



# Report on Developing Northern Australia Presented

The Australian Parliament's Northern Australia Committee today tabled its final report on the development of Northern Australia, titled *Pivot North*. The Committee was tasked with the important role of helping to define the future of Australia's North—a region vital to the economic growth of the nation.

The report makes forty-two recommendations addressing opportunities for and impediments to the development of Northern Australia. The seven priority recommendations identified in the report are:

- The creation of a Department of Northern Australian Development based in Northern Australia.
- The identification of key roads and the commitment of funding for their upgrade as a matter of priority, subject to relative benefit assessment. Projects to consider include: continued upgrade of National Highways (including the Bruce and Stuart Highways); Hann Highway; Peninsula Development Road; Tanami Road; Outback Way; and beef development roads.
- Cost benefit analysis to be conducted on a rail link between Mount Isa and Tennant Creek and the building of passing lanes on the Darwin to Alice Springs Railway.
- Funding and development of water infrastructure projects that meet scientific and economic assessments.
- Investigation of the potential and practicality of special economic zones.
- Measures to reduce insurance premiums in Northern Australia to affordable levels.
- Continued funding of the Great Artesian Basin Sustainability Initiative.

Other recommendations include: establishing a CRC for Northern Agriculture and developing a national institute for tropical sports and sports medicine; the design and implementation of long-term strategies for the development of capital infrastructure and agriculture in Northern Australia; and for improved regulatory arrangements for aquaculture and better regulation of fisheries to allow for sustainable growth of the industry. The report also addresses growing concerns over FIFO employment, recommending improved taxation arrangements to encourage local employment in the resources sector.

This inquiry has formed one part of a broader process aimed at promoting the development of Northern Australia. The Australian Government has made a commitment to produce within a twelve-month timeframe a White Paper outlining the Government's vision for the future of Northern Australia. The Committee's findings and recommendations will inform the White Paper process, assisting the Government to formulate its policy for the future development of Northern Australia.

Committee Chair, the Hon Warren Entsch, stated: "The development of Northern Australia is one of the great challenges and opportunities facing the nation. Northern Australia covers over forty per cent of Australia's land mass but contains only four per cent of the population. It has abundant land, water and mineral resources. It has medical and educational institutions with world class facilities. Northern Australia is on the doorstep of Asia and a significant portion of it is part of the tropical world—which by 2050 will encompass over half the world's population. There are great opportunities for the people of Northern Australia within the tropical zone. But the development of Northern Australia has in the past lacked a commitment by governments at all levels to pursue investment and development in a consistent, sustainable and coordinated way."

**For media comment:** Please contact Heather Beck, Media Adviser to the Committee Chair the Hon. Warren Entsch MP on (02) 6277 4803 or 0427 585 668

**Copies of the report** can be obtained from the Committee's webpage at <http://www.aph.gov.au/jscna/report>

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