

## Submission to the Inquiry into the Protecting the Spirit of Sea Country Bill

I support the Bill.

When any developments or projects are planned, local communities should have a right to be consulted and to have a say on whether such projects are reasonable for their area. This can include any social or environmental impacts from the project.

Australian Indigenous people have a special and deep connection with the land and sea. This can include underwater cultural heritage, which are importantly granted more protections under the Bill. It is also pertinent to consider the history of dispossession and violence directed against Indigenous people across the history of Australian colonisation. Having projects occur on their traditional lands or seas, or areas in which they live, without being consulted or have control on what happens, would likely exacerbate the trauma of this legacy.

Amid the climate crisis, in which Indigenous people are also on the frontline of seeing its impacts on their lives and their traditional land and seas, we should also be critical and scrutinise petroleum and gas projects – both on their local impacts and the ongoing impacts of fossil-fuel driven climate change.

Fundamentally, the Bill underpins the principle that people should have local autonomy and a say on what affects them. Given the appalling lack of consultation, or only brief cursory consultation, taken by fossil fuel companies when planning projects such as in the Tiwi Islands, there needs to be much more mandatory consultation with Indigenous communities.

Kind Regards.

Benjamin Cronshaw.