

Jacqueline Arnold

Submission – Territory Coordinator Bill: Legislative Scrutiny Committee Review

19 February 2025

Dear Committee,

I was born, raised and reside in the Territory.

I strongly object to the draft Territory Coordinator Bill.

1. The primary principle

I do not agree with the primary principle, which prioritises projects the government believes will bring economic prosperity over all other considerations, allowing protective, democratic laws, plans and policies to be bypassed.

I understand the government thinks the path to economic prosperity is continual growth and industrial expansion. I have studied economics at a Masters level and found no convincing evidence to support this. The world's resources are limited, economies built on ever increasing population, consumption and resource extraction are unsustainable, unstable and will collapse sooner rather than later.

The Territory Coordinators powers over the Weeds Act 2001 is a prime example of why I am concerned – many weeds declared under the Act, including buffel grass in the south to gamba grass in the north, pose an existential threat to the Territory and our 'lifestyle'. Some industries want to use weeds as a cheap and easy alternative to sound land management and revegetation, others find good weed management, including hygiene practices, too burdensome and throw up their hands claiming management is impossible while ignoring all evidence, guidelines and opportunity for progress. They don't care if the massive costs associated with weed spread are borne by the public and taxpayers. Is the Territory Coordinator going to be able to decide industry can knowingly destroy the Territory, place us at risk from fires etc, because it 'cuts the red tape' for industry? The answer according to this Bill is yes.

It's appalling that the government is even considering a Bill that could override the authority and rights of Native Title Holders. If you don't understand how disgraceful and dangerous this is you need to stop being wilfully ignorant and educate yourselves before accepting a position on a Committee such as this, I am not going to be able to explain it to you in a submission.

2. Step in powers

The Territory Coordinator's 'step in' powers allow them to override professionals and public entities. Both my parents worked for the Territory public service, as have I for the majority of my career. I understand that the executive arm of our government has issues, and that it is often blamed for inefficiencies that ironically often result from collaborative models that invite chaotic, poorly evidenced industry or subculture interference.

Despite its issues people employed in the public service face rigorous merit selection, ongoing educational requirements and performance review. They represent experts in their respective fields. The systems and recommendations they produce should be respected.

Frankly, a one on one chat with the interim Territory Coordinator at the community information night in Alice Springs left me with grave doubts that he understood his role, the powers he had, or the Territory public service. Let's face it, the optics of his work history (going from project lead on an INPEX project in the Chief Ministers Dept to working for INPEX) aren't great if the government is trying to convince us that the role of Territory Coordinator won't be used by those vulnerable to industry interference.

3. It lets the Chief Minister interfere in the business of the Executive by giving exemptions from laws

We voted for this Chief Minister and Cabinet but in doing so we did not give them licence to grab power like this.

I value living in a place with unique nature and culture, we have a responsibility to protect this place.

I also value living in democracy rather than an oligarchy.

Please urgently abandon the draft Territory Coordinator bill. The environment and peoples' rights should not be bypassed or compromised for developers' convenience.

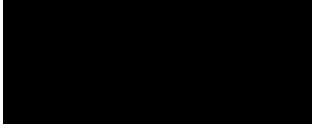
Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I trust you will use the power given to you by the people to serve our interests, not your own or those of industry.

Feedback on consultation

This process has not inspired confidence that the government is at all interested in transparency, fairness or the public's opinion on how we are to be governed.

The public engagement relating to this bill from start to now has been poorly timed and largely inaccessible. This includes the initial industry-only consultation, the poorly recorded community information sessions where the Acting Coordinator couldn't answer most of the questions, and this opportunity for comment - it is concerning that comments are to be submitted via email rather than through the *Have Your Say* portal. And not published. The consultation report did not reflect at all

what I witnessed first -and at the community information session or submissions made by me and others I have spoken to.



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