



The Northern RDA Alliance (NRDAA) comprises eight RDAs whose regions make up Northern Australia. This network, representing the Gascoyne in Western Australia to Gladstone in Central Queensland, has been collaborating and providing input to the Australian Government on the development and delivery of the White Paper on Developing Northern Australia. Our aim is to inform and support policy development and its implementation, and to prioritise investment opportunities to ensure the sustainable development of Northern Australia.

The NRDAA met recently in Canberra to discuss major policy issues across water, energy and communications and priority project investment across Northern Australia.

Issues discussed included:

Investigation of Alternative Solutions to Shortfalls in Regional Telecommunications

The *High-Speed Wireless Technology Pilot* has connected the remote Indigenous communities of Engawala and Atitjere to Vocus (previously Nextgen) fibre via long-distance point-to-point microwave links. The benefit of fibre, which runs north-south along the Stuart Highway servicing the Territory's largest communities, has been shared with some of the Territory's smallest communities. A microwave signal is transmitted from the fibre source approximately 200km to the communities. The trial will test the potential advantages of this wireless service over existing and unsatisfactory satellite services.

Narrowing the digital divide is critical to enabling rural and remote economic development. While existing satellite options provide a baseline service in low population areas there are shortfalls to satellite technology. High speed wireless may better support data and voice connectivity and e-service delivery. This project seeks to test the capability and affordability of alternative technology. The project will have two direct outputs, new infrastructure and services in the test location and a case study to support dissemination of the learnings across rural and remote Northern Australia.

Inland Queensland Roads Action Plan (IQ-RAP)

Stage 1 was completed mid-2016 with the IQ-RAP and associated documents launched, distributed and significant stakeholder engagement undertaken with all three levels of government and peak industry with a high level of interest and support demonstrated.

Stage 2 financial contributions were collected in late 2016 and the Working Group reinvigorated its activities with a new Chair Cr Rick Britton, two new Deputy Chairs Cr Gilmore and Cr McNamara. Strategic engagement with all three levels of government and peak bodies has been on-going. Current activities include engagement with consultations to update the IQ-RAP and meetings with Federal and State Government stakeholders to raise funding for wider economic and social benefit analysis to address questions raised regarding specific employment and productivity gains to be made through investment in inland Queensland road network.

Development of a Northern Australian Energy Strategy

The Northern Australia Energy Strategy seeks to formulate effective pathways to smooth the transition to a low carbon energy future in collaboration with industry and community across Northern Australia to deliver reliable, affordable, distributed, low carbon energy that maximizes social and economic development opportunities, including exploration of export potential of technology, skills and services within the sector.

The unique partnership between CSIRO and the Northern RDA Alliance, through RDA Far North Qld & Torres Strait has been formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding signed in December 2016.

The partnership will seek support from the Australian Government for delivery of the strategy to set the framework for critical infrastructure required to enable economic growth across the north.



Advocacy and Other Discussion Points:

- Northern Australia update from Minister for Northern Australia – Senator The Hon Matthew Canavan.
- Office of Northern Australia White Paper Update – 51 measures of which 25 well progressed. Flagged priority areas of roads, water and energy for 2017/18.
- Inquiry into opportunities and methods for stimulating the tourism industry in Northern Australia – submission development and discussion with Chair, The Hon Warren Entsch MP.
- Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility, Peter Ross, Director of Origination – update on progress.
- Small Business Assistance models, improvement in equity of services across the regions and growing local procurement opportunities – Minister for Small Business, the Hon. Michael McCormack MP.
- Updates were also provided on the projects RDAs are collaboratively delivering. For more information, contact your nearest RDA or visit www.northernrdaalliance.com.au



NRDAA Delegates meeting with Minister McCormack, Canberra, February 2017

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