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Dear Committee Members

Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Northern Australia

Ref : Preparing for emerging industries across Northern Australia

Executive Summary

This submission calls for slowing down the exploitation of critical minerals in Northern Australia to protect fragile ecosystems and uphold First Nations custodianship of Country. It challenges the use of “jobs” as justification for destructive industries, noting that better opportunities exist in tourism, local businesses, ecological restoration, and renewable energy. By prioritising healthy living, nature nurturing, and community-based prosperity, Northern Australia can achieve lasting sustainability and dignity for generations to come.

Introduction

Northern Australia is living Country, cared for by First Nations peoples for tens of thousands of years. Decisions made today must honour that custodianship and protect Mother Earth for future generations. The current rush for industrial expansion and new technologies risks degrading ecosystems, displacing workers, and sending wealth offshore rather than strengthening local communities.

Key Concerns

- **First Nations Position of Country:** First Nations knowledge systems embody balance, respect, and sustainability. Their leadership must guide all decisions to ensure the land remains healthy and resilient.

- **The rush for resource control:** Powerful interests are competing to dominate critical minerals, creating unsustainable pressure on fragile ecosystems and ignoring long-term community wellbeing.
 - **Jobs as an excuse:** Mining companies often justify exploitation by promising jobs. Yet these jobs are temporary, dangerous, and too often funnel wealth offshore rather than benefiting Australians.
 - **Better opportunities for communities:** Tourism, local enterprises, cultural industries, and ecological restoration offer safer, longer-lasting employment. These industries keep wealth in Australia, strengthen communities, and celebrate the unique heritage of Northern Australia.
 - **Machines displacing workers:** Industrial technologies are breakable, hazardous, and increasingly replacing human labour. This undermines livelihoods and community resilience.
 - **Healthy living and nurturing nature:** True prosperity lies in clean air, safe water, thriving ecosystems, and meaningful work. A healthy living ideology must guide industry planning, ensuring harmony between people and nature.
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Recommendations

1. Place First Nations leadership and consent at the centre of all industry planning.
2. Slow down critical mineral exploitation until impacts on culture, environment, and employment are fully understood.
3. Invest in industries that create safe, meaningful jobs — such as tourism, local businesses, ecological restoration, recycling, and renewable energy.
4. Ensure wealth generated in Northern Australia stays in Australia, shared fairly with communities rather than flowing offshore.
5. Promote a national vision of healthy living, where industry supports human dignity and nurtures nature rather than replacing people with machines.

Conclusion

Northern Australia must not be sacrificed to short-term competition or unchecked technology. Protecting Mother Earth, respecting First Nations custodianship, and ensuring workers have dignified roles in sustainable industries is the only path to lasting prosperity. By choosing balance, restraint, and care, we can nurture nature, strengthen local businesses, and secure a healthy future for generations to come.

Respectively Yours

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Private Citizen