



Kimberley Zone of WALGA

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Bill Pender
Inquiry Secretary
Joint Select Committee on Northern Development
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600



Shire of Derby /
West Kimberley

Dear Mr Pender

Submission from Kimberley Zone of WALGA



The Kimberley Zone of WALGA appreciates the opportunity to make a submission on The Development of Northern Australia Inquiry. The Kimberley Zone of WALGA group consists of four local governments comprising the Shires of Broome, Derby West Kimberley, Halls Creek and Wyndham East Kimberley who work on strategic projects that will assist the region.



All four Kimberley Shires are excited with the development of Northern Australia and sees its potential as a supplier of food and services into Asia and the Pacific regions.

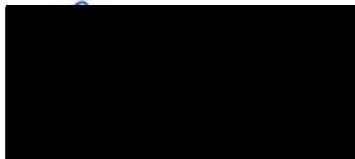
Terms of Reference

The terms of reference of this inquiry are;

- Examine the potential for development of the regions minerals, energy, agricultural, tourism, defence and other industries;
- Provide recommendations to:
 - Enhance trade and other investment links with the Asia-Pacific;
 - Establish a conducive regulatory, taxation and economic environment;
 - Address impediments to growth;
 - Set conditions for private investment and innovation;
- Identify the critical economic and social infrastructure needed to support the long term growth of the region, and ways to support planning and investment in that infrastructure.



The attached submission details the perspective of the Kimberley Group and incorporates their unique circumstances and geographical issues.



KR Donohoe
Secretariat – Kimberley Zone of WALGA.

Kimberley Zone of WALGA

SUBMISSION

TO THE

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON NORTHERN AUSTRALIA

IN RESPONSE TO

THE DEVELOPMENT OF NORTHERN AUSTRALIA INQUIRY

FRIDAY 14 MARCH 2014

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1. Submission

This document is in response to a request by the Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia for submissions to the Development of Northern Australia Inquiry.

Request for Submissions

The committee seeks submissions from interested parties. Those submissions should address the terms of reference and provide views and information on:

- Examine the potential for development of the regions minerals, energy, agricultural, tourism, defence and other industries;
- Provide recommendations to:
 - Enhance trade and other investment links with the Asia-Pacific;
 - Establish a conducive regulatory, taxation and economic environment;
 - Address impediments to growth;
 - Set conditions for private investment and innovation;
- Identify the critical economic and social infrastructure needed to support the long term growth of the region, and ways to support planning and investment in that infrastructure.

Kimberley Group Submission

This is a group submission on behalf of the Shire of Broome, Shire of Derby West Kimberley, Shire of Halls Creek and Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley referred throughout the submission as the 'Kimberley Group'.

In support of this submission is one made by the Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley and another by the Shire of Halls Creek, both lodged separately. Both the Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley and Halls Creek hold strong views on the issues raised by the committee and have, to add emphasis, provided these views directly in submissions that are consistent with the group's.

The Kimberley Group is appreciative of the opportunity to make a submission that responds to the issues from the perspective of the Kimberley Group and incorporates their unique circumstances and geographical issues.

2. Executive Summary

The development of Northern Australia has many challenges with its seasonal variations, geographically remote location, population disbursement and vast untapped resources that require a careful balancing act between development and environmental protection. Given these challenges and opportunities, the Kimberley Group have brought together the shared views of the Local Governments and wish to express these in this submission to the committee.

The Kimberley Local Governments are already engaged with domestic and international businesses and State and Federal departments across the border and see great value in continuing on progressing these issues in a strategic and long term approach. In particular the Kimberley Group see the need for a major economic development intervention for Northern Australia to achieve tangible outcomes for the region. The following submission outlines the key opportunities that should underpin such an approach to the sustainable development of Northern Australia.

3. Background

3.1 The Region

The Kimberley region covers an area of 419,558km² which is one sixth of Western Australia's total land area. It is one of the nine regions of Western Australia and is located in the northern part of the State. The Kimberley is bordered by the Indian Ocean in the west, the Timor Sea to the north, the Great Sandy and Tanami Deserts to the south, and the Northern Territory to the east.

The distance from Perth city to the nearest town, Broome, is 2,415km. The distance from Broome to Wyndham is 1055km via the Great Northern Highway.

The Kimberley is located north of the Tropic of Capricorn, so the climate is tropical monsoon, defined by a distinct wet season (November to April) and a dry season (May to October).

Significant geographic features of the Kimberley include:

- Most of the northern portion is characterised by savannah style vegetation with mature trees and grasslands. Rivers to the north are commonly lined with paperbarks and pandanus
- The coast is typically steep cliffs in the north but flatter in the south with both subject to high tides
- There are no mountains that reach above 1,000 metres
- The southern end of the Kimberley beyond the Dampier Peninsula is flatter with dry tropical grassland and is used for cattle ranching
- In parts of the Kimberley such as the valleys of the Ord and Fitzroy Rivers, the soils are useable cracking clays, whilst elsewhere they are lateritic Orthents

3.2 Demographics

The relatively small total population of 34,794 persons and correspondingly large geographic area of 419,558km² in the Kimberley region, equates to a population density of 0.08 persons/km² (ABS 2011). This compares with the State population density of 0.89 persons/km² and that of Australia at 2.78 persons/km² in 2011. The median age of the Kimberley population in 2011 was 30 years, compared to the State median age of 36 years.

There is a strong Indigenous representation in the Kimberley. The 2011 Census indicated that 40.0% of the total population in the Kimberley were Indigenous people, compared with 3.1% of the population State-wide. According to the 2011 ABS census, Indigenous residents in the Kimberley had a median age of 22 years.

It is forecast that the characteristics of the Kimberley population will alter significantly over subsequent generations. From the macro-economic perspective there will be substantial challenges for Local, State and Commonwealth governments in achieving balanced development from economic, cultural and community perspectives.

The following summarises the population growth for each Shire in recent years: (ABS 2012)

- Shire of Broome – 16,524 people in 2012 and of these 51.1% were male and 48.9% were female. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made up 32% of the population.
- Shire of Derby West Kimberley – 9,556 people in 2012 and of these 58.9% were male and 41.1% were female. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made up 53% of the population.
- Shire of Halls Creek – 4,105 people in 2012 and of these 51.2% were male and 48.8% were female. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made up 80% of the population.
- Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley – 8,665 people in 2012 and of these 51.9% were male and 48.1% were female. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made up 38% of the population.

3.3 Employment

The Kimberley region's labour force (total number of people employed and unemployed) has exhibited steady growth increasing from 17,539 in June 2006 to 18,689 in June 2011. The number of employed persons in the Kimberley in June 2011 was 17,176 and unemployed persons were 1,513.

The Kimberley region's unemployment rate has been consistently higher than the State's unemployment rate since 2006. The unemployment rate was 8.1% in June 2011, compared to the State rate of 4.2%.

3.4 Economy

The Kimberley region's Gross Regional Product (GRP) was estimated at \$3.1 billion in 2010-2011.

The top five industries in terms of employment from 2011 Census data were:

1. Education and Training (14.6%)
2. Health Care and Social Assistance (13.0%)
3. Public Administration and Safety (9.3%)
4. Construction (8.5%)
5. Mining (7.2%)

Mining

The mining industry is the biggest economic contributor to the Kimberley region, with output valued at \$1,159 million in 2011.

Consistent growth in the Kimberley resources sector over the last 10 years has been a major contributor to the 51 percent increase in Gross Regional Product. That growth is likely to

accelerate in the years ahead, primarily driven by the development of the Browse Basin gas resource.

Tourism

Domestic visitors to the Kimberley region in 2013 were estimated at 320,000 persons and international tourists at 40,000 persons. Tourism expenditure in 2010 was estimated to be \$265 million.

In 2010 there were an estimated 2,171 people employed directly in servicing the visitor market.

The tourism industry is expected to remain a key contributor to economic activity in the Kimberley. The expectation of industry operators is that the region is still moving through the development stage and is yet to achieve its full potential.

Agriculture

The value of agricultural commodities has fluctuated over the years. In 1994-95, the value was \$71.6 million, gradually increasing to \$126.8 million in 2000-01, before declining to \$95.9 million in 2003-04. In 2009-10, the gross value of Kimberley agricultural commodities was \$195 million.

The majority of the Kimberley region's land area is under pastoral lease, with an estimated 100 cattle stations.

The Kimberley is the closest pastoral zone to Australia's biggest export market, Indonesia. Annual export figures to Indonesia are around 600,000 head of cattle. Approximately 300,000 cattle are exported out of Darwin annually and between 60,000 to 80,000 are exported out of Broome each year. The suspension of the live cattle trade to Indonesia in 2011 had a significant impact on the Kimberley region. The value of cattle disposals from the Region was \$160 million in 2009-10, which made up 82% of the total value of agriculture.

Horticulture

The Horticulture industry has undergone considerable growth in the East Kimberley region with the 8,000 hectare, \$220 million Ord East Kimberley Expansion Project. In 2009-10, the Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia estimated the total value of horticulture production from the Ord River Irrigation Area to be more than \$20 million.

Commercial horticultural production in the West Kimberley occurs on a relatively small scale in the Derby and Broome Shires, with only a few large-scale commercial businesses. Most of the crops grown in the Kimberley take advantage of the mild to warm 'winter', when they can be grown "out of season" to other Australian production areas.

Aquaculture

The total value of aquaculture in the Kimberley region for 2009-10 was \$67 million. Pearling is a historic industry operating out of Broome with pearl farms along the Kimberley coast. The Kimberley pearl industry peaked at \$91.5 million in 2005-06 and 2006-07, but declined to an estimated \$64.1 million in 2009-10. This decline was caused by the Global Financial Crisis in 2008-09 which has significantly impacted this industry and it was reported that during that time at least 50% of the pearling industry was in 'standby' mode, awaiting improved economic conditions.

4. Terms of Reference

4.1 Development Potential

'Examine the potential for development of the regions minerals, energy, agricultural, tourism, defence and other industries'

The mineral potential of the Kimberley is greatly unrealised and undeveloped. There is a significant domestic and international market for readily exploitable minerals, however there is a considerable lack of critical infrastructure, inhibiting the number of operations that are able to wear the higher cost arrangements to get their product to market. With improved transport access –roads, ports, rail and air, there will be stronger investment return and greater accelerated additional investment.

Agricultural development in the Kimberley is fundamental for ensuring viability and sustainability of the region. The Ord, Fitzroy Valley and La Grange regions are the future food bowls for the country and the Asian region and it is vital that government invest into future private development, critical infrastructure to support domestic and export supply chains, support into research and land use diversification and water resources be conducted to enable this area to grow and prosper.

The Kimberley is recognised as having a strong Tourism industry, but more needs to be done to open the region to the world and capitalise on the aboriginal tourism market with culture and arts. International flights to/from Broome will be one way to tap into the undeveloped market, along with cheaper domestic flights to the region to encourage holiday travel to the region. Another opportunity to open the region to increased tourism is developing and strategically marketing the Savannah Way, thus linking the entire top end from Broome to Cairns and empowering communities by opening up business ventures and creating wealth from tourism.

The table below summarises the areas for potential development in the region.

Key Issues to be Actioned	Regional Benefit
Investment in transport routes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct access to SE Australia and Darwin for Domestic markets • Direct access to export to Asia
Further development of the Ord, Fitzroy Valley and La Grange regions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases economic wealth • Increases employment and business opportunities
International flights in/out of Broome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opens up the Kimberley region to the Asian tourism market
Development and Marketing of the Savannah Way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links the top end, so tourist benefit from a true top end journey experience • Enables communities along the Savannah Way to benefit from indigenous art and cultural tourism.

4.2 Trade and other investment links with the Asia-Pacific

'Provide recommendations to enhance trade and other investment links with the Asia-Pacific'

The Kimberley is located in a strategic position to take advantage of the Asian-Pacific export markets. By investing in reliable and secure road, rail, port and air links, opportunities for regional supply chains to tap into the export market into Asia will be attainable.

Domestic and international competition by tourism organisations to attract visitors is fierce. The Kimberley region has many unique experiences to offer visitors, yet much of the region is unknown. With marketing support, the regions tourism organisations will have the opportunity to better promote and sell the Kimberley Story, leading to increased visitor numbers, more wealth through local economies and creating further employment and business opportunities.

Naval Visits between Indonesia and the Kimberley is a relatively new opportunity for the region. There have been a number of visits between the nations and from that has enabled relationships to strengthen through the Soccer Friendship games, and the opportunity for the Indonesian Navy to participate in the Shinju Matsuri Festival and allow youth to tour their ship. This cultural exchange has worked to promote the region and strengthen the ties between the two countries. By continuing to participate with neighbours in the region, through cultural or student exchange, friendship games or strategic alliance, the opportunities for further market or business exchange will present.

The table below summarises the key areas for enhancing Asian trade for the region.

Key Issues to be Actioned	Regional Benefit
Investment in transport routes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct access to SE Australia and Darwin for Domestic markets • Direct access to export to Asia
Tourism Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases visitor numbers • Increases economic wealth • Increases employment and business opportunities
Increased Naval visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes cultural exchange, • Strengthens neighbour relations

4.3 Establish a conducive regulatory, taxation and economic environment

'Provide recommendations to establish a conducive regulatory, taxation and economic environment'

The Taxation Zone Rebate (TZR) was introduced in 1945 is an income tax concession to recognise the disadvantages to residents in 'specific areas' of Australia. The Zone rebate has changed very little given the number of parliamentary reviews since its inception and is very much flawed as detailed below;

- A resident is defined as a taxpayer who spends time in the Tax Zone Rebate zones, not necessarily continuous time, thus presently allows large benefits to the undeserving fly-in fly-out.
- The effects of inflation and changed family structures have rendered the dollar amounts of rebates in the current system ineffectual in meeting the disadvantages accruing to permanent residents of the Remote Zone and Special Areas.

- Population movements have changed in Australia since 1945; some areas are now less remote, and more amenable and competitive.

The current inadequacies of the zone allowance for northern Australia is an overriding and fundamental issue facing all people in northern Australia. Currently the Zone tax offset is offered to people who live and work in remote areas of Australia. It is only eligible if you have worked in a remote or isolated area of Australia for 183 days or more during the current income year. Remote areas are classed as either zone A or zone B and within these are also special areas. Below are the towns in the Kimberley region by classification;

Zone A

Bidyadanga (Lagrange)
Broome*
Derby

Special Areas**

Fitzroy Crossing
Halls Creek
Kununurra
Wyndham

Zone B

No applicable towns

* Locations within 250 kilometres of these localities are also in the relevant zone.

**Locations more than 250 kilometres from the centre of any urban area with a 1981 census population of over 2,499.

Tax Offset Amounts

Your Circumstances	Zone A	Zone B	Special Area
You were single	\$338	\$57	\$1173
You have a dependant Spouse or relative	\$1516	\$528	\$2351

We propose that the zone allowance be amended to make Zone A \$10,000 per taxable year with the other zones adjusted accordingly and that the zone allowance be indexed on an annual basis. We also propose that only those people who live in these zone areas be beneficiaries of this allowance.

The table below summarises the recommendation;

Key Issues to be Actioned	Regional Benefit
Zone A allowance to be increased to \$10,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offset the high cost of residents living in the region

4.4 Impediments to Growth

'Provide recommendations to address impediments to growth'

The following key issues are those identified by the Kimberley Group as having the greatest impediment to the future growth of the region.

Access to markets

Mining is currently the largest economic contributor to the Kimberley region, with tourism and agriculture other major industries. There has been steady growth in these sectors, however each has been severely impacted by the lack of direct arterial routes to access markets to the south east and northern territory. Without a direct route from the Kimberley to South East Australia in particular a reliable Tanami road, or a rail link across the top end from the Kimberley to Darwin an onward to Queensland, industries such as mining and agriculture will

continue to be impeded by excessive freight costs, thus reducing operational viability or development. Without direct access to major centres, the ability to export product or minerals is also compromised, thus invariably reduces potential investment to the region.

Regional Costs:

As the Kimberley region develops the cost of living for resident’s increases through increased rents and increased housing prices. The median house price in the Kimberley is \$570,000, compared to \$535,000 in metropolitan Perth (2014). This has a direct impact on residents, as it forces people out of rental accommodation and leads to overcrowding and related health issues. Any accelerated development across Northern Australia needs to take into account such issues and make allowances in policy to ensure local residents are not displaced as a result of increased cost of living pressures.

Direct costs on business in the region are also accentuated by the distance of operating in remote regions, increased freight costs, seasonal operational dependence and workforce retention in a hugely transient population. As a region, policy should encourage more tax incentives for those that set up business in these regional centres to enable business to operate competitively.

The table below summarises the critical issues impeding growth for the region.

Key Issues to be Actioned	Regional Benefit
Direct Transport routes i.e. A sealed Tanami Road and Rail line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct access to SE Australia and Darwin • Direct access to export • Operational cost savings i.e. reduced freight costs and lag time
Policy to maintain cost of living to regional people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows for steady growth in regional areas • Residents wont be priced out of the market • Social pressures on family eases
Policy to offset the cost of doing business in regional centres i.e. Tax incentive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows businesses to operate competitively • Creates more opportunities for investment

4.5 Economic and Social Infrastructure

‘Identify the critical economic and social infrastructure needed to support the long term growth of the region, and ways to support planning and investment in that infrastructure’

As with many towns across Northern Australia, the Kimberley has very basic infrastructure such as roads, single lane bridges, airports, ports and waste collection. Much of the infrastructure was built in the sixties and seventies and much of it at capacity, causing detrimental effects on development across the region. All the infrastructure needs detailed in the following section have been identified in the Kimberley Regional Business Plan and Kimberley Development Commission –Regional Investment Blueprint.

Transport Routes

Transport routes servicing the public, freight, tourism, mining and agriculture industries are very limited. There are no trains servicing the region, the road network is aging, and vast sections require full reconstruction, the majority of bridges are single lane and ports are very basic.

The sealing of the Tanami Road is a priority project for the Kimberley Group. The Tanami Road has 753km of currently unsealed road from Halls Creek to Yuendumu and services interstate freight transport companies, pastoral stations, major mining operations, and gives access to tourism attractions and a number of important indigenous communities. At a strategic level, it provides a potentially important direct route between the Kimberley region and the major centres of south eastern Australia.

Sealing the remaining portion of 89km of the Cape Leveque road will allow greater tourism opportunities for the regional communities and allow unrestricted access to Broome centre, as the wet season currently cuts access.

A rail network linking the Kimberley to the Northern Territory will open the region up to export markets, enabling mining and agriculture to capitalise in the region with direct linkage to Asian export through Darwin, NT. A rail network will also reduce freight costs for supplies in and product out and enable operational cost savings through bulk transport.

Reconfiguring all single lane bridges to dual lane will have a significant impact on the arterial network. Single lane bridges are a huge road safety issue and safety improvements will make a positive contribution to reducing accidents, injuries and fatalities. It will also lead to more confidence and attractiveness of driving holidays to support growth of tourism.

Ports

Currently all the Kimberley Ports are at capacity for any future major business development. The Broome, Derby and Wyndham ports all require expansion of their terminals, supply base laydowns, and direct land access routes. Developing the proposed Point Torment deep water port facility will be fundamental to ensuring large scale agricultural and mineral development in the Fitzroy valley. The ability to export large quantities of produce and materials will guarantee investor confidence.

Airports-Aerial highway

The cost of inter regional air travel is exorbitant compared to travel along the east coast. The costs are prohibitive for both business and private travel, impacting on the tourism market, impacting families with the higher costs to travel, and impacting all in the region due to the higher costs of business.

Airports are at capacity, and incapable of taking larger planes and more carriers, thus market competition is haltered and the ability for major investment in the region such as large scale mineral and gas developments may be stiffened in the future if these facilities are incapable of accommodating the demand.

Land availability

Land release and availability is a bottleneck that the region has been working on for some time, although continues to cause housing supply pressures in the market. Policy in relation to land release including pricing and schedule needs to be reviewed, to ensure that any future accelerated growth in any market does not foresee a shortage in accommodation, thus restricting development in that market.

Education & Training

Universities and Training Institutes in the Kimberley are currently reducing capacity and programs. This is a worrying trend and means that youth who want to go onto further

education are prohibited from staying in the Kimberley and must relocate to the capital cities. This has a two fold effect, one that youth may be deterred from higher education all together, thus limiting their ability for employment prospects, the second that business development in the region wont be able to source a local workforce as the skills and training wont be there. There needs to be investment in the Universities and Training Institutes, to grow the capacity, and range of programs that are available. There needs to be more industry sponsorship and partnership, encouraging mineral, agricultural and gas developers to promote training opportunities to locals as part of their community investment in the region.

Regional Waste Facility

Waste management facilities in the Kimberley are at various standards of operation and management. Most are small unmanned landfills that participate in little or no waste diversion stream practices, are at capacity and pose a direct environmental impact if practices are not changed.

The Kimberley Group has worked collaboratively to prepare a Regional Waste Management Plan that has been developed in alignment with the Waste Authority of Western Australia's Zero Waste Plan Development Scheme, the State Government 'Waste 2020' Policy and the State Government 'Strategic Directions for Waste Management' document.

The objectives of the Kimberley Group's Regional Waste Management Plan is to provide strategies and actions to guide the Shires and their communities to improve waste management practices consistent with the State's vision of Towards Zero Waste. The Shires have already commenced working on a number of the projects identified in the 4 year plan but require significant investment to achieve and deliver their priority project of a Regional Resource Recovery Park. Investment into this project will ensure the Kimberley is on track to comply with the States strategic policy and deliver an environmentally prudent service to the entire Kimberley Region.

The table below summarises the critical infrastructure requirements for the region.

Infrastructure to be Actioned	Regional Benefit
Seal the Tanami Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct Freight corridor between the Kimberley and South Eastern Australia. • Enable defence bases to be more easily supplied by road. • Allows communities cheaper cost of living, due to reduced freight costs.
Seal the Cape Leveque Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows communities cheaper cost of living, due to reduced freight costs. • Increased Tourism to the region.
Rail network linking the Kimberley to the Northern Territory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased mining and agricultural development in the region. • Reduced freight costs. • Direct market export to Asia.
Make all bridges dual lane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safer roads will lead to less fatalities and injuries that negatively impact families.
Upgrade Broome Port	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a marine supply base will support development throughout the region.
Upgrade Wyndham Port	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a marine supply base will support development throughout the region.
Upgrade Derby Wharf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will allow service expansion and continue to serve as a vital transport hub

Build a Port at Point Torment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will ensuring large scale agricultural and mineral development in the Fitzroy valley
International flights from Broome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Asia will increase tourism and investment opportunities.
Upgrade Derby Airport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased carriers and services will reduce air travel costs to residents and promote tourism and business investment.
Upgrade Kununurra Airport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A runway extension will enable increased carriers and services will reduce air travel costs to residents and promote tourism and business investment.
Policy for Land release	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows for steady growth in regional areas • Residents wont be priced out of the market
Incentive for business to train/educate local people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases youth education and ability to break out of social restriction. • Builds capacity in regional Universities and Training Institutes.
Invest in a Regional Resource Recovery Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will allow Shires to comply with State Government Policy • Enable Shires to deliver waste collection services to the region • Improve environmental and health compliance

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