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Media Release: NT Economic Summit prime time to deliver on Coasts Election Promise

Safeguards to prevent permanent damage to vital coastal and marine areas are essential if the new Economic Development Framework is to avoid repeating past mistakes.

The *Keep Top End Coasts Healthy (KTECH)* alliance said the draft Economic Development Framework is light on detail about how it will achieve growth opportunities while also protecting the environment and the Top End's enviable lifestyle.

Adele Pedder of the Australian Marine Conservation Society said previous governments have pushed ahead with poorly planned developments along the coast that has seen crucial mangrove populations decimated, waterways polluted and community confidence eroded, such as at Port Melville and the McArthur River mine.

"The community expects to be properly consulted and their wishes for a healthy lifestyle on the coast and on the water addressed in the government's plans," said Ms Pedder.

"To achieve this, the delivery of the Coastal and Marine Management Strategy should be a key part of the Territory's Economic Development Framework.'

"That way Territorians can have confidence that any potential expanded activity along our Top End coastline does not threaten marine life, mangroves, fishing and marine tourism activities, and that the most is made of the economic opportunities that come from one of the Top End's greatest natural assets – its coastal environment.

KTECH detailed key threats to the Top End's coasts before the last election, in a 'health check' report"ⁱ.

"This report represented a wake up call and found that successive governments had neglected the Top End's coasts. Now is the time to turn around that neglect and invest in protecting top end coasts in the face of growing threats and pressures."

"A detailed strategy for the coasts and seas should include the safeguards necessary to maintain a healthy environment and provide people with continued access to their favourite pastimes."

"It is possible to secure economic growth and have a healthy environment as well. This is the missing ingredient in the government's draft Economic Development Framework so far" said Ms Pedder.

The draft Economic Framework was released **yesterday 23 March 2017** and is available at economicsummit.nt.gov.au/draft-framework. Public comments received before Monday 3 April 2017.

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Keep Top End Coasts Healthy is an alliance of environment groups including the Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS), the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Environment Centre of the Northern Territory (ECNT). www.topendcoasts.org.au

ⁱ http://www.topendcoasts.org.au/health_check_report