

NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT AND NRM

20TH NOVEMBER, 2014

VIBE HOTEL – WATERFRONT, DARWIN, 11AM – 1PM

WORKSHOP AS PART OF THE TNRM CONFERENCE



WORKSHOP AIMS

- Explore what the Northern Development agenda could mean for natural resource management in the NT
- Gather some information for the **2016-2020 INRM Plan** for the NT about how NRM can engage with different sectors

INTRODUCTION – NT INRM PLAN – 2016-2020 – Paul Donohoe - TNRM

- The INRM Plan plots a path through competing demands
- It recognises the need to make a living while maintaining and improving resource condition
- Identifies values and threats that need our attention
- Coordinated and strategic approach that guides investment
- Defines goals and a means of assessing our progress

SECTOR PRESENTATION KEY POINTS

1. Luke Bowen – Northern Australia Development Office

- Developing people and capacity to ensure we plan appropriately for the enhancement of **natural & cultural diversity** and play to our **advantage**.
- **Water Allocation Policy** – the NTG needs to get the science right when making decisions about water allocation and water usage policy across the Territory.
- **Infrastructure** - How do we engage with Defence around social responsibilities – Indigenous participation, land care and Infrastructure opportunities?
- **Land Tenure and diversification** – capturing opportunity in a commercial reality. Getting the most for Indigenous land and people.
- The key aims of the NTG's blueprint for the NT is a balanced environment - confident culture - economic prosperity & strong society.

2. Michael Douglas – Charles Darwin University – National Environment Research Program – Northern Hub

- The natural environments are nationally and globally significant.
- North Australia has the world's largest area of high quality tropical savanna
- Least disturbed rivers in Australia & currently limited threats to freshwater biodiversity

- People value these rivers for a variety of reasons, preserving natural diversity and habitat, producing food for Australia and for the value to people that live near and use the rivers.
- Visions for the other sectors are inextricably linked with the environment.
- Our understanding of the impacts of development on ecosystems continues to improve.
- We still have time to get it right in northern Australia
- What do we need to do?
 - Ensure environmental sustainability in areas where we will have more intensive development
 - Better manage natural resources across the broader landscape
 - Support environmental stewardship for people managing the land
 - Improve our understanding of the trade-offs: Benefits & Costs, Winners & Losers
 - Make informed decisions based on the evidence

3. Tom Ryan – NT Cattleman’s Association

- Currently, the cattle industry holds 45% of the NT land mass carrying 2.2 million cattle over 700km².
- It is expected that in the future there will be greater diversification on pastoral properties and greater productivity through improved water access, fencing and improved pasture.
- The challenges facing the industry to achieve this growth are a lack of profitability, restrictive land tenure, a need to increase knowledge of soil health and diversified farming methods and understanding a large and diverse area across the NT.
- What do we need to do?
 - Invest in a Northern CRC
 - Develop an integrated approach to research and NRM
 - NRM needs to become cross jurisdictional, supported by all levels of Government, and become focused on long term objectives.

4. Drew Wagner – Minerals Council of Australia – NT Division

- Outlined the key aspects of the mining industry in the NT.
- There are just a handful of major mining projects in the NT that constitute almost all of the income made from mining.
- The MCA's work in the sustainable development area is designed to achieve two overarching goals:
 - A NT minerals industry enhancing value for stakeholders and the broader community through sustainable practices; and
 - Commitment by the NT minerals industry to sustainable development through wealth creation, environmental leadership and socially responsible development, which is acknowledged by key stakeholders and decision-makers.

5. Mark Crummy – Parks and Wildlife – Tourism and Visitor Services

- NT Parks receive 300,000 plus visitor per year, and represent 1,500 square kilometres in size, and aim to be representative of all of the majority of NT habitats. Kakadu and Uluru NP’s (Australian Government managed) receive over 400,000 visitors per year.
- Challenges for the future are maintaining key parks in pristine condition and providing an increase in active visitor experiences and eco-lodges in key areas.
- Managing crocodiles that allows access to active use of waterways and managing threats such as gamba grass and gamba associated fires.

6. Greg Owens – NT Farmers Association

- Vision for 2050 - Sustainable mosaic of agricultural and horticultural development, utilising soil and water resources sustainably, established supply chains into other markets and integration with pastoral, aquaculture, tourism or mining production.
- Challenges include developing integrated profitable farming systems, finding investment partners, unlocking water and soil potential, looking at all options of small medium,

large, scale development, finding sustainable positions in economically viable and environmentally sustainable supply chains and developing a skilled workforce

- **What we need to do?**
 - Support for innovative water storage or wet season water harvesting including on farm storage, proactive Bio-security
 - Research, development & extension in tropical plant and animal and integrated production systems
 - Flexibility in land tenure with co-investment, changes to pastoral leases etc.
 - Renew land management guidelines to keep pace with agronomic developments
 - Develop young professionals and technicians with true career pathways.

QUESTIONS for PARTICIPANTS

1. Are there some common threads between speakers? If so what are these and how might they influence, or relate to, Territory NRMs work?

2. How can TNRM best work with different sectors to help shape a successful future for the NT?

KEY POINTS RAISED FROM GROUP DISCUSSIONS

- Opportunity to develop sustainably in North Australia through improved risk assessment processes of new developments.
- NRM needs to also work at the systems level rather than just at a project level.
- Indigenous rangers, NTG Rangers and farmers need to be dynamic and innovative to engage with the broader development agenda – i.e. tourism, fee for service, solar farming.
- TNRM working more at addressing threats but should engage more at driving the vision for the NT through facilitating collaborative opportunities across sectors
- Must be a commitment to regional long-term sustainability and we must learn from past experiences and tragic mistakes.
- TNRM should show where and how other sectors do or could support one another and strengthen cross sectoral relationships.
- Government and industry bodies need to be in conversation.
- We need to have a better understanding of the trade-offs for different types of development through incorporating natural capital into economic models.
- Increase extension and adopt best practices
- TNRM can assist to encourage the maintenance of momentum for long-term NRM issues, i.e. feral animal management.
- There seems to be a sensible approach to development across North Australia and an opportunity to integrate investment between sectors.
- Water is a common commodity and requires sensible allocation between development and environment.
- NRM planning and implementation must utilise a holistic framework.
- TNRM can interact with a variety of sectors and add value.
- TNRM can pull together gaps and help define sustainability – be able to define key agendas and definitions, i.e. sustainable development.
- Find synergies and connections and facilitate how best to bring sectors together.
- TNRM should support innovative ideas to help them get established.
- TNRM should focus on the local and ensure local voices are heard at the higher levels.