



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

No. 254

WRITTEN QUESTION

J Davis to the Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment, Hon Joshua Burgoyne MLA:

Middle Arm Precinct and Darwin Harbour

1. Both the NT EPA and the Australian Government are conducting environmental assessments relevant to the Middle Arm precinct, the NT EPA under the Environment Protection Act 2019 and the Commonwealth under the EPBC Act.
 - a. What is the current status of each assessment, and has either regulator raised issues of concern about the precinct's potential impacts on Darwin Harbour?
 - b. The answer to Written Question No. 140, given by the Minister for Logistics and Infrastructure, advised that the Environmental Impact Statement "will be released for public exhibition when the draft is complete". What is its current status, and when is public exhibition expected?
2. In October 2025 the Commonwealth determined that the proposed action for the installation of acid gas removal units at the Ichthys facility on the Middle Arm Peninsula was not a controlled action. Records of the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water released under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 record that "This referral relates to construction activities only", that "consideration of greenhouse gas emissions was not within scope of the assessment", and that "The referral is not part of the Middle Arm Strategic Assessment".
 - a. Which proposals within the Middle Arm precinct have been, or are being, assessed outside the Middle Arm strategic assessment?
 - b. Please provide the proponent and the date of referral for each.
 - c. On what basis is a proposal within the precinct assessed outside the strategic assessment rather than under it, and who makes that decision?

- d. What does the Middle Arm strategic assessment assess that separate referrals do not?
3. Has the Government committed to a low emissions outcome, including carbon capture, for the Middle Arm Sustainable Development Precinct; if so, in which document is that commitment recorded and in what terms?
 - a. Will the addition of new LNG or gas processing infrastructure at the precinct increase the net emissions footprint of Darwin Harbour?
 - b. What modelling supports the Government's position, and will it be tabled?
4. The Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade's brochure Darwin region future water supply records, as Option 2 of the Preliminary Assessment released in February 2021, "A desalination plant to be located at the Middle Arm Sustainable Development Precinct and drawing sea water and discharging wastewater into Darwin Harbour (12,000 ML/y)", together with a water recycling project of 5,000 ML/y.
 - a. Is a desalination plant at Middle Arm still proposed; if so, at what capacity, and in which current document is it recorded?
 - b. The brochure records that a Detailed Business Case was to be prepared by PricewaterhouseCoopers. Was it completed, on what date, and what did it conclude in relation to desalination?
 - c. What assessment has been undertaken of the impact on Darwin Harbour of discharging desalination wastewater at that volume, and has that assessment been completed?
 - d. Will that assessment, and the Detailed Business Case, be published?
5. What formal role have Larrakia traditional owners had in decisions about Middle Arm's development — not as proponents in specific commercial ventures, but in decisions about whether and how the precinct proceeds, what industries are permitted, and how Darwin Harbour is protected?
6. If the role of the Larrakia people has been limited to commercial partnerships rather than decision-making about their country, how does the Government reconcile that with its obligations under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act and the principles of free, prior and informed consent?
7. What is the Government's definition of success for Middle Arm, by what date does it expect to demonstrate that success, and what happens to the public investment already made if the precinct does not attract sufficient private investment to proceed?