

My name is Olivia Conan-Davies and I am here on a personal capacity but speak as an emergency and flight nurse working here in the Territory.

I am deeply concerned about the health impacts of the proposed Middle Arm development primarily due to its impact on our air quality. My key concern is the pressure this will place on our healthcare system that is already struggling to safely treat the high disease burden we face in the Territory.

We have the highest rates of respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease and preterm labour in the country. The causes of these chronic conditions are often complex and multifactorial but they are all exacerbated by inhaling poor quality air. There are noticeable spikes in Emergency presentations during these periods, particularly for asthma. The World Health Organisation calls air pollution the greatest environmental risk to health.

The Territory's healthcare system is not coping with this burden of disease. People are waiting unacceptably long in Emergency Waiting rooms and staff are burning out under the constant pressure. I believe this is because as nurses we are being put in the uncomfortable position of being unable provide adequate healthcare to our increasing and critically unwell patient-load.

The Royal Darwin Emergency Department is the only ED in the country to "double-bunk", meaning they put 2 patients in the 1 treatment bay. This is really unsafe because the documentation between these 2 patients can get easily confused, there is only one set of monitoring for the 2 patients and there is absolutely no infection control or privacy between them.

Despite having the highest rates of preterm births, the Territory was recently unable to staff its neonatal intensive care unit, meaning all babies of 32 weeks or less were being flown interstate for care. This denies families the opportunity to be close to loved ones and country during such a significant time, is high risk to the patient and costs the government an astronomical amount. It is unethical and impractical; we need to address the root causes of this system failure, not add to its burden.

Despite these unsafe conditions, I believe the hospital staff are doing an incredible job trying to manage with inadequate resources. As the largest workforce in the Territory, I believe we deserve better conditions.

I implore you to consider the effects that additional air pollution will have on our population's health and our healthcare system's ability to keep-up.