

Territory Coordinator Bill 2025

Despite the short submission cut-off date, I thank you again for the opportunity to contribute to the decision-making process for the Territory Coordinator Draft Bill. It is with great concern that the key concerns and issues identified in the Draft Bill have not been addressed and that some have in fact been exacerbated by further changes to the Bill.

Public consultation allows concerns, questions, challenges and comments to be presented in good faith that due diligence by the Government will be undertaken to acknowledge and address those matters. The public also rely on expert specialist knowledge holders, for example in this case environmental scientists, to also present rigorous feedback on draft bills. However, it would appear all concerns and issues identified and submitted have been blatantly disregarded.

I ask the Scrutiny Committee to question why the CLP government have responded with such reckless disregard for any of the concerns and issues brought to their attention through the consultation process. Northern Territorians have a right to fair and transparent decision-making processes that do not favour unelected bureaucrats and the chief minister to have unrestricted and unchallengeable power.

I ask the Scrutiny Committee to seek the evidence provided by respective professionals that support the concerns and issues that have been raised so that the Scrutiny Committee may be appropriately informed about the consequences of this Bill.

I ask the Scrutiny Committee why the removal of certain limitations on the exercise of powers is necessary? How is removing the cheques and balances on those in power a good democratic decision? Please consider the appropriateness of the chief minister to remove such limitations to achieve political ambitions – by any means necessary.

The new requirement to seek the Territory Coordinator's (TC) views on decisions and processes in the Territory Development Area (TDA) demand that the TC's views must be taken into account in the decision. Yet, evidence-based information such as scientific data from suitably qualified individuals can be excluded or ignored at the expense of the TC'S "views". This clause ought to raise serious concerns for the Scrutiny Committee and highlight the absolute folly of this bill.

The list of changes to the Bill following its release as an Exposure Draft is considerable and overwhelmingly seeks to expand the powers of the TC. I draw the Scrutiny Committee's attention to those changes and ask that any and all expansion of powers be questioned, challenged and ultimately dismissed. Far-reaching power as proposed in the Bill for the purposes intended has no place in our democracy. The TC bill amounts to a flagrant abuse of power.

On a more personal note, I am writing to express my concern about the Territory Coordinator (TC) as an NT resident. I live here because of the unique environment and associated lifestyle. Therefore, I am actively engaged in ensuring that good governance in the Northern Territory is put ahead of shortsighted decisions motivated by financial gain.

The Territory Coordinator Bill is strongly opposed by the public, creates serious flaws in our decision-making process, is a totally unnecessary position and consolidation of power within the Minister for the Territory Coordinator - the Chief Minister, and puts our health and our unique and precious environment at serious risk.

The TC bill is shortsighted and removes the requirement for the due diligence necessary to consider proposed projects that ought to be carried out by suitably qualified and unbiased experts to determine fact based environmentally sound and appropriate decision making.

Alarmingly, the TC Bill could erode Indigenous land rights which would be morally reprehensible. The TC Bill introduces risk to the Northern Territory and its residents that is completely unacceptable and offers no tangible economic benefit to Territorians struggling with the cost-of-living crisis.

Recent serious environmental incidents, such as the reported contaminated water pumped onto vegetation at the Beetaloo Basin fracking site, raises further concern as it demonstrates an urgent need for more regulation not less as proposed by the Territory Coordinator Bill .

My recommendation stands. Do not pass the Territory Coordinator Bill in its current, or any future form. The proposed legislation lacks public support and introduces significant risks for the Territory, foreseen and unforeseen.

Sincerely,



Lee Harrop

