

Hi Jason

Thanks for the opportunity to contribute further to the Question on Notice.

I understand the question from Warren Entsch was:

Finally, as a little bit of homework from a question or notice, can you put together a few of your thoughts on additional things that we can do better, particularly focusing on additional Indigenous participation and capturing the opportunities for young people, not just on road building and other things but also on other things that you think that we could do better in relation to this program to capture more of the young ones in these communities?

**Response:**

I thank the Committee Member for his question on notice.

My response is that I think we need to apply the principles that we have adopted in the planning and development of the funding arrangements for the Peninsula Development Road to a significant spend on major enabling infrastructure across-northern Australia.

One of the stand out features of success within the original DNA White Paper Package has been the collaborative approaches taken by the Commonwealth, the States and NT Governments to the design and delivery of the major publicly-funded enabling infrastructure packages (both within and beyond the White Paper). The programs were collaboratively designed between the jurisdictions, and in at least Queensland's case, they had strong Regional Development Australia (RDA) network and Local government involvement. In the Beef Roads context, there was a strong evidence base emerging from CSIRO's TRANSIT model. In other northern Australian-related investment, new innovations on collaborative government approaches to the delivery of such projects also proved successful, and specifically in the case of the Cape York Infrastructure Package.

There has been some detailed case-study and socio-economic impact analysis of the Cape York Region Package (CYRP). The Package has been used globally to promote the importance of resolving the deficit in reliable strategic infrastructure to provide connectivity between communities and social and economic development in tropical regions. Stage 1 of the CYRP was a shared \$260.5 million investment by the Australian federal and Queensland state governments on an 80:20 basis, and it showcased the benefits of new engagement approaches in an economically marginalised tropical region. Stage 1 of the Package consisted of:

- A \$200 million program of works over five-years to seal some priority gravel sections of the backbone freight route (the Peninsula Developmental Road or PDR);
- Some \$10 million over four years for sealing works on the Endeavour Valley Road (EVR) through to the Hope Vale Aboriginal community; and
- Some \$50.5 million for other priority community infrastructure identified by the Cape Indigenous Mayors Alliance (CIMA – now Torres and Cape Indigenous Councils Alliance).

The real innovation in the CYRP was the high level of inter-governmental collaboration at all levels that resulted in combined State and Commonwealth commitments to significant regional community engagement in the design and delivery of the infrastructure spend. Both Governments joined together with key regional

institutions in the establishment of a CYRP Sub-working Group and Taskforce. Together with the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads (QDTMR) and other key State departments, this group also involved Cook Shire Council, the Cape York Indigenous Mayors Alliance (CIMA) and key regional development agencies (such as RDA Tropical North and Torres Strait Inc and Cape York Sustainable Futures). All of these parties supported the responsible government agencies to engage effectively with the wider Cape York community through regular CYRP Taskforce meetings.

The overarching engagement framework enabled the regional community to: (i) influence the design and prioritization of the infrastructure program; and (ii) provide feedback on the proposed infrastructure procurement arrangements to help maximize regional, local and Indigenous business and employment outcomes from procurement. This helped lift regional capacity during the infrastructure build. From the outset, community feedback ensured a priority focus on the development of the central Peninsula Developmental Road (PDR), and a secondary focus on supporting priority transport and other local infrastructure needs within the eight Indigenous local government areas and communities represented by CIMA.

A second layer of engagement within this framework involved detailed project-level negotiation following the registration of the Native Title Cape York United Number 1 Claim registered over Cape York Peninsula, which included the PDR. The key principle of the Claim has been that Traditional Owners for each area continue to speak for their lands and waters according to their traditional laws and customs. Consequently, negotiations took place between QDTMR and the Cape York Land Council regarding an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) and a Cultural Heritage Management Agreement which consented to certain acts being undertaken so the PDR could proceed.

Successes within this innovative new approach have included a high level of community input and feedback on the process, high levels of local Indigenous contracting, particularly high levels of Indigenous and local employment. Key lessons learned have included that:

- Remote communities can benefit from effective engagement with central agencies from the design to delivery phases;
- Structured engagement with Indigenous land holders can greatly reduce risks in project approval and delivery and equally benefit landholders;
- An active focus on securing Indigenous and local benefit from procurement processes can both increase support for infrastructure and boost regional development; and
- Quality processes for cultural heritage assessment and ongoing engagement with Traditional Owners can reduce the impacts on cultural heritage from major infrastructure development.

In recognition of the importance of these large enabling infrastructure programs associated with the White Paper, and based on a number of key supply chain and digital infrastructure research assessments, CRCNA and Infrastructure Australia (IA) collaborated with the ONA and the jurisdictions since 2021 in working toward the development of a new Major Enabling Infrastructure Package which could be kicked off through the current refresh of the White Paper Action Plan. A significant forum of Commonwealth, WA, NT and Queensland Government agencies was held in May 2022. The forum agreed that there would be great value in collaboratively progressing towards a major enabling infrastructure package to facilitate transformational economic and social change across the north. Through further discussion at with the Northern Australia RDA Alliance and a major stakeholder workshop at the DNAC Conference in Darwin 2023, a broad conceptual idea was presented and considered at the Northern Australian Ministerial Forum in October 2023. The proposed pathways forward to achieving this aims to work through and to take advantage of the newly established Northern Australian Ministerial Forum arrangements as a mechanism for well-facilitated and evidence-based package planning and development. It also encourages deep collaboration across Commonwealth agencies, the jurisdictions, the RDA Northern Australian Alliance, Local government, the Australian Logistics Council and other key northern Australian stakeholders with a significant role in regional development and trade.

Key elements of the proposal include a process that builds on the experience of past major enabling infrastructure packages within Northern Australia. Three key steps in progressing the package would include: (i) the development of a no-regrets interim enabling infrastructure package by December 2024 (in preparation for the 2025/26 budget cycle); (ii) a strong collaborative planning phase between January 2025 to December 2026 (in preparation for the 2026/27 budget cycle (informed by scenario-thinking and economic modelling developed via collaborative forums); and finally (iii) progression of a significant Federation Funding Initiative to

underpin the north's transformational enabling infrastructure. The package focus would prioritise overcoming significant and emerging supply chain fragilities in the north, re-orientation of our relationships into the wider Indo-Pacific and ASEAN region, and overcoming social and economic disadvantage in remote and Indigenous communities.

To meet Ministerial forum priorities for developing transformational and complex projects with strong remote communities and First Nations focus, and to meet the above three priorities, key emerging design principles of the proposed no regrets Major Enabling Infrastructure Package could include:

- Development of an emerging east-west integrated transport infrastructure pack with: (i) communications cover; (ii) EV charging cover; (iii) targeted access improvement to remote Indigenous/rural communities; (iv) multi-user line of sight to Indo Pacific supply chains; (v) defence and (vi) disaster resilience;
- Major program delivery models that build on the CYRP regional experience;
- CRCNA (as facilitator), Infrastructure Australia, RDA Northern Alliance and the Northern Australian Indigenous Reference Group working in partnership with ONA and the jurisdictional northern Australia leads to develop the package by December 2024;
- An aim for 80/20 Commonwealth/State shared budgetary influence recognising the extremely remote nature of northern Australia;
- Building an aligned proposal for developing the longer term foundations for development of integrated supply chain modelling for the North; and
- Wider stakeholder engagement with Development Commissions, Regional Economic Development Organisations, Local Governments, and Indigenous communities, industry, logistics groups and other key stakeholders.

I hope the above adequately responds to the question.

Thanks so much for your support through the process.

Regards

Allan

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