

Consultation Report

Draft Territory Coordinator Bill



Contents

1. Executive Summary	2
Feedback	2
2. Introduction	3
3. Consultation Process	3
3.1. Consultation Objectives	3
3.2. Methodology	4
3.3. Feedback on consultation process	5
4. Feedback	5
4.1. Intent of the draft Bill	6
4.2. Primary Principle	6
4.3. Safeguards, transparency and accountability	6
4.4. Regulatory effectiveness, efficiency and resource allocation	7
4.5. Scope, including limitations and scheduled legislation	7
4.6. Designating Territory Development Areas, Significant Projects and Programs of Works	7
4.7. Investing in communities	8
5. Next steps	8

1. Executive Summary

The Northern Territory Government consulted on the draft Territory Coordinator Bill (draft Bill) with a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including community groups, land councils, industry bodies, government and regulatory agencies.

Consultation was carried out in two phases:

- Phase 1 focused on early-stage engagement through a consultation paper
- Phase 2 released the draft Bill and *Guide to the Territory Coordinator Bill* (the Guide) for public feedback.

By the end of the consultation period, 321 participants had attended six Community Information Forums across the Northern Territory, 559 written submissions had been received and 89 meetings were held with 267 individuals representing various sectors. Efforts to increase accessibility included the publication of detailed documents, targeted media campaigns, and a dedicated website which received over 2,800 visitors.

These activities aimed to promote understanding of the draft Bill and its objectives and gathered feedback that has informed changes to the Bill before introduction to the Legislative Assembly.

Feedback

Feedback on the draft Bill generally fell into two categories: supportive or critical. Very few people took a neutral stance. Many stakeholders acknowledged the value of a Territory Coordinator to support economic development by streamlining project approvals, attracting investment, and reducing delays. However, others considered that there were risks that the powers contained in the Bill would bypass established regulatory safeguards and prioritise economic objectives over important environmental, social, and cultural considerations.

Many stakeholders identified that Territory Development Areas (TDAs) could significantly improve investor confidence by completing baseline assessments and welcomed the potential to streamline approvals processes and address inefficiencies using prioritisation and progression requests. They sought clarity on the criteria and consultation processes for designating TDAs and significant projects and advocated for strong safeguards and transparency mechanisms to ensure responsible decision making. Drawing on prior experience, stakeholders urged government to support projects and development that would prioritise local training, employment, and build local capacity, which would support the reliability of operations and delivery of local economic benefits. Feedback also emphasised the importance of supporting economic development alongside long term community and environmental sustainability.

A variety of potential implementation challenges were raised including the need to safeguard against consequential delays to projects that could not meet the threshold for designation.

Overall, the consultation underscored the need for a balanced approach that aligns economic growth with social and environmental outcomes. While many stakeholders supported the draft Bill's intent, they highlighted opportunities to strengthen transparency and build public trust in the proposed framework.

2. Introduction

The NT Government has established 'Rebuilding the Economy' as a reform priority and the establishment of the Territory Coordinator as a key element of this agenda. The Territory Coordinator is intended to act as a strategic intermediary between government agencies and project proponents, providing a single touchpoint across government for complex projects of economic significance for the Territory.

The objective is that the Territory Coordinator will strengthen the way important and complex projects and significant private investments are handled in the Territory, by driving strategic coordination and addressing hurdles to development.

The Territory Coordinator is proposed to:

1. Fast-track major investments, making it easier for investors to bring big ideas to life.
2. Streamline approvals across government, removing roadblocks to economic progress.
3. Boost the Territory's competitiveness, attracting large-scale investments to fuel growth and development.

In developing the proposed approach to the Territory Coordinator, the Government has drawn on frameworks that exist or are being developed in other jurisdictions including Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia, and refined to reflect the Territory's unique circumstances.

3. Consultation Process

Consultation on the proposed approach to the Territory Coordinator has been delivered over two phases:

- **Phase 1:** On 11 October 2024 a consultation paper was released to government regulators, stakeholders and industry peak bodies as a basis to test key provisions and proposed powers being considered for inclusion in the draft Bill. On 24 October 2024, the consultation paper was released publicly.
- **Phase 2:** On 14 November 2024, a draft Bill and Guide were released to the public, seeking feedback that will inform a revised Bill. Public engagement on the draft Bill closed on 17 January 2025.

3.1. Consultation Objectives

The objectives of consultation were to:

1. Create opportunities for key stakeholders to have input into early-stage concepts and development of a draft Bill.
2. Generate community awareness of the Territory Coordinator role in all regions of the Territory.
3. Seek feedback on the draft Territory Coordinator Bill to shape the final functions and powers of the Territory Coordinator.

3.2. Methodology

The consultation paper released on 11 October considered the current investment landscape, similar models domestically and internationally, and outlined the functions, powers, types of designations and other provisions being considered. It was initially released to government regulators, stakeholders and industry peak bodies as a basis to test key provisions and proposed powers being considered for inclusion in the draft Bill.

During this first phase of the consultation there were 49 meetings with 113 people to gather input on the proposed functions and powers of the Territory Coordinator. The Chief Minister also gave radio interviews with ABC Radio Darwin and Mix 104.9 where the purpose and role of the proposed Territory Coordinator was explained.

On 24 October 2024, the consultation paper was released to the public, with feedback requested by 1 November 2024. This feedback was considered in the development of the draft Bill that was released on 14 November 2024.

The draft Bill presented the legislation being considered in its entirety. This allowed the community to see exactly what was being considered at a greater level of detail than was presented in the earlier consultation paper.

The draft Bill was released with a Guide to clarify the meaning of the draft Bill in more accessible language, and with examples of how it could operate. During the second phase of the consultations:

- 1218 copies of the draft Bill, and 861 copies of the Guide were downloaded between 14 November 2024 and 17 January 2025.
- Three media releases were issued promoting the consultation on the draft Bill, the role of the Territory Coordinator, how people could get more information and provide feedback. More broadly, eight media releases were issued between 18 September 2024 and 17 January 2025 that made reference to the proposed role of the Territory Coordinator with 48 media articles being published by Northern Territory media outlets.
- 11 news articles were published online in the NT News and NT Independent, attracting 112 comments. Approximately 80% of the comments were encouraging or neutral to the draft Bill, while 20% were discouraging.
- Community Information Forums were promoted through paid advertising on radio, newspapers and social media. The social media ads generated a total of 92 037 impressions to 35 474 people and 671 clicks on the link. The link took people to the Territory Coordinator website where they could register to attend a forum or get additional information on the draft Bill.
- 2 849 people visited the website 4 589 times between 11 October 2024 and 17 January 2025. During this period, 66 copies of the consultation paper, 1 218 copies of the draft Bill and 861 copies of the Guide were downloaded.
- A combined total of 321 people attended 5 Community Information Forums hosted by the interim Territory Coordinator, held in Palmerston, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs, Nhulunbuy in addition to an online forum.

- Additional stakeholder engagement meetings were held with 154 people from 40 stakeholder groups (including 5 government agencies, 10 industry peak bodies and 25 other stakeholder groups).



Darwin and Palmerston Community Information Forum

3.3. Feedback and consultation process

There was a variety of feedback on the consultation process. Many stakeholders welcomed the opportunity to understand and provide feedback on the legislation, and some highlighted the importance of the face-to-face engagement in regional areas.

Community Information Forum attendance registers and feedback forms showed that most attendees were local to the area. There was low feedback form return rates at the Tennant Creek (9% of attendees), Online (10%), Katherine (15%) and Nhulunbuy (21%) forums, and higher return rates of feedback forms at the Alice Springs (35%) and Darwin and Palmerston (38%). Of the 81 feedback forms received, 91% were completed by someone identifying as a community member and 23% identifying as a member of a community group or not-for-profit organisation. Less than 16% of people identified as a business owner, employee of interested business or member of an industry peak body.

4. Feedback

Feedback was received through a range of channels:

1. 559 written submissions were received to the OTC.consultation@nt.gov.au email address, comprising 270 campaign emails, 204 submissions from individuals, 43 submissions from a community group or government and 42 submissions from a company or peak body;
2. 89 meetings were held with 267 people from companies, stakeholder groups, industry peak bodies, government and regulatory agencies where feedback and questions were noted;
3. 321 people attended a Community Information Forum where feedback and questions were noted; and
4. 81 feedback forms were received across all community information forums.

Feedback received through written submissions, verbal feedback and questions at stakeholder meetings, at Community Information Forums and via feedback forms is summarised below under key themes.

4.1. Intent of the draft Bill

There was a variety of feedback on the intent of the draft Bill. Very few respondents took a neutral stance. Support and opposition were evident across all feedback sources and stakeholder groups.

Industry stakeholders welcomed the establishment of the Territory Coordinator, viewing it as a commitment to facilitating investment and removing obstacles to large-scale projects. Most supported the draft Bill's goal of enhancing efficiency and certainty in approvals, arguing that delays in individual projects weaken overall economic confidence in the NT. Some industry representatives also emphasised the importance of social licence, cultural values, and environmental safeguards.

In contrast, campaign submissions and feedback from some individual community members opposed the Territory Coordinator role, some citing concerns beyond the scope of the draft legislation.

Common stakeholder recommendations to strengthen the draft Bill included to:

- ensure that the final legislation remains aligned with its original intent of streamlining approvals while maintaining integrity.
- strengthen safeguards, transparency and accountability mechanisms to ensure confidence in the legislation and prevent misuse of powers.
- ensure that social, cultural and environmental outcomes are considered in decision-making.

4.2. Primary Principle

Stakeholders provided a range of feedback on the Primary Principle. Some welcomed its focus on achieving long-term economic prosperity, acknowledging the need for a central guiding principle to drive decision-making. Many industry stakeholders noted that aligning decisions with the Primary Principle could attract investment, foster innovation, and deliver economic benefits to the Territory.

Some stakeholders argued that the Primary Principle and the term 'economic prosperity' were unclear, and that an emphasis on economic prosperity might lead to decisions that neglect broader sustainability goals or fail to account for community, ecological and cultural impacts.

4.3. Safeguards, transparency and accountability

A clear theme from many respondents was the need for clear checks and balances on the exercise of powers by the Territory Coordinator and Minister for Territory Coordinator under the legislation. This included a range of suggestions for increased transparency for key decisions. Several stakeholders articulated a need for periodic reviews of the Territory Coordinator's effectiveness, including suggestions that legislation should be adapted based on outcomes and community feedback. Some stakeholders also saw the implementation phase as an opportunity to refine operational guidelines and address unforeseen challenges.

Most industry stakeholders supported the use of the Territory Coordinator's powers to maintain a business-friendly environment, prevent delays, and ensure decision-making processes remain efficient. They noted that notices issued by the Territory Coordinator could bridge gaps between decision-making body meetings and allow consideration of innovative technologies that current legislation may not accommodate. The ability to seek expert advice on technology application was seen as a positive feature.

4.4. Regulatory effectiveness, efficiency and resource allocation

Many stakeholders saw the range of powers in the draft Bill as a way to streamline government assessments and approvals.

Stakeholders expressed a range of views about prioritisation, progression, and decision requests. Many saw these powers as a way to streamline decision-making and improve government efficiency. For example, many industry stakeholders argued that prioritisation could help direct resources toward high-impact projects, boosting investor confidence. Several stakeholders identified a risk that prioritisation might disadvantage smaller projects.

Some participants sought clarity on the regulations required to operationalise the draft Bill and how they would function in practice.

4.5. Scope, including limitations and scheduled legislation

The status of the *Heritage Act 2011* and *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989* in the draft Bill attracted a variety of comment and were often discussed together.

Several stakeholders supported the removal of the limitation of the use of powers under the draft Bill regarding these Acts, particularly for prioritisation, progression and decision requests. Some suggested all legislation should be included, while others argued to maintain the limitation on powers in relation to both Acts.

Other stakeholder recommendations included to:

- remove the *Nuclear Waste Transport, Storage and Disposal (Prohibition) Act 2004* so the draft Bill cannot create a pathway for the storage of radioactive waste in the Territory.
- remove the *Off-Shore Waters Act 1985* as there are not statutory processes or decisions under that Act that are likely to be relevant to coordinating development outcomes.
- include the *Electricity Reform Act 2000*, as it regulates licensing for electricity generation, is relevant to electricity generating projects and reflects the inclusion of equivalent legislation in similar approaches in other jurisdictions.

4.6. Designating Territory Development Areas, Significant Projects and Programs of Works

Many stakeholders noted that Territory Development Areas (TDAs) could enhance investor confidence by providing baseline assessments of land characteristics and constraints. Industry representatives sought clarity on how project proponents could engage in the designation process and what criteria the Territory Coordinator would consider when declaring a TDA.

Views on the criteria for designation of significant projects and TDAs in the draft Bill differed. Some saw broad definitions (e.g. “economic significance”) as beneficial for attracting diverse investments, while others called for more detailed criteria.

There was also a focus on the coordination of public services alongside significant projects and TDA plans. Several stakeholders emphasised the need for clear infrastructure planning to prevent overlaps or conflicts and sought clarity on consultation processes and time frames within the Bill. Many highlighted the importance of assessing how these designations benefit not just individual projects but the Territory as a whole.

4.7. Investing in communities

The stakeholder consultation process also raised several issues beyond the scope of the draft Bill.

Many stakeholders emphasised the need for major projects to contribute directly to local communities, particularly through workforce development and training programs. There was strong interest in ensuring economic benefits extend beyond shareholders, reflecting a concern that often fly-in-fly-out workforces have not built enduring local capacity or delivered lasting advantages.

Some participants supported a focus on large-scale projects, while others highlighted the importance of also supporting small businesses and local enterprises. Questions were raised about how declaring TDAs and significant projects would affect smaller businesses, both in terms of regulatory approvals and access to broader project benefits. Meaningful community engagement was seen as essential when making decisions on significant projects.

5. Next steps

The Northern Territory Government extends sincere appreciation to everyone who took the time to engage in the consultation in its various forms and for providing feedback and submissions.

Feedback from submissions, stakeholder meetings and forums has been used to inform changes to ensure the revised Bill is fit for purpose prior to introduction to the Legislative Assembly.

