



12 September 2019

Committee Secretary
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Select Committee on the effectiveness of the Australian Government's Northern Australia Agenda

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on this inquiry into the Australian Government's Northern Australia agenda.

North Queensland Bulk Ports Corporation (NQBP) is a Queensland Government-owned Corporation responsible for facilitating more than half of Queensland's trade through the operating ports of Hay Point, Mackay, Abbot Point and Weipa. More than 1,000 people call our ports a place of work, and more than 28,000 direct trade jobs in mining, farming and transport depend on our ports (Source: NQBP data; Department of Transport and Main Roads state port throughput data; QRC Coal Industry Data 2017/18).

With four major ports in the Northern Australia region facilitating trade worth \$40 billion, NQBP has a significant interest in the Australian Government's Northern Australia Agenda.

To date NQBP have benefitted enormously from the existing Northern Australia Agenda. We have become members of the Australian Logistics Council Northern Australia working group where we have partnered with a range of stakeholders interested in securing greater opportunities for Northern Australia.

Additionally, several members of our executive recently attended the *2019 Developing Northern Australia Conference* which provided an opportunity for us to share our challenges and opportunities as the Port Authority for the Port of Weipa, but also develop relationships and learn about issues as diverse as:

- The need to develop a diversified economy that isn't solely reliant on mining;
- The importance of early engagement with traditional owners and the role that organisations such as NQBP can play in building capacity with traditional owner groups;
- Practical examples of how to develop a sustainable business within Northern Australia; and
- The importance of government engagement.

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It is clear to NQBP that Northern Australia has a unique set of circumstances which requires a different focus by Government. This includes remoteness, sparse population, under-developed infrastructure, extreme weather patterns, higher indigenous populations and lower political representation. This is where an effective Northern Australia agenda is so vital.

As this submission outlines, NQBP supports the Agenda's focus on unlocking the region's full potential as a gateway to global markets, while providing stewardship to the region's pristine environments and partnering with traditional owner groups in the region.

While all four NQBP's ports play a critical role in the Northern Australia agenda, this submission focuses on the Port of Weipa, located on Western Cape York Peninsula.

NQBP believes the changing commercial dynamics at the Port of Weipa offer all stakeholders, including the Office of Northern Australia, a unique opportunity to deliver long-term investment and support as the port transitions away from a reliance on mining.

In 2017, Weipa celebrated 50 years since it officially opened as a town. The Port of Weipa has been an essential contributor to the economic development of the region since it first opened. It has historically facilitated the export of bauxite and the import of corresponding fuel and general cargo through its connection to the East Weipa and Andoom bauxite reserves, located less than 20 km from the township and the port.

The East Weipa and Andoom bauxite deposits are forecast to be exhausted by 2028 or earlier. In 2018, the Amrun Mine to the south of Weipa became operational. Fuel and other supplies (including labour) still pass through the Port of Weipa, however, the mine does not export bauxite through the Port of Weipa. Further bauxite reserves are located at Mapoon, about 85 km to the north of Weipa and Aurukun, about 85 km to the south. At this stage it is unclear whether these deposits would be exported through the Port of Weipa.

NQBP recognises that it is critical to develop a diversified economy within Weipa. With four existing berths, the Port of Weipa has the necessary facilities to support a wide range of commodities, including agriculture, forestry, aquaculture and tourism. The limitations are on the economic and infrastructure development of these activities within the port catchment, rather than the port itself.

To support this, we are working with stakeholders in the region to identify new trades that capitalise on the existing infrastructure at the Port of Weipa, facilitate sustainable growth for Cape York and create opportunities for traditional owners in the region. These trades include:

- Aquaculture
- Bio-futures
- Agriculture
- Forestry
- Tourism
- Marine & Mining Services

During 2019/20, the Queensland Government will invest \$967 million in infrastructure that supports Far North Queensland. We believe that a strong and effective Northern Australia Agenda that builds on this investment is essential.

We look forward to exploring the possibilities for the Cape Region with the Office of Northern Australia into the future and will continue to help facilitate trade through the Port of Weipa.

If you have any questions please contact Paul Doyle

Yours faithfully

Nicolas Fertin
Chief Executive Officer