



# The Development of Northern Australia Interim Report tabled

The Australian Parliament's Northern Australia Committee has tabled an interim report as part of its inquiry into the development of Northern Australia.

Committee Chair, the Hon Warren Entsch, stated: "The inquiry has generated a high level of community interest and high expectations. In response, the Committee has undertaken an extensive program of travel, comprising 19 hearings and inspections, in a range of locations across Northern Australia."

The Committee has received 287 submissions and 49 exhibits and has programmed six, week-long public hearing and inspections visits as well as several one-day hearings in capital cities. Amongst its tasks, the Committee has been asked to identify significant opportunities for the development of Northern Australia.

"There is potential to expand the resources sector in the North as well as introducing more intensive agriculture, horticulture, and aquaculture," Mr Entsch said. "There are opportunities to grow both domestic and international tourism, increase education opportunities, and promote research on health, energy and food production in the North. There could also be a more northerly focus of Australia's defence forces, building on current assets in North Queensland and the Northern Territory."

The Committee has also been asked to identify impediments to developing Northern Australia. "There are a number of major impediments to economic and social development," Mr Entsch said. "These include the absence of economic infrastructure; the cost of power and water; access to telecommunications; land tenure arrangements; lengthy approvals processes and the lack of consistency of processes and requirements between jurisdictions.

"Also needing to be taken into account are high development costs; availability and affordability of insurance; regular damage to economic and the need to mitigate against weather risks; and small sized and widely dispersed populations which prevent the creation of a critical mass for the provision of infrastructure and services, such as health and aged care services, and education."

The Committee will conclude its evidence-gathering phase with hearings and inspections in the Upper Flinders District, Gulf Country and Weipa, originally scheduled for mid-April, in early July; and additional public hearings in Darwin and Brisbane. The Committee will be tabling its final report and recommendations to the Parliament in September.

"The Committee will identify key development projects, strategies and ways by which governments can stimulate development and unblock impediments," Mr Entsch concluded.

Information on the inquiry is available on the committee website at [www.aph.gov.au/jscna](http://www.aph.gov.au/jscna)

**For media comment:** Please contact Heather Beck, media adviser to the Committee Chair the Hon Warren Entsch MP on (07) 4051 2220 or 0427 585 668

**For background information:** Please contact the committee secretariat:  
Phone: (02) 6277 4162 Email: [jscna@aph.gov.au](mailto:jscna@aph.gov.au) Website [www.aph.gov.au/jscna](http://www.aph.gov.au/jscna)