

Post consultation, the Primary Principle still remains unclear as to who or what type of ‘economic prosperity’ is aimed for; it does not state long-term anywhere, it merely states for the Territory or a region of the Territory.

Short-term economic policies that favour corporate profits over community benefits will hurt the NT; they have in the past with the INPEX boom-and-crash-cycle, and they will again with the Beetaloo Sub-basin mining. A part of this is allowing Territorians to be consulted on projects. Consultations allow community members to voice their concerns and to be informed about projects. In the long term, this ensures that Territorians maintain confidence in their government and that its decisions are made with the economic concerns and voices of Territorians in mind.

The Bill currently permits the Territory Coordinator to skip community consultations processes under the Acts listed in Schedule 1 of the Bill. This marginalises local residents through poor information flows.<sup>1</sup> Removing community consultation, simply put, shows the government does not place importance on what the individuals who elected it have to say. Outside of this, community consultation can produce, in anticipation of a major project about to occur,

*a socioeconomic or baseline profile [to] help to identify what is ‘normal’ for local communities, so that increases in demand for local government services can be noticed quickly. Such profiles can also identify the capacities and ‘problem thresholds’ for local government services, as well as capacities and thresholds for private services ranging from ambulances to motel room capacities.<sup>2</sup>*

The Bill in its current form does not have sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals in that the Bill can remove community consultation. On this basis alone, the Bill should not be passed. Alternatively, by explicitly stating the Territory Coordinator must have regard to long-term economic prosperity, some of these issues with the Bill could be mitigated. To ensure this, the Scrutiny Committee should amend the Bill to:

1. Define ‘economic prosperity’ to prioritise long-term benefits for the Territory.
2. Exclude the ability of the Territory Coordinator to skip community consultation as it is a fundamental part of any administrative decision-making process.

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Taylor and James Winter, ‘Welcome to the Boomtown! Darwin and the “Boomtown Syndrome”’ (Research Brief No 2013-03, Charles Darwin University, May 2013) (“Welcome to Boomtown!”)

<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey B Jacquet, ‘Energy Boomtowns & Natural Gas: Implications for Marcellus Shale Local Governments & Rural Communities’ (Rural Development Paper No 43, The Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development, Pennsylvania State University, 2009).

3. Amend the Bill to include mechanisms for assessing local long-term economic impacts to ensure community needs and service capacities are considered before major projects proceed.

These changes can promote sustainable long-term economic prosperity while maintaining transparency and trust in Government decision-making. Without these changes, the Bill risks undermining the very communities it seeks to serve.