

To Whom It May Concern

I am writing to express my **opposition to the Territory Coordinator Draft Bill. It should not be passed in its current form.**

I am committed to good governance and informed decision making and that is why I am expressing my opinion and making some recommendations regarding this Draft Bill. Thankyou for the opportunity to contribute.

I have worked in environmental management for 25 years and currently work at the marine consultancy Aquenal (Link: [Sam Wood Bio](#)). Throughout my career, I have been involved in numerous environmental impact assessments, most recently regarding the expansion of salmon farming in Tasmania. I have lived in Darwin for the last seven years and am passionate about preserving the lifestyle and environment we enjoy in the Top End.

### **Recommendations**

#### **1. Speeding up the decision-making process should be achieved by improving efficiency WITHIN regulatory bodies, not by bypassing them.**

As the co-author of several environmental impact assessments, I appreciate that there is often some duplication of assessments and inefficiencies in the approvals process. Ironing out these inefficiencies is imperative to expedite the decision-making process.

The Territory Coordinator proposes to achieve this through 'step in' powers to make important decisions instead of relevant government bodies (i.e. EPA; Dept. Planning, Lands and Environment). This is an appalling (and probably undemocratic) proposition which appears designed to circumvent the safeguards that the regulatory process provides for protecting the Territories wonderful environment and lifestyle.

I recommend that ironing out the inefficiencies in the decision-making process should be done *within* the regulatory bodies. For example, a review of the decision-making process could be conducted and recommendations put forward about how to cut so-called 'green or red tape' within regulatory bodies.

#### **2. Decision making must balance economic, social and environmental issues and not give precedence to 'economic prosperity'.**

The principals of sustainable development ask us to balance our economic, social and environmental needs. Sustainable development underpins all good decision making. Achieving sustainable development is crucial to maintaining our precious Territory Lifestyle.

Through the primary principal, the Territory Coordinator explicitly elevates so-called economic prosperity above social and environmental issues. This is contrary to the principals of sustainable development and may ultimately lead to a deterioration of the environment through degradation of our water resources and biodiversity values. It is also likely to have implications for our health and outdoors lifestyle.

I recommend rephrasing the Territory Coordinators primary principal to explicitly acknowledge the three pillars of sustainable development. For example, the TC or Minister can have regard to "*the*

*primary objective of achieving sustainable development for the Territory by carefully balancing its economic, environmental and social needs'*

**3. Good decisions take time. Give them time.**

The proposal of a Territory Coordinator appears designed to speed up the decision-making process. Having worked in environmental management, I am acutely aware that collecting data on the biodiversity values and water resources of a proposed development area takes a long time. Understanding the potential impacts of developments and their consequences on our environment usually takes a long time.

If we don't take the time, then there is likely to be perverse outcomes for our environment, society AND the economy. For example, if a Territory Coordinator steps in before we take the time to understand the potential impacts of a development on a mangrove ecosystem, then this may lead to the collapse of fish breeding grounds with knock on impacts for social fishers and commercial fisheries.

I recommend giving regulators time to make good decisions. If this means that economic development has to wait, then it will be worth the wait in order to maintain our Territories' treasured environment and lifestyle.

**4. If there is a Territory Coordinator, they must be committed to sustainable development and the public should decide who it is.**

Should the Territory Coordinator Bill pass, then the person appointed to the role must (a) have not vested interests; (b) be committed to sustainable development; and (c) the public should have a say in who is appointed in a democratic way.

My understanding that the current nominee for Territory Coordinator is the former general manager of INPEX and has been nominated by the current Government with minimal transparency. This nomination contravenes all three of the principals I outlined above and is likely to give precedence to the resource extraction industry.

I suggest that the current nominee be reviewed and a suite of candidates who are committed to sustainable development (including the current nominee!) be presented to the public to decide who should be our Territory Coordinator in a transparent and democratic process.

Thankyou for the opportunity to contribute the decision-making process for the Territory Coordinator Draft Bill. To reiterate, **I oppose to the Territory Coordinator Draft Bill and do not think it should be passed in its current form.**

Your Sincerely,

Dr Sam Wood

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