

From: [REDACTED]
To: [ntepa.epa](#)
Cc: [Das.NTG](#)
Subject: Project Ares submission - referral and draft Terms of Reference
Date: Saturday, 15 August 2026 11:55:20 PM

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

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 proceed 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. I oppose this unless the NT EPA requires that the source of the gas be disclosed and its full lifecycle emissions assessed, including the upstream fracking.

Threatened wildlife, including the Greater Bilby, has already been recorded here, and other listed species are likely present. The proponent has relied largely on desktop review rather than looking properly on the ground. This must not be approved until the NT EPA requires field surveys for these threatened species across the whole project footprint before any decision on impacts.

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. I oppose this unless the NT EPA requires a full, cumulative assessment of whether this level of groundwater extraction is sustainable before any approval.

Assessing the data centre on its own hides its true footprint: it relies on a gas pipeline and is tied to a neighbouring ammonia project, and splitting these apart understates the combined impact. I object unless the NT EPA requires that the whole project and its connected parts, including the gas pipeline and the ammonia plant, be assessed together rather than piece by piece.

The studies supporting the referral are largely desktop-based and leave the creek corridors and downstream areas unsurveyed. This must not be approved until the NT EPA requires field surveys across the full project footprint, in appropriate seasons, before the scope and level of assessment are locked in.

The project can clear or disturb up to 19,150 hectares, an area roughly 14 km across. 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.

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.

Robert Newland
Darwin River