

Claire Salter Parry

19th February 2025

Secretary, Legislative Scrutiny Committee
GPO Box 3721
Darwin NT 0801

Dear Scrutiny Committee,

RE: Territory Coordinator Bill 2025

As per the serious concerns raised by many local constituents during the initial consultation period for this bill, I wish to express my strong opposition to the Territory Coordinator Bill.

In regard to the key comments and feedback being sought, please see my responses below:

1. ***Whether the Assembly should pass the Bill***

No, I do not think the Assembly should in all good conscience, pass this Bill.

2. ***Whether the Assembly should amend the Bill***

I think that the Assembly should reject the Bill in its totality, but if this is not an option, then yes, the Bill needs to be heavily amended with a focus on the following:

- If the role exists, they should be nominated from amongst the pool of existing elected members, not from outside the Parliament
- Step-in and exemption powers should be rolled back completely
- A merits review and appeals process should be available for any decisions passed other than the only option of judicial review in the Supreme Court
- Remove the ability of the Territory Coordinator to enter private land
- Embed clear and consistent accountability measures for the Territory Coordinator, other than the Chief Minister
- Existing Acts should not be able to be bypassed

3. ***Whether the Bill has sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals***

No, it does not. The unilateral focus of economic development over environmental, social and health domains ignores and tramples the aspirations of many Territorians. Whilst there is broad understanding of the need to be economically viable, the means of doing this require a serious look at taxation within the NT, particularly of gas and mining industries.

This legislation removes people's democratic right to elect the people who govern and represent them. In addition, the powers of the Territory Coordinator to enter private land, breaches people's rights and liberties.

Lastly, this legislation severely hampers people's right to scrutinise, appeal and protest against decisions that affect them, their families, their communities, their environment and their lifestyle.

4. Whether the Bill has sufficient regard to the institution of Parliament

No, it does not. Having an unelected bureaucrat with such wide sweeping powers and the ear of the Chief Minister makes a mockery of our allegedly democratic institutions. Elected members of Parliament should be the people who are responsible for the strategic direction and approvals of projects, with the support of the public service.

This legislation concentrates exceptional and unacceptable levels of power to the Chief Minister and the Territory Coordinator. It will ignore and bypass established democratic laws and processes, including 32 Acts and their associated Regulations.

The criteria for the Territory Coordinator and the Chief Minister to exercise their powers under the Bill are vague and lack rigour. There is no clear public interest test ensuring the powers are used in a clear and controlled way, for stated public benefit outcomes.

The Bill states that the Territory Coordinator would be impartial and independent. The fact that the previous General Manager of INPEX is the interim Territory Coordinator, in a jurisdiction where government is in the pockets of the coal and gas industry, screams hypocrisy and a massive conflict of interest. The fact that Scheduled Laws covering environmental protections, water extraction, mining and petroleum etc, would be at the mercy of a gas industry powerbroker is of deep concern.

In conclusion

I am deeply concerned about this legislation and what the future of the Northern Territory will be if this Bill is passed. After living in the NT for almost a decade, then leaving for a few years, I decided to come back primarily for the unique lifestyle and culture that this place offers. If this Bill is passed, I don't see living here as a viable proposition anymore. So many of us who live here are active community members, passionate about justice, about the environment and about protecting all that is special about this part of Australia. The NT government is desperately trying to boost the number of people moving to the Northern Territory to improve economic growth, yet I guarantee that people will start leaving in droves if this legislation is passed, leaving a failed and desolate state in their wake.