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13 February 2014

Dr Bill Pender
Parliament of Australia
PO Box 6021
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Dr Pender

RE: Development of Northern Australia

Thank you for your letter regarding the Joint Select Committee on the Development of Northern Australia.

There are a number of areas that require investment to ensure that Northern Australia continues to develop, many of these are interrelated.

The first of these relates to transport infrastructure. Transport infrastructure is vital to the successful development of Northern Australia. The predominate industries of our region are primary production (cattle and sheep) and tourism. Both of these industries require investment in the improvement of transport infrastructure to thrive. Tourism is dominated by caravan/camper owners/operators. This medium on tourism participants requires safer roads to encourage participation and enable point to point destinations are easily reached. Further, smother roads will enable quicker delivery of cattle and sheep to markets with less fatigue of both drivers and their cargo.

Additionally, another aspect that would improve development in Northern Australia is the flood proofing of vital infrastructure. Infrastructure such as roads, hospitals, schools and community facilities require protection as do business production premises. Flood proofing would ensure production continuity and constant employment. Flood proofing could be implemented as a long term project.

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Council would also encourage greater decentralisation of government offices. Staff numbers at regional government offices have been on rapid decline. This takes expertise and understanding of the central west out of the public service/agencies and leads to a disconnect between capital city policy makers and on the ground implementation. It is recommended that a program of decentralisation be developed to relocate professional officers into regional centres. Departments that have a direct relationship to the central west should be targeted for relocation.

In addition, an increase in information technology capability would reduce the Virtual isolation of the Central West. Northern Australia should be given a priority to receive upgraded technical capability of the NBN and associated projects.

Yours faithfully

Mark Watt
Chief Executive Officer