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6 August 2025

Media release: Inquiry Into Waterfront Corporation Leaves Key Questions Unanswered

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“Last week in Parliament, the Government tabled the Public Accounts Committee’s (PAC) report into the allegations made against the Darwin Waterfront Corporation (DWC).

As the crossbench member of the Committee, I provided a dissenting report to clarify where my position differed from my colleagues at the conclusion of the inquiry. I agreed with the Committee’s finding that the four allegations outlined in the terms of reference could not be substantiated based on the evidence provided. However, I remain concerned that the inquiry process was not robust enough to properly interrogate the issues raised.

The inquiry was called with only a week’s notice. Submissions were limited to four agencies and were provided to the Committee late on Monday before a Tuesday hearing, leaving less than 24 hours to review complex material. Despite being scheduled for two hours, the hearing was concluded 45 minutes early, and key questions remained unanswered.

In our unicameral parliament, committees play a critical role in holding government to account. When they are dominated by Government members, as every parliamentary committee is, and offer no time and no resources are provided to Independent members for inquiries, that role is undermined.

During the inquiry itself, many of my questions went unanswered. I asked whether the Corporation’s conflict of interest register, board minutes, or internal audit reports could be made public. These requests were denied, despite the Darwin Waterfront Corporation receiving approximately \$25 million in public funding annually. I do not believe the public can have confidence in oversight processes where this level of transparency is refused. The consistent lack of supporting documentation prevented the allegations from being meaningfully scrutinised.

Further, the Committee’s terms reference were narrow, and serious questions raised about independent reporting - such as the overlap of board and executive roles across government-owned entities, unadvertised appointments, and governance practices - were not explored.

While I accept the Committee’s conclusion regarding the specific allegations, I do not believe this inquiry has resolved broader concerns about the use of public funds at the DWC. In my view, the inquiry process raised further questions that the public deserves answers to, and I remain committed to pursuing transparency and accountability in the management of public funds.”

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*My dissenting report is available as part of the Committee’s report online at:
<https://parliament.nt.gov.au/committees/list/public-accounts-committee/dwc>*



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