



MEDIA RELEASE: ENVIRONMENT GROUPS WELCOME SENATE REPORT CALLS FOR INQUIRY INTO MIDDLE ARM

The Northern Territory's peak conservation body has welcomed the long-awaited final Senate Report on fracking in the Beetaloo Basin, backing its recommendation for an inquiry into plans to construct a "[new gas demand centre](#)" including petrochemicals factories at Middle Arm in Darwin Harbour, among a suite of other recommendations.

Executive Director of the Environment Centre NT, Kirsty Howey said:

"We welcome the Committee's recommendation for a full-scale Inquiry into the Middle Arm disaster proposed for our iconic and beloved Darwin Harbour."

"Middle Arm is the brainchild of the pro-gas Morrison Government, and oil and gas lobbyists who want to frack the Beetaloo Basin."

"This project, backed by \$1.9 billion of taxpayer money, is strongly opposed by residents of the Northern Territory. Middle Arm, if it goes ahead, will use fracked Beetaloo gas as a feedstock for new gas development and [petrochemicals](#) factories and will be toxic to Territorians' [health](#), harbour and [climate](#)."

"It is nothing short of a fossil fuel subsidy, shoring up the business case for opening up the carbon bomb of the Beetaloo Basin and offshore gas fields like the Barossa."

"This Inquiry is desperately needed due to the murky history behind the development of Middle Arm, the characters and companies who are behind it, and how taxpayer funds have been committed with no environmental impact statement and no cost benefit analysis."

"We look forward to working with the Senate, and with people across the NT, to ensure that the Middle Arm project is subjected to the highest possible scrutiny."

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What is the Middle Arm Sustainable Development Precinct (MASDP)?

The MASDP is a proposal to build a major petrochemical manufacturing and gas processing hub just 3km from homes and schools in the City of Palmerston, and in the middle of Darwin Harbour. In October 2022, the Albanese Government confirmed its commitment to provide \$1.5billion of public funding to the project. The precinct is designed to lock in consumption of fossil fuel gas from the controversial Beetaloo basin, and offshore gas fields.

The proposal is currently being assessed by the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NTEPA) under a strategic environmental assessment process. Chemicals mentioned in the referral documents for the project are ammonia, urea, ethylene, methanol.

Health and environmental risks of petrochemical development in the middle of Darwin Harbour revealed in Petroni report

The report of Dr Michael Petroni is [here](#). It shows plans for a petrochemical precinct proposed in the middle of suburban Darwin could:

- increase industrial fine particulate emissions by 513% in the region, resulting in \$75 million of additional health impacts, **equivalent to 15 additional premature deaths, per year**
- **increase the industrial cancer hazard in the region four-fold** due to releases of formaldehyde, acetaldehyde, polycyclic aromatic compounds (PACs), and additional air toxics
- Lead to an **800% increase** in carbon monoxide releases in the Greater Darwin Region, as well as massive increases in releases of other harmful chemicals that have been linked to heart disease, respiratory conditions, and stroke.
- drive up greenhouse gas emissions in the Territory by 75%, levelling an annual social cost of \$310 million

Dr Michael Petroni is an environmental scientist with expertise in environmental health and risk assessment, with a focus in petrochemical and large manufacturing. He has experience working on health risks from, and pollution prevention solutions for, industrial facilities in the US. Dr Petroni was engaged by the Environment Centre NT to write a report on the Potential Environmental and Human Health Impacts of the Middle Arm Sustainable Development Precinct (MASDP), which was submitted to the NTEPA on the 10th of June.