October Stakeholder Update

Ministerial Forum on Northern Development
The inaugural meeting of the Ministerial Forum on Northern Development was in Darwin in September 2017. The Forum comprises ministers from the Northern Territory (NT), Western Australia, Queensland and the Australian Government. The NT is represented by Chief Minister, the Hon Michael Gunner, MLA. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Northern Australia, the Hon Barnaby Joyce, MP, chaired the meeting.

In the communique issued at the conclusion of the event, all ministers confirmed their commitment to northern development and agreed on a set of shared developmental priorities, namely: economic infrastructure (including transport, logistics, energy and digital), agriculture and aquaculture, resources and gas, Aboriginal business, innovation and growth, defence, innovative economic incentives and social infrastructure. All of these are important to the NT.

There was a focus on Aboriginal business at the forum. At the next forum the Aboriginal leaders who attended will present a suite of suggested actions on growing the Aboriginal business sector and the capability of land owners to engage in development.

Biosecurity hub for Darwin
To add to Australia’s strong biosecurity measures a joint NT and Australian government initiative will see an $8 million high-tech biosecurity hub built at the NT Government Berrimah Farm in Darwin. Australia’s freedom from the world’s most severe pests and diseases is critical in protecting our $32 billion agricultural export industry. Much of this protection comes from our advanced biosecurity measures. The Berrimah Farm hub will be ten times larger than the existing facility.

Ship Lift and Marine Industries Project
The NT Government and the Northern Ship Support (part of the Paspaley Group) have signed a project development agreement to deliver the Darwin Ship Lift and Marine Industries Project. Central to the project is a ship lift and common user area that can handle vessels of over 90 metres. The NT Government has committed $100 million towards the project. The facility will create and sustain local jobs and consolidate Darwin as a Northern Australian hub for marine maintenance and servicing. The facility will serve Defence and Australian Border Force vessels as well as vessels from the oil, gas and maritime industries.
**Project Sea Dragon**

With the signing of a project development agreement between the NT Government and Seafarms Group, Project Sea Dragon has taken another step toward construction of its US$1.45 billion prawn aquaculture project in the NT. The agreement will see the Seafarms Group establish its headquarters for Project Sea Dragon in Darwin. Project Sea Dragon comprises a number of facilities across Northern Australia with the proposed 10,000 hectares of grow-out ponds in the NT just across the WA border.

**Northern Australia Defence Summit**

Hosted by the NT Government, the Northern Australia Defence Summit was held in Darwin 25-26 October 2017. As the defence presence in Northern Australia increases more investment is needed in the infrastructure, sustainment and maintenance areas to support major defence projects. The defence industry contributes significantly to the NT economy with this set to increase as Defence invests approximately $8 billion into its bases and facilities.

**Facing North**

As part of the Territory Leadership Networks’ Facing North initiative, a delegation of 150 NT business leaders attended a function at Parliament House in Canberra to promote investment in the Territory. Attendees included the NT Chief Minister, the Prime Minister and the Federal Opposition Leader. In supporting the development of the NT the Prime Minister committed to backing infrastructure development, further development of Defence facilities and tax cuts for businesses.

**Barossa development process begins**

ConocoPhillips has outlined plans to bring the Barossa and Caldita fields into production to extend the life of its Darwin LNG Plant beyond the early 2020s. A public consultation process has begun. This development will extend the Plant’s life for 20 years.

**Indigenous Economic Development Forum**

The NT Government hosted the 8th Indigenous Economic Development Forum in Darwin 23-24 October 2017 which was attended by almost 400 delegates. The forum is one of Australia’s largest Indigenous economic development events.

With the theme of The North is Our Economic Story, the forum highlighted that Indigenous socioeconomic development is critical to the development of Northern Australia.

**Northern Australia Investment Forum**

Following the successful 2015 Northern Australia Investment Forum in Darwin, the next forum will be in Cairns 19-21 November 2017.

Hosted by the Australian Government, the forum is a high level, invitation only event involving senior leaders from international and Australian companies. It provides the opportunity to better understand the diversity and scale of investment opportunities in the north. Investors will have the opportunity to engage with government representatives, industry experts and project proponents.

The Chief Minister will lead the NT’s participation with the NT nominating eight local projects for participation in the forum’s ‘Marketplace’ display area. Aboriginal businesses, native title matters and research will be major topics.

**Space industry in the North**

The NT Government is now actively promoting the NT as a location for space industry projects. With the development of more commercial applications for technology along with greater availability of low cost and lighter satellites the world’s space industry is growing quickly. The NT ticks a lot of boxes as an industry player with its location close to the equator, tectonic and political stability, well established logistics and construction sectors, clear weather, sparse population and land availability.

**NT projects funded by CRC for Developing Northern Australia**

Three of the seven successful projects funded from the first round of the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Developing Northern Australia come from the NT. The funded projects will use industry-led collaborative research to solve unique industry problems in the North, including:

- developing and applying control strategies to prevent viruses that cause skin lesions on crocodiles, devaluing Australian crocodile skins
- breeding for resistance to juvenile pearl oyster mortality syndrome
- applying new technologies to enhance biosecurity and cattle quality.