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**To:** Territory2030 DCM  
**Subject:** 2030 Submission and Comment - NO PERMISSION TO EDIT AND IF REJECTED FOR PUBLICATION PLEASE ADVISE

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### **Submission on NT 2030 Strategy**

Without wanting to be unkind and diminish in anyway the enthusiasm of the committee members or the public servants who have toiled away at this project for some considerable time there is something fundamentally flawed in our community when a Government abdicates its responsibilities to develop policy to an unelected and unrepresentative committee co Chaired by a merchant banker from Sydney. Remember the Wran Report of the mid 1990's – I sure do.

What precisely does Paul Henderson and his Cabinet colleagues think their job is? The Chief Minister says in the introduction '*It's important for us to plan today the Direction the Territory will take into the future*'. The slogan *fresh ideas, real results* Strategy (that's the strategy in case you missed it; the ideas and results bit) is emboldened as though this is some revelation. It's almost as catchy as Denis Burke's *Foundations for our Future* which was another failed exercise in *gobbledygook* politics and aptly described as the longest suicide note in Territory political history. It's also a bit reminiscent of the 2020 Rudd Summit which suggested that having been elected they had better cobble some ideas together fast. History has now consigned that tax payer funded *talk fest* to the rubbish bin after the Prime Minister lamely offered some crumbs over a year after the event excluding the biggest ticket item – the Republic.

2030 is destined for the same fate notwithstanding the conscientious efforts of the committee, public servants drafted to the cause and those making the submissions believing that they can make a difference – good on them. They will be hoping that the Chief Minister pays closer attention than the Prime Minister did to the 2020 ideas.

If you want an example of a committee crystal ball gazing into the future look no further than the 1995 Wran Committee – again chaired by a Sydney '*sider*' and Premier turned merchant banker. What a fizzer that was – no railway until next Century Neville Wran told me. My response was unequivocal, '*bull shit*' and we built the railway – I had the commitment from John Howard in 2 years. And that's my point, Governments are elected to govern – to get on with it, be innovative and put the shoulder to the wheel. '*Make it happen*' should be the catch cry of all governments.

It used to be said that what marked the Territory out from other jurisdictions was that in the Territory we looked to see what was right with a project rather than what

was wrong with it. That is no longer the case, look no further than our mining sector and the limp wisted response of the Territory Government to the events surrounding MacArthur River Mine. Apparently that was a *'Federal problem'* notwithstanding hundreds of Territory jobs were at risk.

Perhaps we could have a 2030 section on ministerial responsibility, the Westminster system and how it particularly applies to Health Ministers who are seemingly not in charge or responsible for our hospitals and Education Ministers who sack department heads by proxy.

I can hear the mantra now; *'we need Governments that think outside the electoral cycle and plan for the future'*. That's true Paul and that's your day job so I suggest you get on with it.

The five focus areas are all important but most of those aspirations can't wait until 2030 particularly when it comes to indigenous Territorians. The comprehensive failure of the Martin Labour Government to address dysfunction on Aboriginal communities was born out by the intervention of the Howard Government and the renewed commitment to the intervention by the Rudd Government. What that tells me is that neither side of politics in Canberra trusts the Territory Government to handle indigenous affairs any more. You can have all the submissions and navel gazing that you want – when it comes to indigenous communities you, the NT Government have lost control and worse you let it happen.

The Martin Labour Government was complicit in the greatest walk over in the NT by a Federal Government every. The repeal of the euthanasia legislation paled in significance when compared to what happened here as Australian Federal Police and the Australian Army took *'control'* of Aboriginal communities because of the failure of the Territory Government to act.

How can the Government talk about progression to Statehood so emphatically when the Territory Government has less authority than it did 10 years ago – perhaps Clare and Paul understand, they have been surrendering Self Government powers since being elected rather than defending them. Apart from the Intervention the Territory Government meekly rolled over and surrendered its authority over uranium mining in 2005. When was the last time you saw a Territory Minister say NO to the Commonwealth on anything? Instead we witness an indecent haste to roll over on every southern legislative template and social experiment driven out of Canberra.

I don't see a great deal in the 2030 planning to ensure that you can walk the street safe at night or go to a shopping centre without fear of harassment or attack. I don't see much thought being given to a criminal justice system that is so comprehensively failing its law abiding citizens that people now cite public safety as a reason to move interstate in their retirement. Chief Minister the people can't wait until 2030 to see whether you and your party cut the mustard – based on past performance over the last 10 years you could understand the scepticism of the person on the street.

It's great that education has been highlighted. Given that the Territory Government today gets almost 3 times the revenue via the GST than what I and my CLP predecessors had at our disposal I would have expected most of these plans to be implemented already. Territory Labour has had a decade running the show with all those GST revenues so what's been holding you back?. Let's face it, it's not as though there has been a population explosion up here.

I can only urge and encourage Territorians to read this document and then ask the question – is this for real?

There are more pressing and immediate issues that should be at the forefront of Government today – not 2030 - such as guaranteeing when you switch on the light something actually happens. At one point the northern suburbs of Darwin were entirely reliant on generators; it beggars belief that such neglect over a decade could come to this. I wonder whether the Sydney based Chairman is aware of such a failure of infrastructure as he presides over a Committee making forecasts 20 years on. Part of the *'enviable lifestyle'* is having electricity. If the Territory is to *'invest in its economic future'* its needs reliable electricity supplies now – not 2030. If you are serious about *'broadening the economic base'* you need to start with a reliable and affordable supply of electricity now and not in 20 year's time. And if you are really serious about developing Darwin as an *'international city'* then the Government needs to repair and restore engagement with the Asia Pacific which the current Government has systematically dismantled over 3 terms. It would also help if that same Government took a stand on the abysmal state of airline services in and out of the Territory.

As for the environment if the Government is serious about *'ecologically sustainable development'* they could start with some good old fashioned town planning – that's not rocket science. To his credit Gerry Woods has been making this point in relation to the Darwin Harbour for some time. My Government declared the Charles Darwin National Park (a first for a capital city) and set the threshold preservation for mangroves and we were very pro development. It's a matter of balance and not 6 glossy points that are incomprehensible – what does *'equity and cohesion are intrinsic to the way the Territory operates'* mean when speaking of the environment? We get the drift that *'ecologically sustainable development'* (mentioned 4 times in the 6 core points) may well be the theme but what's the process and the enforcement? As for loss of species especially fish stocks we can't wait for 2030 on any estimate.

And finally don't laugh but they will part measure environmental success by how many of us in 2030 are walking and using bicycle paths – in the tropics and wet season ; good one.

The rest are words and more words – here we go again; a Government bereft of any ideas fighting for its political survival. Dennis Burke and Paul Henderson have a lot in common.

Track through it line by line, section by section and join the ranks of those who despair that this what your NT Government spends it's time and money on as services across health, education, infrastructure and public safety collapse around you. No doubt we can look forward to copious colour brochures about it in our letter boxes. The economy is holding but only just; as we all know we are historically counter cyclical to national trends.

What really takes the cake is the section on where they, the committee have been – great stuff. The sad fact is that instead of a committee that's where the Ministers should be, out and about listening and talking to Territorians. At least Allison Anderson learned that skill from CLP Ministers. When was the last time we saw a Territory Minister front a public meeting? They are nowhere to be seen as they send the public servants as sacrificial lambs or worse as occurred in the middle school 'consultation' debacle consultants, usually from 'south'.

The Chief Ministers media release says that the committee has received 77 submissions and met with over 300 people. In a population of over 200,000 Territorians it probably would have been better if he hadn't let that slip. Please Chief Minister don't presume to make any future commitment on my behalf based on less than .001% of the population.

Finally it seems the 2030 'idea' is not unique to the NT – Abu Dhabi and Kenya are on the same program but then again democracy is not top of mind in those places so 1% telling the rest how it's going to be wouldn't be out of the ordinary over there.

Governments should plan, consult, listen to the community and gauge ideas for the future but don't ask someone else to go out and do it for you – that's your job.

No one doubts the bona fides of the Committee and their interest in the well being and future of the Territory nor the commitment of those public servants engaged in the process. My point is that the Chief Minister and his government should get on with the job they were elected to do and stop hiding behind consultative committees whose recommendations will be quietly shelved as time drifts on.

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