



Peoples Climate Action Coalition

PO Box 544,
Canberra ACT 2601

Peoples Climate Assembly Submission: Middle Arm Industrial Precinct

The Peoples Climate Assembly (PCA) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the Middle Arm Industrial Precinct. The PCA have written to all the ACT elected representatives and made several representations to the Finance Minister, Senator Katy Gallagher, about the Middle Arm Precinct.

Although badged as a “Sustainability Precinct,” it should be viewed as a new gas project; it is potentially an enormous and heavily-polluting gas and petrochemical facility. Minister Plibersek was briefed in July 2022 that Middle Arm was a “key enabler” for the export of Beetaloo gas from Middle Arm, as well as to add to the feasibility of proposed offshore carbon capture and storage associated with Santos Barossa project.

In April this year, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres said that *“Investing in new fossil fuel infrastructure is moral and economic madness.”* The International Energy Agency warned, in 2021 in their Net Zero by 2050 report, that new coal, oil and gas projects need to stop immediately.

Canberrans are deeply concerned about climate change and expect decisive, bold leadership. Canberrans do not want our representatives approving massive fossil fuel subsidies that are damaging the climate and that increase the health risk to communities in the Northern Territory. We know that emissions do not respect state or territory boundaries, nor country boundaries. Emissions created in the Northern Territory will affect us in the ACT, in Australia and globally. This is not a development that is exclusively of interest or concern to the Northern Territory.

No good case for Middle Arm

The Morrison government committed \$2 billion to the Middle Arm precinct with no cost-benefit analysis, no climate impact analysis, no public health analysis and no due process. Middle Arm would be a gateway to opening up the Beetaloo Basin which could increase Australia’s emissions by up to 22% and significantly impact Australia’s commitments under the Paris Agreement. The Albanese government’s 43% target has been promised by the Prime Minister himself, as a floor and not a ceiling.

As the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis states: *“The Middle Arm Sustainable Development Precinct plan, which promises new industry and substantial infrastructure investment, is flawed. Its market assumptions are overly optimistic; infrastructure needs will stress federal and local budgets; and the plan is misaligned with global efforts to curtail greenhouse gas emissions.”*¹

The Middle Arm project, as IEEFA highlights, has many leadership red flags; they have identified risks *“based on market, fiscal, governmental, and health and safety factors, viewed through a financial lens. They are organised around two basic headings: 1) The plan is flawed, and 2) The business model is not viable.”*

1

https://ieefa.org/resources/middle-arm-gas-and-petrochemicals-hub-combination-problems-makes-it-unprofitable-business?fbclid=IwAR18OdHn5k0ZU3alsNDFGBI05SBB4ZGrhSna0eMfTESTX_-A6EAqdo-ML5E

No community support

NT Padriatirican, Dr Louise Woodward, led a delegation of parents and health professionals to the Federal Parliament to raise the devastating health impacts of climate change, on 8 August 2023. The NT delegation stressed there is no safe way to expand the gas industry. Suki Dorras-Walker from Parents for Climate Darwin stated:

“The NT government continues to ignore the clear majority of Territorians, shown in inquiry after inquiry, survey after survey who do not want fracking.”

Suki also told the anecdote of a parent in the NT delegation whose 3 year old said: *“Mummy, it’s too hot. It’s too hot Mummy.”*

The parent’s response: *“I know baby and that is why I’m going to Canberra. To tell people that it’s getting too hot.”*

Suki continued by saying, *“Please listen, please do not give \$1.5 billion towards gas expansion in the Territory and please, from Territorian parents and Territorian children, no more gas.”*

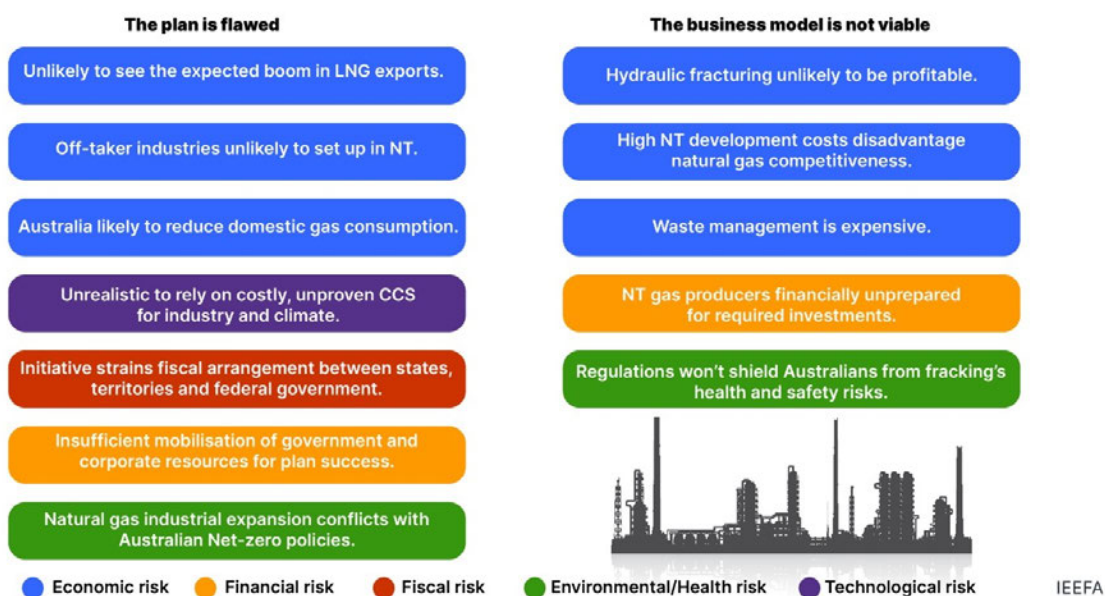
Dr Woodward pleaded:

“The children in the Northern Territory are already suffering, they do not need their air and water poisoned by these fossil fuel developments. Governments have a Duty of Care to protect their people, what else are they for? They should sacrifice our children’s health and well-being in favour of multinational gas companies”

Red flags

If the Middle Arm Project was approved, it would erode public trust in the Albanese Government’s mission to address climate change.

Problems with the Middle Arm Gas and Petrochemicals Hub



It has been estimated that the Middle Arm Precinct would itself generate 15 million tonnes of carbon emissions per year, increasing the NT's emissions by 75%.

We fully support the following recommendations by NT organisations:

- Funding shall not be used to fund gas-related industries directly or indirectly at Middle Arm (including LNG processing, petrochemical production, blue hydrogen and CCS)
- Funding shall not be made without free, prior and informed consent of Larrakia people
- Funding shall not be committed until a completed assessment by Infrastructure Australia pursuant to its Assessment Framework, and a recommendation is made that funding occur
- Funding shall not be committed until a cost benefit analysis (per Infrastructure Australia's latest Assessment Framework CBA guidance) is completed
- Climate risk assessment is conducted that includes risks to the precinct's projected scope 1, 2 and 3 greenhouse emissions, and their impact on domestic and international climate commitments. This should be done in addition to a thorough Environmental Impact Assessment and EPBC Act assessment process
- Commonwealth commitments to recommendations from the Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing in the Northern Territory should be addressed in full as soon as possible and before any fracking is allowed to occur in the NT. This includes a means of assuring that there will be no net increase in the life cycle GHG emissions emitted in Australia from any onshore shale gas produced in the NT and expansion of the EPBC water trigger to include unconventional gas including shale gas—see more on this below.

Health Impacts (including due to air pollution)

"The UN Special Rapporteur on Toxics and Human Rights recently singled out the Middle Arm Industrial Hub as threatening to turn the Northern Territory into a sacrifice zone for the fossil fuel industry."

The Northern Territory is on the front line of the climate emergency with a health system that is already overburdened. The climate crisis needs to be treated like the health emergency it is.

Close to 100 doctors rallied on 8 August to alert the Federal Parliament with their increasing concerns from the mounting evidence showing people living near gas developments suffer more from life threatening health conditions. These health professionals made it very clear that climate change is already fuelling a health crisis.

The Greater Darwin region currently faces extremely poor air quality, which will be further deteriorated by the Middle Arm industrial precinct, with significant implications for human health.

Modelling suggests an increase in industrial fine particulate emissions by 513%, and a four-fold increase in the industrial cancer hazard.² 1200 health professionals from across the nation, led by NT Paediatricians signed an open letter opposing Middle Arm and the decision to greenlight fracking in the Beetaloo Basin³

People exposed to oil and gas operations experience a long list of harms.⁴ These include:

² https://www.ecnt.org.au/submission_to_ntepa_on_middle_arm_sustainable_development_precinct_referral

³ <https://www.abc.net.au/.../nt-doctors-parents.../102698970>

⁴

https://theconversation.com/health-evidence-against-gas-and-oil-is-piling-up-as-governments-turn-a-blind-eye-212459?fbclid=IwAR0hY-AxUabDUeNljKixsD9efoEkz6yWLyasRISl35sEte_Pt3F8UbCuPMM

- more severe asthma in children requiring more medical treatment, emergency department visits and hospitalisations
- higher hospitalisation and death rates due to heart attacks, heart failure, respiratory diseases and some cancers
- higher injury and fatality rates due to increased heavy vehicle traffic
- increases in depression, anxiety and social withdrawal, especially among young and pregnant women
- increases in sexually transmitted infections associated with the industry's mobile workforces
- reproductive harms and interference with development of unborn babies, including higher risks of low birth weight, pre-term delivery and spontaneous abortion
- higher risk of severe birth defects
- higher risk of acute lymphoblastic leukemia.

Pollutant	MASDP scenario estimated annual total	Increase in emissions vs region* or territory**
Carbon Monoxide	34770.97 (Tonnes)	805%*
PM2.5 Primary	633.05 (Tonnes)	513%*
PM10 Primary	501.83 (Tonnes)	391%*
Sulfur Dioxide	1278.82 (Tonnes)	245%*
Volatile Organic Compounds	4753.8 (Tonnes)	233%*
Nitrogen Oxides	4852.89 (Tonnes)	192%*
Greenhouse Gases (CO2e)	15.52451 (Megatonnes)	75%**

Cultural heritage impacts

The Federal funding commitment to the Middle Arm industrial precinct was made without consultation with Larrakia families. The peninsula is a site of immense cultural significance to the Larrakia people. Larrakia leaders have warned that the development of the Middle Arm industrial precinct could lead to “another Jukaan gorge”, and lead to the destruction of important sites.

Eric Fejo’s statement was read at the rally on 8 August:

“Against the interests of the Larrakia people, the Federal Government...have partnered with the Northern Territory Government and a private consortium to develop a liquified gas and petrochemical plant at Middle Arm.

They have not recognized or respected Larrakia people, nor have they protected the natural environment and they have not genuinely engaged with Larrakia people over these developments.

...We must ensure that government and industry prevent the long term and indirect consequences of environmental harm including harm to our culture, health, and wellbeing. They are responsible for the damage to our environment and to our health and wellbeing and we must hold them to account.”

Biodiversity impacts

Darwin Harbour is home to very many diverse ecosystems, including intact mangrove systems, coral reefs, mudflats and seagrass beds. It supports high biodiversity and provides habitat for nesting turtles, dolphins, dugongs, migratory shorebirds and fish.

The significant harms, environmental and health, are so devastating that the planned funding should go to NT communities to invest in protecting and safeguarding their futures rather than destroying it.

Yours sincerely

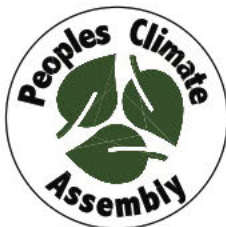
Amy Blain

31 October 2023

Peoples Climate Assembly

The Peoples Climate Action Coalition T/A Peoples Climate Assembly (PCA) is a coalition of various climate groups including Australian Parents for Climate Action Canberra, 350/Move Beyond Coal Canberra, the ACF Community Canberra, Climate Action Canberra, Conservation Council ACT Region, and Extinction Rebellion ACT. The PCA is an organisation that believes we need to Act Now to reach zero emissions at emergency speed.

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Action is the antidote to despair

The Peoples Climate Assembly acknowledges that we live on the stolen land of the Indigenous people of Australia. We acknowledge the Ngunawal and Ngambri people, the traditional custodians of the land on which Canberra is situated. Their sovereignty was never ceded. We pay our deepest respects to our nation's First Peoples and to Elders, past and present.