

10th April 2024

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
Parliament House
Ec.sen@aph.gov.au

RE: Middle Arm Industrial Precinct

Dear Committee,

We have come here today because as nurses and midwives we have a duty of care to advocate for patient health and safety.

Our city already has problematic air quality, and the addition of the proposed Middle Arm Precinct will add unsafe levels of pollutants. The Northern Territory has the highest rates of respiratory and cardiovascular disease in the country, as well as preterm labour and neonatal deaths statistics.

Whilst we recognise the causes of poor cardiovascular health, respiratory health and birthing safety are complex and multifactorial, it is an undeniable fact that poor air quality will intensify these issues, leading to an increase in all-cause mortality.

As it stands, our healthcare system is not coping. This year alone we had 444 full-time equivalent nursing & midwifery positions to be filled across the Territory, resulting in staffing shortages so severe that patients shared emergency bed cubicles at our tertiary hospitals and some remote clinics were forced to close. Due to staffing issues alone, we move patient's interstate for care. This is a dangerous and unethical solution that forces vulnerable patients to leave family and country to access healthcare that is available in all other states/territories.

Royal Darwin and Palmerston Hospitals are constantly activating Code Yellow responses, which means all elective surgeries are postponed and beds at the private hospital are loaned to cope with a surge in Emergency presentations. There is no sudden event that has triggered this "surge" – it is the chronically high burden of disease that the hospital is unable to cope with on a day-to-day basis.

We are deeply concerned at the prospect of worsened disease under this system. If Middle Arm precinct goes ahead, we will have to factor for increased emergency presentations and premature births despite being unable to manage at present. As nurses and midwives with a duty of care to patients, we must speak out against a project as harmful as the proposed Middle Arm development.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Hatcher
ANMF NT
Branch Secretary