FORANT

DEVELOPING NORTHERN AUSTRALIA

A 2030 VISION

DISCUSSION PAPER

Developing Northern Australia

- A 2030 Vision -

Executive Summary

Northern Australia, the parts of Australia north of the Tropic of Capricorn and spanning Western Australia, Northern Territory, and Queensland, is often regarded as Australia's 'last frontier'. It has historically remained underutilised relative to the rest of the country. However, it is well acknowledged that this region has tremendous potential and competitive advantages through its significant natural, geographic, strategic and other attributes.

The rise of Asia, with a set of global macro-trends particularly pertinent to Australia, will create significant opportunities for Northern Australia to capitalise on its strengths and unlock major economic value. By 2030, these could include:

- Developing a food bowl including premium produce which could double Australia's agricultural output
- Growing the tourist economy in the North to \$100 billion and 2.5 million tourists
- The growth of an energy export industry worth \$150 billion with a major proportion of sustainable energy
- Tripling of resource exports, adding over \$100 billion to the economy
- Relocation of defence facilities to the North to support our strategic and regional objectives and allies

Further growth can be created by bringing several of Australia's strongths to Northern Australia, including:

- Batablishing at least two world class medical centres of excellence in the North
- Creating three to five leading vocational and higher education campuses with world class strengths in selected areas
- Growing Australia's exports of technical skills related to resources and agriculture to a \$7 billion industry

Capitalising on these opportunities will require a strong development platform for the long term sustainable development of Northern Australia. This includes governance, population growth and streamlined land access legislation, as well as a better basic set of infrastructure and water facilities. To enable this development will require both government action and private sector initiative.

Australia is a high cost country, but we also have a reputation for quality. To capitalise on emerging markets, we should focus at the quality end, rather than at the low cost, mass market end which is fiercely competitive. 'Australia equals quality' is the brand we should leverage.

This paper seeks to identify potential Northern Australian strengths and to promote discussion on furthering development of the region. It identifies opportunities and potential areas of government action, but is not intended to be definitive or fully comprehensive.

First Term Initiatives

This paper outlines a strategic vision for Northern Australia.

In order to realise this vision, specific initiatives are required. In its first term the Coalition proposes to:

- 1. Establish a high-level Northern Australian Strategic Partnership comprising the Prime Minister, the Premiers of Queensland and Western Australia and the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory. This partnership will develop, drive and implement a 20-year strategic plan for Northern Australia. Adding flexibility to land use controls and reducing unnecessary regulation and approval processes will be an immediate priority
- Invite representatives of a number of neighbouring Asian partners, such as Singapore, South Korea and Indonesia, onto an advisory committee which would allow Australia to maximise partnership opportunities and to expressly acknowledge the valuable insights of our Asian neighbours
- 3. Look to develop key urban zones Darwin, Cairns/Townsville and Karratha with the aim of substantially increasing the population in these areas. In conjunction, the current immigration policy, relocation incentives and personal tax incentives should be reviewed, along with the planning of economic zones centred around these urban areas
- 4. Allocate during a first term, to meet our neighbourhood foreign aid obligations, \$800 million from the foreign aid budget to further build world centres of excellence in tropical health provision and tropical medical research (centred around Darwin and Caims/Townsville), including such capacity building as training doctors, nurses and all other medical specialists from aid recipient countries in Northern Australia
- 5. Task infrastructure Australia to conduct a comprehensive audit of Northern Australia's infrastructure and to devise a 15 year rolling priority list of projects of various scales, including road, port, airport, rail, water, power, communication, health, education and tourism infrastructure
- Evaluate existing foreign investment policies regarding Northern Australia, such as consideration of the role of leasehold flexibility in accelerating investment
- Establish a significant Water Project Development Fund to support the advancement of
 meritorious proposals for water infrastructure across Northern Australia, including dams and
 groundwater projects see Coalition Dams and Water Management Discussion Paper
- Leverage the Coalition's Direct Action policy to support the development of projects, such as
 the PNG Purari Hydro Project, that could deliver baseload levels of clean energy across
 Northern Australia and into the National Electricity Market
- Relocate substantial and relevant components of Federal departments and Commonwealth
 agencies, such as CSIRO, to key urban zones in Northern Australia
- 10. Ensure that by 2030 every child in remote Northern Australian communities has access to a scholarship for boarding school and billeting opportunities for a high quality education, similar in standard to that received by other Australian students
- 11. Roll out Australian Technical High Schools (Year 11 and 12) across Northern Australia which specialise in fields such as mining, agriculture, tourism, healthcare, infrastructure and education

Public comment and input regarding these initiatives is encouraged.