

Our Ref: 42.09.01

Northern Australian Taskforce Secretariat
Department of the Environment and Water Resources
GPO Box 787
CANBERRA ACT 2601



Submission to the Northern Australian Land and Water Taskforce July 2007

Council for the Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley makes the following submissions for the Taskforce consideration. These submissions were also made to Senator Heffernan in June 2007.

1. Development of agriculture in northern Australia must be based on good science;
2. Development of northern Australia is in the nation's interest;
3. World trends indicate that continued agricultural production in Australia is essential;
4. Fresh water will be a limiting resource for the much of the world in the next 50 years and beyond;
5. Given climate trends and predictions for Australia, it is unlikely that southern Australia can continue to play the dominant role it has in the past 200 years in terms of agricultural production even with advances in science (new varieties etc);
6. Genetically modified crops should be considered in the context of developing agriculture and industries in northern Australia;
7. That appropriate market signals are beneficial in terms of water pricing;
8. Irrigation efficiency will be required in both the existing irrigation scheme (Ord River Scheme) and any expansion to maximise the value of the fresh water available.
9. The Ord River Irrigation Scheme is investor and development ready, because of the existing headworks, infrastructure and some 30 years of science underpinning its development. This does not seem to be a focal point for the Taskforce terms of reference, and it should be, because there is no catchment or project more ready for development than this one. If Australia cannot expand this Scheme then it has little or no chance of developing others.
10. The state of readiness for investment and development of the Ord River Scheme is immediate and far exceeds any other area in northern Australia in this regard;
11. The Ord River Irrigation Scheme has water availability secured by virtue of past Commonwealth and State investment in key infrastructure such as the Argyle Dam and Lake Kununurra Diversion Dam;
12. This past investment will not be fully capitalised on, unless the Ord River Irrigation Scheme is fully developed;
13. If the development of Ord River Irrigation Scheme is to reach its full potential (80,000Ha plus) it should be done before other greenfield developments are commenced (e.g. Fitzroy River in the West Kimberley);

The Last Frontier



26. That these new jobs are essential if the Kimberley region is to provide new opportunities to the rapidly growing indigenous population. (Senator Heffernan emphasised this point at the Broome Economic Forum 2nd May 2007);
27. That the potential for irrigated agriculture in the East Kimberley region extends beyond the Ord Valley and already includes 10,000 Ha at Kingston Rest with its own secure water supply of 23 GL, and is yet to be fully developed;
28. That a mosaic of other niche irrigated agricultural production is possible in places such as Argyle Diamond Mine (when the mine is decommissioned), Bell Springs community, Kalumburu, North Kimberley etc. This mosaic of agricultural development is possible across the Kimberley often without large headworks and can assist in leveraging business critical mass for agricultural industries. Further development of this type has risk management advantages and the ability to time production to suit niche market opportunities. The work at Killo Station by Jack Nixon is a terrific example of this.
29. That given the importance of the East Kimberley region and Ord River Scheme to any genuine consideration of land and water resource development in Northern Australia, that the Taskforce ought to reflect stronger membership from this region.
30. It is noted on the map circulated with the terms of reference that Katherine and Derby are not shown as "Major Towns". If we are talking about developing Northern Australia, surely they must be considered as Major Towns. Arguably Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek and Kalumburu should also be shown.
31. The West Australian newspaper 3 July 2007 quotes Senator Heffernan as saying "*the Ord was now a matter of national interest and he had commissioned studies into how it could benefit Australia. The question of ways to develop the Ord dominated discussion at the task force's inaugural meeting on Friday and talks are already under way between Perth and Canberra about the GM issue.*"
That is an interesting comment and raises numerous questions. Council seeks clarity on the following:

If the Ord is of such national interest, why isn't the third level of government in this country, Local Government, our Local Government the Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley, given the courtesy and respect of being both represented on the Northern Australian Land and Water Taskforce and being present at these supposedly important meetings?

The failure of the Commonwealth Government to address this issue, when it is this regions "backyard" you are talking about, makes a mockery of a number of intergovernmental agreements about involvement of Local Government in the future of our society. It is for reasons like this that our Council has resolved to initiate a national media campaign around this issue. Our region and Local Government has not been consulted with regard to appropriate levels of regional representation at forums where the future of this region is discussed. How do you expect people of this region to have confidence in your government going forward, if this situation is to continue?

Yours sincerely,



Michele Pucci
Shire President