



COMMUNIQUE

Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce

3 July 2009

NORTHERN AUSTRALIA TASKFORCE MEETS KIMBERLEY STAKEHOLDERS

The Australian Government's Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce visited Western Australia 1–3 July 2009. The Taskforce is meeting with representatives and individuals from across northern Australia to deepen its understanding of opportunities for sustainable economic development.

The Taskforce met with Mr Peter Yu, Mr Wayne Bergman and other community leaders in Broome. The Taskforce discussed a range of issues associated with Indigenous rights and interests in the sustainable development of land and water resources, noting the critical importance of early, meaningful and effective engagement with Indigenous communities.

The Taskforce visited the Indigenous Land Corporation's Roebuck Plains Station and live cattle export depot and noted the success of the Indigenous trainee program in operation.

The Taskforce again noted the importance of infrastructure in opening up development opportunities across a range of industries, such as agriculture, minerals and resources and tourism. The need for new meat processing facilities in the Kimberley, to complement live cattle exports, was canvassed by a number of stakeholders.

The Taskforce also attended a field day at nearby Kilty Station hosted by the community based natural resource management group, FitzCam (Fitzroy Catchment Management Project).

The field day highlighted the challenges facing industries in the region, as well as opportunities for mosaic and integrated pastoral/fodder production. Discussion also focussed on the Fitzroy River catchment being a northern freshwater system of national significance. The Taskforce heard presentations from local pastoralist Jack Burton, Mr Jim Motter from the Kimberley Pastoral and Graziers Association, Mr Gary Scott from Environs Kimberley, Ms Anne Poulina from Nyikina Mangala Corporation, the Western Australian Department of Water, and the Tropical Rivers and Coastal Knowledge research hub (TRaCK). The Taskforce completed its meetings at the re-built Eco Beach resort south of Broome.

The Taskforce noted the diversity of environments and the unique nature of the Kimberley region and the tremendous opportunities available for mosaic-style smaller scale developments, as exemplified by the success of the Kilito and Eco Beach operations. However, a recurring theme in discussions was the cost and delays caused by regulatory complexity and red tape. The importance of engaging Indigenous interests at the outset of planning for new development, so that Indigenous communities and proponents benefit jointly, was stressed repeatedly.

The Taskforce reports to the Australian Government at the end of this year. Further consultations will be conducted over coming months. More information can be found at www.nalwt.gov.au

ENDS