

From: [Melissa Ball](#)
To: [LA Committees](#)
Subject: Territory Coordinator Bill Submission.
Date: Monday, 17 February 2025 10:26:29 PM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

To Whom It May Concern

Thankyou for the opportunity to respond to the decision - making process for the Territory Coordinator Bill.

I am most concerned about two aspects of the proposed Bill in terms of undermining democratic process and the governments interpretation of what constitutes projects of economic significance. I am outlining my concerns further below.

Economic significance.

I am worried about the emphasis on projects of 'economic significance' with specific reference to the Territory Coordinator (TC) consultation paper which identifies case studies such as the development of onshore gas development scenarios in the Beetaloo Sub Basin.

This does not instil my confidence in government leadership in terms of taking an enlightened approach in defining and determining what projects are of *genuine* economic significance.

Surely environmentally sustainable projects commensurate with our governments commitment to meeting net emissions targets in the interest of avoiding a climate catastrophe would be in the Territory's best interests in term of long-term economic viability.

There is a wealth of evidence substantiating the adverse impacts of climate change in terms of the economy, both short and long term, in terms of:

- § Direct macroeconomic shocks from climate change, including reduced agricultural yields, damage to property and infrastructure and commodity price hikes, are likely to lead to painful market corrections and could trigger
- § Increased insurance premiums.
- § On current trends, the accumulated loss of wealth due to reduced agricultural

§ productivity and labour productivity in Australia because of climate change is projected to exceed \$19 billion by 2030, \$211 billion by 2050 and \$4 trillion by 2100.

§ An increase in frequency and intensity of extreme weather events.

Climate Council, *Compounding Costs: How Climate Change is Damaging Australia's Economy*, 2019, <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Costs-of-climate-change-report.pdf>

As I understand it, according to the governments own economic modelling, there is a dearth of evidence to suggest the development of the Beetaloo Basin will benefit Territorians, in short:

§ According to 2021 -22 data, the mining industry - includes gas and LNG projects - employs only 1.9% of Territorians.

§ Allowing development of Beetaloo gas resources will create greater dependency of the NT economy on the maintenance and construction schedules of the gas industry, thereby reducing scope for further diversification of the NT economy.

§ There will be an increase in net emissions from both extraction of the gas—via increased fugitive methane emissions and higher combustion emissions from converting the gas to LNG—and from its consumption, when it is used to generate electricity or in other uses.

§ This increase in emissions will unnecessarily contribute to further destabilisation of the environment, as contrary to political propaganda, demand for gas to drive electricity generation collapsed (Institute of Energy Economics, 2022) 47% from 2014 to 2022.

The Australian Institute, Gas Bagging: The Case Against the Beetaloo Basin Gas Development, 2023, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/P1448-Gas-Bagging-Web.pdf>

The Rule of Democracy

I am deeply concerned about the erosion of democratic process this appointment signals with especial reference to the *unprecedented* powers vested in the position of the Territory Coordinator (TC).

Nothing about the consultation process or the response to the legitimate concerns of Territorians at scheduled forums has served to alleviate my concerns. Specifically:

- § I categorically reject the notion the government has a mandate to introduce the TC Bill. As I understand it, the proposed Territory Coordinator Bill 2020 (NT) did not pass the legislative assembly and did not include an exemption power. Furthermore, it has been my experience through consultation with Territorians at market stalls and door knocking that most people were either unaware or shocked by the announcement of the position.
- § The premise that similar positions have been legislated in other Australian states (Queensland) obfuscates the fact that no other jurisdiction has legislated an exemption power that enables *modification of the application of Territory Law*.
- § If it had not of been for the vociferous public opposition to the TC Bill when announced, it is not clear there was ever an intention to hold a comprehensive consultation process. The fact ad hoc forums were scheduled in Darwin and Palmerston in December 2024 and January 2025 in response to significant public agitation severely undermines my confidence in the government's commitment to genuine consultation. The Territory is a culturally diverse region with many unique demands in terms of linguistically diverse communities, different cultural protocols for genuine dialogue and remote and challenging geographical/environmental conditions. The least that would be expected from a government vested in the interests of Territorians would be to undertake a consultation process that removed barriers for genuine engagement and scheduled forums to maximise participation. In my opinion, scheduling forums close to Christmas/New Year and during the wet season when many people are travelling, and communities are inaccessible, makes a mockery of the process.
- § The premise that the TC Bill is necessary to expedite major and economically significant projects is a fallacy. If this were factual there would be an argument for introducing a dictatorship model into every jurisdiction and business model in Australia. There is a wealth of literature to support the governments consideration of other avenues for promoting greater efficiency and efficacy without imposing a Bill that will fundamentally undermine the trust and confidence of most Territorians. For example, leading practice in terms of ensuring regulatory compliance may include developing a strategy for improving the capabilities required to deploy information and technology, improving the interface between regulators and resources companies through online portals and databases, and developing modelling capabilities to support analysis and decision making.

Australian Productivity Commission, *Resources Sector Regulation: Productivity Commission Study Report, 2020*,
<https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/resources/report/resources.pdf>

Regards
Melissa Ball