

Why The Middle Arm Industrial Precinct Is Bad Public Policy

Abstract

The Middle Arm Industrial Precinct (MAIP) is the key pillar in the Northern Territory Government's plan to achieve a \$40 billion economy by 2030. It is a project that has received scrutiny for its claim to be a 'Sustainable Development Precinct'. The masterplan for the project reveals that it is designed to expand the gas industry in the Territory, providing a crucial link to the fracking of the Beetaloo Basin. The project's 'green' credentials depend entirely on the plans to establish carbon capture and storage technologies to offset the emissions that an expansion of the fossil fuel industry would inevitably bring. In this paper, I argue the MAIP is bad public policy. I begin by setting out the principles of good public policy, making reference to the concept of the common good. I then explain what is currently known about the MAIP project, highlighting the difficulty in acquiring precise knowledge due to a lack of transparency on the part of the NT Government, as well as deceptive communication. I demonstrate that, based on all the available information, there are good reasons to think the MAIP, if allowed to proceed, will pose significant risks to human health and exacerbate the catastrophic effects of human-induced climate change.