



Northern RDA Alliance: Priorities Update

Implementing the White Paper on Developing Northern Australia

The Northern RDA Alliance is a network of eight RDA's from across Northern Australia, stretching from the Gascoyne to Central Queensland. Together, we are very supportive of the extent to which the Northern Australia White Paper has recognised and addressed our 6 articulated priorities.

The real opportunity now lies with seeing both the White Paper and these priorities implemented.

As a first important step, we have submitted a Business Plan seeking limited DIRD funding to support us to work with the Australian Government and the WA, NT and Qld Governments to effect the implementation of our priorities. Beyond this, the following key steps are also needed to help progress the implementation.

Priority 1: Connecting Northern Australia through Strategic Road Infrastructure: The White Paper's announcement of the Beef Roads (\$100m), Priority Roads (\$600M) and Infrastructure Pipeline substantially deliver on this priority. To effect implementation, we seek:

- Funding of the Northern RDA Alliance Business Plan to trial a collaborative prioritization model based on the Qld Inland Roads Action Plan, and extending the approach to the NT and WA;
- Northern RDA Alliance representation within the processes/arrangements established to prioritise the Beef Roads and Priority Roads Investment Programs; and
- The Commonwealth and Northern RDA Alliance reaching agreement on a common model for managing the governance of major road infrastructure spends in our regions, aiming to maximize investment leverage, regional development and employment outcomes from the Commonwealth spend.

Priority 2: A Genuine Exploration of Incentive Options to Lift Northern Australian Investment and Liveability: The Northern White Paper explores a range of incentives to maximise investment in northern Australia. We increasingly consider that, making best effect of these incentives requires a place-based approach. To effect implementation of such an approach, we seek:

- A strong Commonwealth and ONA commitment to partner in progressing the Pilbara Development Zone and the Northern WA Investment Prospectus and evaluating the key lessons emerging from this exercise;
- The Commonwealth to commit to working with the North Queensland RDA's to propose a joint state-federal approach to improving the facilitation of major projects and evaluating the approach taken;
- The Commonwealth commit to involving the RDA NT in the design and establishment of the NT One Stop Shop and evaluating the key lessons emerging from this approach; and
- That the Commonwealth develop a terms of reference to be progressed through the Productivity Commission to ensure a transparent process to explore the full range of existing and potentially new incentives to attract investment into northern Australia without distorting the economy.



Priority 3: Integrated ICT including Trialling High-Speed Wireless Technology: We consider the integrated ICT components of the White Paper could be developed further as there are many communities in Northern Australia that lack basic services such as fixed-line telecommunications and access to 3G and 4G mobile networks. We are currently trialling high-speed wireless networks, and if proven affordable and reliable, will increase economic development and encourage private investment. We are currently looking for the Commonwealth to:

- Continue to work closely with the Northern RDA Alliance and RDA NT to successfully bring to a close the current trial and evaluation of the potential for high-speed wireless networks; and
- Once completed, we would like the DIRD and the new ONA to partner with us to build a policy and business case for taking forwards the key implications from the trial.

Priority 4: Secure Access to Clean Water for Northern Australian Communities: This has been our priority as secure access to potable water is still far from being achieved in northern communities and we are looking to work with the Commonwealth to see the development of a dedicated, coordinated and explicit Australian, State, and Territory government program to address this issue. The White Paper commitment to a \$200 million Water Infrastructure Fund is a great step in this direction. To secure the outcomes intended by this priority we seek:

- A commitment from the Commonwealth to allocate a small component of the NA Water Infrastructure Fund to enable the Northern RDA's to facilitate a process that partners the WA, NT and Qld Governments in the development and costing of a "Potable Water Infrastructure projects, Program and Long Term Delivery Framework"; and
- A Commonwealth commitment to involve the relevant northern RDAs in the early design of the processes established to determine the available water and best locations for water infrastructure in the Mitchell, West Kimberley, Darwin regions and for the Nullinga Dam Study.

Priority 5: Towards a Northern Australian Energy Strategy: The Northern RDA Alliance has had support from Minister's McFarlane's Office to commence work with the CSIRO Energy Flagship to explore the case for the development of a Northern Australian Energy Strategy; one focussed on security and affordability. At this early stage, we seek:

- Early recognition within DIRD and the ONA of this emerging step and a commitment to work with the Northern RDA Alliance in progressing this approach to the next step as and when required.

Priority 6: Towards a collaborative research initiative supporting agriculture: The Northern RDA Alliance greatly appreciates the Commonwealth's commitment to the CRC and the inclusion of tropical health issues. At this stage, the Alliance would simply like to ensure early direction is provided to the proposed consortium to ensure early commencement of the CRC and a continued focus on the priorities and approaches already recommended.

Working Together on the Future Governance of Northern Australia

The Northern RDA Alliance has been strongly supportive of the Commonwealth's focus on governance reform in the north. We hope, as a key part of the Commonwealth's regional policy agenda that:

- The Alliance have a clear, regular and structured relationship with the emerging ONA;
- The Alliance be seen and supported to have a key role in coordinating wide community policy and strategic advice into the formal Strategic Partnership arrangements.



Who is the NRDA?

The Northern RDA Alliance comprises eight RDAs whose regions make up Northern Australia. This network, representing the Gascoyne in Western Australia to Gladstone in Central Queensland, has been meeting to explore common interests and issues. Our aim is to support policies and to prioritise investment opportunities to ensure the sustainable development of Northern Australia.

The Alliance is supportive of the Australian Government's efforts to focus policy and investment attention on Northern Australia and we recognise the need to make a convincing case for national investment. The Alliance has agreed on the following six shared priorities:

- *A Genuine Exploration of Incentive Options to Lift Northern Australian Investment and Liveability*
- *Connecting Northern Australia through Strategic Road Infrastructure*
- *Integrated ICT including Trialling High-Speed Wireless Technology*
- *Secure Access to Clean Water for Northern Australian Communities*
- *Towards a Northern Australian Energy Strategy*
- *Towards a collaborative research initiative supporting agriculture*

The Alliance is committed to the need for a clear strategy to unite the policy and investment objectives of the Australian, State and Territory governments, combined with a focus on lifting investment barriers for private capital.

The Northern RDA Alliance can greatly assist the Governments policy on Northern Australia. Our concern is to explore the key ground-breaking reforms and investments needed to secure our future through implementation of ideas outlined in the White Paper on Developing Northern Australia.

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