



13 March 2014

Dr Bill Pender
Committee Secretary
Joint Select Committee on
Northern Australia
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

via email: jscna@aph.gov.au

Dear Dr Pender

RE: Inquiry into the Development of Northern Australia

Thank you for your invitation of 17 January 2014 to make submission to this Inquiry. I am pleased to provide the enclosed submission on behalf of the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC).

The ILC notes the broad scope of the Terms of Reference of the Inquiry and has limited its submission to sectors of industry in which the ILC has had significant engagement with Indigenous landowners in northern Australia over almost twenty years. This ranges from providing building capacity through property management planning and training, to assisting the management of Indigenous-held land through infrastructure and plant and equipment grants, to the development of pastoral, horticultural and tourism enterprises. The ILC has invested more than \$30M in land management and enterprise development in northern Australia over the past five years and, since 1995, has acquired more than 4 million hectares of land for the benefit of Indigenous Australians. The ILC seeks to assist Indigenous Australians in the management of that land to build capacity, establish enterprises, and create employment to derive social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits.

Within that context, the submission identifies the following key opportunities for the development of north Australia:

- *Expanding Indigenous agricultural industries* – our submission demonstrates where the ILC has collaborated with Indigenous landowners, industry and governments to assist in the creation of viable Indigenous enterprises, and identifies emerging opportunities for new Indigenous enterprises.
- *Harnessing export potential* – the ILC operates the Roebuck Export cattle yards in Broome (WA), which has added significant capacity to WA's \$198m live cattle trade with approximately one-third of WA's live export passing through the facility annually. Further investment in port facilities and road infrastructure is critical to harnessing the potential of Australia's live beef cattle export industry, and diversification relies on providing viable local processing options to producers.

- *Expansion of horticultural industries* – the ILC has contributed significantly to the development of the Indigenous Kalano tomato enterprise in Katherine (NT) and the Hopevale (QLD) banana enterprise. Our submission notes that opportunities exist to expand Indigenous participation in the horticultural industry in northern Australia, but are dependent on the availability of appropriate land tenure and access to markets.
- *Harnessing economic potential of emerging markets* - Indigenous landholders in the north are well positioned to benefit from engagement in viable Payment for Ecosystem Services markets, including in respect to carbon and biodiversity offsetting. The ILC seeks to work with governments and industry to assist the design and development of Indigenous PES enterprises that would assist the protection of precious cultural and environmental values and create Indigenous enterprises and employment.
- *Expanding the Indigenous tourism Industry* – the ILC has collaborated with Indigenous groups in the development of tourism enterprises including the Mossman Gorge Gateway Centre (QLD), Home Valley Station (WA) and Ayers Rock Resort (NT), which combine Indigenous training and employment outcomes with the provision of world class travel experiences. Our submission sets out suggestions for developing Indigenous capacity and providing incentives to promote the tourism industry.

Our submission makes recommendations about a number of impediments to the development of the north, including to social infrastructure; road infrastructure; sea based transport and infrastructure; regional training and employment for building leadership; and regional labour market disincentives. Additional to these impediments, and perhaps the most critical, is land tenure reform. Our submission asserts that creative mechanisms need to be developed where Governments, major financial institutions and Indigenous interests work in genuine partnership to address the tension between the inalienability of Indigenous rights over and connection to land, and the ‘bankability’ of title to enable Indigenous communities to participate in economic development.

Underpinning each of these opportunities and recommendations is the critical need for the genuine engagement of Indigenous people in the identification of priorities and planning for the development of northern Australia. The ILC has significant experience in the facilitation of successful partnerships across the north and is well placed to support the development of governance and consultative frameworks.

Please do not hesitate to contact me on [REDACTED] if your Committee would like to discuss the contents of this submission.

Yours sincerely

M C Dillon

Chief Executive Officer