

Mr John Carter

Inquiry Secretary

Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia

For the Committee Members

This is my vision of opportunities for the development of Northern Australia.

I am an 81 yo living in Pine Creek NT and am concerned about the lack of aquatic industries in our tropical north. My only academic qualifications are from the University of Life. Up here in the NT we have vast areas of very poor soil, but have abundant water which makes the area suitable for Aquaculture and Aquaponics a subject I have been studying for many years.

There are many species of fish and crustaceans that have not been studied or properly utilised, but have great potential for farming. The benefits would include, more fresh produce grown locally thus saving transport from southern markets and creating new industries and added employment. By using aquaculture and Aquaponics fresh vegetables and fish could be produced without much expensive research.

The Giant Freshwater Prawn of the *Macrobrachium* species would have to top the list for potential. Known as Cherabin a local formerly thought to be *M. rosenbergi* but now identified to be *M. spinepes*, but through lack of research could be one of several species inhabiting this area. The *M. rosenbergi* is widely farmed throughout the Asian and South East Asia area and the South Pacific, there is about 200.000 tonnes sold annually. At the moment not one prawn is farmed in Australia although there is a farming manual available on line from the FAO and they are native to tropical northern Australia and I have read about them being imported from Fiji because of their excellent eating qualities.

In my initial search I contacted Professor Peter Mather who in his retirement is reviewing some papers of past Australian research into this prawn and has indicated that he is interested in helping. This prawn can be farmed inland without disturbing coastal habitat.

Fish of the grunter family is another example of a fish not being farmed. The the sooty grunter (*Hephaestus fuliginosus*) while not an attractive

fish is caught in numbers and are favoured over the barramundi by most people around here. These fish would be relatively easily farmed and the fillets have a good recovery rate, I have a manual for the hormone induced spawning and believe natural spawning could be carried out with relatively simple setup costs and would be easier to breed inland, also not disturbing coastal habitat and not requiring saline water for breeding like the barramundi.

These two examples could be farmed using standard aquaculture methods and the waste water used on crops or by using Aquaponics could produce fresh fish/crustaceans and vegetables in small or commercial quantities anywhere in the area. They would be suitable for small or large communities, retail outlets and restaurants regardless of location even using solar power if necessary.

I have tried over many years to get interest in these projects from government agencies, politicians and businesses without any interest or success, but still feel that it is worth one last go. There is so much untapped potential for the area it just takes ideas and positive thinking, which seem to be in short supply at the moment.

Respectfully Yours

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