

16<sup>th</sup> September 2009  
NGRMG  
PO Box 62  
Georgetown QLD 4871

Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce  
Office of Northern Australia  
GPO Box 594  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: WRITTEN SUBMISSION – OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTH

The Northern Gulf Resource Management Group (NGRMG) would like to thank the Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce for the opportunity to make this written submission regarding opportunities for development in the North. The NGRMG has strong connection with a wide range of stakeholders (Industry, Community, Traditional Owners, Local Government, and Conservation groups) through membership, partnerships, and a long standing credible history in the gulf region of Queensland. We are inclusive, strategic and have both personal and professional investments in Northern Australia. We believe the NGRMG would be a credible partner in any governance and/or delivery arrangements for achieving sustainable futures for Northern Australia, especially within our region.

The Northern Gulf region encompasses the catchments of the Mitchell, Norman , Gilbert and Staaten totaling approximately 193,5000km<sup>2</sup>. The major town centres are Georgetown, Croydon, Einasliegh, Mt Surprise, Dimbulah, Normanton, Karumba, Mount Molloy, Chillagoe and Irvinebank. The region is a remote area with an estimated population of one person per 20km<sup>2</sup> (compared with the Queensland average of 2.4 persons per km<sup>2</sup> (OESR 2007)). The majority of the region is comprised of approximately 245 large grazing properties. Major development to this point has been centred around the Mareeba- Dimbulah Water Supply Scheme (MDWSS) which primarily supplies water for agricultural production worth more than \$100 million dollars a year. Further development of this catchment and the water resources of the other catchments is currently being considered by governments, but also speculative commercial investors.

The NGRMG has a successful track record of delivery and a wide demonstrable support of the public for government and ethical investment to achieve outcomes in the region. Any major development in Northern Australia will require the input and engagement of the local people and the NGRMG are already providing this service with their existing structure, cooperative arrangements and partners. By utilising the NGRMG's integrated approach it will ensure the maximum benefits for the economy, environment and the community.

The Northern Australian Land and Water Taskforce is in a rare and privileged position to influence the design of future land uses, lifestyles, and opportunities for future generations within an area where the intact natural resources are both important for both production and protection. Due to the remoteness of much of the country formal information sources are lacking making the heuristic knowledge of local

people critical for integration in planning and delivery in this area. Fostering cooperative arrangements between all levels of Government and the community is needed and the NGRMG could provide the ideal conduit for this process.

Potential for development in the North is wide and varied. Any development concepts should be developed with significant engagement with the local communities to identify risks, constraints and any potential environmental impacts. Thinking 'outside the square' should also be given proper consideration to identify less common income streams such as ecosystem services, nature based tourism and carbon trading schemes. These along with sustainable agricultural production have the potential to build resilient communities.

The existing projects being delivered by NGRMG provide significant data, monitoring and benchmarks that will contribute to a strong foundation to the future decision making for our region. The innovative approaches and outcomes being delivered also underpin our future sustainability, and provide services to the wider community, industry and government.

In summary, the NGRMG request that any policy development or further investigation will include the bodies with the experience, knowledge and community representation to provide input. The NGRMG have a proven track record with a strong local community engagement focus and an excellent understanding of local, regional, state and national issues and targets.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. C. Bethel', with a stylized flourish at the end.

John Bethel  
Chair  
Northern Gulf Resource Management Group