



COMMUNIQUE

Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce

23 April 2009

NORTHERN AUSTRALIA TASKFORCE MEETS IN WEIPA

The Australian Government's Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce met in Weipa on 22 April 2009.

The Taskforce was established in May 2007 to examine the potential for further developing land and water resources in northern Australia and undertook extensive community and stakeholder consultations from June to September 2007.

The Taskforce met with representatives of Rio Tinto-Alcan in Weipa and visited the Andoom mine-site. The Taskforce gained a greater understanding of the interactions between the mine's operations and the Weipa community.

The Taskforce also visited the Wenlock River and met Mapoon based Wild Rivers Rangers. The Taskforce was impressed by the ranger program being developed by the Queensland Government but noted the importance of cooperation between stakeholders with interests in the Wenlock River catchment and the cultural and conservation economies based on the river.

Also accompanying the Taskforce were Queensland Government representatives from the Department of Natural Resources and Water who provided detailed advice to the Taskforce on Queensland's regulatory frameworks for water and land management.

The Taskforce was invited to country by prominent Queensland Indigenous leader and Taskforce member, Mr Richie Ah Mat. The cultural connection to country and the realisation of Indigenous economic aspirations were key issues raised by Mr Ah Mat and are being examined by the Taskforce as part of its work program for 2009.

The Taskforce reached in principle agreement on a forward program of scientific research which is to be coordinated by the CSIRO. The work program aims to provide the Taskforce with a better understanding of opportunities and potential impacts of development and will establish and illustrate key principles and guidelines for the sustainable development of northern Australia.

The Taskforce final report, which will be the most important examination of development opportunities and issues for northern Australia for 60 years, will be delivered to the Government in December 2009.