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Subject: Project Ares submission - referral and draft Terms of Reference
Date: Sunday, 9 August 2026 1:00:49 PM

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As a Territory resident, I am writing, with real concern, about the proposed Project Ares data centre and gas power station at Murrarji Station.

I am all for DC and know they are important. That said the nt is in an amazing potion of power right now. Lots of water, space, and energy. These people want it! I just want to make sure we are getting a good deal for now and for my kids in the future. This means we need to look after our resources, especially water. No point giving it away for free when we have a strong negotiating potion. 1. Water plenty (apparently), 2. Energy, 3. Green field dev, 4. Close to Asia. And potentially many more.

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. This worries me, and I ask the NT EPA to require assessment of the project's impacts on Lake Woods and the creeks that feed it.

The project would take up to 4 billion litres of groundwater a year from the Cambrian Limestone Aquifer, about 30% of the water the regional plan makes available to all industry, while other users draw on the same system.

Since water is life!

1. Will they pay for this resource? Just maybe we could actually use this to fund schools and better hospitals.. instead of being told we are broke mainly through our own bad deals. Anyway...
2. Is this a recharging aquifer?
3. If so how much on a good year/wet? And how much in a bad year/wet? Will they have obligations to reduce or stop operations when certain hard limits are reached and recharging can occur?
How confident are they in the 4b litres figure? Did the provide a range and over the operational life?
4. What are their obligations for treating used water? Where will it go? Any hazardous chemicals that are at risk of contamination back to the wet lands/aquifer?
5. What monitoring and reporting obligations will they have or will these be done independently?

I am concerned about this, and ask the NT EPA to require a full, cumulative assessment of whether this level of groundwater extraction is sustainable before any approval.

Project Ares would run on a gas plant of about 1,000 MW, bigger than the Territory's main power station, yet the referral will not say where the gas comes from. In this region, new gas means fracked Beetaloo shale gas.

Are there any alternative conventional fields to use instead of needing to resort to risk fracking?

Importantly are they paying us for this gas resource? Once it's gone, it's gone.

This is a real concern, and I ask the NT EPA to require that the source of the gas be disclosed and its full lifecycle emissions assessed, including the upstream fracking.

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. This is a real concern, and I ask the NT EPA to require that the whole project and its connected parts, including the gas pipeline and the ammonia plant, be assessed together rather than piece by piece.

So far the environmental work is mostly desk research, done without surveying the creek lines or the country downstream in the seasons when it matters. I am worried about this, and ask the NT EPA to require field surveys across the full project footprint, in appropriate seasons, before the scope and level of assessment are locked in.

Up to 19,150 hectares, a footprint about 14 km across, could be cleared or disturbed under what is proposed. I find this troubling, and ask that the NT EPA 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 am worried these matters could be waved through. I ask the NT EPA to require them in the Terms of Reference and to assess them in full before any decision is made. Thank you for considering my submission.

Thanks,
Riaan