



COMMUNIQUE

Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce

21 August 2009

NORTHERN WATER TASKFORCE MEETS STAKEHOLDERS IN DARWIN AND THE DOUGLAS-DALY REGION

The Australian Government's Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce visited the Northern Territory 19–21 August 2009 to further discuss opportunities for sustainable economic development in northern Australia.

The Taskforce is chaired by prominent Indigenous leader Joe Ross from Fitzroy Crossing in WA and was formed last year by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd to examine opportunities for sustainably developing water resources across northern Australia. The Taskforce is also charged with assessing the potential impacts of new developments and considering institutional and governance arrangements to improve the management of water. The Taskforce will report to the Australian Government at the end of this year.

In Darwin the Taskforce toured Crocodylus Park and met with Dr Graeme Webb to discuss sustainable crocodile management, conservation and commercial opportunities for the production and promotion of high quality crocodile leather products.

The Taskforce travelled to the Nauiyu community on the lower Daly River to meet with Traditional owners, local Malak Malak land management rangers who work on the river, local tourism operators and Wagiman women responsible for Butterfly Gorge and the Tjuwaliyn (Douglas) Hot Springs.

All these stakeholders observed changes in the health of the Daly River over the past two decades — which they ascribe to upstream activities — and raised concerns with a lack of infrastructure and regulatory compliance. Wagiman women also spoke of their concerns with a lack of consultation on developments and commercial activities that are occurring on their traditional land.

The Taskforce also visited Midway Station and the Douglas Daly Research Farm further upstream on the Daly River and met with a wide range of local producers and researchers. Producers, in particular, were united in their call for more streamlined approval processes to facilitate the timely development of the agricultural, forestry and pastoral industries in the region.

A final round of stakeholder consultations is scheduled to be conducted by the Taskforce next week in Broome (31 August), Darwin (2 September) and Cairns (3 September). The Taskforce has also invited individuals or organisations to provide written submissions to the Taskforce addressing their terms of reference prior to 16 September 2009.

More information on the Taskforce consultations in Broome, Darwin and Cairns and the Public Submissions process can be found at www.nalwt.gov.au

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