Adam Giles
Chief Minister of the Northern Territory

NT backs White Paper on Developing Northern Australia

18 June 2015

The Federal Government’s White Paper on Developing Northern Australia will deliver new economic and cultural opportunities for the nation’s fastest growing region, Northern Territory Chief Minister Adam Giles said today.

Mr Giles said the vast majority of the proposals raised by the Northern Territory through the White Paper development process had been picked up by the Australian Government.

“I am particularly pleased that the White Paper places heavy emphasis on managing the opportunities of native title across Northern Australia. From the NT perspective, this is vital if we are to strengthen the economic rights of Aboriginal Territorians and create sustainable jobs,” Mr Giles said.

The White Paper commits $110 million towards finalising all native title claims within 10 years and $20.4 million to assist native title holders in their negotiations with businesses.

“This is great news for both Aboriginal people who are seeking a real economic future and business who want to pursue opportunities ranging from aquaculture to tourism on Aboriginal land,” Mr Giles said.

The White Paper also provides $3.7 million to develop the Territory’s proposal for a more integrated approach to the development of projects across the north with the implementation of an Investment Projects Pipeline.

This would be a database for business and relevant government regulatory departments to track the stages and potential opportunities arising from significant projects.

Mr Giles welcomed the $600 million infrastructure package in the White Paper, particularly the identification of Central Australian roads like the Tanami Road and the Outback Way as roads critical to the development of the North. Funding for the Arnhem Highway will also open up new sources of economic activity, particularly through tourism.

“I’m also pleased to see the Australian Government committing $5 million towards the corridor required to turn the Tennant Creek to Mt Isa railway into a reality. The Territory Government’s Budget committed $1 million to a feasibility study for this exciting new project and this funding will provide the opportunity to really drive this project forward.
The Territory Government welcomed the White Paper’s commitment to establish a ‘single point of entry’ in Darwin to support investor interest.

“This will complement the work already being undertaken by our existing Office of Northern Australian Development and is a sensible approach to ensuring the success of major infrastructure projects across the Territory,” Mr Giles said.

Mr Giles said he would be pushing for the Territory to be the location of some components of the $75 million Co-operative Research Centre for the Development of Northern Australia.

“With its initial focus on agriculture, food and tropical medicine, I’d expect the Australian Government would be amenable to house one of each of these components across the three jurisdictions involved,” he said.

“There is great benefit in developing these intellectual resources right across the whole of the North - not just concentrating this vital research effort in one location.

“I will be pushing for the Menzies School of Health Research in Darwin to feature prominently in this research effort as it is an established leader in the tropical health area and well located to lead further efforts in this area.”

Water infrastructure and management is vital for the development of the tropical areas of Australia and the White Paper supports a number of critical areas with substantial financial commitments.

Mr Giles said the $200 million to build water infrastructure in the North will aid development in the decades to come.

“I’m particularly pleased to see $5 million allocated for detailed examinations of the economic feasibility of the Ord Stage 3 on the border of Western Australia and the Territory. The water needs of the growing Darwin region will also be supported with $5 million for investigations to determine available water and the best locations for water infrastructure,” Mr Giles said.

The Chief Minister said the development of Northern Australia was now firmly on the nation’s economic, policy and political radar as a result of the White Paper.

“I thank my Parliamentary colleagues for their support and contributions which have allowed the Territory to drive the Northern development agenda forward,” Mr Giles said.

“Prime Minister Tony Abbott is to be commended for having the courage to think outside the traditional political prism of the east coast and look seriously at the issues facing the north of the country.

“Northern Australia will change for the better as a result of the Prime Minister’s commitment and subsequent generations in the North will enjoy opportunities that will have been created through this White Paper.

“Territorians are looking forward to playing their role and capitalising on the important focus on the North that the White paper has generated. This process will make it easier for us to attract investment, raise finance and attract the skills we need to continue our journey.
“We will capitalise on the momentum generated by the White Paper and make sure the story doesn’t end here. It’s just the beginning of realising our true potential and the contribution we can make that will drive our nation’s economy for years to come,” Mr Giles said.

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