

From: [REDACTED]
To: [ntepa.epa](#)
Cc: [Das.NTG](#)
Subject: Project Ares submission - referral and draft Terms of Reference
Date: Wednesday, 19 August 2026 3:51:57 PM

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As a Territory resident and a birdwatcher, based in Darwin, I am writing to object to the proposed Project Ares data centre and gas power station at Murrniji Station.

Yes, I have visited the region frequently to look for wildlife. I've seen Greater Painted Snipes in the region along with a plethora of other semi arid birds including yellow chats and freckled ducks. The incredible biodiversity of this place should be looked after and the environmental stability should not be squandered. The species found throughout some of the specialist habitats of this region are endemic and likely depend on adequate groundwater.

The project's creeks drain about 80 km to Lake Woods, a nationally important wetland that fills with up to 116,000 waterbirds. The referral admits the connection but has not assessed the downstream effect. The project should not be signed off until the NT EPA requires assessment of the project's impacts on Lake Woods and the creeks that feed it.

A gas power station of around 1,000 MW would be built to run this data centre, larger than the Territory's biggest existing station. Where its gas would come from is left unstated, but in this part of the NT that means fracking the Beetaloo. This must not be approved until the NT EPA requires that the source of the gas be disclosed and its full lifecycle emissions assessed, including the upstream fracking.

The Greater Bilby, a Vulnerable species and an Australian icon, is confirmed on the site, and the Grey Falcon and Yellow-spotted Monitor are expected here too. Yet the surveys so far are desktop-only and cover only part of the site. The project should not proceed until the NT EPA requires field surveys for these threatened species across the whole project footprint before any decision on impacts.

Up to 4 billion litres a year would be drawn from the Cambrian Limestone Aquifer for this one project, a large share of the region's allocation, on top of the demands of cotton, petroleum and a co-located ammonia plant on the same water. I oppose this unless the NT EPA requires a full, cumulative assessment of whether this level of groundwater extraction is sustainable before any approval.

Up to 19,150 hectares, a footprint about 14 km across, could be cleared or disturbed under what is proposed. I object unless the NT EPA requires 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.

This is determined native title country with significant cultural heritage, and the engagement needed to understand it has hardly started. The project should not proceed until the NT EPA requires that cultural heritage assessment be led with Traditional Owners through the Northern Land Council, properly resourced, and not rushed by a streamlined timeline.

I do not believe this project should be approved until these matters are fully and independently assessed. I call on the NT EPA to require them in the Terms of Reference before any decision is made. Thank you for considering my submission.

Bryn Pickering
Darwin

Sent from my iPhone