



PATHWAY TO POSSIBILITIES

A BLUEPRINT FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACROSS NORTHERN AUSTRALIA

**North Australia Economic Development Forum -
Cairns 2008**



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Delegates to the North Australia Economic Development Forum 2008 are sending a clear message to government. The north wants recognition of its economic significance to the nation and ownership of local decision making on all matters that affect the future of its inhabitants, in particular, issues such as policy development, expenditure and planning.

Delegates from northern Australia called for a fair share, a greater percentage of the revenue produced by its industries to be returned to the north. Recognise the north and invest appropriately.

Delegates were under no illusions about the challenges facing north Australia and a number of barriers to regional economic development of north Australia were identified. Strongly held convictions arising from NAEDF 2008 concluded that there needed to be:

- Reform of governance structures and services to overcome economic and governance marginalisation resulting in alienation of remote communities. Enough rhetoric - **Governments need to demonstrate by actions - a sincerity in engaging with remote Australia.**
- Decisions relating to the north to be made in the north and by the north with policies and expenditure decisions made by those (locally) able to deliver practical, achievable and measurable outcomes
- Timely and practical investment in improving leadership and capacity to strategically plan and implement regional development
- Investment in infrastructure to stimulate growth as opposed to the current ideology of waiting for growth. Active not reactive.
- A fair share of the cake - there is huge disparity between the amount of income and tax revenue generated by north Australia and the investment in infrastructure
- Review of government programs so as to be more relevant to northern Australia. Programs designed to effectively meet the needs of northern Australia instead of generic programs to suit more populous and metropolitan areas. One size does not fit all.

A number of criteria were identified as being critical to enabling the full potential of north Australia to be realised. These include:

- a) Formal collaborative arrangements transcending political allegiances to ensure that there is real and long term commitment of State, Territory and Australian governments to North Australia. This will need a bipartisan approach of collaboration in the national interest. This commitment must also survive the 3 or 4 year political cycle which was identified as a real barrier to sustainable economic development by NAEDF 2008 delegates.
- b) Formal establishment of effective long term cooperative arrangements between all 3 levels of government and adequate resourcing of the local government tier. Recognition of the significance of local government to community should be formalised, placing local government under the aegis of the federal sphere.

It is essential to ensure that there is capacity of local government to:

- Develop collaborative partnerships and networks
- Maximise opportunities and develop economies of scale through collaborative arrangements
- Effectively and efficiently deliver services and manage funding
- Build capacity of their communities to take advantage of opportunities

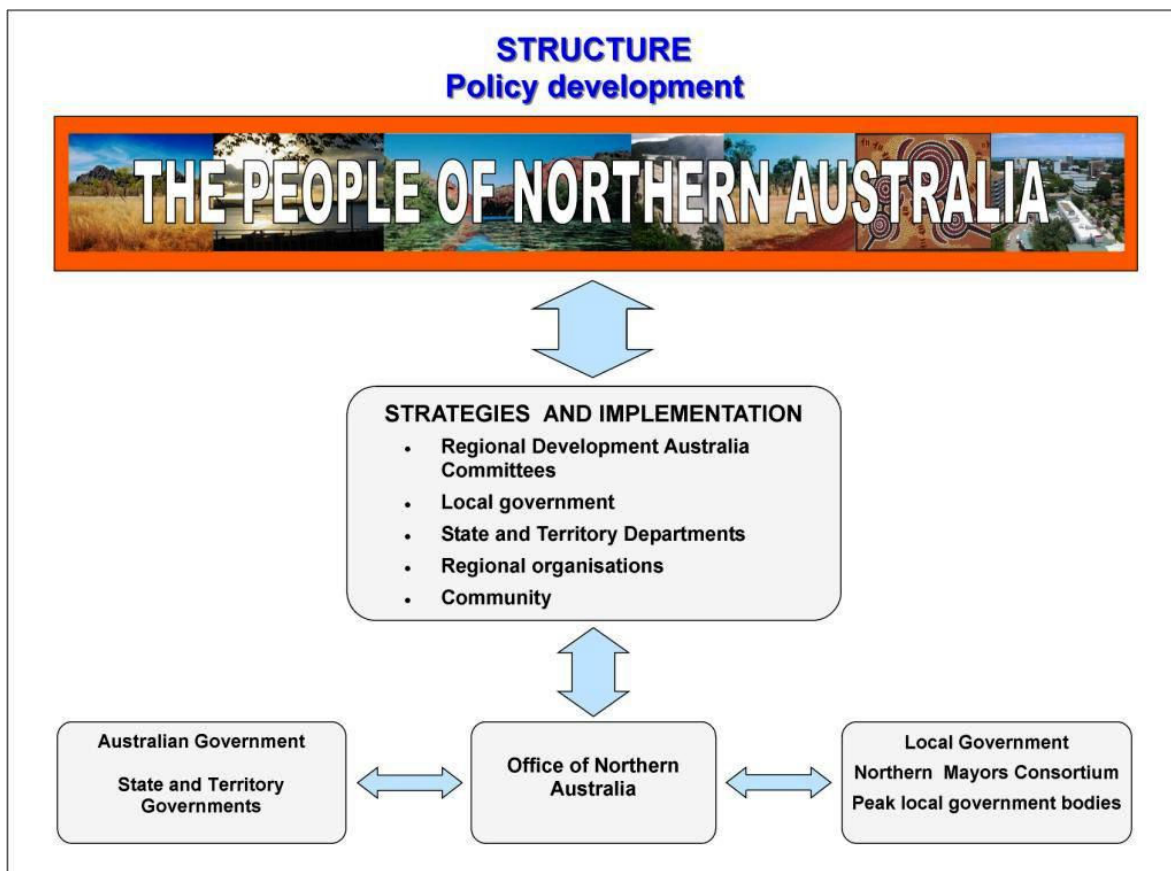
- c) The Office of Northern Australia to be structured and recognised within the state and federal ministries and bureaucracies to provide an accurate and effective voice for North Australia in order to overcome the lack of political representation in Canberra. In alliance with the Regional Development Australia committees, there would be capacity to streamline the regional planning and development process. A well oiled conduit needs to exist between local government and federal government to be provided by the ONA and the RDA network.

The Office or offices of North Australia to be located in northern Australia, not Canberra or Brisbane.

Governance and Delivery

In developing the strategy document we considered **how** change might be achieved.

The governance model developed by NAEDF delegates places the people and community of north Australia at the top of the hierarchy, supported by governments.



The model also takes into account the numerous statements made by Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Northern Australia, the Hon Gary Gray AO MP, that local government will be in the front line for service delivery and a key participant in regional planning and prioritisation.

It also identifies the importance of the current ACC structure (transitioning into RDAs) as an essential conduit across regions and across community, government and industry - an honest broker with an established network and runs on the board.

An identified weakness is the capacity of local governments across the remote north to take on a higher level governance role. Local governments across the region have differing management capacity and development priorities and imperatives. They are already stretched to meet the demands of rates, potholes and footpaths. Local government has suffered under the burden of increasing cost shifting over the years from both state and federal governments with minimal expansion of its revenue base to cope with the load. Most Local Governments have limited growth potential with a static or declining rate base and with escalating costs and increasing regulatory responsibilities. Furthermore, local government is in a vulnerable position with no recognition under the Constitution and under the arbitrary control of State and Territory Governments. Elected representatives and council employees are already strained, with limitations on available resources, revenue and a restricted skills and knowledge base, particularly in the more remote councils. Local government deals with the minutiae of community governance and they are being asked to expand this role to a regional planning and collaborative model. State and federal governments can selectively deal with emergent issues whereas local government is close to the constituency and must meet the demands of all community concerns.

Local government could find itself in the position of many a harassed organisation: With crocodiles up to your armpits it's difficult to remember your objective was to drain the swamp.

The Solution:

- Local Government is the tier of government closest to people and best placed to engage the community.
- Avoid the creation of another layer or 'structure' to deliver enhanced governance by investing in and supporting what already exists.
- Invest in expanding and enhancing the role for local government in regional planning
- Capitalise on the ACC/RDA organisations to work with local government in regional development collaboratively across local government boundaries for the big picture of northern Australia.

What Northern Australia Offers the Nation

North Australia has much to offer the nation and indeed has many competitive advantages. It is resource rich in minerals and primary industries, with proximity to Asian markets. It is a first world nation straddling the tropics and is already showing the potential to be a world leader in tropical knowledge, innovation and industries with an enormous capacity to expand. It has a bountiful supply of water, a commodity to be cherished with the looming impact of global climate change. Above all, it has the capacity for expansion. There abounds room for people, farming and industry.

The north offers domestic and international tourists an unparalleled experience of remoteness and diverse environments in safe political surroundings.

Northern Australia is the hearth for indigenous people. It is the location where the true potential and self realisation of indigenous Australians is being achieved, but where the real work needs to be done to deliver equality.

Northern Australia has an identity and a way of life and that sets it apart from southern Australia. It is a truism that most northerners have more in common with their mates east-west across the north than to centres in southern Australia. Lifestyle, opportunities and challenges are shared between Cairns, Townsville, Darwin and Broome. Where else can you swap stories of crocs, cyclones and dengue? Not so Brisbane, Adelaide or Melbourne.

There is a living connection to SE Asia, reflected by our cultural mix and trade. We are closer to Asia in many ways than we are to Canberra. We boast the national and international reputation as a 'frontier' region – an asset for tourism but often an impediment for major investment.

It is time to take northern Australia seriously.

NAEDF 2008 considered the economic development requirements for the north under four themes:

- Creating a Sustainable Economic Development Environment for North Australia
- Industries of Tropical Australia
- Carbon Trading and Conservation in Business
- Indigenous Business Enterprises

A number of recommendations relating to each theme were developed and prioritised. This strategic document looks at how those recommendations can be delivered under a collaborative framework created between all stakeholders. This framework and the respective roles of key players is detailed in the following document.

A vastly different approach to governance and service delivery will be critical to effecting change and realisation of the potential of north Australia. The sentiments expressed at NAEDF 2008 suggest strongly that it is north Australia's time to take centre stage. Now!

NAEDF 2008 Organising Committee

Far North Queensland ACC
Kimberley ACC
Mackay Region ACC
Northern Territory ACC
North Queensland ACC
Torres NPA ACC

FOREWORD

Northern Australia shares an identity and commonality in a number of very fundamental areas - in its vast landscapes, tropical environment, history and culture. It is also rich in its diversity of intact tropical ecosystems, five World Heritage Areas and a colourful past. The cultural mix is a reflection of the north Australian history and proximity to SE Asia, PNG and the Pacific Island nations.

The north is resource rich with plentiful water supply. Those characteristics along with the tropical climate has produced a marked similarity of key industrial and primary industry activities across the north.

Early settlers bypassed northern Australia in favour of the more temperate environments of the eastern and southern coastal regions. The European settlers and their exotic stock and crops were not acclimatised to the rigours of a tropical climate, hence the far north did not attract early settlement and was regarded as foreign and inhospitable.

For over 150 years after European settlement, northern Australia was regarded as a 'frontier' – a perception used to advantage by the tourism industry but which did not lead to a positive attitude towards investment by governments and industry.

Political representation in federal Parliament has always been concentrated in the eastern and south eastern parts of Australia, they being the areas with the majority population and of that representation, a significant percentage of federal parliamentarians hail from metropolitan centres. In fact only 8 seats represent north Australia in federal parliament. Political representation in state governments is again focussed on the high population centres of the capital cities and surrounds. Concern is now being voiced that the democratic process has not worked in the best interests of remote and regional Australia.

The higher cost of infrastructure and development in remote and northern Australia has tended to deter investors, concerned that returns will not be adequate in view of the high level of capital required to develop even conservative projects, the exception being exploitation of mineral resources and very large pastoral operations with assured markets.

All of the above has resulted in a commonality among the regions of northern Australia; fiercely competitive but with a shared world view.

INTRODUCTION

NAEDF 2008 followed on from similar meetings commencing in the north in 2000 with the North Australia Forum, Katherine 2000. The resulting report *"Investing in Northern Australia : More Than Outback – More Outfront"* was published by the federal government in 2001. (Committee for the Economic Development of Australia).

That report noted that the north was the last part of the Australian continent to be settled and it was regarded as a frontier until mid 20th century. It highlighted the growth of the resource rich northern region, accounting for over one third of Australia's export growth over the preceding 30 years from 6% of the nation's population; that it was southern Australia's largest market; it highlighted the

resources assets and tourism growth. The growth was attributed to the developing Asian markets hungry for resources that the north could provide, improvements in communications and technology and its strong multi-cultural base.

The 5 year period between 2001 and 2006 saw a gradual growth of competitive concepts, alliances, clusters and joint projects across the north, generated largely by industries and organisations in the north. The growing recognition of the value to the national economy of tropical knowledge, science and expertise in a range of disciplines attracted the attention of both state and territory governments. An initiative of the Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australian governments, the Cooperative Framework on Tropical Science, Knowledge and Innovation was signed on 5th March 2004. It is a 10 year agreement demonstrating a commitment of the 3 governments to collaborate on developing the potential of tropical Australia. It has had some successes; however Professor Peter Andrews, Queensland Chief Scientist has commented¹ - there has been duplication and lack of coordination in tropical knowledge research and development. It is essential that Australia invests in structures that enable coordination.

The North Australia Economic Development Forum in Cairns 2006 was conceived to rejuvenate the process started in Katherine 2000. This Forum was industry based with the key sectors of mining, primary industries, fishing, forestry, tourism, tropical health and expertise. Outcomes of the 2006 forum contained in the report “*Outback – Outfront*” include a high profile for tropical industries and greater collaboration within industries, particularly the seafood industry, culminating in the Queensland seafood initiative. Agreement was reached between the NT and Qld to maintain collaboration for the next forum in 2008.

NAEDF 2008 was coordinated by the 6 Area Consultative Committees across north Australia and managed by the FNQACC in Cairns. The aim of NAEDF 2008 was to find sustainable local solutions to local problems. The proceedings of the Forum have been circulated and a two page Ministerial Brief on the outcomes sent to all state and federal Ministers with portfolios impacted by the recommendations.

A recommendation of the Forum at the final Plenary session was the preparation of this paper: a strategic document to consider ways and means to implement the 2008 recommendations and meet the needs identified. The overwhelming opinion was that there had been enough talk about need and potential, enough papers written and enough posturing. What delegates wanted was an ‘action’ – we have said what is needed so **how** do we achieve it.

1. TRENDS AND DRIVERS IMPACTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH AUSTRALIA

Following is a very brief overview of factors influencing regional development and the economic development potential of northern Australia. An extensive reference list is provided with this paper.

Political

The Rudd government has demonstrated a commitment to northern Australia with the creation of the Office of Northern Australia. Although there is still uncertainty regarding the practical function of ONA, in the Parliamentary Secretary’s paper to NAEDF 2008 the Hon Gary Gray identified that the role of ONA will be to conduct a

¹ Presentation to North Australia Economic Development Forum 2008

conversation across the north, the outcomes of which will inform the policy mix in Canberra.

There has been recognition of the breakdown of governance across remote Australia and the intervention in the Northern Territory by the NT and federal governments highlights this. NAEDF 2008 called for a new focus on economic development of indigenous settlements.

The Rudd government is affording Local Government far greater recognition with funding under infrastructure programs to be delivered through councils, in what is expected to be a collaborative approach by all three tiers of government. Local government however, is not recognised in the Constitution and is subject to State and territory governments, as evidenced by the recent council amalgamations.

Political perceptions at a community level are far more sophisticated and constituents expect their leaders at all levels of government to produce results. The media plays a significant role in keeping the public abreast of issues and performance and in influencing public opinion.

Economic

The Global economic meltdown, its the impact on the economies of Australia's export targets, China, Japan and India, particularly the former are having a major negative flow on effect to the mining and resources industries. This will adversely impact on the mining operations across north Australia and hit the communities reliant on them very hard.

The effectiveness of government spending programs to boost employment and spending will have a major influence on the capacity of Australian economy to withstand the effects of recession. For the foreseeable future we can expect investment money to be in short supply and the \$42 billion package announced in early February will send the budget into deficit for some time. As a result nationally, projects seeking funding will be subjected to even closer scrutiny.

The economic performance of regional and local economies will be shaped by their diversity and resilience – for example economies relying heavily on one or two industries are vulnerable. Regional centres and remote settlements reliant on the resources boom will be adversely impacted and contribute to the small town decline which has been stealthily spreading for years. Prof Bob Miles commented² that “Regions as opposed to state and territory governments are regarded as the economic drivers of the national economy”. Commitment at a regional and local level is essential to stem the rural decline and build communities; stop the economic leakage and engage communities in economic and social development.

The impact of recession particularly on local government, which is already under-resourced as a result of cost-shifting by state and federal governments and the impact of amalgamations will place even more strain on growth and service delivery.

North Australia is rich in resources and assets but low on population and industrial development and distant from the financial and commercial hubs of southern Australia.

Governance

² Miles, R 2008, *Sustainable Economic Development in Northern Australia – challenges, opportunities and the role of leadership*. NAEDF 2008

Decision making for north Australia has tended to be centralised in the state capitals or Canberra. The ONA may or may not ameliorate this situation. Certainly, the Hon Gary Gray, Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Northern Australia has stated on a number of occasions that ‘decisions affecting the north must be made in the north. If that is to be achieved there will need to be a rethink of the governance structure and a new model for service delivery and funding tested. That is one of the objectives of this strategic document.

It has been stated in several forums now that “government is not working in remote Australia”³. Remote regional settlements and communities across north Australia have little say in the policy and fiscal decisions that affect their lives and economies.

At this stage the role of the Regional Development Australia Committees is uncertain. This strategy paper develops a blueprint for their function as a well oiled conduit between industry, community and the federal government.

Across northern and remote Australia a number of organisations and forums have identified a need to re-connect the community with the machinery of government. Local Government is the tier of government closest to the people and the federal government is seeking a far more active and influential role for local government. This paper pursues that path, however a more prominent and proactive role for Local Government will of necessity need to be allied with adequate resourcing, leadership and capacity.

Community and Social

Across remote northern Australia there is a high level of social disadvantage, attested to by the need for the NT intervention and the level of dysfunction in remote indigenous settlements is well documented. Marginalised from the mainstream economy and governance they are characterised by an peripatetic professional population with flyin-flyout mining operations and short term government placements. Professor Gerritsen⁴ paints a gloomy picture of a dual economy developing in remote Australia.

Building social capital in regions and remote centres is a long term process. However if regions and communities are to take responsibility for their future and be sustainable, leadership development, creation of networks, trust and shared values are all essential to enable competent and effective decision making, cooperation and collaboration.

These are significant factors in light of NAEDF 2008 recommendations regarding the need for local decision making.

³ RemoteFOCUS Prospectus, NAEDF 2008, Desert Knowledge Symposium 2008

⁴ Gerritsen R 2008, *The Dual Economy – a 1st world/3rd World Dichotomy*. Paper presented at NAEDF 2008.

Other Impacts

Natural disasters and climate change will impact all areas of the continent. A common factor for the north is the disruption to development by the wet season.

2. NAEDF 2008 MESSAGES

NAEDF 2008 comprised four themes:

- Sustainable economic development environment of northern Australia
- Industries of Tropical Australia, infrastructure requirements; the importance of tropical expertise in trade and export and the interface with Desert Knowledge
- Carbon trading and conservation in business
- Indigenous business enterprises and overcoming the economic marginalisation of remote Australia.

The Forum focused on the effectiveness and adequacy of the regions governance under existing structures and policies to manage the sustainable growth and development of the region. Areas of concern included the

- Marginalisation of the north Australia economy – reasons and solutions
- Decision making far from the location of the recipients of the decisions
- Lack of, inadequate or inappropriate government service delivery
- Impact of climate change and rising energy prices on north Australian economy and the emerging carbon economy
- Infrastructure priorities and capacity to remove blockages and address the regional development needs
- Government programs – applicability for remote regions of the north
- The issues of remote and regional demographics and skills shortages. Resources, capacity building, leadership

Key issues:

- the need to develop our tropical knowledge and expertise, network and build business globally with a specific focus on partnerships with our neighbours in the Asia Pacific.
- the urgent need to build business acumen, establish networks and clusters and nurture targeted investment.
- contemporary challenges confronting indigenous Australians and the need to embrace this sector into the mainstream economy.
- Need for urgent coordinated action be taken by the three levels of Government, industry and the Community in partnership to tackle these substantive challenges.

Some of the more salient identified needs included:

- An urgent need to undertake a review and reform the governance and public administration Northern Regional Australia
- An urgent need for a shared vision for Northern Australia (tri-partisan approach) with a clear and targeted agenda for investment and development of the region;
- A need to develop appropriate policy and institutional settings that enable local/regional community to engage effectively in decision making and self reliance
- A need to build capacity and regional capability and to develop/support local leadership

- There is also an urgent need to ensure the infrastructure that is required to facilitate and stimulate growth is in place.
- A need to review government programs, legislation and regulations impacting north Australia to increase flexibility and reduce/remove those not conducive to sustainable regional economic development
- A need to develop tropical innovation through a concept of Tropical Knowledge Centres and to work in partnership and collaborate with other regions such as Desert Knowledge
- A need to create a settlement network that guarantees security, safety and services in the national interest across regional Australia, providing an investment strategy for the next 50+ years and a need to nurture and develop in a sustainable way indigenous businesses and address the intractable challenges facing indigenous communities in Northern Australia

3. WHAT DO WE WANT IN PLACE IN 3-5 YEARS

- a) Partnership model:
 - Federal, state, local government bipartisan alliance based on formal Heads of Agreements – partnerships for regional development activities and programs to be coordinated between the 3 tiers of government
 - Governments assist in development of regions through support programs and partnerships; collaborative and avoiding duplication
 - Integrated triple/quadruple bottom line approach to program development and delivery
 - Effective and efficient deployment of funding and resources
 - Role of government is as a facilitator and service provider. Governments provide funding for leadership development, training, mentoring, skills development and business advice
- b) Coordination/ collaboration; open and ongoing dialogue aimed at finding solutions and acting on them
- c) Engagement of all stakeholders to avoid silos – local government, fed and state, industry, research, indigenous, community
- d) Funding programs that are regionally specific and are relevant to and respond to the specific needs of regional northern Australia and which recognise the diversity of socio-economic circumstances

4. STRUCTURE AND STAKEHOLDERS

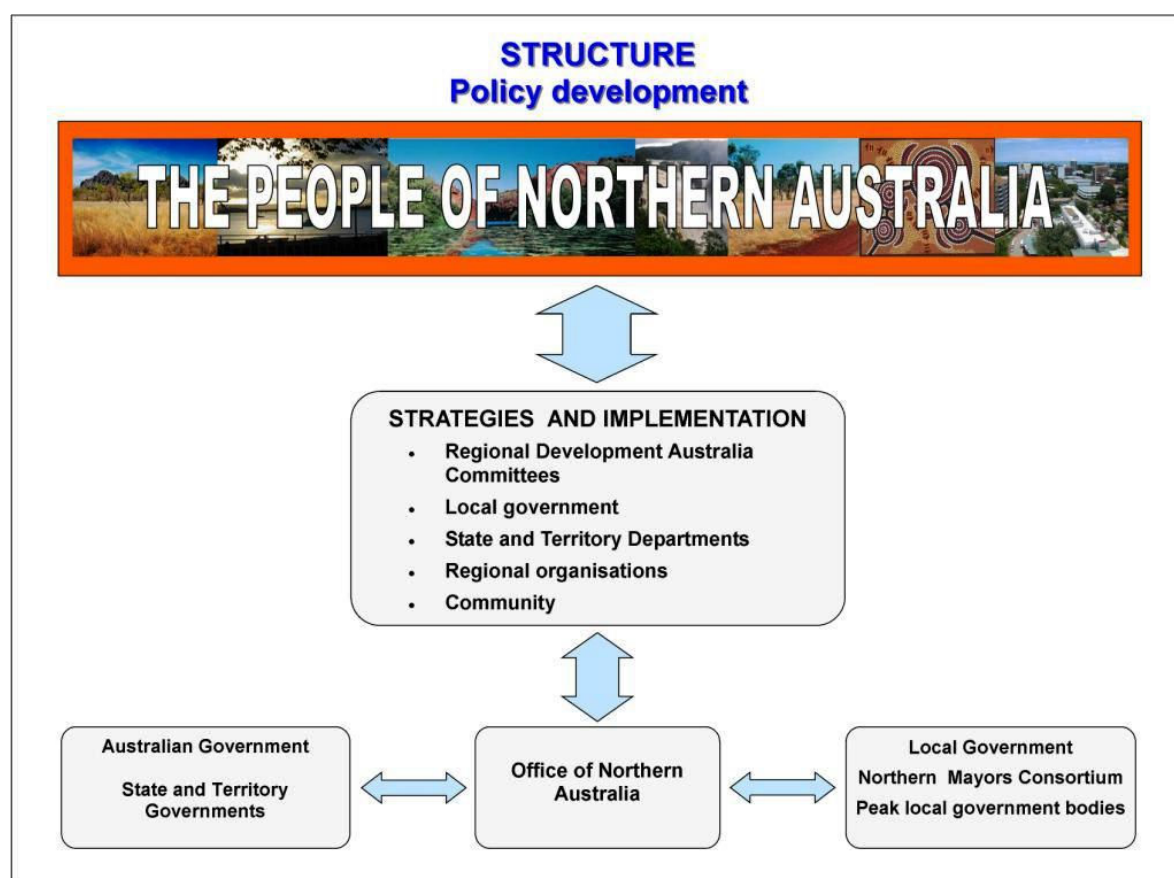
On the basis of current government policy direction and engagement of local government this document considers appropriate delivery options for NAEDF recommendations across north Australia.

4.1 GOVERNANCE AND SERVICE DELIVERY STRUCTURE

Explanatory notes:

The hierarchy has been turned on its head with the people of northern Australia as the key stakeholders. The federal, state/territory and local governments are seen as the foundation for policy development and providers of funding and resources for servicing the people of northern Australia. Between the two sectors are the agencies that provide the services and the essential linkage, coordination and partnerships. Linkages may be formal with MOUs or Heads of Agreement or informal collaborative arrangements

The strategies have been based on these relationships and connectivity.



4.2 STAKEHOLDERS AND KEY PLAYERS

One of the key themes of NAEDF 2008 was the fact that the people of the north are the key stakeholders in the north. They are the people with the vested interest in moving ahead and growing. Decisions impacting their future and wellbeing should be made as close as possible to the local level. All communities need leadership and therefore in developing the blueprint we have placed prime importance on the role and functions of local government, being the level of government with the invested interest to make regional development a success. The role of local government is to enhance and strengthen their community.

To quote Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Northern Australia, the Hon Gary Gray AO⁵ “ ***We need strong and dedicated local governments capable of developing strategic regional plans and working to them. It’s not easy, indeed it is one of the most difficult jobs in local government. It’s about leadership, about pragmatism, it’s about creativity and it’s the job of local government.***”

The government has stated on a number of occasions that infrastructure funding will be delivered through local government. However, it is essential that decisions concerning future directions and the expenditure targets should also be made at the local level (or at the very least with significant local contribution), otherwise local government will continue to simply carry out decisions made in Canberra or capital cities. The Northern Queensland Mayor’s Alliance was established as a result of concern that decision making was not being made by the region generating the funds; that there was more resource flowing out of the north than was being returned.

There is considerable concern at the capacity of local government to effectively and efficiently manage an expanded governance role and significant infrastructure funding without additional resources. Most regional local governments are stretched to the limit, particularly where amalgamations have occurred.

In delivering the infrastructure funding, the general assumption on the part of the federal government and peak organisations such as LGAQ seems to be that councils will voluntarily collaborate in regional groups to assess need and determine priorities, with one council taking the lead role in managing the funds. Queensland has some experience in this type of structure over the past 30 years, with small, remote councils cooperating to provide a consolidated front to governments. Gulf Savannah Development was created in 1975 to pressure government to seal the highway from Cairns to Normanton (it took 25 years), RAPAD in the southwest to address the needs of very remote shires. However, these types of organisations function through secretariats and require an operating budget. The more recent establishment of the North Queensland Mayors Alliance is another example with the focus on the Bruce Highway. There is also the example of the Queensland Regional Roads Groups— but again substantial support is received from government to make them work.

Regional collaboration of councils will need to address issues such as differing levels of sophistication and development motivation, operating systems, provision of facilitation mechanisms for planning, collaboration and funds management. Smaller councils with less political ‘clout’ must not be disadvantaged.

⁵ The Hon Gary Gray, 2008, *Future Directions – Office of Northern Australia*, NAEDF 2008

4.2.1 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND REGIONAL PEAK BODIES:

Peak Bodies (ALGA, LGAQ, LGA of NT, WALGA); ROCs

Role:

- Coordinate response from local governments to federal and state governments on policy issues. This does not detract from the role of regional and individual councils to collaborate and negotiate through RDA committees and state level development organisations.
- Assist establishment of regional partnerships of councils

Local Government

Role:

- Vital and fundamental role at the coal face in implementation of policies, programs and linking to the people. Raising local government standards to deliver programs and ensure informed, collaborative, open leadership will go a long way to creating sustainable, growing communities
- Local government is in the best position to engage their Community and build social capital
- Local government can provide governance, communication, servicing and make representation at state and federal levels

However:

- Under-resourced with a limited rates base (often further reduced with the creation of national parks) and the victim of cost-shifting over many years from both state and federal governments
- Vulnerable position as local government is not mentioned in the Constitution and exists at the behest of State and Territory governments
- Coordination between groups of councils will need resourcing
- IF local government is to have a stronger and more effective service delivery role it will need far more resourcing than is currently available

North Australia Mayors Group

The North Queensland Mayor's Alliance, comprising 10 Mayors, already exists and has met 4 times in 2 years for a total expenditure of \$6,000.⁶ There would be potential to expand the group to include NT and WA northern councils although such a move would need to take into account the wide diversity in operational levels and organisational culture.⁷

A North Australia Mayors Group has been included in the NAEDF strategies. It would meet bi-annually and provide a sounding board for the Australian Government, ONA, RDAs and state and Territory governments.

Next are those organisations providing the linkages between the regional, local and community stakeholders and other levels of government

⁶ Lynch D, 2009, *NQ Mayors Alliance Update*, presentation at Economic and Regional Development Conference, March 2009

⁷ Pers comm. Cr Les Tyrell, Mayor Townsville City Council March 2009

4.2.2 OFFICE OF NORTHERN AUSTRALIA

With northern Australia boasting only 8 seats in federal parliament, the role of the Office of Northern Australia is vital in representing the interests and potential of north Australia. The primary role of the ONA is expected to be one of coordination, facilitation between government, industry and communities across the north and providing a direct conduit between local government and north Australia to Canberra. It will be a source of advice for councils. Most effective will be a close collaboration with the RDA committee network that is already well established across the north. ONA is expected to provide the umbrella for debate and analysis of issues impacting north Australia and to facilitate the resolutions. ONA is expected to be the prime source of intelligence and policy information to represent northern Australia interests.

Regional Development Australia Committees:

Role:

- Advice, consultation and community engagement
- Regional planning and coordination
- Collaboration with state agencies to establish a regional dialogue
- Whole of government activities
- Promotion of government programs
- Community development

RDAs will be the apolitical champions and the honest brokers for their region. They will play an essential role as conduits of information, advice and liaison with all levels of government, industry and community across north Australia. They will provide an essential link between ONA and local government and facilitating communication and coordination of stakeholder responses

4.2.3 KEY STAKEHOLDERS WITH POLICY AND FIDUCIARY AND FINANCIAL CONCERN

Federal Government (Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries, Parliamentary committees, Departments, agencies - links to ONA, RDA network):

Role:

- Overarching governance
- Champion of north Australia - ensuring decisions made about North Australia are made **in** North Australia
- Resourcing and infrastructure; support targetted to local/regionally identified needs and priorities
- Facilitating pathways (through ONA and RDA network) by engaging regions
- Partnerships and MOUs
- Capacity building for investment – local governments and local industry/business; tax incentives
- Partnerships, MOUs
- Devolve responsibility; support local decision making
- Build capacity, programs to enhance local leadership

4.2.4 STAKEHOLDERS WITH PROVINCIAL INTEREST IN THEIR SPECIFIC STATE/TERRITORY

State and Territory governments:

Role:

- Coordination across key areas such as transport, main roads
- Resourcing
- Leverage – with federal and local governments
- Support – departmental and cross jurisdictional
- Facilitation
- Skills development

4.2.5 BROAD INTEREST GROUPS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Range of Stakeholders to be engaged:

Industry:

- Commercial and economic prioritisation and needs
- Liaise regionally with RDAs where appropriate

Tropical science, knowledge, industry and innovation:

- Tropical Futures Australia: State and Territory Tropical Expertise MOU and Senior Officers Group
- Australian Tropical Expertise Consortium (Queensland) – expand initiative across the north
- Not all tropical industries and research based in the north – therefore value in concept of a tropical science and industries innovation council with support of the federal government
-

Other organisations as stakeholders:

- NRM bodies
- CRCs – tropical savannahs, tourism
- Universities – strong and significant role in regional development
- Financial institutions
- State RDOs

Indigenous interests (across all above):

- Peak bodies – IBA, CC, land councils
- Indigenous councils and peak bodies
- Wide range of indigenous organisations

NAEDF delegates

- Ongoing collaboration with RDAs and within their individual spheres of influence to broaden awareness of North Australian economic development potential, barriers and requirements.

4.2.6 LINKAGES AND MECHANISMS

- Commonwealth/State/Territory Heads of Agreement; COAG
- Formal alliances
- MOUs between players and stakeholders
- Range of processes: inter-relationship, partnerships, alliances, MOUs
- Informal collaborative arrangements

- RDA conduit for flow of information

5. NAEDF 2008 CHALLENGES, GAPS AND APPLICATION OF BLUEPRINT

This section takes the NAEDF recommendations and looks at how the proposed blueprint/model can provide solutions, achieve objectives, enrich communities (tabulated as far as possible) - the practical application of the model to delivery across north Australia

The emphasis is on defining actions not needs; identifying responsibilities, linkages and connectivity and most appropriate players.

NAEDF 2008 STRATEGIES

Refer to the governance structure diagram which provides the framework for the delivery of each strategy. In effect, the strategies test the structure.

PART A: BROAD STRATEGY RELEVANT TO ALL 4 FORUM THEMES

DEVELOP AN OVERARCHING POLITICAL PARTNERSHIP TO DELIVER AND FACILITATE GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT ACROSS NORTH AUSTRALIA

Rationale:

Basic premise:

- Federal government policies relating to northern Australia to be developed in consultation with north Australia and decisions impacting northern Australia to be made in north Australia
- Capacity building: Local government is enhanced and provided with resources to be capable of taking leadership and managing regional and local service delivery (whether services provided by fed, state or private providers)

NAEDF findings:

- Policies and decisions relating to north Australia are made in southern centres
- Sufficient concern was expressed re lack of governance to acknowledge that there is alienation of remote areas and a failure to deliver equitable services to remote Australia
- Demonstrated lack of coordination in policy development and services delivery
- Failure of policies and programs to be applicable to remote regional areas
- Australia has a supreme opportunity to get it right, do it better with the initiatives of the Rudd government
- Vision for northern Australia needs to be developed engaging all stakeholders

It is also cogent to include a few comments made in the Governance forum at the Desert Knowledge Symposium, November 2008:

- Good governance is the key to empowerment of Aboriginal people
- There are successful governance models operating (eg health). These models work because they are from the ground up
- Fiscal reform – decentralised real decision-making attached to real resources/money
- Subsidiarity: decentralise government by redrawing 'jurisdictional' boundaries
- Replace an existing layer of government – don't add a fourth one
- Facilitate increased Aboriginal participation in government (less fly-in/fly-out, use of translators)
- We must not romanticise – there are no 'perfect' governance models anywhere
- The devolution of decision-making must be hand-in-hand with capacity building

In this overarching strategy we suggest the possible creation of a North Australia Economic Development Group/Forum which would involve representatives from local government, industry and regional groups. Federal and state representatives would be present in an *ex-officio* capacity. This is not seen as duplication of the Office of Northern Australia nor of the RDA network, but would bring together all interests in a collaborative environment, engaging government, industry and community (including universities, CRCs, regional groups) and enabling a visionary approach to NA development and providing a sounding board for the ONA. It would provide an independent voice for government and an ongoing means of collaboration between all NA interest groups. It's creation is not however critical to the delivery of the overarching strategy. The RDA network will also provide the 'grass roots' advice to ONA.

DEVELOP AN OVERARCHING POLITICAL PARTNERSHIP TO DELIVER AND FACILITATE GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT ACROSS NORTH AUSTRALIA

Key player & stakeholders	Role and function	Necessary actions	Collaboration coord/linkages level	Outcomes Anticipated	Resources Personnel	Milestones Timeframe
Local Government Individual councils Peak bodies (e.g. ALGA, LGAQ, WALGA, LGA of NT, peak indigenous council organisations)	Local and regional governance Delivery of services and programs – the coal-face To engage communities, identify potential opportunities and initiatives, prioritise for their community	Creation of Mayoral Group with support and assistance from ONA and establish formal links within each region with RDAs (possibly as Board members) Identify priorities, planning and costing within each LG area (part of normal activities)	MOU – overarching MOU with federal and state. Could be MOUs between individual councils and relevant RDAs	Direct input to the determination of policies and priorities impacting their region within Nth Aust Direct contribution on decisions impacting their council/region	Key personnel (eg CEOs, engineers, Finance Officers etc) link with RDAs on a regular basis re priorities, government programs etc Ownership of regional/local government visions and future directions	Commence engagement with RDAs 2009

DEVELOP AN OVERARCHING POLITICAL PARTNERSHIP TO DELIVER AND FACILITATE GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT ACROSS NORTH AUSTRALIA

Key player & stakeholders	Role and function	Necessary actions	Collaboration coord/linkages level	Outcomes Anticipated	Resources Personnel	Milestones Timeframe
<p>Northern Australia Mayoral Group</p> <p>This could be structured based on each state/territory having a Mayoral Group – Qld already going down this path and nominating 1 Mayor to attend an annual forum</p>	<p>Collaborate across north.</p> <p>Determine/agree on and prioritise governance and development requirements across the north</p> <p>Collaborate with federal government, ONA and state/Territory ministers</p> <p>Participate in the "NA Governance and Development Group" if created</p>	<p>Establish and formalise Northern Australia Mayoral 'Group'</p> <p>Hold first meeting with assistance of ONA and establish an internal 'structure' – Chair, meeting format and regularity of meetings; etc</p> <p>Consider MOU</p>	<p>MOU</p> <p>Enduring agreement</p>	<p>Coordinated and cohesive approach to northern development; value for money; capacity to plan well ahead for projects; coordinate federal and state funding for the maximum benefit of the north regions</p>	<p>Coordinated front and presentation for federal and state/territory governments</p>	<p>First meeting of Mayoral Group 2009</p>

DEVELOP AN OVERARCHING POLITICAL PARTNERSHIP TO DELIVER AND FACILITATE GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT ACROSS NORTH AUSTRALIA

Key player & stakeholders	Role and function	Necessary actions	Collaboration coord/linkages level	Outcomes Anticipated	Resources Personnel	Milestones Timeframe
<p>Federal Government Ministers. Parliamentary Secretary. Departments.</p>	<p>Overarching leadership - Political and policy development in consultation and on advice from regions If created the "Nth Aust Governance and Development Group " will be a source of advice Resourcing to enable local government to play a key role in regional development Ensure clarity of responsibility at all levels</p>	<p>Discussion/conference between federal state/territory ministers, peak LGA bodies, ONA, north Australia RDA representatives and other relevant agencies to consider NA governance and development delivery requirements as identified in NAEDF and other forums Consider the partnership proposal structure, protocols, processes, Develop a collaborative framework (e.g. as per the structure diagram) Develop draft MOUs/Heads of Agreement for consideration by Mayoral Group and state/territory governments Federal government to consider a greater recognition of local government role in Australian governance (Constitution?)</p>	<p>MOU Formal and enduring agreements with local governments, state and territory governments</p>	<p>Positive and productive response to the concerns re governance, representation, applicability of programs etc identified at NAEDF and other forums Enhanced connectivity between federal government and remote communities Re-engagement of communities with the political and development processes Better interpretation and understanding of policies</p>	<p>Parliamentary Secretary with support from heads of Departments or very senior with capacity to make decisions within the region (Designated "Champions" for specific regions</p>	<p>Early 2010 – first meeting of North Australia Governance and Development Council</p>

DEVELOP AN OVERARCHING POLITICAL PARTNERSHIP TO DELIVER AND FACILITATE GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT ACROSS NORTH AUSTRALIA

Key player & stakeholders	Role and function	Necessary actions	Collaboration coord/linkages level	Outcomes Anticipated	Resources Personnel	Milestones Timeframe
<p>Office of Northern Australia</p>	<p>Coordination and facilitation across all agencies and link to Canberra</p> <p>Direct link to federal departments on North Australia issues</p> <p>Use RDAs as the 'eyes and ears' across the north</p>	<p>Establish formal coordination structure with the already existing RDA network across north Australia</p> <p>With assistance of RDA network, finalise presentation for consideration</p> <p>Assist with establishment of NA Mayoral 'Group'/Group of Mayors</p> <p>Coordinate all stakeholders to develop NA vision (easiest through the group below)</p> <p>Assess feasibility of formation of a <i>NA Governance and Development Group/Forum</i> to comprise leaders of local government, industry, commerce, research.</p>	<p>Formal base of operation with the RDA network to create a frequent and regular engagement</p>	<p>Vastly improved flow of local intelligence to Canberra and greater awareness of bureaucracy of north Australia issues, investment potential, concerns of national and regional implications, requirements to better inform policy and budgetary development</p>	<p>Chairs and CEOs meet face to face 1X per annum and phone links other times;</p> <p>Travel by ONA personnel to each RDA Board for briefings on regional development</p>	<p>2009</p>

DEVELOP AN OVERARCHING POLITICAL PARTNERSHIP TO DELIVER AND FACILITATE GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT ACROSS NORTH AUSTRALIA

Key player & stakeholders	Role and function	Necessary actions	Collaboration coord/linkages level	Outcomes Anticipated	Resources Personnel	Milestones Timeframe
RDAs	<p>Coordination across all stakeholders</p> <p>Provide a well oiled conduit between all stakeholders and between regional structure and federal agency - ONA</p>	<p>Formalise coordination networks</p> <p>6 RDAs have already coordinated to stage NAEDF 2008</p> <p>Boards to be representative of all regional stakeholders</p> <p>Hold regional forums to engage community – link with state forums – in formation of regional visions (linked to an overarching regional plan for each RDA region)</p> <p>Assess feasibility of formation of a <i>NA Governance and Development Group/Forum</i> for advice to ONA</p> <p>Continue to collaborate across north Australia</p> <p>Develop overarching regional plans incorporating vision, key strategies of all existing plans (federal, state, regional bodies, industry)</p>	<p>Role delineated in RDA ToR</p> <p>Reporting responsibility up to the federal government and to all stakeholders</p> <p>Formal links to ONA</p>	<p>Regular communication and engagement with local government and all stakeholders and communities</p> <p>Increased community participation</p> <p>In depth appreciation of economic and other concerns, initiative, potential and priorities for referral to federal government</p>	<p>Boards representative of key stakeholders within their region</p> <p>CEOs and staff</p> <p>External consultants/advisors as required</p>	<p>2009</p> <p>Collaborative network established and communication strategy formulated</p>
State and Territory Minister Parl Secs Departments	<p>Facilitation and support role</p> <p>Resourcing for local government for eg skills development</p>	<p>Meet with federal government to consider political collaborative structure for north Aust.</p> <p>Nominate 'champions'</p> <p>Collaboration with RDAs</p>	<p>MOU commitment</p>	<p>Avoid duplication</p> <p>Coordinate development programs and schedules with federal programs across remote north Australia</p>	<p>Designated "Champions" to deal with north Australia issues and governance – a Minister or Parliamentary Secretary</p> <p>Networking process</p>	<p>MOU commitment 2009</p> <p>Designated "champions" nominated</p>
North Australia Economic Development Forum delegates	<p>Awareness raising across the many sectors and disciplines they represent</p>	<p>Raise awareness of issues arising from NAEDF 2008 within their industry, employment, professional group and to associates</p> <p>Continue planning for NAEDF 2010 with an interim meeting in 2009</p>	<p>Link to RDA network</p>	<p>Ongoing awareness raising of the issues and development potential</p>		<p>2009</p>

PART B: SPECIFIC STRATEGIES ARISING FROM FORUM THEMES

In this section, we test the model structure to see how the actions and strategies arising from the NAEDF 2008 recommendations could be delivered, the key players and their potential roles, interaction and linkages and the anticipated outcomes. In the overarching strategy we suggested creation of a North Australia Economic Development Group/Forum which could involve representatives from all levels of government, industry and regional groups. This would not be seen as a duplication of ONA and would bring together government, industry and community (including universities etc). However as it does not exist it is not included as a stakeholder in the following strategy development.

THEME 1: CREATING A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ENVIRONMENT

REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

STRATEGY 1 - ENHANCE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND DEVELOP LOCAL LEADERSHIP, CAPACITY BUILDING WITHIN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

NAEDF Rationale:

- Regionalisation of decision making is required
- Strategic regional vision, owned by the region
- Practical models for service delivery
- Need to continually audit community capacity
- Coordinated regional planning context

STRATEGY 1 - ENHANCES ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND DEVELOP LOCAL LEADERSHIP, CAPACITY BUILDING WITHIN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Key player & stakeholders	Role and function	Necessary actions	Collaboration coord/linkages level	Outcomes Anticipated	Resources Personnel	Milestones Timeframe
ALGA and local government peak bodies (LGAQ, LGA of NT and WALGA)	Advisory Negotiation	Pressure for enhanced recognition of local government – Constitution? Consolidate response of local government Identify across the board training levels needed Training delivery	As above	Elevated public perception of local government generally Improved local government governance and service delivery to regional communities	Training resources	2009/2010
Individual Local governments	Commitment to skills development Prioritisation of needs	Nominate candidates for leadership programs (already done to an extent but should be enhanced)	Coordination through peak bodies	Potential young leaders identified and cultivated/mentored Build local capacity and increase community involvement in local government and decision making on matters that impact the future of their community - local solutions for local problems Potential for local communities to act as business leadership incubators	Commitment of time and personnel	2009
Federal government: Departments: ONA Infrastructure Environment Etc	Overarching role through ONA Facilitation Resources provision	Strengthen role and position of local government within Australian governance structure Support creation of NA Mayoral Group	Head of agreement with state governments and peak LGA bodies MOU between ONA or Department and NA Mayoral Group	Enhanced governance across northern Australia with greater inclusion and engagement of community Developed model and programs to nurture and establish new leaders for regional development	Funding Program development	2009/2010

STRATEGY 1 - ENHANCES ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND DEVELOP LOCAL LEADERSHIP, CAPACITY BUILDING WITHIN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Key player & stakeholders	Role and function	Necessary actions	Collaboration coord/linkages level	Outcomes Anticipated	Resources Personnel	Milestones Timeframe
RDAs	Liaison and coordination	Coordination with local government – specific forums Advise government/ONA on leadership development needs especially for potential young leaders – mentoring and professional development initiatives Liaise with state agencies	Local government engagement at Board level	Productive working relationship with local government and open lines of communication	Boards and CEOs	2009
State & territory governments Departments:	Support and facilitation Resourcing Collaboration	Local government training programs – to be relevant to enhanced role for local government Nominate officer(s) with whom RDAs to liaise	Included in Heads of agreement with federal and local government peak bodies	Improved local government governance and service delivery to regional communities	Funding Nominated personnel	2009
Peak bodies (ROCs, CYSF, GSD, T/lands, NT, Kimberley etc	Collaboration and coordination role	Coordination role in linking with RDA Programming for ROC members	Linkage through regional RDA	Enhanced local government role and increase potential for community and business engagement in local planning initiatives and in finding solutions to local problems	Time and personnel	2009
CRCs and NRM bodies	Collaboration	Role in participating in and delivering information for training programs	As above	Greater contribution to local government	Time and personnel	2009

STRATEGY 2 - REVIEW AND OVERHAUL OF REGULATIONS TO MEET ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, INNOVATION, INVESTMENT CRITERIA

NAEDF Rationale:

- Over-regulation hampers development and innovation
- Needs overhaul of regulations to ensure conducive to productivity
- Refer to productivity Commission review of business regulations

Key player & stakeholders	Role and function	Necessary actions	Collaboration coord/linkages level	Outcomes Anticipated	Resources Personnel	Milestones Timeframe
Federal government: Infrastructure Environment Etc	Overarching Assessment	Alliance with state and Territory governments to commit to overhaul of regulations nominated by north Australia industry as adverse to economic development Nominate key personnel as contacts	MOU if necessary	Clear understanding of regulatory impacts on remote, regional development industries and agencies Streamlined processes Regional economic development enhanced Enhanced service delivery	Key contacts	2009/2010
ONA	Collaboration Facilitation	The initial step in this strategy: Liaise with RDAs to establish regional evaluation panels within industry and business to identify and assess those regulations which hinder development	Networking	Collated documentation of regulations unsuitable for northern Australia or hindering development and documented necessary changes to report to government(s) and inform departments responsible		2009/2010

STRATEGY 2 - REVIEW AND OVERHAUL OF REGULATIONS TO MEET ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, INNOVATION, INVESTMENT CRITERIA

RDAs	Key role: collaboration and consultation with all key stakeholders	Organise regional forums to identify regulatory blockages and develop actions for consideration of governments Coordination with ONA and the RDA network for a coordinated response for government(s) Overarching regional plans which identify the strategic needs of industries	Conduit between community, industry and ONA	Hands on understanding of regional regulatory environment and capacity to advise federal government on changes to remove barriers	2009/2010
State & Territory governments Departments:	Collaboration	Alliance with federal government – agreement to address the regulatory issues Nominate officer(s) as contact personnel		Enhanced service delivery Streamlined processes Regional economic development enhanced	2009/2010
Industry – all sectors	Collaboration and advice	Provide advice to RDA on regulatory barriers to industry development in regional areas Make recommendations on necessary changes	Linkage with RDA	Government will have a clear understanding of the barriers faced by regional industries	2009/2010
ALGA and local government peak bodies	Advisory and coordination	Coordinate local government response	Linkage - ONA	Greater clarity of regulatory environment Streamlining local government processes across the north	2009/2010
Individual Local governments	Collaboration	Work with RDAs to identify regulations having a negative impact on regional economic development	Linkage with RDA	Benefits for local business development Streamlining local government processes across the north	2009/2010
Peak bodies (CYSF, GSD, T/lands, NT, Kimberley etc CRCs and NRM bodies	Collaboration	Work with RDAs to identify regulations having a negative impact on regional economic development	Linkage with RDA	A voice for their members on regulatory matters across all industry sectors which adversely impact local and regional development	2009/2010

STRATEGY 3 - MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE PRIORITISATION – IDENTIFY INFRASTRUCTURE ACROSS REGIONS AND INDUSTRIES WHICH VALUE ADD AND HAVE IDENTIFIED RETURNS ON PUBLIC INVESTMENT

NAEDF Rationale:

- Lack of key hard and soft infrastructure – roads, water, communications
- Provision of infrastructure would make the north more attractive to domestic and international investors
- Better access to markets to aid regional industry development

Key player & stakeholders	Role and function	Necessary actions	Collaboration coord/linkages level	Outcomes Anticipated	Resources Personnel	Milestones Timeframe
Federal government: Infrastructure Environment Climate change Etc	Overarching Budget consideration	Commitment to place foremost in budgetary consideration for north Australia, the infrastructure projects identified as priorities by the North Australian collaborative approach		Clear budgetary priorities which have industry, local and state backing		
ONA	Facilitation Coordination Advisory	Coordinate response from RDA network and local government through the NA Mayoral Group With assistance of RDAs develop documented infrastructure priorities and rationale (quadraple bottom line) for government(s)		Clear view of infrastructure priorities and the rationale for them and national benefits ; to be subjected to annual review		

STRATEGY 3 - MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE PRIORITISATION – IDENTIFY INFRASTRUCTURE ACROSS REGIONS AND INDUSTRIES WHICH VALUE ADD AND HAVE IDENTIFIED RETURNS ON PUBLIC INVESTMENT

Key player & stakeholders	Role and function	Necessary actions	Collaboration coord/linkages level	Outcomes Anticipated	Resources Personnel	Milestones Timeframe
RDAs	Key role in regional collaboration and consultation	Develop overarching regional plan for the RDA area incorporating all state and local plans and identifying industry potential and competitive advantages Work with state, local government and industry to develop regional/local visions and priorities – forums Liaise with ONA on coordination of local government and state contribution to prioritisation		Clear view of regional infrastructure priorities to be subjected to annual review		
Industry – All sectors	Collaboration	Work with peak agencies, ONA or RDAs at a regional level to identify big ticket items		Planning capacity enhanced		
State & territory governments Departments:	Partnership Facilitation and collaboration	Nominate contact officer(s) for RDA consultation		Clear budgetary priorities which have industry, local and state backing		
ALGA and local government peak bodies	Collaboration	Coordinate where necessary response from local government to federal government				
NA mayoral Group And Individual Local governments	Collaboration	Work with regional industries and RDAs in developing priorities – through forums and other avenues		Clarity for future planning		
Peak bodies (ROCs, RDOs etc CRCs and NRM bodies	Collaboration	Collate information for RDA – much of this data already identified		Clarity for future planning		

STRATEGY 4 - DEVELOPING SMALL BUSINESS AND PROVIDE IMPROVED SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT

NAEDF Rationale:

- Dollar retention in regions, stop the leakage
- Growth from within the region
- Economic diversity providing enhanced sustainability
- Need to audit communities
- Develop models – incubators, clusters
- Population migration to build local market base

Key player & stakeholders	Role and function	Necessary actions	Collaboration coord/linkages level	Outcomes Anticipated	Resources Personnel	Milestones Timeframe
Federal	Overarching coordination	<p>Examine possible avenues for small business support</p> <p>Examine migration programs to grow the market base and assist remote regional areas</p> <p>Explore other means such as taxation incentives to improve business conditions for SMEs in regions</p>		Regional growth – the regions ride on the back of small to medium business		
State and Territory	Resourcing and capacity building	<p>Collaborate in assessing state and Territory delivery of small business support across northern Australia to overcome the current inequitable levels of small business support</p>		Growth of SME capacity across regional areas and greater contribution to state production		
RDAs	Coordination	<p>Audit community needs</p> <p>Inform government policy on local and regional business development requirements</p>		Close liaison with SMEs and awareness of all issues and potential solutions for informing government		

STRATEGY 4 - DEVELOPING SMALL BUSINESS AND PROVIDE IMPROVED SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT

Key player & stakeholders	Role and function	Necessary actions	Collaboration coord/linkages level	Outcomes Anticipated	Resources Personnel	Milestones Timeframe
<p>Peak regional bodies ROCs, RDOs NRM, CRC etc</p>	<p>Coordination and collaboration</p>	<p>Work with RDAs, state and regional organisations to develop training packages of relevance to remote and regional areas and the means of delivery locally Identify problem areas and industries in need</p>		<p>Enhanced capacity to undertake broad regional planning across remote areas – e.g. western Queensland</p>		
<p>Federal, state and private training orgs</p>	<p>Collaboration</p>	<p>Work with RDAs, state and regional organisations to develop training packages of relevance to remote and regional areas and the means of delivery in the regions</p>		<p>Overcome the difficulty of training delivery in areas with small populations</p>		

STRATEGY 5 - HARNESSING NATURAL COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

NAEDF rationale:

- need to develop enterprises appropriate for region
- economic sustainability
- - triple bottom line
- need to engage governments on key strengths of north Australia and build regional capacity by using the competitive advantages
- identify and nurture entrepreneurs

Key player & stakeholders	Role and function	Necessary actions	Collaboration coord/linkages level	Outcomes Anticipated	Resources Personnel	Milestones Timeframe
Federal	Overarching role in coordination through ONA	Oversight process through ONA – function of RDAs to collate data		This information along with regional plans and infrastructure and other priorities will inform policy development and budgetary considerations for the federal government		
State and Territory	Collaborative and provision of support (information, reports, key personnel)	Much of the information is available and needs evaluating and prioritising: Identify contact officer for each RDA to consult with				
RDAs	Coordination and liaison Proactive in establishing overarching regional plans for RDA areas and collaborating across RDA boundaries	Overarching regional plan: Audit regional assets Inform government policy on local and regional assets, key strengths and characteristics; external drivers and influences				
Peak regional bodies		Identify regional potential entrepreneurs and leaders				

STRATEGY 6 - INTRODUCE SUSTAINABLE LAND DEVELOPMENT

NAEDF Rationale:

- need to establish criteria to evaluate use of land on triple bottom line principles
- viability of producers
- need to ensure certainty for investment
- need property management plans and resolve Native Title

Key player & stakeholders	Role and function	Necessary actions	Collaboration coord/linkages level	Outcomes Anticipated	Resources Personnel	Milestones Timeframe
Federal	Overarching and managing role Possible regulatory role	Hasten resolution of Native Title across the north – streamline processes and resolve uncertainty		Barriers to regional economic development across much of northern Australia removed or at least mitigated		
State and Territory	Collaborative and possible regulatory role	Hasten resolution of Native Title across the north – streamline processes and resolve uncertainty		Barriers to regional economic development across much of northern Australia removed or at least mitigated		
RDAs	Coordination and collaboration	Liaison with peak primary industry bodies and local government and relevant state agencies Consideration in regional plan		Realistic view of economic development prospects and time frames		
Local government	Collaboration	Document the specific barriers Participate in regional meetings called by RDA/ONA Work with local industry re property management plans		Greater certainty for land development and economic expansion plans		

STRATEGY 6 - INTRODUCE SUSTAINABLE LAND DEVELOPMENT

Key player & stakeholders	Role and function	Necessary actions	Collaboration coord/linkages level	Outcomes Anticipated	Resources Personnel	Milestones Timeframe
Industry/ primary industry	Collaboration	Establish criteria with support of federal and state agencies to evaluate triple bottom line sustainable use of land Prepare property management plans		Greater certainty for investment in land use Viability of primary producers Enhanced sustainability		
Peak regional bodies: ROCs, RDOs, NRM, CRCs and similar	Collaboration	Identify any Native Title barriers NRM – property management plans RDOs – management plans and Native Title		Land use planning – sustainable and triple bottom line		

THEME 2 : INDUSTRIES OF TROPICAL AUSTRALIA

Two key strategies were nominated, the first to produce a sustainable and coordinated development plan within which Tropical SKI hubs and centres based on the tropical industries of north Australia would be created. This strategy is aimed at coordination of tropical SKI industries and business operations and development. The strategy involves establishing an interim committee and undertaking a feasibility/business plan for the creation of the hubs. Tropical SKI innovation and development is currently characterised by a lack of coordination (Prof Peter Andrews NAEDF 2008) and improved coordination and collaboration would vastly improve investment and development potential.

The second strategy targets national coordination of tropical SKI research, innovation and development and aims to establish a national Tropical Innovation Council which would be broadly based under the aegis of the federal government to coordinate national tropical SKI development.

STRATEGY 7: ESTABLISH AN INTERIM COORDINATING GROUP (HONORARY)

TO:

- **SEEK FUNDING FOR A FEASIBILITY ASSESSMENT TO SCOPE OUT THE BASIS FOR OPERATION OF TROPICAL SCIENCE KNOWLEDGE INNOVATION HUBS AND CENTRES ACROSS NORTH AUSTRALIA**
- **OVERSEE THE CONDUCT OF THE BUSINESS PLAN**

A SUBSEQUENT STRATEGY WILL BE FORMALISATION OF THE COORDINATION GROUP TO PRODUCE A SUSTAINABLE TROPICAL INDUSTRIES DEVELOPMENT PLAN IN COLLABORATION WITH KEY AGENCIES

NAEDF Rationale:

- Priority for future of north Australia tropical industries is bottom up leadership and coordination and networking and coordination
- A coordinating group to establish tropical SKI hubs across the north. This network would then collaborate with relevant agencies such as NRM boards, CRCs to produce a sustainable development plan and to guide development of the plan and implement recommendations
- Build on the cooperative initiatives already in place
- Impacts of climate change – water in demand
- Expected that nature and structure of tropical industries will change dramatically over next 20 years
- Private investment will be contingent upon government investment in infrastructure

STRATEGY 7: ESTABLISH AN INTERIM COORDINATING GROUP (HONORARY)

Key player & stakeholders	Role and function	Necessary actions	Collaboration coord/linkages level	Outcomes Anticipated	Resources Personnel	Milestones Timeframe
Federal Climate Change Industry Others	Overarching coordination role	Funding and Resourcing		Enhanced value of tropical industries for the Australian economy with a coordinated approach to tropical expertise development across the north rather than the current piecemeal approach	Funding to engage expertise to undertake a business/feasibility plan to establish and operate the hubs/centres	
ONA	Coordination Collaboration Information flow	Work with RDAs and stakeholders to identify federal input Relay information to relevant departments		Targeted investment in tropical industry and SKI Value for \$ As above		
State/Territory	Facilitation and collaboration	Funding and resourcing for involvement of state and Territory personnel Qld already hosting Aust Tropical Expertise Consortium - an initiative that can be extended across the north	MOU Reinforce existing MOU for the Cooperative Framework for Tropical SKI	Economies of scale Targeted investment		

STRATEGY 7: ESTABLISH AN INTERIM COORDINATING GROUP (HONORARY)

Key player & stakeholders	Role and function	Necessary actions	Collaboration coord/linkages level	Outcomes Anticipated	Resources Personnel	Milestones Timeframe
RDAs	Liaison and collaboration	RDAs collaborate and investigate funding avenues Dialogue with all stakeholders and linkages with other federal programs Establish a coordination group (honorary) to progress the concept Seek expressions of interest for people to be involved in the interim committee Seek out an appropriate body to auspice the funds in collaboration with the interim committee		Close linkages between government programs and tropical SKI industries		
Industry	Information Facilitation Funding	Representation of key industries on coordination group	Partnerships	Investment targets and opportunities		
Universities and CRCs	Research Information source	Represented on coordination group		Research potential		
Relevant orgs:		Represented on coordination group				

STRATEGY 8 - ESTABLISH A TROPICAL INNOVATION COUNCIL

NAEDF Rationale:

- Despite the Cooperative Framework on Tropical SKI MOU, there has been a marked lack of coordination resulting in duplication (Prof Peter Andrews NAEDF 2008)
- Australia is in a prime position to take advantage of the growing body of tropical knowledge and science
- First world nation with capacity to develop tropical industry

Advice from the Office of the Queensland Chief Scientist reveals that this strategy has already been pursued. An incorporated association, **TropLinks**, has been established, the Chair being Dr Peter Andrews.

TropLinks objective is to develop a globally competitive tropical economy in Australia, based on leadership and international recognition in tropical research, knowledge and innovation. TropLinks has been set up as an independent, not-for-profit association that will provide:

- **Stakeholder engagement** – networking members and building critical mass to grow a tropical expertise industry
- **Corporate leadership** – coordinating, lobbying and seeking strategic opportunities for members
- **Business matching** – bringing together and linking members to collaboratively bid for major projects
- **Funding and capital raising** – attracting investment and resources for project activity and industry development
- **Identity and branding** – making it easier to market products and services and creating a defined industry sector in tropical expertise

Membership will be drawn from across industry, research, education and the community and from across Australia and particularly the north. More detailed information on TropLinks will be available in the near future with a launch in Townsville around mid April 2009.⁸

⁸ Information supplied by the Office of the Queensland Chief Scientist, February 2009

THEME 3: CARBON TRADING AND CONSERVATION IN BUSINESS

STRATEGY 9 - WORKSHOP 2009 - TOPIC: ECOSYSTEM SERVICES APPLICABLE TO NORTH AUSTRALIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ALLIED WORKSHOPS CONCURRENTLY OR SEPARATELY: CARBON SEQUESTRATION, ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT, RENEWABLE ENERGIES

NAEDF Rationale:

- Actions identified include:
 - Coordinate strategic intelligence, develop a vision 5,10,20 years hence
 - Identify and develop markets (domestic and international), undertake market feasibility
 - Grow clusters of learning and research and collaborate and share learnings
 - Hold a summit for northern development governance; federalism not working for north Australia
 - Government to fund a series of work shops

Key player & stakeholders	Role and function	Necessary actions	Collaboration coord/linkages level	Outcomes Anticipated	Resources Personnel	Milestones Timeframe
Federal	Facilitation and resourcing	ONA liaison		New innovation economic development options for northern Australia		
State/Territory	Coordination and collaboration Resourcing Facilitation	Involvement of organisations/groups such as Aust Tropical Expertise Consortium Investigate funding sources		Open avenues for regional industries to meet the environmental requirements emanating from climate change RDAs looking to achieve sustainable regional communities		
RDAs						
NRM Boards	Key role in coordination, management and delivery	Northern NRM Alliance meeting in Darwin 17, 18 Feb Seek funding for workshop series				
Universities and CRCs	Collaboration					
Relevant orgs:	Collaboration participation					

STRATEGY 9 - WORKSHOP 2009 - TOPIC: ECOSYSTEM SERVICES APPLICABLE TO NORTH AUSTRALIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Key player & stakeholders	Role and function	Necessary actions	Collaboration coord/linkages level	Outcomes Anticipated	Resources Personnel	Milestones Timeframe
Industry and Consultants	Collaboration participation					

STRATEGY 10 - DEVELOP AND INVEST IN COLLABORATIVE MODELS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH AUSTRALIA WITH ENGAGEMENT OF ALL STAKEHOLDERS

NAEDF Rationale:

- Develop models for appropriate development based on alternative economies
- Vision for NA development – 5,10,20 years
- Develop economic opportunities for indigenous settlements
- Need to develop market feasibility
- Climate change presents opportunities
- Northern Australia comprises one of the world’s largest collections of intact and diverse ecosystems

Key player & stakeholders	Role and function	Necessary actions	Collaboration coord/linkages level	Outcomes Anticipated	Resources Personnel	Milestones Timeframe
Federal	Overarching			Sustainable development models across the north Opportunities, avenues for employment creation in remote settlements	Funding	
State/Territory	Collaboration Facilitation	Aust Tropical Expertise Consortium		Clarity in terms of best application of resources Sustainable development models Opportunities, avenues for employment creation in remote settlements Clarity in terms of best application of resources		

STRATEGY 10 - DEVELOP AND INVEST IN COLLABORATIVE MODELS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH AUSTRALIA WITH ENGAGEMENT OF ALL STAKEHOLDERS

Key player & stakeholders	Role and function	Necessary actions	Collaboration coord/linkages level	Outcomes Anticipated	Resources Personnel	Milestones Timeframe
RDAs	Collaboration	Collaboration in interests of attaining sustainable communities		Will inform RDA strategies to achieve sustainable communities		
NRM Boards	Implementation: Key role in developing concepts and presenting the need to government	NRM Boards (e.g. Northern NRM Alliance), to take the lead in developing the details for ongoing action		Clarity for development of future actions, programs and priorities, whole of community involvement cohesive approach to NRM across the north	NRM Boards and personnel critical to networking to develop models, funding sources etc	
Universities and CRCs	Collaboration	Involvement in planning Research				
Relevant orgs:	Collaboration					
Industry	Collaboration					

THEME 4: INDIGENOUS BUSINESS ENTERPRISES

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

The comments raised by delegates at NAEDF 2008 have been expressed in a number of other meetings around the nation. There is a plethora of government departments, agencies, peak bodies and private organisations beavering away in indigenous settlements, all no doubt with the best of intentions but as the evidence at the forum and other gatherings and reports suggest, with questionable results. Programs are thrust at the indigenous community with reportedly little understanding and appreciation of the objectives on the part of recipients. At this stage we are uncertain of whether north Australia is benefiting from the multitude of programs targeting indigenous settlements.

Therefore we will not attempt at this stage to develop the specific strategic activities for the actions recommended at NAEDF 2008. However the comments raised by delegates and the actions proposed will be made public for use by relevant agencies.

A new dynamic is needed which offers a higher level of local and regional determination of what and how programs are delivered and geared to the business potential of each centre. One size does not fit all and people in the regions and settlements across the north need to have a say in what and how programs are delivered. *True, one cannot evaluate what one doesn't know. A comment at NAEDF was that it is difficult to explain complex policy and business environment with simple language. So there needs to be business training sensitive to indigenous lifestyle and knowledge.*⁹

For the benefit of north Australia there needs to be a greater level of coordination of programs and service delivery and a need to develop a clear picture of all initiatives taking place to avoid duplication. Again there is an opportunity to use existing structures as vehicles for delivery and coordination – namely the RDA network across the north and the local governments.

STRATEGY 11 - CREATE A FRAMEWORK TO COORDINATE LOCAL/REGIONAL INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION MAKING WITH A VIEW TO ENHANCING SETTLEMENT AND COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY AND INDIGENOUS BUSINESS POTENTIAL ACROSS NORTH AUSTRALIA

NAEDF Rationale:

- Indigenous business opportunities would be enhanced if Indigenous people were able to refocus Government attention from disadvantage and deficit, to invest in Indigenous people, their heritage and culture
- Settlements shape the experience and generate the livelihood opportunities
- We are entering an era where an investment in livelihood opportunity will be the main driver of Indigenous decision-making. This will necessarily bring an increased focus on settlements and regional development.

⁹ (note the indigenous business training program at Galwintku in which traditional trade was used to explain modern business practices).

- Revitalise regional northern Australia, the role of Indigenous people and business opportunities that would flow from a proactive investment approach by:
 - Focus on enabling livelihoods across the north
 - Development of a settlement network that guarantees safety, security and services in the national interest across regional Australia
 - Develop new approaches to re-invigorating capital investment in outback Australia and develop a clear understanding of investment and development of settlements across north Australia by providing an investment strategy
- Government provide leadership, certainty and direction for business development in that part of the nation where markets are weakest and people most marginalised

SPECIFIC ACTIONS RECOMMENDED NAEDF 2008

STRATEGY 12 - INVESTIGATE NEW CAPITAL INVESTMENT POTENTIAL IN INDIGENOUS SETTLEMENTS ACROSS THE NORTH

NAEDF Rationale:

- Refocus government attention from deficit to investment opportunities
- Position emerging business investment opportunities in a regional development context
- Settlement viability needs to be assessed
- Sustainability and business investment would be enhanced with a clearer understanding for investment and development of settlements

STRATEGY 13 - EXAMINE POTENTIAL ECONOMIC BASE FOR DISPERSED NETWORK OF SETTLEMENTS AND ALIGN INDIGENOUS BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING; IDENTIFY STRATEGIES FOR ROLE OF INDIGENOUS SETTLEMENTS AND INDIVIDUALS IN REVITALISING REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

NAEDF Rationale:

- Develop proactive investment strategies and development of settlements across the north
- Deliver effective governance of northern Australia
- Indigenous settlements need more than land and culture to be viable
- 4 activities would revitalize regional Australia and the role of indigenous people within it:
 - focus on enabling livelihoods
 - develop a settlement network that guarantees safety, security and services
 - investment strategy for next 50 years
 - new approaches to invigorating capital investment in outback Australia

STRATEGY 14 - REVIEW OF POLICIES:

- INVESTIGATE OPTIONS FOR AND WHERE POSSIBLE PROVIDE TAX INCENTIVES FOR INDIGENOUS BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
- REVIEW AND ENHANCE GOVERNMENT POLICY RE PREFERENTIAL EMPLOYMENT OF LOCAL INDIGENOUS LABOUR

NAEDF Rationale:

- Tax incentives for indigenous business development
- Position emerging businesses within regional development context
- Government to take decisions that provide leadership, certainty and direction for business development in part of nation where markets are weakest and people most marginalized
- Endorse and improve policies for preferential local indigenous supply of labour

STRATEGY 15 - TRAINING, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND MENTORING FOR INDIGENOUS BUSINESSES

NAEDF Rationale:

- people not engaging with training - Training needs to be flexible and appropriate and alert to business development needs
- Need to maintain consistent on-site mentors
- Some lack of clarity on purpose of a business – wealth, employment, pride
- Promote training in generic skills e.g. service provision
- Concepts of competition and entrepreneurship under-developed and need to be introduced at school
- Government support needs to be seen by the community as an investment

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