



Media Release

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## **Budget wins for the environment. The Territory is a step closer to a renewable power superhighway**

The Environment Centre NT has welcomed several key spending initiatives in today's NT Budget as wins for the environment. They show that there is a path for the Territory that moves us away from the dangerous fracked gas plans of the past.

"We're very happy to see the Government is funding a grid connection feasibility study, that's a major win for renewables," said Kirsty Howey, Co-Director of the Environment Centre.

"A renewable power superhighway for the NT would mean more cheap, clean energy for Territorians. A potential east coast grid connection would mean that we could realise our massive potential to export solar energy to the rest of Australia."

The Environment Centre NT campaigned for a feasibility study into an electricity grid connection between Darwin and Alice Springs during the Territory election earlier this year. This Budget has delivered \$1.2m for a feasibility study for a Darwin-Alice Springs grid connection, and a "potential link" to the National Energy Market.

"We were watching closely for any sign of public money being spent to lure big irrigators to the Territory. We're celebrating that the Gunner Government has, so far, ignored lobbying pressure from Big Cotton to ruin our rivers with irrigated cotton," said Howey.

"Even after cotton companies from down south have lobbied hard for millions in taxpayer funding during the election campaign, there's still no money in this Budget to prop up a cotton gin in Katherine that would help big irrigators get in the door. If done well, and in partnership with local communities and Traditional Owners, the planned Katherine Agribusiness and Logistics Hub could help local farmers, growers and truckers instead. The introduction of the large-scale irrigated cotton industry into the Big Rivers region would threaten our water, our fishing and local farms right when we can't afford it."

This Budget includes a planned spend of \$29m on the Katherine Agribusiness and Logistics Hub, focused on headworks and subdivision of the land.

"The Gunner Government has an opportunity to build upon today's budget announcement to support jobs in renewables, tourism and in conservation and land management. This is the time for the Territory to turn away from polluting fracked gas and towards renewables. There are some major initiatives in this Budget for the environment, and we're celebrating that today with an eye to increasing our efforts to build a better Territory for tomorrow."

Media:

Kirsty Howey: 0488 928 811