

Committee Secretary
Select Committee on the effectiveness
of the Aust Gov Northern Aust Agenda
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA



16 September 2019

Dear Committee Secretary

On behalf of Regional Development Australia Fitzroy and Central West (RDAFCW) I am providing to the Senate a submission on the effectiveness of the Australian Government's Northern Australia Agenda.

BACKGROUND:

RDAFCW is an incorporated not-for-profit organisation that receives funding from the Australian Government to implement its Regional Development Australia Charter, primarily to facilitate economic development outcomes.

The RDAFCW boundary embodies 12 Local Government areas including Diamantina, Barcoo, Winton, Longreach, Barcaldine, Blackall-Tambo, Central Highlands, Woorabinda, Banana, Gladstone, Rockhampton and Livingstone Council areas. The RDAFCW region sits at Queensland's southernmost part of the Northern Australia boundary.

RDAFCW is also a member of the Northern Regional Development Australia Alliance, that comprises the eight RDAs within Northern Australia.

SUBMISSION:

RDAFCW recognises that implementation of the Northern Australia White Paper is only at year three of its twenty year plan and that the scale of the agenda will take a much longer length of time to fully implement and reap rewards.

Please find below comments on the items identified in the Terms of Reference.

Facilitation of public and private investment in infrastructure and economic development:

- RDAFCW was pleased to see the rules around NAIF loosened in 2018 and will hopefully see more projects supported as a result. The NAIF budget has demonstrated however, the lack of shovel ready projects and that perhaps an important project readiness step has been missed.
- RDAFCW has observed, within its region, a number of funding applicants stall at the Business Case stage, citing Business Case production expense as a barrier. There is potential to explore funding or training options to better support proponents to prepare Business Cases within Northern Australia.

Economic and social benefit arising from that investment for Northern Australians, in particular First Nations people:

- No comment.

Funding models and policy measures that capture the full value of existing and emerging industries:

- Amendments to regional taxation policy could provide incentives for business, both existing and emerging, to either move to, or establish a business to Northern Australia.
- Within the RDAFCW region agriculture and coal are key economic drivers, a lack of strategic freight corridors from east to west increases freight costs constraining growth/profitability within the sectors. Plans and support for these east - west freight connections exist and remain a regional priority, however existing funding models often look at a project on a singular basis rather than at a larger scale and big picture regional benefit.

In areas such as RDAFCW where Local, State and Commonwealth economic development entities within the region are in consensus on regional priority projects it would be useful for access to alternate funding options to fast track such projects to enable improved economic growth. For your information, please consult our website to view the regions consolidated list of regional priority projects.

Measures taken to develop an appropriately skilled workforce:

- Changes to working visa programs (e.g. Pacific Labour Scheme) have been well received within the RDAFCW region.

Emerging national and international trends and their impact on the Northern Australia agenda:

- Global population growth will mean increased food production opportunities for Northern Australia.
- Over the longer term, the push for more sustainable power supply has the potential to impact Northern Australia's coal industry.
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Any other related matters:

- No comment.

Yours Sincerely

Anthony (Tony) Gambling

Director Of Regional Development