

# SUBMISSION

TO THE HOUSE  
OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STANDING COMMITTEE  
ON PRIMARY INDUSTRIES  
AND REGIONAL SERVICES -

INQUIRY INTO  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
AND THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF  
AUSTRALIA'S  
REGIONAL AREAS

May 1999

# Attachments

# CONTENTS

	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>1. The Local Government Association of the Northern Territory.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Local Government in the NT.....</b>	<b>1-2</b>
<b>3. The Aim of the Submission .....</b>	<b>2-4</b>
3.1 Submission by the ALGA.....	2
3.2 Previous major reports which address infrastructure and development issues for regional areas of Australia .....	2-3
3.3 This submissions aim .....	4
<b>4. Addressing the Terms of Reference of the inquiry .....</b>	<b>4-15</b>
4.1 Deficiencies in infrastructure which currently impede development in Australia's regional areas.....	4-8
4.2 Factors that would enhance development.....	8-10
4.3 Potential for development in regional areas .....	10-11
4.4 The extent to which infrastructure development would generate employment in regional Australia.....	11-13
4.5 Role of different levels of government and the private sector in providing infrastructure in regional areas .....	13-14
4.6 Planning, co-ordination and co-operation in the provision of infrastructure in regional areas ....	14-15
4.7 Benefit to the national economy of developing regional infrastructure.....	15
<b>5. Recommendations to the Inquiry.....</b>	<b>16-17</b>

## **Attachments:**

1. Location map of Local Government Authorities in the NT
2. Outback Highway

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## 1. THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY (LGANT)

The Local Government Association of the Northern Territory (LGANT) is the peak body established by Local Government in the NT. The Constitution of LGANT provides that the objectives of the Association are to:

- provide a united voice for NT Local Government.
- represent the views of local government to the NT and Federal Governments on financial, legislative, administrative and policy matters.
- provide high quality professional services to our members.
- promote the credibility and profile of local government.

Membership of the Association comprises all but one of the 69 local governing bodies in the Northern Territory recognised by the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Governments for the purposes of receipt of Local Government Financial Assistance Grants.

LGANT represents Northern Territory Local Government on the Executive Board of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) and along with the six other State Local Government Associations has established and finances the ALGA to represent Local Governments interests at the National level.

## 2. LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

In the Northern Territory there are 180,000 people, less than 1% of the Australian population, living in one sixth (1/6<sup>th</sup>) of the land area of Australia. 94% of these people live within the boundaries of the Council members of the Association. There are 69 Local Governing bodies in the Northern Territory comprising:

6	Municipalities
31	Community Government Councils
30	Associations incorporated under NT and Commonwealth legislation
2	Special Purpose Councils

**Attachment 1** to this submission shows the locations of all Northern Territory Local Governing Bodies.

Aboriginal people comprise 24% of the population of the Northern Territory and Local Government is very inclusive with 634 Aboriginal elected members representing communities on Aboriginal land and making decisions for their community on local government functions and a number of other “community” matters normally included within Local Government’s responsibilities.

### **3. THE AIM OF THIS SUBMISSION**

#### **3.1 Submission by the Australian Local Government Association**

The Association has been involved in the preparation of the submission to the Inquiry by the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA).

The ALGA submission focuses on the broad infrastructure and development needs of rural and remote areas of Australia and we do not wish to duplicate the work of ALGA in our more specific submission. We strongly support the ALGA submission and endorse its contents and recommendations to the Inquiry.

#### **3.2 Previous major reports which address infrastructure and development issues for regional areas of Australia**

The Association draws the attention of the Inquiry to a plethora of previous reports prepared by the Commonwealth Government, the NT Government and Local Government on the important issues addressed by the terms of reference of this Inquiry.

These include in the Northern Territory context:

##### **Commonwealth Government**

- Community Infrastructure on Homelands – Towards a National Framework - February 1996 (ATSIC)
- Social Strategies for the Northern Territory - April 1993 (Office of Northern Development)
- Towards the Development of a North Australia Social Justice Strategy - 1994 (Office of Northern Development)
- Investing in Infrastructure - August 1994 (Department Housing and Regional Development)
- Northern Australia's Industrial Capabilities - October 1994 (Department Housing and Regional Development)
- Report of the Committee on Darwin - September 1995 (Senator Grant Tambling)
- Developing Australia - A Regional Perspective - July 1993 (Department of Industry, Technology and Regional Development)

##### **Northern Territory Government**

- Darwin 2010: The Multi-Model Transport and Logistics Hub - November 1996 (Department of Transport and Works)

- Road Network Strategy - August 1996 (Department of Transport and Works)
- Economic Development Strategy (Department of Asian Relations, Trade and Industry) for the following regions:
  - Darwin Rural Economic Development Strategy - July 1998
  - Barkly Regional Economic Development Strategy - May 1992
  - Arnhem Region Economic Development Strategy - May 1995
  - Tiwi Islands Region Economic Development Strategy - November 1996
  - Katherine Region Economic Development Strategy - May 1996
- The face of Alice Springs in Ten Years Project - April 1999  
Department of Chief Minister.

### **Local Government**

- Development of Northern Australia - November 1996 ALGA
- Strengthening Local Economic Capacity Program (SLEC) - June 1993 LGANT
- Local Government Authorities Corporate Plans
- Integrated Local Area Planning (ILAP) - July 1993 ALGA

These reports contain wide ranging recommendations which cover all of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference and the Association does not wish to repeat what has previously been put to Government by the bodies responsible for their preparation.

### **3.3 This Submissions Aim**

The focus of this submission is to draw the attention of the Inquiry to the infrastructure and development deficiencies faced by the remote communities in the NT who are members of the Association and to make a series of recommendations to the Inquiry which will assist overcome over time their problems faced on a day-to-day basis on communities.

In essence, our submission is a “bottom up” approach as while we realise the Inquiry is focussing on major issues, it is only by systematically addressing current deficiencies in a planned way, backed by proper resourcing and sensible decision making that progress will be made and the aspirations for improving infrastructure and development of regional and remote areas of Australia inherent in the terms of reference for this Inquiry realised.

## **4. ADDRESSING THE TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE INQUIRY**

### **4.1 Deficiencies in infrastructure which currently impede development in Australia’s regional areas**

The Northern Territory suffers major deficiencies in both the physical and social infrastructure necessary to support growth and economic and social development.

Due to remoteness and the sparse population base of regional Northern Territory, transport and communications are essential for the welfare of the regional and remote regions of the Territory.

#### **Roads**

Road accessibility is an issue that is constantly raised by Councils in the Northern Territory who are frustrated at their inability financially to meet the needs of their constituents.

Local Government has control and maintenance responsibility for 39% (12,250 km) of the Northern Territory road network. Community Government and Association Councils manage and control 8,891 km of this network. 8,592 km is unsealed and ranges from formed gravel roads to flat bladed tracks.

The NT road network is very costly to maintain and construct (compared with southern Australia) due to remoteness, climatic conditions and the diverse geographical nature of the region, that range from monsoon conditions in the north to deserts in Central Australia.

In Northern Australia much of the road network in remote areas is not accessible for up to 6 months of the year between November and May (monsoon season). For the communities isolated during this period and island communities, the only means of transport and freighting of goods is by barge and air at huge expense.

To maintain this extensive road network, Local Government in the Northern Territory is allocated \$8 million per annum Financial Assistance Grants. This amount is totally inadequate.

Following distribution by the Northern Territory Grants Commission to the 68 local governing bodies; there are 16 Councils who receive the minimum of \$20,000 per annum. This level of funding is an insult to any organisation contemplating meaningful maintenance works on their roads.

### **Airstrips**

Due to the road network being inaccessible for up to 6 months of the year airstrips become the only mode of transport for much of regional Northern Territory.

The majority of the airstrips operate under restricted licenses due to no lighting. In the majority of cases they are gravel and due to monsoon rains it is difficult to maintain the strips to an appropriate standard because of the inappropriate funding levels.

### **Communications**

As managers of a project being funded by the Regional Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund, LGANT has experienced the frustration at the lack of appropriate communication infrastructure to regional areas. We use two communities as an example.

A deficiency in telecommunications infrastructure to the Wadeye and Aputula communities has the potential of jeopardising their participation in our connections of email and Internet capabilities.

We draw to the attention of the Inquiry an extract from the "LGANT Internet Project progress report".

*"Wadeye*

*Phone lines at the community were identified as being problematic. This was due in part to the installation of an out-of-date satellite at the community some years ago. The majority of the lines in the community were satellite lines although there were a few remaining landlines. The Council had at least one landline on which their fax machine is run. We were told that from previous experience the satellite lines proved to be*



*of very poor quality especially for data transfer. It was agreed between the project and the council that if possible the Internet connection would share the fax line in the office.....*

*The main issue for the project and its success at Kardu Numida (Wadeye) will be the reliability of the phone lines. Should they provide to be appalling, the project will look at a major retraining exercise following the Electronic Outback rollout....."*

*"Aputula*

*The issue of phone lines, particularly the lack of them, was a major concern to the community. The community has a population of about 400 and only 12 phone lines. There is one public phone. No-one in the community had a phone in their home, other than the Council Clerk, and this was a line from the Council's commander system. There was not only an issue with the number of lines but also the quality of existing lines. At best data communication above 2400 baud is impossible. The Council Clerk also complained about the quality of service from his satellite phone. If he needs to use it he generally has to get out of the car and point the dish in the direction that gives the clearest reception. This may mean that the community is on the edge of the satellite footprint. If this is the case it could impact the work conducted by the Electronic Outback."*

In light of the information we gathered on our visit to Aputula, the project concluded that it would not be viable to install Internet and email services in the same time frame as the other pilot sites.

### **Housing Infrastructure**

Deficiencies in infrastructure and housing in remote Aboriginal communities were identified in a report by ATSIC in 1993 "Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey".

1. 311 discrete communities have a non complying water supply
2. 119 discrete communities have an inadequately maintained water supply
3. 64% of communities had less than 50% of their internal roads sealed
4. 58 discrete communities have sewerage and septic systems that do not work satisfactorily
5. 136 homeland centres do not have a sewerage system.

A severe shortage of housing throughout the regional Northern Territory is seen as a major impediment to social and economic development.

Health services and infrastructure to support these services are under-resourced. The only way regional and remote Territorians can access such services as mental health, rehabilitation and counselling services is to travel to major regional centres at great expense.

We draw attention of the Inquiry to a specific example of infrastructure deficiency in the Gulf community of Borrooloola, by extracts from a Consultant's report on the sewerage system or lack of.

Borrooloola Housing and Infrastructure Report" by McIntyre and Associates Pty Ltd - 1998

*"This report presents the result of investigations to upgrade sewerage schemes for the Aboriginal town camps of Borrooloola, namely Mara, Yanyula, Garawa 1 and Garawa 2....."*

#### *Yanyula Town Camp*

*Existing infrastructure is a Common Effluent Drainage Scheme (CED) and gravitates to a single pump station, then pumps to an absorption bed (or mound). The absorption mound is not functioning satisfactorily as sewerage is overflowing at the distribution boxes and seeping out of the toe of the embankment.....*

#### *Mara Camp septic tank and absorption trenches*

*As discussed previously, ongoing difficulties have been experienced at Mara Camp with the septic tank, pump well and absorption trench installations. On the date of our inspection, two (2) residences had effluent ponding on the surface in quite large areas....."*

In remote areas of the Northern Territory current infrastructure is inadequate to support major economic development initiatives; transport is limited and costly, essential services are restricted and in some cases near capacity, community and recreational services are geared to the residential population and there is minimal capacity to look at economic development opportunities.

Unless basic infrastructure deficiencies are overcome this situation will continue in the long-term.

## **4.2 Factors that would enhance development**

### **1. Sensitivity**

Economic development on Aboriginal land in the NT will need to be consistent with Aboriginal aspirations regarding their land and culture. This has to be a fundamental component of any development strategy. Projects that threaten cultural values and integrity will not commence or not be sustainable in the long-term. On the other hand, projects that strengthen these values are likely to attract broad support. Aboriginal communities have considerable resources and assets in the form of

land and culture, which can form the base for sound economic development.

Further commitment by both Commonwealth and Territory Governments to support community based economic development through policies and programs that stimulate and facilitate local initiatives are necessary. Aboriginal controlled economic development requires additional support, sensitivity, training and funding to allow communities to determine the appropriate form and timescale of economic initiatives.

## **2. Improving Road funding**

The funding of road infrastructure in regional areas of the Northern Territory is totally inadequate. There has to be an increase in funding to Local Government for road funding as well as an increase in specific road grants for roads of national and regional importance eg. "Outback Highway", "Strategic Roads Initiative on Aboriginal Land".

## **3. Reducing administration costs**

The Commonwealth has to better ensure that money gets onto the ground. One example of how this can occur was the "Local Government Capital Works Program" in 1994 where the Commonwealth Government funded directly Local Government Councils with unemployment higher than 10%. Evaluation of this program identified that only 2% of the funds were spent on administration as compared with 30% on many current programs.

## **4. Co-ordination and co-operation**

There is a need for better co-ordination and co-operation between funding bodies and agencies. There are many different programs funded by Commonwealth and Territory Governments that deal with the development of infrastructure in the regions. These programs include the Community Housing and Infrastructure Program (CHIP), Health Infrastructure Program (HIP), Indigenous Housing Authority of the Northern Territory (IHANT) and the National Aboriginal Health Strategy (NAHS). A more strategic and co-ordinated approach will not only have economic benefits but delivery will be less disjointed.

## **5. Fast tracking and incentives**

Policies of Governments should encourage by financial assistance the fast tracking of infrastructure developments such as large private developments, like mining industry.

There are excellent examples of the economic and social impact to regions of the development of mining towns in the remote areas of the Northern Territory. Mining in Gove, Groote Eylandt and Jabiru have

provided the town, region and community infrastructure. These mining towns are now regional centres servicing huge areas of the Territory. This would not have been achieved without the support by Governments.

This opportunity was however lost in Borroloola with the opening of the Macarthur River mine. Due to inadequate community facilities and limited capacity of the Borroloola Council to provide adequate services for the mine personnel, the management of the mine has decided on a fly-in fly-out operation. This decision has had far reaching effects on the growth of the region. The potential of further economic development has been lost because of this decision.

## **6. Funding Local Government on the basis of Fiscal Equalisation**

The Fiscal Equalisation principles of funding that apply to State Governments should be extended to Local Government by the Commonwealth Government.

The joint submission to the Senate Select Committee on the New Tax System by the Local Government Associations of the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Western Australia, 27<sup>th</sup> January, said this:

*“...fiscal equalisation does not apply fully or adequately to the local government sector. It is nevertheless significant and has had beneficial effects in terms of assisting local governments with lesser capacity to raise revenue and/or higher expenditure needs to operate at standards closer to those of financially stronger Councils than would otherwise be possible. It has, for example, enabled some reduction in the gap between financially stronger suburban and commercial areas on the one hand and suburbs with lower socio-economic status and rural and regional Australia on the other.*

*If the application of fiscal equalisation principles is extended as we propose that will clearly have the effect of furthering these objectives. It would certainly be consistent with the recent emphasis at the political level on the need to reduce the inequities in access to and costs of services suffered by those living in rural and regional Australia, although we emphasize that the outcomes extend beyond this particular aspect.*

*We also note that the desirable effects of fiscal equalisation are not confined to an “evening up” in access to services at reasonable cost. They also include an enhancement in the capacity of the less financially well endowed areas of Australia to finance the infrastructure and the other programs which are necessary to facilitate economic growth and employment, objectives which we all share”.*

## **7. Continuation of the Regional Telecommunication Infrastructure Fund**

Continuation of the Remote Telecommunication Infrastructure Funding is essential for the economic development of regional Australia. For Northern Territory regions to be competitive with other areas of Australia there must be an even playing field. Today technology is part of this even playing field.

### **4.3 Potential for development in regional areas**

The Northern Territory Government in the early 1990's with the co-operation of various Regional Economic Development Committees have developed Economic Development Strategies for the regions of Barkly, East Arnhem, Tiwi Islands and Katherine. While strategies have been adopted they languish because of a lack of funding. Economic growth is more effective when it occurs from the "bottom up" with local communities involved in planning, investing in, and implementing new opportunities.

The rationale for the shift towards local community based economic development has come from the knowledge that most new initiatives originate from within regions.

- the majority of new employment comes from the growth and diversification of existing businesses
- most new regional investment comes from existing businesses, local public authorities and existing residents

- most innovation comes from existing local entrepreneurs and skilled residents.

The economic potential of the individual regions has been identified in Economic Development Strategies which have created a framework for regional development to occur and progress, but money is lacking. Strategies need to be developed to enhance local community based economic development.

#### **4.4 The extent to which infrastructure development would generate employment in regional Australia**

LGANT brings to the attention of the Standing Committee an initiative that started in 1995 as an example of employment outcomes generated by infrastructure funding and developments at a regional level.

In response to concerns raised by members of LGANT and other organisations representing Aboriginal people regarding the inadequate road funding and standard of road infrastructure, the Commonwealth Government funded the NT Strategic Roads on Aboriginal Land Initiative with an allocation of \$15.6 million over 3 years.

There was an NT Steering Committee formed with representatives from all three levels of government and their agencies as well as Aboriginal organisations that were committed to the strategic road initiative.

A Heads of Agreement was signed in 1994 between the Commonwealth Government and the Northern Territory Government and part of this agreement was that the NT would take over responsibility for the maintenance of the five identified strategic roads on the completion of the 3 year initiative funded by the Commonwealth Government. In the 1996/97 Budget, the Commonwealth Government cut the Strategic Roads Initiative, but in recognising the importance of the project, the Northern Territory Government allocated \$2.5 million in the 97/98 budget.

From this initiative, six Community Government Councils were successful tenderers in their own right on contracts totalling \$2.27 million. These contracts led to the full time employment and training of 26 Aboriginal and 3 contracted supervisors/trainers from outside the communities during the life of the project. In addition to this, the Bawinanga Corporation (Maningrida outstation body) was successful in winning \$450,000 section of the Arnhem link road, which provided employment and training for 12 Aboriginal people with a co-ordinator employed through the Department of Transport and Works.

Economic relationships developed through this initiative such as the Umbakumba Community Government Council, after consultation with the Angurugu Community Government Council resolved with the assistance of the Department of Transport and Works to enter into a

joint venture arrangement with Henry and Walker, an NT owned road construction company. This venture led to the employment and training of 10 Aboriginal people from Umbakumba on a roster system of one week on, one week off. Henry and Walker provided the supervision, training and additional plant that the Council did not have.

Another example is the formation of a regional Council AYAC (Ananguku Yirwarra Aboriginal Corporation) in central Australia. AYAC comprises five Community Government Councils of Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore, Mt Liebig, Nyirripi and their Association homeland organisations.

Following negotiation with the Department of Transport and Works, AYAC were successful in obtaining contracts on the strategic road linking the communities of Papunya and Kintore in Central Australia. AYAC engaged Civil Construction Skills Technology Centre as their training provider and S & J Earthmovers as the construction arm of the project. Employment varied between 5 and 10 Aboriginal people during the contracted period.

The Evaluation Report of the Strategic Road Initiative identified the following benefits of the program:

- at the start of the 3 year project and due to the substantial size of the contracts, the project gave Councils the opportunity and confidence to purchase capital equipment
- contractors with the appropriate expertise and equipment, and the fact the Community Government Council recruited civil works supervisors, and purchased capital equipment, Councils were then in a position to successfully tender for projects other than the Strategic Roads Initiative, eg. Kardu Numida Community Government Council being contracted by the Department of Transport and Works to do the civil works on a 12-house subdivision, which included the sealing of the roads.
- heavy equipment required in the Strategic Roads Initiative in the Daly/Port Keats, Ngukurr/Numbulwar regions allowed Councils to rehabilitate tip sites, stockpile gravel for future works, reforest burrow pits, and clear transitional areas around their airstrips to name a few.
- better standards of roads has meant that goods and material for various projects within the 16 communities linked by the strategic roads could be trucked in rather than barged, and in some cases this had cost savings of up to two thirds of freight costs.
- Councils with traditional owners saw the potential for regional co-operation and formed regional roads committees. This outcome had both social and economic benefits for their regions. These committees, over time developed to look at broader issues affecting their region, such as resource sharing, both human and equipment

resources, tourism and other economic developments in their region, and all road funding within their region, not just Strategic Roads Initiative funding.

The program was cut without consultation by the current Government in the 1996/97 Federal Budget and this has led to a major drop in morale of all involved in this excellent initiative.

A core message which our members wish to draw attention to is that there is not enough emphasis placed on improving basic education through the education system and the failure to achieve numeracy and literacy skills for many people.

There has been too much adult training of Aboriginal people, which have not led anywhere. This has undermined the way training is value by communities and regional areas. There are a range of skills that can be found in regional areas and communities, which cannot be applied because of a lack of employment opportunities. These opportunities come from economic development and the infrastructure to support those developments.

#### **4.5 Role of different levels of government and the private sector in providing infrastructure in regional areas**

The problems of duplication and overlap in the delivery of programs and services to Aboriginal people have long been recognised by all levels of Government. The special Premiers' Conference in 1990 called for a report on the means of achieving greater co-ordination, and in December 1992 the Council of Australian Governments, comprising the Commonwealth and all State and Territory Governments as well as Local Government representation, endorsed a national commitment to improve outcomes in the delivery of programs and services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> June 1995 there was a bilateral agreement signed between the Commonwealth Government (ATSIC) and the Northern Territory Government (Department of Housing) to form the Indigenous Housing Authority of the Northern Territory (IHANT).

Under the agreement, all ATSIC and Northern Territory funds allocated for Aboriginal Housing are now pooled, and IHANT is responsible for the development and review of a five year Strategic Plan.

This attempt at a 'whole of government approach' is commended although it is not inclusive of Local Government and this has caused some difficulty.

An example of the lack of communication and co-operation between agencies is the Borroloola Sewerage system, mentioned previously. It



is being funded through an ATISC program to put sewer onto Aboriginal Urban Living areas in the Borroloola Township. The pipe sizing has not allowed for further development of the township or the connection of the other residential properties in the township. ATISC are saying their funds are limited and their priority is the connection and improvement of their clients and the responsibility and contribution should be made by the Northern Territory Government who have not budgeted for sewers in Borroloola this financial year.

#### **4.6 Planning, co-ordination and co-operation in the provision of infrastructure in regional areas**

The "Outback Highway" initiative is an excellent example of the co-operation between State/Territory and Local Government authorities, Aboriginal communities, Tourism interests and regional and remote Australia in putting forward a proposal that enhances the economic opportunities of outback Australia.

The "Outback Highway" will link Perth with Brisbane by road through the Western Australian towns of Kalgoorlie/Laverton/Warburton into the Northern Territory opening up the regions of Docker River/Uluru (Ayers Rock)/Alice Springs/Haasts Range to Winton in Queensland then to Townsville, Rockhampton or Brisbane.

Attachment 2 to this submission provides details.

This infrastructure will open vast areas of regional Australia to potential economic developments in tourism, mining sector and the pastoral industry.

The Australian Local Government Association has endorsed the project and has the full support of Local Government in Australia through this forum. There has been full support by the Western Australian, Northern Territory and Queensland Governments.

This commitment to the strategic linking of the Eastern and Western regions of Australia by governments has led to financial commitment of \$25 million by Western Australia and \$24 million by Queensland State Government with the Shire of Boulia in Queensland allocating \$900,000 to upgrade the highway in their Shire.

There has been an approach by the Outback Development Committee to the Commonwealth Government for financial assistance over 5 years of \$50 million on a dollar-for-dollar funding proposal. This would deliver to the regions accessed by this highway a good formed gravel surfaced road and a 10-year plan has been developed for the sealing of the road at a cost of \$171.5 million.

Other examples of co-operation are the development of the two railway proposals the Melbourne to Darwin rail link and Adelaide to Darwin rail link.

These examples however are not the norm and there have been lost opportunities due to the lack of co-operation and co-ordination between the three spheres of Government and private sector which leads to frustration and lack of confidence at the local level.

#### **4.7 Benefit to the national economy of developing regional infrastructure**

The Northern Territory has large untapped resources that would benefit the national economy.

There has been some 2,500 mineral and petroleum discoveries but there are still areas that are under explored. The mineral mining is driven by market prices which has led to mine closures in Katherine and Tennant Creek. There is great potential in the new gas and petroleum fields off shore in the Timor Sea.

There has been growth in Horticulture production from \$22 million in 1990 to \$40 million in 1995. In 1995, 143,000 head of live cattle were exported and there are new markets being sought and found since the South East Asia downturn.

The major employer in Northern Territory remote areas is the service delivery sector. Community services in the Northern Territory account for almost half of all Aboriginal employment (43%).

Investment in infrastructure will stimulate the local economy and with the proper environment and infrastructure in place, the private sector will be encouraged to invest, creating employment in industry, which will lead to less dependency on Territory and Commonwealth Government monies. This will also develop a sense of community pride, regional autonomy and self-esteem.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE INQUIRY**

- 1. THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT RECOGNISE THE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF CURRENT PER CAPITA FUNDING OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN STATE AND TERRITORY ALLOCATIONS**
- 2. THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FISCAL EQUALISATION AS THE BASIS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE GRANTS BETWEEN STATES AND TERRITORY.**
- 3. THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT BUDGET ALLOCATE ADDITIONAL FUNDING TO THE REGIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE FUND.**
- 4. THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT FURTHER DEVELOPS A 'WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT APPROACH' TO REGIONAL ISSUES AND WORK WITH THE TWO SPHERES OF GOVERNMENT OPERATING REGIONALLY TO ACHIEVE MUTUALLY AGREED OUTCOMES.**
- 5. THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT INTRODUCE AND DEVELOP NEW INITIATIVES TO STIMULATE REGIONAL COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT. SUCH PROGRAMS SHOULD DEVELOP REGIONAL LEADERSHIP, COOPERATION AND STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE. PROGRAMS SHOULD BUILD UPON EXISTING REGIONAL ECONOMIC STRATEGIES AND FOSTER STRATEGIC PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE TO ENHANCE THE COMPETITIVE STRENGTHS OF REGIONS OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY.**
- 6. THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT TO SUPPORT THROUGH POLICIES, A "BOTTOM UP" APPROACH IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND SUPPORT SUCH INITIATIVES WITH INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING ON THE PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED IN THESE REGIONAL PLANS AND STRATEGIES.**
- 7. THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT TO RECONSIDER ITS POSITION ON SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIC INITIATIVES SUCH AS THE "STRATEGIC ROADS ON ABORIGINAL LANDS INITIATIVE" THAT WAS CUT FROM THE 1996/97 BUDGET.**
- 8. REGIONAL AUSTRALIA HAS SUFFERED A DISPROPORTIONATE BURDEN OF COMMONWEALTH FINANCIAL CUTS AND THEREFORE THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT SHOULD ENSURE THAT GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES CONSIDER PROPERLY THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES IN DELIVERING SERVICES TO REGIONAL AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY AND THAT THESE SERVICES ARE BEING DELIVERED EFFECTIVELY.**
- 9. THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT TO DEVELOP A DETAILED STRATEGY TO ADDRESS THE PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS OF REGIONAL AND REMOTE REGIONS OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY AS IDENTIFIED IN THE NUMEROUS PUBLISHED REPORTS.**

- 10. THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT TO RECOGNISE AND ACKNOWLEDGE THE POOR STATE AND DETERIORATION OF THE REMOTE AND REGIONAL ROAD NETWORK OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY AND COMMIT ADDITIONAL FUNDS TO OVERCOME THIS SITUATION.**
- 11. THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT RECOGNISE THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE TRANSPORT LINKS BETWEEN QUEENSLAND AND WESTERN AUSTRALIA VIA CENTRAL AUSTRALIA AND THE GULF OF CARPENTARIA AND FINANCIALLY SUPPORT THESE INITIATIVES.**
- 12. THE COMMONWEALTH AND TERRITORY GOVERNMENTS UNDERTAKE A DETAIL ASSESSMENT OF THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE WITHDRAWAL AND RATIONALISATION OF GOVERNMENT AGENCIES SERVICES TO REMOTE AND REGIONAL NORTHERN TERRITORY.**