



**Submission to the Northern Territory  
Department Environment, Parks and Water Security**

**on the**

***Draft Declaration of Prohibited Action: Seabed Mining***

***19 June 2021***





Hon Eva Lawler  
Minister for Environment  
Northern Territory Government

Dear Minister

The Anindilyakwa people of the Groote Archipelago and the Anindilyakwa Land Council unreservedly endorse the decision by Minister Lawler to introduce a Declaration of Prohibited Action: Seabed Mining for Northern Territory waters. This decision is aligned with the previous submissions made by the Anindilyakwa Land Council in November 2020 in relation to the NT EPA and AAPA reviews of Seabed Mining.

In 2012 the Anindilyakwa people of the Groote Archipelago and the Anindilyakwa Land Council (ALC) played a pivotal role in bringing a halt to a seabed exploration project off the coast of Groote Eylandt. The threat to the Groote Eylandt's sea country, their *"supermarket"*, and their associated song lines from exploration and future seabed mining was a catalyst which brought the communities together in one voice to raise their concerns.

ALC has a mandate and obligations under the ALRA to protect the cultural, biophysical, social, and economic values that make the Groote Archipelago what it is now and into the future.

As identified by the Minister the NT is currently not resourced to manage such a new industry.

It is acknowledged that there is lack of data and experience and as stated it may take 2-5 years of data collection to truly understand the interactions within a natural system.

It is appreciated that the Northern Territory Government now recognises that to consider allowing these areas to be mined in the future would show a disregard for ecological function of these areas, disrespect to those communities relying on the seafood resources from such areas and potentially endorse the desecration of culturally important areas.

It needs to be acknowledged that this decision is very important for Aboriginal people who hold a strong connection to the sea country and their custodianship (and hence responsibilities) extend well beyond the low water mark, often beyond the horizon and it would be appropriate that Traditional Owners of this sea country are in the future extended rights as occurs on Aboriginal Land under ALRA. Any future development of sea country and its resources must involve respectful engagement with the Traditional Owners, custodians, and any associated communities.

The people of Groote are moving towards a post mining economy involving the development of seafood-based enterprises, particularly aquaculture. It is essential that access to clean seas is maintained and the





reputation that Territory produce is clean, and green is retained. The development of tourism is also forecast to develop in the coming years with access to pristine marine environments being a key economic asset. The Northern Territory Governments future consideration of the aspirations of Aboriginal people, and the need to allow them to determine their own futures is crucial and this needs to include the recognition that this may not involve mining activities.

The ALC considers the cultural and environmental risks associated with seabed mining far out weight the potential economic benefits. Aboriginal people see no separation between culture and the environment and there are no boundaries of ownership between land and sea country. It is pleasing to see the NTG respecting the concerns of the Aboriginal people of the Groote Archipelago and allow them to have a voice in determining the activities that occur in their sea country and maintaining their cultural responsibilities.

Yours faithfully

Mark Hewitt

Chief Executive Officer

Anindilyakwa Land Council

