

**COUNCIL FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT NORTHERN TERRITORY**  
PO Box 2134, Alice Springs NT 0871

Committee Secretary  
Standing Committee on Primary Industries and Regional Services  
Department of the House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Secretary

**RE: INQUIRY INTO INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF AUSTRALIA'S REGIONAL AREAS .**

**PURPOSE:**

This is a submission to the "Inquiry into infrastructure and the development of Australia's regional areas" from the Council for Regional Development NT (CRDNT).

This submission will describe the Council's role and give an overview of the importance of infrastructure to regional development within the Northern Territory.

**BACKGROUND:**

The Council for Regional Development NT is the peak body that represents the five regional economic development committees within the Northern Territory. The regions covered by the five committees are similar to the Australian Bureau of Statistics regions for the Northern Territory ie:

- Central Region                      The Alice Springs Economic Development Advisory Committee
  - Barkly Region                        The Barkly Regional Economic Development Committee
  - Katherine Region                    The Katherine Regional Economic Development Organisation
  - East Arnhem Region                The East Arnhem Business Development Association
  - Darwin Region                      The Darwin Rural Regional Economic Development Committee
- Balance

A map of the regions is at Attachment A.

The Charter for the Council of Regional Development NT is at Attachment B. You will note that it includes a mission statement, goal, objectives and key focus areas. The Council's membership consists of a representative from each of the five regional committees, an observer from the NT Area Consultative Committee and secretariat support is provided by the Regional Development Group of the Northern Territory Government's Department of Industries and Business.

Each of the regional economic development committees are community based and include representatives from local government, NT Government (eg Industries and Business; Transport and Works etc), community groups, Commonwealth Government (eg ATSIC, Defence) business and industry groups (eg Chamber of Commerce, regional tourism associations, etc).

It is clear that the regional economic development committees within the Northern Territory have filled a void in respect to community input for the development process.

### **Overview – the importance of infrastructure.**

Given the vast expanse of the Northern Territory and its small and widely dispersed population, infrastructure plays a major role in economic development, delivery of products and services and employment opportunities.

Examples of infrastructure development that would boost employment in the regions include:

- the construction of the Alice Springs to Darwin railway with its resultant impact on the five NT regions;
- the construction of the Melbourne to Darwin railway and, in particular, the Mt Isa to Tennant Creek section;
- major water resource investigations in the Central and Barkly regions that would open up land for horticultural purposes, ie water quantification and quality identified;
- 62 out of 68 local government centres qualify for funding under the Commonwealth's Rural Transaction Centre project;
- road upgrades – from tracks to gravel and/or bitumen would provide massive opportunities eg the East-West Highway linking Queensland, the NT and WA;
- route #1 connecting Doomadgee, QLD, with Borroloola in the Northern Territory;
- the Tanami Road linking Alice Springs with the mines in the North-West of the region.
- the Central Arnhem Road, linking Katherine with Nhulunbuy;
- upgrading the Barkly Highway between Mt Isa and Camooweal;
- upgrading the bridges over the Inker and Georgina Rivers;
- Introduce infrastructure in respect to education and health services and delivery;
- review the impact of FBT, income tax, payroll tax and GST on regional employment;
- raise the priority of energy requirements in regional areas eg diesel fuel rebate, renewable energy opportunities;
- work with the NT Government to address the issue of skill shortages and particularly the impact of high housing costs; and
- communications – the provision of communications infrastructure to NT communities will provide improvements in health, education and employment opportunities. The NT is a recipient of \$15 million from the \$250 million Regional Telecommunications Infrastructure

Fund and over the next 2-3 years major improvements in telecommunications access is expected.

Provision of infrastructure facilities such as roads, energy, and water supplies will turn the Northern Territory into a dynamic economic driver for the rest of Australia. As an example the construction of the Alice Springs to Darwin railway, linked to the port facilities in Darwin, will provide an economic boon to Australia through the land-bridge with Asia.

**CONCLUSION:**

This submission has barely scratched the surface of identifying the opportunities for the Northern Territory, and Australia, through the provision of adequate infrastructure.

The Council for Regional Development NT invites members of the Standing Committee to visit the Northern Territory to get a first hand view of the importance of infrastructure to what is unarguably Australia's most regional of areas.

My direct contact details are:

Phone: (08) 89 521244

Fax: (08) 89 521757

Terry McCumiskey  
Chairman  
CRDNT