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Dear Committee Secretary,

Submission to the Environment and Communications References Committee Inquiry into the Middle Arm Industrial Precinct.

We wish to start by acknowledging the tireless advocacy of many individuals and organisations who fought for this Inquiry. We thank them for ensuring greater oversight and accountability, as well as the opportunity for broader community input, regarding the proposed Middle Arm Industrial Precinct.

Australian Youth Climate Coalition

The Australian Youth Climate Coalition ('AYCC') is Australia's largest youth-led not-for-profit organisation. We act as an independent, non-profit, non-partisan organisation, building a generation-wide movement to create just solutions to the climate crisis by educating, inspiring, empowering and mobilising young Australians around the issue. Our organisation currently has over 200,000 supporters and dozens of local grassroots groups all around Australia.

We write this submission as the AYCC Darwin group, representing the voices of young people in Darwin and surrounding areas.

Summary

We seek to highlight the voices of young people in Darwin and their concerns regarding the Middle Arm Industrial Precinct. Darwin has the youngest population of all capital cities in Australia [1], and as young people we seek to have our voices heard.

We are growing up in a climate crisis – we are living through intense heatwaves, massive bushfires, and record-breaking floods.

We will grow old in a climate crisis – Darwin is predicted to be unlivable by 2070 [2]. The safest option will be to leave. For some, this won't be an option.

The NT Government betrays its young people when it actively seeks out and undertakes developments that expand and further entrench polluting and extractive industries. They know the reality; they know that our futures are being sacrificed. They are not listening.

As young people living in Darwin, we hold a different vision for the future of our home. We want investment in the needs of the community, like health and education, rather than in a gas hub. Our communities deserve better. All of us want clean air and water, a healthy environment, and a safe future to grow up in.

We demand that the federal government take strong action to stop fossil fuel expansion, and that includes stopping this development at Middle Arm.

We emphasise three key points:

1. There must be a full and thorough environmental, climate and health impacts assessment of industrial expansion at Middle Arm - including climate and health impacts of gas extraction in the Beetaloo and Barossa basins.
2. Free, prior and informed consent of Larrakia Traditional Owners must be obtained for the precinct, whatever the configuration of industries at the site.
3. Public money should not be handed out to gas corporations for the expansion of the fossil fuel industry.

There must be a full and thorough environmental, climate and health impacts assessment of industrial expansion at Middle Arm - including climate and health impacts of gas extraction in the Beetaloo and Barossa basins.

Darwin, our home, is being treated as a sacrifice zone by the rest of the country and by the gas industry. The health of our communities, and the liveability of Darwin, are under threat by this project [3]. The Morrison Government committed almost \$2 Billion to Middle Arm with no climate impact analysis and no public health analysis.

Climate impacts

It is clear that Middle Arm is a gas expansion project. Freedom of information requests show that Middle Arm's business case was heavily focused on Middle Arm's potential as a 'new gas demand centre' which would help unlock gas extraction in the Beetaloo and Barossa basins [4]. The project includes the expansion of gas export facilities and infrastructure that the former government cited as being required for gas extraction in the Beetaloo basin [5].

Gas is a dangerous fossil fuel that will worsen the climate crisis, threatening our communities for decades to come. An assessment report by environmental health and policy scientist Michael D. Petroni found Middle Arm would have significant climate impacts and become the single largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in the NT, increasing total annual NT emissions by approximately 75% [6].

Young people in Darwin have the most to lose from climate change, yet we are not being listened to when we voice our concerns over Middle Arm. From extreme heat to

devastating floods, we are already feeling the impact of climate change, and we fear what is to come if we don't halt gas production now.

Health impacts

The Petroni report also found the industrial development at Middle Arm would have significant climate and health impacts, including increasing air pollution and cancer risk several times over [7]. According to a 2020 review of 16 epidemiological studies, communities living within 5km of petrochemical facilities had a 30% higher chance of developing leukaemia [8].

These risks increase dramatically for young people. Studies have shown that children living near gas operations in the US have higher rates of low birth weight, birth defects, childhood cancers, and respiratory conditions [9]. Palmerston is just 3km away from Middle Arm, with more than half the population aged under 29 [10].

Free, prior and informed consent of Larrakia Traditional Owners must be obtained for the precinct, whatever the configuration of industries at the site.

As young people living, working and studying on Larrakia Country, we stand with Larrakia people. We cannot achieve a safe climate future without justice and self-determination for First Nations people, who have been caring for Country for tens of thousands of years.

The Federal funding commitment to the Middle Arm industrial precinct was made without consultation with Larrakia families [11]. The peninsula is a site of immense cultural significance to the Larrakia people, including some of the only remaining petroglyphs in Darwin, thought to be the only Larrakia rock art to have survived colonisation.

Since the funding was first announced, Traditional Owners have voiced opposition to the development. Larrakia Elders and senior people have spoken on the potential harms of Middle Arm, including to the rock art. They were also critical of the lack of consultation and consent. In a statement to the Guardian in May 2023, Larrakia Elder Bill Risk said “you want to talk about free, prior and informed consent? There isn't any. We haven't been spoken to. We would say quite clearly we do not want it. They haven't reached out. They haven't spoken to us.” [12]

Public money should not be handed out to gas corporations for the expansion of the fossil fuel industry.

We call on the Inquiry to recommend that no public money supports the construction of infrastructure that will be used for the benefit of the gas industry at Middle Arm.

The federal \$1.9 billion stake must not benefit gas companies or the gas industry if the Albanese Government is to keep to its existing climate and industry policy commitments.

As demonstrated by freedom of information documents, the funding promised for Middle Arm by the Commonwealth is shown to be a fossil fuel subsidy, and will directly fund the gas industry [13]. American gas company Tamboran has even used the federal stake in Middle Arm as a selling point for investors in their Beetaloo fracking project [14]. Public money should be used for public good, not to prop up destructive gas. Communities on the ground - particularly those already living with the impacts of fossil fuel extraction and/or experiencing extreme weather due to the climate crisis - would receive far greater benefit from the public money intended for the gas industry.

Seeing billions of dollars used to fund fossil fuels is a slap in the face to young people in Darwin struggling with a rising cost of living. Darwin has amongst the highest youth unemployment rates in the country [15], and we are being shut out of essential services, with healthcare across the Territory closing affordable bulk billing options [16], and the soaring rental market quickly becoming out of reach to young people. A 2022 report found that people on youth allowance could not afford a single rental or even share-house in the NT [17]. We need investment in the future of our community, not the gas industry.

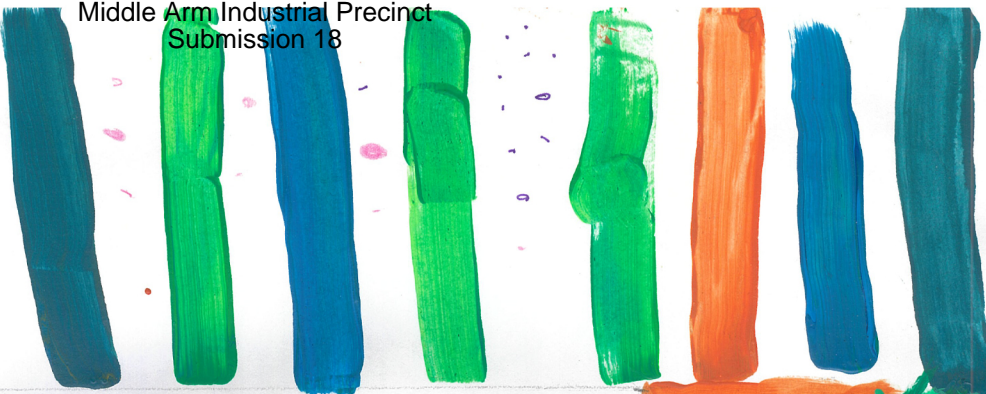
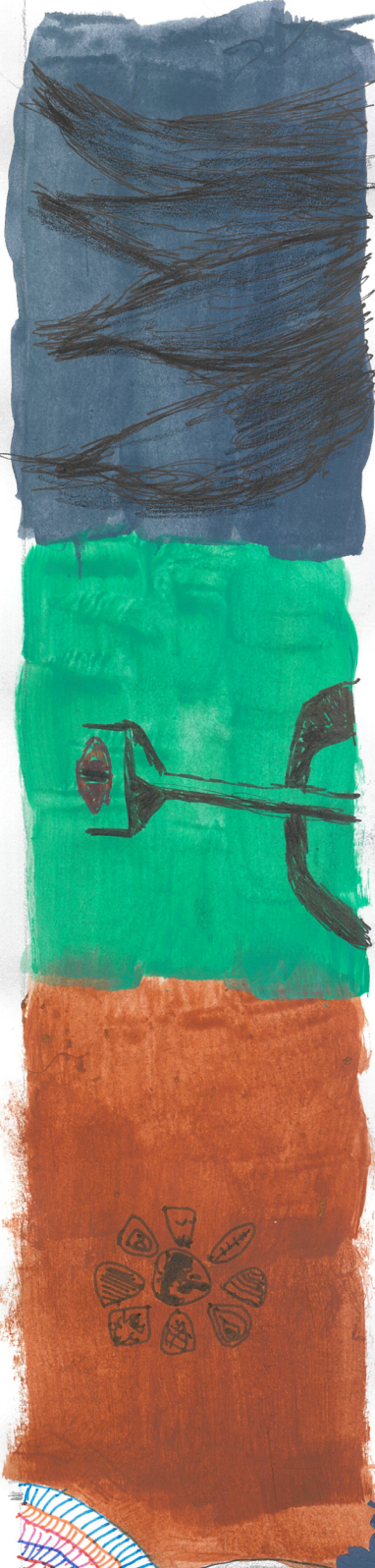
Young people across the country have demonstrated time and time again that we want an end to all fossil fuels subsidies. This is an opportunity to listen to our call. We ask that the committee consult with Traditional Owners and the local Northern Territory community on the best use of the \$1.9 billion investment.

We demand that the federal government protects our future by ending all public subsidies towards fossil fuel expansion at Middle arm, ensuring that any development at Middle Arm is conditional on the full, prior and informed consent of Larrakia people, and ensuring that a thorough assessment is conducted of climate and health impacts of industrial expansion at Middle Arm.

We have attached an artwork with quotes from young people in Darwin, alongside submissions from our members and supporters from across the Northern Territory, articulating their opposition to the proposed development at Middle Arm.

Yours Sincerely,

Al Cabry,
Volunteer, Australian Youth Climate Coalition Darwin



I grew up 5 minutes away from the proposed Middle Arm Industrial Precinct. I have memories of going down to Elizabeth River, fishing off the bridge and watching the sunset. When I think of what I love about Darwin, it's places like these. When I first learned about the Government's plans to industrialise Middle Arm, I was shocked. As I've learned more about this development - the publicly funded gas lobbying and Federal subsidies, the lack of consultation with Larrakia people, the green washing - the shock has well and truly worn off. We don't need a gas hub at Middle Arm. We need to protect these places for the benefit of our community now, and into the future. - **Al, 26**

As a medical student, I'm very concerned about the impact of the development on the health of our community. It's also very concerning and sad that community voices are being ignored and shut out when we will be the most immediately impacted, and the ones left to deal with the fallout. - **Rochelle, 28**

I've lived here my whole life. I love the wildlife and I've made it my being to share that love with other people. We could have such an awesome industry built around sharing knowledge of land and culture but instead we are destroying for a cheap buck. - **Alex, 26**

It's just really sad. - **Abbey, 25**

It's disappointing that they are going through with this when they promised us a greener future. It's already so uncomfortable to live here because of the effects of climate change, and the Middle Arm Project will make it worse or make it unlivable in the NT as time goes on. - **Sithum, 17**

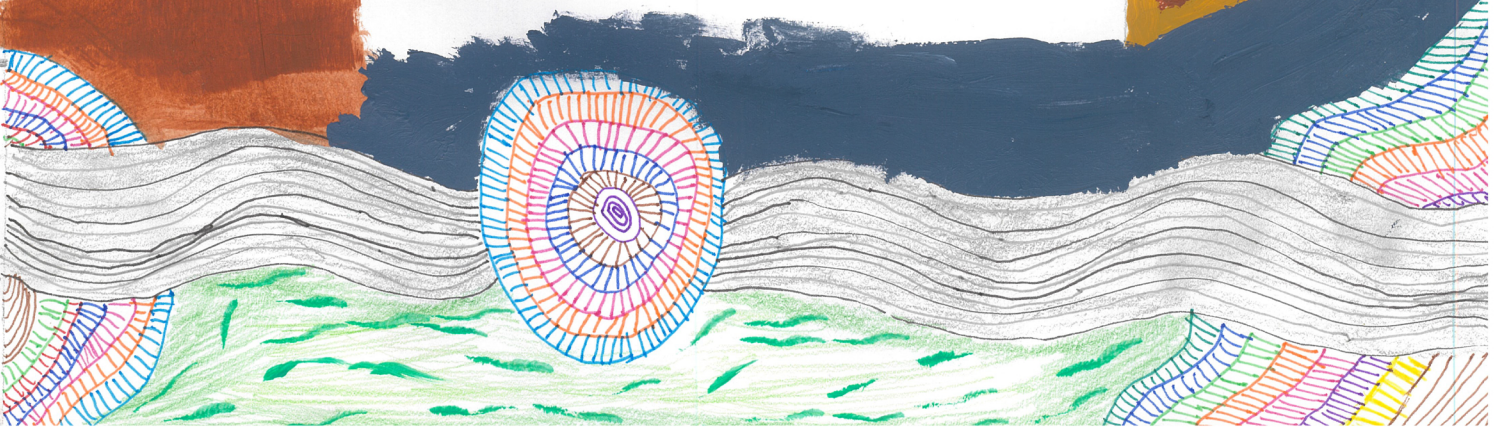
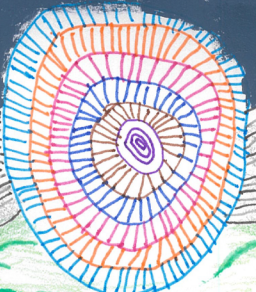
I am disgusted, appalled, and not in the least bit shocked that our government continues to show such brazen disregard for young and future generations. The expansion of Middle Arm Gas Precinct is another giant leap towards an international climate disaster that can not be allowed to go ahead. Our climate is passed its tipping point and Middle Arm will be another deep wound in our fragile ecosystem. The climate inaction of previous administrations continue to inform my vote and I hope you will not continue their legacy. -

I should be worrying about homework, not worrying about the climate. I want to enjoy being a kid! - **Haileybury student, 9**

My family legit came to Darwin from overseas because it was so pretty. I don't think I'll hang around after graduating now. - **Haileybury student, 13**

Why are they building Middle Arm? Aren't we trying to stop climate change? - **Student, 9**

I am deeply concerned about the impact of the Middle Arm Gas hub not only on the local ecosystem and the wellbeing of the community in Darwin, but also because of the potential for it to contribute to a dramatic increase in Australia's greenhouse gas emissions if it goes ahead. In the midst of a climate emergency, we need to stop creating new infrastructure that contributes to increasing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, and instead move our focus towards renewable energy sources that will help to ensure we have a safe and liveable planet into the future. - **Elly, 25**





Dear Committee Members,

I am totally opposed to the Gas Hub at Middle Arm. It will increase damaging climate change, pollute beautiful Darwin Harbour and be detrimental to human health. I live in Alice Springs and we will be getting extremely hot weather this summer and are surrounded by bushfires. It will be unlivable here if the gas industry gets the green light in Darwin.

Yours sincerely,
Margaret McHugh,
Alice Springs, Northern Territory, 0870

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Georgina Landy, I am from Alice Springs and I am lodging a submission to the senate inquiry into the Middle Arm Industrial Hub. I am very concerned that the government is looking to spend over a billion dollars of public money to use fossil fuels and add to climate change. It concerns me that Indigenous groups have not been adequately consulted and that this project could increase risk of harm to people and affect water supplies. The government should not be investing in any projects that contribute to climate change. The effects of climate change are already costing billions, causing massive upheaval, and affecting quality of life. The government must take a stronger stance on lessening Australia's impact on climate change. It is negligent not to do so. Thank you for listening.

Yours sincerely,
Georgina Landy
Alice Springs, Northern Territory, 0870

Dear Committee Members,

Fracking of the Beetaloo Basin should not proceed. The gas released is too great a price to pay for climate change. The NT Govt requires all omissions burnt in Australia to be offset. We know that is impossible. Instead all gas will be shipped offshore where we are not responsible for emissions offsets. It is a cop out. We must be responsible global citizens and not extract Beetaloo gas. Let's pursue other NT economic opportunities to boost our economy.

Yours sincerely,



Glenn Marshall
Alice Springs, Northern Territory, 0870

Dear Committee Members

Yet another petition to save our water, our country, our very lives. I too live within the radius of harm the Middle Arm gas hub will inflict on Darwin and Palmerston populations.

It is unconscionable. I understand the gas companies, miners, huge corporations whose only motive is profit. Those who benefit do not have to live with the consequences. Their wealth will probably save them from the worst consequences of climate change and they obviously do not care about Country, ecology, diversity, health and well being of Top End populations, or indeed anyone but themselves.

A week ago we all had an object lesson on the perverse outcomes money can buy. I hope with all my heart that you are among the few in public life who feel a duty to support and deal honourably with the people who call this place home.

None of us should have to deal with the well known, inevitable and tragic health outcomes. Our environment should not be trashed. Climate change will wreak havoc way past the here and now.

Just stop these insane developments.
Please.

Yours sincerely,
Janet Nixon
Coolalinga, Northern Territory, 839

Dear Committee members,

My name is Jonathan Graham, I am a long term resident of the Northern Territory and I wish to make a submission to the senate inquiry into the Middle Arm Industrial Hub.

There are several reasons why this hub should not even be considered as a viable project.

First and foremost has to be the massive increase in carbon and other emissions that will further exacerbate climate change. Climate change is the greatest threat to the future viability of Planet Earth as a place for life to exist. The Middle Arm hub would make several, highly damaging fossil fuel projects far more likely to become viable, for example, fracking in the Beetaloo basin.

Secondly, there is no support from either Traditional Owners or the General Public for this project. The vast majority of people do not want to see further expansion of the fossil fuel industry in the midst of a climate crisis. The government are elected by the people and should therefore be listening to and guided by their electorate's views.

For the Labor government to uphold the previous government's plan to gift almost \$2 billion of public money is completely outrageous and is hugely insulting to the people of Australia.

As a final note I would ask this senate inquiry to apply a simple risk management matrix to the issue of expanding the fossil fuel industry within the context of a climate crisis. As a teacher I am very familiar with risk management. In this instance the consequences would be considered cataclysmic (i.e. end of life on earth) and the likelihood almost certain (any credible scientist predicts that without fundamental change, i.e. stopping burning fossil fuels then climate change will continue to accelerate and eventually make the planet inviable for life). An equivalent proposal in a school context would be to ask to take a group of Preschoolers to the beach and leave them there unattended for the day. What sane School Principal would approve that excursion?

Our government has approved something that will cause vastly more harm and on a global scale simply because the fossil fuel industry wants to keep making lots of money. This is wrong and I ask in the strongest terms that this project be stopped. Thankyou for reading my submission.

Yours sincerely,
Jonathan Graham
Jingili, NT, 0810

Dear committee members,

As a mother of two young Territorians I am extremely concerned about any fossil fuel developments that would contribute to making the planet unliveable for my children and future generations.

The Middle Arm's development presents a clear and present danger to the climate. Its main aim is to help the gas industry expand. If built, it would accelerate some of Australia's biggest gas projects, and become a source of demand for gas and other hydrocarbons from the Beetaloo Basin, Santos' highly emitting Barossa gas project and others in the Timor Sea, as well as Inpex's proposed expansion.

I work daily with Central Australian Aboriginal communities whose residents will feel the impacts of global boiling first and worst, despite having contributed the least to the climate crisis. Heat waves, water shortages and more extreme flooding could force many of them off their land, sever their connection with songlines, stories and sites and making them refugees in their own country.

The NT Labor government seems determined to push the Middle Arm project through in spite of the objections, and without the prior informed consent, of the Larrakia traditional owners of the site.

Gudanji, Yanyuwa, Garrwa, Jingili, Mudburra and Alawa traditional owners have also opposed gas extraction from the Beetaloo Basin and Barossa gas field. In 2021, members of these groups wrote an open letter to Parliament, noting the lack of full consultation by gas companies.

I object strongly to the NT Labor government's \$1.9 billion contribution to Middle Arm. Public money should fund clean and affordable renewable energy, healthcare, education, and climate change mitigation and resilience rather than subsidise the big fossil fuel polluters.

Finally, while I live in Alice Springs, I oppose the Middle Arm development on health grounds. The documented risk of significantly increased fine particulate air pollution in the Darwin region, potentially increasing cancer risk and adversely impacting the health of my fellow Territorians in Darwin and Palmerston. Studies have shown that communities living within five kilometres of petrochemical facilities had a 30% higher chance of developing leukaemia than those living further away. Palmerston is just three kilometres away from Middle Arm. Nobody's health should suffer for the profit of fossil fuel companies.

Yours sincerely,
Elke Wiesmann
Alice Springs, Northern Territory, 0870

Dear committee members,

The NT Government's support for the toxic Middle Arm industrialisation project is deeply misguided, misconceived and against the interests of the NT community and wider Australian community.

It is a last-century fossil fuel-based mega industrialisation project being misleadingly presented as a modern 'circular economy' vision - without any foundation. A large number of the 'dozens of studies' that the NT government claims underpin the project have not been released.

The idea was cooked up by a small group of businessmen and ex-politicians with financial vested interests related to the project. It was then 'sold' to a desperate and clueless NT government as a means to reach the completely unrealistic and arbitrary goal of a '\$40 billion economy by 2030'.

The project is based on huge subsidies, direct and indirect, and cost-externalisation, which mean it will be paid for by NT and national taxpayers and future generations. Any profits will, as usual, largely accrue to offshore entities. Companies will use all the available loopholes to avoid paying royalties or taxes. Tamboran Resources is likely to sell its proposed LNG project to offshore interests like Saudi Aramco which actually have the finance and expertise to build and operate such a facility.

The proposed CCUS hub that CSIRO is promoting, to its lasting shame, is economically and environmentally implausible but is being used as cover to make it appear the whole Middle Arm project will magically be 'carbon neutral' or 'net zero'. At best it is mere greenwashing by CSIRO. At worst it is deliberate and calculated misconduct by CSIRO which ought to be separately investigated.

None of this makes any sense in a world experiencing a climate crisis and a Territory experiencing social, economic, climate and governance breakdown. The Commonwealth government should not be providing any financial or regulatory support to Middle Arm. If it has a spare \$1.5 billion to spend on the NT there are many far more urgent, important and socially and economically beneficial ways to use it.

CSIRO should be directed to immediately halt its involvement in and support for the illusory CCUS component of Middle Arm.

Yours faithfully
Peter Robertson
Ludmilla
Darwin 0820



Dear committee members,

Middle Arm's primary function is to enable expansion of the gas industry. If built, this hub would accelerate some of Australia's biggest gas projects, becoming a foundational demand source for gas and other hydrocarbons from the Beetaloo Basin, or offshore in the Timor Sea including Santos' highly emitting Barossa gas project and Inpex's proposed expansion from 2030.

Gas is a dangerous fossil fuel that will worsen the climate crisis, threatening our communities for decades to come. Communities in the NT will feel this first and worst - heat waves, water shortages and more extreme flooding could force many remote communities off their country, and make large parts of the NT unliveable.

The Petroni report found the industrial development at Middle Arm would have significant adverse climate and health impacts, including significantly increased fine particulate air pollution in the Darwin region, potentially increasing cancer risk and adversely impacting the health of Darwin and Palmerston residents. According to a 2020 review of 16 epidemiological studies, communities living within 5km of petrochemical facilities had a 30% higher chance of developing leukaemia. Palmerston is just 3km away from Middle Arm. Middle Arm's development is opposed by Larrakia Traditional Owners. In May 2023, Larrakia Elders and senior people spoke of the potential harms of Middle Arm. They were also critical of the lack of consultation and consent. Larrakia Elder Bill Risk said "you want to talk about free, prior and informed consent? There isn't any. We haven't been spoken to. We would say quite clearly we do not want it. They haven't reached out. They haven't spoken to us."

Gas extraction from the Beetaloo Basin and Barossa gas field have also both faced opposition from Traditional Owners and local communities. In 2021, Gudanji, Yanyuwa, Garrwa, Jingili, Mudburra and Alawa Traditional Owners presented an open letter to Parliament, noting the lack of full consultation by gas companies. In the open letter, they say that gas companies have failed to "follow proper process in consultation with us, failed to acquire consent, failed to provide transparency in their dealings with us, and have systematically excluded our voices from the decision-making process for activities on our Country"

The planet is seriously overheating and such projects will prevent our children and theirs from leading a healthy life.

Yours sincerely,

John Smith

Buffalo Creek, Northern Territory, 812

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