiction of independent regulators, overriding their functions and undermining their experience and mandate.

If this bill passes it will destroy the health of the Northern Territory's unique and precious environment and with it the health of its people, for the sake of a so called economic prosperity. Therefore I am asking the Legislative Scrutiny Committee not to pass the Territory Coordinator Bill 2025.

Yours faithfully,

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Monika Doepgen

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