

30 November, 2015

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Dear Nathan

Re: Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility

It was a pleasure to meet you at the Townsville NAIF workshop and to also meet your colleague Ms Carol Bellettini in Canberra at a recent meeting with the Northern RDA Alliance. We support the joint submission made by the Northern RDA Alliance as submitted by Dr Allan Dale today. On behalf of the Regional Development Australia Townsville and North West Queensland Committee (RDA), I write to make additional comments as below on the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility.

Australia's future success in the North relies on the development of shared infrastructure to enable investment, connectivity and productivity gains for those doing business. We congratulate the Government on the initiative to develop the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility and believe that the draft guidelines are quite comprehensive with flexibility. The following is provided as our feedback to some of the questions in the Consultation Paper.

In **Question 3** on the Consultation paper you enquire about other examples of economic infrastructure that would transform Northern Australia but may not meet all of the proposed requirements. As discussed in the workshop in Townsville, roads funding is a serious issue and concern in Northern Australia. Road infrastructure is recognised as important economic infrastructure, especially for rural industries that rely on the road network to move exports and domestic freight on the road network to link with rail or ports. However, northern roads are lagging in investment, productivity and safety outcomes. Typically funding is constrained by the fact that private sector investment is not easily attracted to these areas. Hence we encourage the Government to consider new options for long term planning and funding of road improvements. Certainty of investment plans and construction timelines will give confidence to industry, businesses and Councils.

In regard to **Question 4 concerning Mandatory Criteria**, we encourage the Government to initially focus on projects that are fully in the Northern Australia footprint. There will be much need in this region without spreading the funding across the Tropic of Capricorn to the south.



In regard to **Question 4 concerning Non-Mandatory Criteria**, we encourage the Government to consider using its 8 Northern Australia Regional Development Australia Committees for advice on alignment of proposed projects with the Regional Plans/ Roadmaps that have been developed by each RDA in consultation with local government authorities and other regional economic development stakeholders. RDA Committees are in a position to take a “helicopter view” based on their regional collaboration and on-the-ground expertise and networks.

Also in regard to **Question 4 concerning Non-Mandatory Criteria**, we encourage the Government to maintain an open view to the scale of projects as some smaller scale projects can make a significant economic and jobs impact in a remote area of Northern Australia.

Again, we congratulate the government on taking this initiative to focus on the development of Northern Australia. RDA continues to be a major regional stakeholder, and we are pleased to have had the opportunity to provide comments.

I would be pleased to expand on any comments or answer any questions you may have and can be reached on 07 4410 3655 or at ceo@rdanwq.org.au. We look forward to further engagement in the development of Northern Australia.

Yours sincerely



Glenys Schuntner

Chief Executive Officer

Regional Development Australia Townsville and North West Queensland Committee