



10th March 2014

Committee Secretary
 Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia
 PO Box 6021
 Parliament House
 CANBERRA ACT 2600
 AUSTRALIA

Dear Committee Members,

Territory Natural Resource Management (TNRM), the regional natural resource management organisation for the Northern Territory, would like to make an ongoing contribution to the process of northern development. In the submission below we briefly explain how natural resource management can help underpin successful long-term development to benefit all northern Australians while maintaining the assets of our natural resource base.

Northern Australia is not homogenous but bio-physically and socially diverse. Any process for development must recognise this reality. Of course no region in Australia is homogenous; nevertheless, the peculiarities of the North are beyond the experience of most Australians and their decision-makers. While having much potential and many opportunities, Northern Australia and the Territory face many challenges. Indigenous people exist under some of the world's most impoverished conditions while being the world's oldest continuous culture.

Many Territorians need to travel vast distances to restock supplies, access services or reach decision-makers, who do not always understand these tyrannies of distance. Our industries are far from both markets and suppliers. Flooding rains in the wet season hamper access to markets and supplies and production can be limited by lack of rainfall in the dry season, excessive rainfall in the wet season and extreme temperatures in between. Drought is a constant threat below the monsoonal belt, and a failure of the monsoon has serious consequences in the wet/dry tropics.

Fundamentally our communities and our businesses rely upon healthy natural resources – water, soil, vegetation and coasts. Natural resource management (NRM) organisations maintain or improve this natural capital and increase productivity through:

- strategic planning
- effective, efficient and accountable program delivery
- working with landholders and all stakeholders and
- leveraging in-kind and co-investment.

Territory Natural Resource Management (TNRM) is the regional organisation responsible for planning, coordinating and facilitating a strategic approach to NRM in the Northern Territory.

TNRM:

- provides leadership, planning and coordination in delivery of NRM in the NT
- supports on-ground works and monitoring and reporting
- builds and maintains partnerships, increases participation and builds community capacity to engage in NRM through knowledge sharing, skills development and supporting partners to improve our natural capital
- Collects, manages and shares NRM information and knowledge
- Identifies and develops opportunities to support investment in NRM in the NT

Natural resource management, Landcare and Indigenous land management all produce multiple or co-benefits – along with managing our natural resource base and safeguarding productivity, positive social, health, employment and education outcomes are generated - *all necessary for lasting development*. Through supporting and developing a wide range of industries (not just the larger ones), such as ecosystem services, stewardship, on-country tourism, bush harvest, etc., there is great potential to encourage long-term and equitably-distributed benefits for both northern people and Australia as a whole.

Natural Resource Management and northern development

Natural resource management can contribute in a number of ways to appropriate northern development.

Integrated NRM Plans, developed with stakeholders and scientific input, are critical to informed development and land-planning decisions.

NRM organisations provide expertise and resources for managing issues that threaten productivity such as: weeds, feral animals, soil health and erosion, and managing climate variability and change. It provides expertise and resources to manage assets and create opportunities such as biodiversity conservation, managing water resources, and developing ecosystem services.

NRM builds land managers' and organisations' capacity to sustain and build enterprises; fundamental human and social capital required for developing the north. NRM builds our knowledge of the tropics so as to foster production and sustainable development.

Integrated NRM Plan

The Northern Territory's NRM Plan, developed with community, industry, government and researchers, identifies priority actions for managing the NT's natural resources including:

Addressing threats to the environment and production - weeds and feral animals, fire, biosecurity and climate change (some of which can also provide opportunities)

Supporting ecologically sustainable development and sustainable agriculture - supporting industry and agriculture with adoption of sustainable practices' evidence-based policy and planning for sustainable use and economic diversification through opportunities (e.g. the carbon economy, wildlife harvest, monitoring for biosecurity).

Managing environmental assets - protecting significant sites including cultural sites, and recovering species through adaptive management.

All of these actions rely upon ongoing building of adequate and sound information.

Additionally, managing the NT's water assets sustainably is essential for long-term productivity and development and the NRM Plan currently under review will reflect this.

NRM principles for northern development

Territory Natural Resource Management advocates the application of a set of principles to bring about sustainable development. It does so in a non-partisan fashion.

- Healthy communities, culture, environment and economy - Social and natural capital is as fundamental to human and economic well-being as financial capital
- A diverse resilient economy
- Working with and for local people, acknowledging diversity and not using a one-size-fits-all
- Indigenous land management is a crucial part of the past and future, looking after country and producing multiple benefits including health and educational
- Evidence-based decision-making drawing on research, Indigenous and local knowledge
- Sound land-use planning that is community-based and participatory
- Transparent and inclusive governance processes
- Engage with existing bodies such as regional NRM organisations and the North Australian Indigenous Experts Forum on Economic Development
- Long-term, inclusive and equitable.

Natural resource management requires sustained effort and capacity by individuals, enterprises, organisations and governments. This requires ongoing and long-term investment. Successful development requires a sound evidence-base, good science and planning.

We look forward to the opportunity of appearing before the Committee in order to discuss the application of such principles as northern development proceeds.

Yours sincerely



**Chair
Territory Natural Resource Management**



Attachment

Role of regional Natural Resource Management organisations

Regional NRM bodies across northern Australia work to **increase stewardship and productivity** of our natural resources through:

- Delivering programs accountably and effectively using multiple delivery mechanisms
- Planning strategically to manage natural resources (Integrated NRM plans)
- Instituting sound governance and financial management
- Building capacity of land managers and organisations and increasing landholder and community participation
- Working with all stakeholders and integrating across landscapes – tenures, issues & activities
- Strengthening and sharing NRM knowledge to make better decisions
- Leveraging in-kind and co-investment in NRM

Territory Natural Resource Management

Territory Natural Resource Management is the regional organisation responsible for planning, coordinating and facilitating a strategic approach to natural resource management (NRM) in the Northern Territory. Our aim is to build community capacity to engage in NRM through knowledge sharing, skills development and supporting our partners in the care and protection of our natural assets. We face the challenge of managing our natural resources over a vast and sparsely populated landscape. The Northern Territory covers one-sixth of Australia's land and sea and the majority of our nearly 230,000 population live in our four largest city/towns (Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine and Alice Springs).

Between 2011 and 2013, TNRM supported 90 NT projects and has worked with and supported 115 groups and organisations undertaking activities to manage and protect our natural resources, including pastoral enterprises, Landcare groups, Indigenous ranger groups and organisations, local governments, and conservation, research, and industry groups.

What we do:

Leadership, Planning and Delivery:

We provide leadership, planning and coordination to deliver NRM in the NT.

People and Partnerships:

We build partnerships, increase participation and support the capacity of NT people in NRM.

Investing in Information and Knowledge:

We collect, manage and share NRM information and knowledge.

Opportunities and Investment:

We identify and develop opportunities to support investment in NRM in the NT.

The Territory's Integrated NRM Plan

TNRM is the custodian of *the Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan 2010-2015*, which sets the strategic direction for Natural Resource Management in the Northern Territory and developed together with diverse stakeholders. The INRM Plan recognises both the diversity of the Territory and the importance of regional action in the Top End, Gulf Savanna, Tablelands and Arid Lands.

The Integrated NRM Plan works to ensure that we can maintain livelihoods and improve productivity while minimising adverse impacts. The NRM plan guides us through this process by managing competing demands and plotting a path that allows us to make a living while maintaining or improving resource condition. It identifies the people, resources and information needed to do this; the systems that need to be in place; and the values and threats to productivity and the environment that need our greatest attention. It provides a coordinated and strategic approach that shows which are the best ways to invest our efforts and resources. It defines the goals we hope to achieve and a means of assessing how far along we are in achieving them. And, therefore, it gives us a prospectus that can attract support from others wishing to invest in natural resource management in the Territory. Finally, the plan is based on extensive consultation and the best -available evidence to ensure we achieve the above.