

14 June 2024



Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to present to you today.

At the heart of the matter the Federal Government's \$1.5bn Darwin infrastructure commitment is the question of opportunity cost.

The Federal investment can only be spent once, and as such it needs to be invested prudently and in a way which will deliver the greatest benefits to the NT community and aligns with national priorities of the Future Made in Australia Act and emissions reduction targets.

A choice needs to be made about which port precinct will be invested in, which types of industries, clean or fossil, will be supported, and which types of jobs, local or FIFO, will be encouraged.

We can choose to invest in growing the existing port precinct in East Arm which already has key enabling infrastructure like rail, truck, common user facilities, bulk and container loading facilities and a thriving business sector. Investing in East Arm would make it a competitive clean industrial precinct and provide economies of scale, industrial proximity, and the opportunity to capitalise on shared infrastructure to make local industry competitive.

Or we can choose to invest in Middle Arm which will in contrast, create a diseconomy of scale, make Darwin industry less competitive, deliver no benefit or growth opportunity for the existing industrial sector and split finite resources across two port locations.

We face a choice about supporting the growth of local employers and industry in the Small to Medium Enterprises sector as well as supporting households and businesses tackle the cost of living crisis, versus a choice of subsidising infrastructure for wealthy gas companies which are predominantly foreign owned.

We face a choice about creating well paid jobs for local tradies, manufacturers and educators, versus a choice of creating work for predominantly FIFO construction workers and highly paid gas lobbyists.

Finally, we face a choice about creating a low emissions highly competitive NT economy that leans into its natural advantages in renewable energy and will provide lasting benefits for generations to come, or a high emissions economy dependent on a gas industry that will pack up and leave once the gas runs out.

Thank you for the opportunity to present today.

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Tom Quinn - Managing Director, Springmount Advisory

