



Media Release

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NORTHERN AUSTRALIA LAND AND WATER TASKFORCE CONSULTATIONS

The Government's high profile independent Taskforce, headed up by prominent Kimberley Indigenous leader Joe Ross, is working hard to include the voice of stakeholders across northern Australia.

The Taskforce is exploring new opportunities for water-based developments across the north and is due to report to the Government in December. As well as looking for opportunities, the Taskforce is charged with assessing the potential impacts of new developments as well as considering institutional and governance arrangements that might improve the management of water.

It's a big ask and the Chair of the Taskforce, Joe Ross is working his members hard to ensure they have every opportunity to draw on the experience and knowledge of as many people who live and work in the north as possible.

This week the Taskforce is meeting Indigenous water experts at Mary River Crossing in the Northern Territory. The meeting, which is being held on the 5-6 August, was organised for the Taskforce by the Northern Australia Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance and will include over 100 Indigenous water experts from Western Australia, Queensland and Northern Territory.

As an Aboriginal man from Fitzroy Crossing, Joe is keenly aware of the difficulties in creating positive change across the north and is uniquely well placed to head up the Taskforce.

Joe has a keen eye for the beauty and value of northern Australia. "It doesn't matter if it is 45 degrees out there, it is a beautiful country from the desert to the ranges to the saltwater" he says. He also believes he has a responsibility to tell Australian people about his country and about the values of it. Only in this way will people realise the spirit in this country and be better placed to work with us to create a genuinely sustainable future.

'We are focussed on what the long term sustainable development of water resources in northern Australia might look like; and of course, a key ingredient in that has to

start with a new deal for Indigenous communities that includes genuine engagement and sustainable businesses’.

The Taskforce is also conducting a series of meetings in September with stakeholders from the industry and resources, agriculture and conservation sectors. Meetings will be held in Broome (31 August), Darwin (2 September) and Cairns (3 September).

‘We know there are no blanket solutions and what might have worked in the south will simply not work in the north. Listening and learning from people who know and understand the north is critically important to the Taskforce coming up with recommendations that work in the north’, Mr Ross said.

The Taskforce is also inviting individuals and organisations to provide written submissions by 16 September 2009.

The Taskforce reports to the Australian Government in December 2009. More information on the sectoral meetings in September or the request for written submissions can be found on the Taskforce website www.nalwt.gov.au.

Media inquiries: Joe Ross 0419 913043

Website: www.nalwt.gov.au