



COMMUNIQUE

Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce

24 July 2007

NORTHERN AUSTRALIA TASKFORCE MEETS IN DARWIN

The Australian Government's Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce visited the Northern Territory this week and met with members of the community, scientists and government officials. The Taskforce, established by the Prime Minister as part of *A National Plan for Water Security*, is examining the potential for further developing land and water resources in northern Australia. The Taskforce will be travelling widely across northern Australia over the coming months to meet with stakeholders in the region and to deepen its understanding of key priorities and issues.

Members of the Taskforce visited Palumpa (east of Wadeye) and Elsey Station (south of Katherine) to better understand the opportunities afforded by Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) as well as looking at horticultural and pastoral enterprises.

The Taskforce also spent two days in Darwin meeting with a wide range of stakeholders including agricultural, horticultural and pastoral interests, environmental and natural resource management groups and the Northern Land Council.

The Taskforce had discussions about a number of issues specific to development in the Northern Territory, focusing in particular on the work being done in the Douglas Daly region. Other issues explored included the challenges and opportunities presented by different land tenure arrangements, infrastructure and environmental issues. The Taskforce emphasised to stakeholders that it was exploring a wide range of economic development opportunities, including industry and tourism, and that its interest was not limited to agricultural development opportunities.

Reinforcing its earlier decision that its deliberations would be informed by the best available science, the Taskforce met with scientists from the Northern Australian Irrigation Futures (NAIF) project, the Tropical Rivers and Coastal Knowledge (TRaCK) program and the CSIRO.

The Taskforce will next meet in late August in Western Australia, where it will visit Perth and the Kimberley region. The Taskforce has also called for public submissions which need to be lodged by 17 August.

More information on the Taskforce, including its terms of reference and membership, can be found at www.environment.gov.au/water/action/development/nalwt-tor.html