

28 October 2021

**Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Amendment (Economic Empowerment) Bill 2021**

To the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committees,

The serious concerns that I have with the changes to the Economic Empowerment Bill include the fact that there was a rush to pass these new laws. This is deeply troubling as it does not allow for a reasonable time period for Traditional Aboriginal owners in the Northern Territory to have the time to go through and understand the nature and purpose of any amendments and as a group, and then give their consent. Additionally, any Aboriginal communities or groups that may be directly or indirectly affected by the changes must be consulted and given adequate opportunity to express their views.

Secondly, it is stated that the Aboriginal people are represented but what about their involvement in the co-design and representation in the bill. However, there is no record in the public domain about what has been agreed in the co-design process or if this is documented in some transparent agreement. This does not stack up. Exactly how has it been co-designed?

There are also obvious floors in the process as the Senate enquiry is largely inaccessible to the people it is impacting. Again, things have been rushed with inadequate time for those affected to raise concerns or become more involved. Native Title has also not been addressed.

When making these decisions, economic, cultural, and social aspirations of the people are hugely important and must be considered. The benefit that indigenous landowners have from mining on their lands is drastically inadequate and disproportional to the profits of the mining companies. There are many alternatives to mineral extraction which do not destroy the land in the NT. The negative environmental consequences of mining are widely known. Land should be managed with primary concern for biodiversity and cultural importance, not for its mineral productivity.

Economic empowerment should align with what Aboriginal people actually want. To know what they want requires the opportunity for them to voice this. Assumptions must not be made on their behalf.

There are just a few of the concerns that I have relating to the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Amendment (Economic Empowerment) Bill 2021.

We trust that these matters will be given your serious consideration and will be investigated thoroughly.

Kind regards,  
Camille Hanrahan-Tan