

From: [REDACTED]
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Subject: Project Ares submission - referral and draft Terms of Reference
Date: Friday, 14 August 2026 1:18:59 PM

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As an urban planner, I am making this submission about the proposed Project Ares data centre and gas power station at Murrarji Station.

As someone trained in land-use-change assessments in urban and regional environments, I have a professional interest in the development of these projects country-wide. We know that many of these projects are considered at the Federal, State and Territory level without input from local experts, and before the introduction of federal or state research-informed industry standards and regulations with regards to these new land uses. As we grapple with the introduction of this new technology to our environment and economy, and as many of the companies behind these projects move towards IPO funding whilst still operating at a financial loss, it becomes critical for professionals to not be swept up in the fever-pitch of this industry's marketing and assess its real impacts carefully and properly so that future generations are not left with a financial or environmental debt that we cannot pay.

Lake Woods lies downstream of this project, in the same catchment, and supports enormous numbers of bird life. Nothing in the referral examines what the project's runoff and creek crossings would do to it. The Terms of Reference should require assessment of the project's impacts on Lake Woods and the creeks that feed it, as well as creek corridors and downstream areas that remain unsurveyed, across appropriate seasonal changes.

The project depends on an off-site gas pipeline and shares water and infrastructure with a separate ammonia project, yet these are being treated as separate matters. I ask that the NT EPA require that the whole project and its connected parts to be assessed together rather than piece by piece.

Up to 19,150 hectares, a footprint about 14 km across, could be cleared or disturbed under what is proposed.

The urban heat island effect created by buildings in local ecosystems should also be considered as part of a whole land-use change. Not only is this ecosystem's micro-climate going to be affected by clearance, but what remains of the flora and fauna will be dealing with a rise in localised temperatures from the large scale of the building and its use as an activity which requires massive cooling systems to operate while managing an ongoing risk of fire. This may represent a rise in heat-related illness risks to any human life on-site, or heat- or fire-related risks of damage to local significant landscapes. As climate change leads to increased temperatures on a global scale, when it comes to local micro-climates, every little bit makes a difference and should be considered very seriously. I ask the NT EPA to require that the assessment be carried out against the full maximum footprint, with any later reduction made a binding condition of approval rather than an assumption.

I ask the NT EPA to ensure these matters are required in the Terms of Reference and assessed in full before any decision is made. Thank you for considering my submission.

Rhydian Kelly