

Northern RDA Alliance (NRDAA) comprises of eight RDAs whose regions make up Northern Australia. This network, representing the Gascoyne in Western Australia to Gladstone in Central Queensland, has been meeting regularly and providing input to the Australia Government on the development of the White Paper on Developing Northern Australia and the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility. Our aim is to support all governments to develop policies and to prioritise investment opportunities to ensure the sustainable development of Northern Australia.

The NRDAA met recently in Darwin NT to discuss major policy issues across water, energy, communications and priority project investment across Northern Australia.

Issues discussed included:

- **Office of Northern Australia activities**

The Alliance was updated on the anticipated delays in delivery of the White Paper implementation report due to the election. We also discussed the policy development role of ONA in relation to the newly established Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility (Cairns).

The NRDAA is interested in promoting the opportunities presented by the NAIF, facilitating proponent engagement, supporting wider industry and community engagement around proposals (socio-economic benefits) and advising on the development of the Indigenous Engagement Strategy component of applications.

- **Inland Queensland Roads Action Plan (IQ-RAP)**

The Alliance was updated on RDA TNWQ progress on working with stakeholders to adopt the IQ-RAP road investment prioritisation process and recommendations for regional Queensland and the opportunity to migrate the methodology across to other jurisdictions to assist with planning strategic road infrastructure across northern Australia. The IQ-RAP has the support of 33 Local Governments in Queensland and is considered a valuable planning and decision-making tool for investments into road networks to also support regional economic development. We also explored the potential application of IQ-RAP principles and approaches in other initiatives. We anticipate alignment between the IQ-RAP priorities and those to be announced under the Northern Priority Roads and Beef Roads packages under the White Paper initiatives.

- **Development of a Northern Australian Water Security Program**

NRDAA will continue working with stakeholders to deliver secure, quality water supplies across Northern Australian regional centres and communities. The NRDAA is engaged in the delivery of the National Water Infrastructure Development Fund through membership of the Northern Australia Water Resource Assessments Program Governance Committee. The Assessments will focus on three areas: Mitchell river basin in Queensland; Darwin river basins (Adelaide, Finniss, Mary and Wildman) in the Northern Territory and the Fitzroy river basin in Western Australia. The NRDAA looks forward to active engagement, participation and support of the recently announced feasibility studies (initially in Queensland). Reinforcing the importance of transparent processes with strong regional community, industry and local government engagement to improve successful outcomes.

- **Defence White Paper implementation**

The Alliance discussed its interest in supporting the regional investment elements of the Defence White Paper, with a key focus on maximising local and Indigenous training and employment outcomes through the relevant tender and procurement processes.

Updates were also provided on the projects RDAs are already delivering in collaboration:

- **Northern WA Prospectus**

Delivering an investment prospectus for projects across Northern Western Australia which could be used as a model for Northern Australia investment attraction, which will be launched at an event in Perth in July.

- **Investigation of Alternative Solutions to Shortfalls in Regional Telecommunications**

Delivering the High Speed Wireless Technology Pilot to test the potential of long-distance point-to-point microwave links as a low-cost strategy to expand the benefits of existing fibre infrastructure. This installation of equipment will commence shortly and the service should be live by October 2016.

- **Development of a Northern Australian Energy Strategy**

A formative partnership between the NRDAA and CSIRO to develop the Strategy which aims to provide secure, reliable and affordable electricity across the north. The Strategy seeks to understand future opportunities for energy demand, generation and supply to inform pathways to delivery across the north, including exploration of export opportunities for technology, skills and expertise.



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