



NORTHERN TERRITORY CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

NT Budget Submission – 2010/11

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Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association

2010 / 11 - NT Budget Submission

'Advancing and protecting the interests of the cattle producers in the Northern Territory'



Purpose

The purpose of this submission is to advise the NT Government (NTG) on Northern Territory priorities from the perspective of the NT Cattlemen's Association (NTCA) for the 2010 /11 Budget. It is founded by NTCA leadership in managing pastoral land, which in turn is guided by the experience of its membership, by debate in NTCA policy formulation forums and on research we have specifically commissioned.

Summary and Recommendations

The contribution of the NT Pastoral sector to the economic, social and environmental development of the Northern Territory will become increasingly significant over coming years. As the Department of Primary Industries' report *Growing Our Primary Industries* underlines (p4), 'The role of primary industries has never been more important....It is clear that the potential for primary industries is open-ended and offers a significant underpinning of the Territory's economic and social fabric.' It specifically names cattle production (p6) as '...the Northern Territory's principal land-based rural industry and a key contributor to regional economies and Gross State Product overall' and also identifies (p6) primary industries as '...a cornerstone of regional development'.

Given current economic challenges, we expect to see a proportional increase in the relative importance to the NT economy of our vital food production sector due to continued demand for live cattle and domestic and export demand for beef. The Northern Territory beef industry is strategically positioned, producing an environmentally friendly, low footprint product, while sustainably managing up to 50% of the NT landmass, contributing to regional economies, employment and development.

Such a significant factor in the NT economy needs to be at the table in developing policy and helping make the right decisions that will benefit '...the Territory's economic and social fabric'. For this to happen, there needs to be true partnerships between government, industry and the community. The NTCA is prepared to accept the responsibility. This submission, as well as detailing key areas for investment, proposes true partnerships and collaboration as the way forward.

Our Northern Territory future requires an immediate investment by government in key areas, specifically:

1. Roads investment for maintenance and new capital works.
2. The NT Agribusiness Strategy, in which we include:
 - Research and development
 - Biosecurity
 - Indigenous pastoralism
 - Partnerships
 - Land ownership, access, use
 - Extension
3. Climate change policy

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4. Improved health services right across the NT and improved access to medical assistance in regional and remote areas.
5. Dedicated investment in education services across all sections of the community.
6. Improved access and use of modern telecommunication technology for business, community and private benefit.
7. Occupational health and safety
8. Pest management
9. Other industry programs

Recommendations

1. Roads

Recommendation 1.1: That the NTG renew its commitment to the Remote Australia Livestock Transport Scheme (RALTS) and allocate resources and funds to support the roll out, training, accreditation process over 2010-12.

This commitment should include working closely with stakeholders from the pastoral and transport industries to work towards harmonisation of legislation and procedures across State and Territory borders, where it does not disadvantage Territory road users.

Indicative cost: \$120,000 pa

Recommendation 1.2: That the NT Government commit to the upgrade and seal of more than 4,300kms of the State Arterial and Secondary Arterial network to a cost of approximately \$1.7 billion to ensure the future development of the NT, its people, industries and their economic, social and environmental wellbeing. This does not account for local network and national Hwy. It is estimated a further \$300 million is required to upgrade the local road network.

Overall indicative cost: **\$2.0 billion**

Recommendation 1.3: That the NTG review Port of Darwin operations for their capacity, and in particular the need for high quality export yards with direct access for loading, to accommodate an expansion in the live cattle export trade in the future.

Indicative cost: \$150,000

Recommendation 1.4: That the NTG and the NTCA collaborate on planning spelling yards and rest areas for greater efficiency and safety in transporting animals through the Territory.

Indicative cost excluding capital development costs: \$150,000



2. NT Agribusiness

Recommendation 2.1: That the NT Agribusiness Strategy be an initiative of the Chief Minister of the NT, requiring multi-ministry and departmental cooperation and agreement, including environmental legislation and policy.

That the NTG invite the NTCA and other industry groups to play a formal role in developing its proposed Primary Industry Research Strategy.

Recommendation 2.2: That the NTG increase the level of funding and support for bio-security early warning, detection and response capability with the immediate increase of technical and extension staff by four and the corresponding resources.

The NTG should maximise coordination and cooperation with AQIS and other responsible agencies including support of local and regional early warning capability in communities many of which are located along our northern coastline.

Indicative cost: \$1.2 million

Recommendation 2.3: That the NTG fund training for industry liaison officers and government disease response officers.

Indicative cost: \$50,000 pa

Recommendation 2.4: That the NTG proceed with action recommended by the Primary Industries Review to establish stakeholder engagement forums. The purpose of these will be to involve industry stakeholders in setting research, development, policy and extension priorities.

Indicative cost: \$50,000 pa

Recommendation 2.5: that the NTG fund a two-year full-time industry position to drive industry involvement and investment in the NT Agribusiness Strategy. The position will work across NTCA, NTHA and AT Ag. This has been supported by each of these associations.

Indicative cost: \$150,000 pa

Recommendation 2.6: that the NTG dedicate resources to the explore opportunities for land tenure developments to enable long term primary production agreements under the NT Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1976.

Indicative cost: provided from core government operations

Recommendation 2.7: That the NTG increase the level of extension in key locations to ensure maximum uptake of new skills and knowledge. Staff number to be increase by 4 across the NT.

Indicative cost: \$600,000 pa



3. Climate Change Policy

Recommendation 3.1: That the NTG fund a dedicated position with the pastoral industry to work with pastoralists and coordinate a research and development efforts towards workable carbon offset initiatives for the industry.

Indicative cost: \$150,000 pa

Recommendation 3.2: That the NTG invite representatives of land managers, landowners and leaseholders eg NTCA, North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA), Northern and Central Land Councils (NLC; CLC) to participate in developing all aspects of new policy on carbon offsets.

Recommendation 3.3: That the NTG accept and act on the principle that land managers who are managing carbon have a right to benefits that may flow from it.

Recommendation 3.4: That the NTG involve NT land managers, landowners and leaseholders in governance structures for managing financial arrangements for a Territory carbon fund.

Recommendation 3.5: That the NTG fund additional carbon emission education programs and other associated work, notably the measurement and monitoring systems; and work with land managers to develop on-farm best practice carbon emission management.

Indicative cost: \$300,000 pa

Recommendation 3.6: That the NTG seek opportunities to maximize leverage of R&D funding from the Australian Government and other sources.

Indicative cost: funded from core operations

Recommendation 3.7: That the NTG devote appropriate and realistic levels of funding to developing offset products in partnership with the private sector, recognizing that private sector contributions, particularly from Territory landowners and land managers, may often be in-kind.

Indicative cost: from normal operations

Recommendation 3.8: That the NTG, in recognition of the important role NAFI will play in monitoring and managing carbon emissions, continues to contribute substantially to its upkeep

Recommendation 3.9: That the NTG review Target 20 and commit to adequate support and resources for control, recovery and monitoring and reporting programs for all pest species.



Recommendation 3.10 That the NT Government match federal funding for the Central Australian Camel eradication program as new and additional funding over and above existing funding.

Indicative cost: \$3.0 million pa

Recommendation 3.11: That the NTG reconsider this Target from its Climate Change Policy in light of the need for a holistic, fair and defensible strategy and engage with land managers and landholders, the conservation movement and the wider community to deal with:

- Carbon emissions, carbon trading and the Emissions Trading Scheme
- Sustainable integration of conservation and production – an environmental stewardship approach
- Maintaining and developing a viable agricultural sector
- Planned development
- Effective environmental management

4. Improved health services

Recommendation 4.1: That the NTG increase incentives for specialist and other services to deliver services to regional and remote areas.

Recommendation 4.2: That the NTG purchase / build and control a hanger and associated facilities suitable for the long term needs of northern air medical services at the Darwin airport in order to support a long term integrated contract.

Indicative cost: \$10 million

5. Dedicated investment in education services

Recommendation 5.1: That the NTG increase resources to support, promote and advance new technology and initiatives to improve educational outcomes outside major centres.

Indicative cost: \$400,000

Recommendation 5.2: That the NTG fund a rural coordinator to work with urban, regional and remote students in an Ag in Schools program.

Indicative cost: \$120,000 pa

Recommendation 5.3: That the NTG promote and maintain Student Assistance Schemes for those disadvantaged by distance or isolation, and re-evaluate eligibility criteria and assistance rates.



6. Improved access and use of modern communications technology

Recommendation 6.1: That the NTG urge the Australian Government to deliver, as part of its National Broadband proposal, equitable access to high-speed broadband and a broader network of mobile phone access.

Indicative cost: Nil

7. Occupational health and safety

Recommendation 7.1: That the NTG resource NTCA to facilitate pastoral industry engagement in improving Occupational health and Safety during the Worksafe roll-out. It is suggested that this position may also work across agriculture and horticulture.

Indicative cost: \$150,000 as a fully resourced position

8. Pest management

Recommendation 8.1: That the NTG take a lead in negotiation of federal resources to manage pest species .

That the NT Government increase direct investment in pest management, coordination and cross departmental cooperation to mitigate current and emerging threats.

Indicative cost: \$150,000 for coordination.

Indicative cost: increase existing spend on programs by 25%.

9. Other industry support programs

Recommendation 9.1: That the NT Gov maintain the water enhancement scheme and retain the \$300,000 investment in industry training and capacity development formerly engaged under the farmBis program.

Recommendation 9.2: The NT Gov increase pressure on the Federal Government to provide workable off grid renewable power incentives for power generation and water.



Organisation and Industry

The Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association (NTCA) Inc is the peak primary industry advocacy group in the Northern Territory, representing more than 90 per cent of the Territory's cattle herd, from small family operations to the large corporate organisations. By area, employment and economic contribution the pastoral industry is the dominant industry in land management in the NT, with a focus on long term sustainable production. With about 55 per cent of the total NT production destined for export markets in south-east Asia, the northern beef industry continues to focus on partnerships and programs to strengthen this trade.

The NTCA has a strategic approach to managing the pastoral sector in the Northern Territory which informs its leadership in pastoral land conservation, market development, and key infrastructure activities.

Land Stewardship

Our members manage a landmass of more than 620,000 square kilometres and more than 85 per cent of all NTCA members are active participants in Conservation, Environmental and Landcare groups and the NTCA continues to encourage members to join local groups in all corners of the Northern Territory

The Herd

Cattle numbers have increased from 1.4 million in 1974-75 to 1.7 million in 2000-01, and are currently over 2 million head. Over the same period, improved management practices have raised the percentage of turnoff to cattle population as an indicator of productivity from 11 percent to 35 percent.

Turn-off and the Markets

NT producers supply cattle to all states and territories of Australia and produce quality animals for the growing live export trade to South East Asia. A mix of family and corporate operations in the savanna country (the Victoria River, Katherine, Roper districts) and other Top End regions turn off 300,000 head annually, most of which are shipped through the port of Darwin. The corporate operations of the Barkly region turn off another 205,000, which goes into the domestic market through feedlots in Queensland; and the family operations of the Alice Springs region turn off a further 75,000 head, also for the domestic market.

Future Prospects

NTCA believes that over the next decade, there is potential for the cattle herd to increase by 30 per cent and for productivity, measured by the percentage of turnoff to population, to also increase significantly. This increase in the total herd can be achieved through more efficient use of rangelands and improved productivity from continued adoption of improved management practices including mineral supplementation, early weaning and continued learning programs. This ongoing growth is due largely to the industry reinvesting in itself to the extent of \$30 million per year. Our members are optimistic as they position themselves for predicted future expansion in both our domestic and export markets.

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Our Territory national and international links

Our approach is informed by our body of knowledge and by our active membership of national peak bodies such as Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) the National Farmers Federation (NFF) and Cattle Council of Australia (CCA) and through these affiliations an international network including the International Federation of Agriculture Producers. We are involved in promoting sensible and responsible policy and practice including:

- Government policies for secure land tenure systems and adequate infrastructure that allows producers to invest in long-term farming strategies related to sustainable production, conservation, soil carbon and biodiversity enhancement.
- Increased funding for the scientific research that underpins the development and sound understanding of how agricultural management interacts with biodiversity.
- Scientific knowledge and findings should be disseminated, scaled-down and be specific to the dynamics of a particular region.
- Strengthened farmers' participation in the formulation and the implementation of research projects and rural development strategies to enhance , production and conservation outcomes.
- Improved policy coordination and planning of environmental legislation affecting agricultural production. Often different government departments deal with these issues in isolation. There is also a need to increase capacity to enforce legislation in a coordinated way.
- Economic partnerships between developing and developed countries aimed at transferring and adapting stewardship programs, such as credit systems and extension services.
- Recognition of farmers' and producers knowledge of local resource management and conservation.

Government Organisational and Policy Settings

At a time of increasing world demand for food, increasing pressures from climate variability and tightening economic conditions, the Northern Territory has demonstrated a capacity to produce food and trade that food with the rest of Australia, and the world. Despite projected changes, there is no doubt that the NT will continue to be able to capitalise on opportunities to continue to increase levels of production to supply NT, Australian and world food demand.

Currently the NT does not have any targets for current or future food production and there is limited cross departmental cooperation on common issues of major economic benefit to the NT. By way of example, agricultural, horticultural and pastoral production is impacted by policy and legislation from at least three departments including Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sports (NRETAS), Planning and Infrastructure (DPI) and Resources – (formerly Primary Industry, Fisheries and Resources DRPIFR). It appears that in many cases, there is little cooperation across these departments or ministries directly impacting our future production capacity.



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Moreover, there has also been a net withdrawal of extension staff from major departments, who in the past have provided valuable production and environmental support to the primary production sector. This in itself has placed increased limits on productivity and efficiency gains in the short, medium and long term. Extension is becoming increasingly essential in a complex world, where vital information, tailored to a region and industry is essential for informed investment decisions as industry strives to improve productivity, whilst meeting increasing expectations with regards to environmental sustainability, animal welfare and regulation.

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Removal of the FarmBis program from the training and capacity development agenda in the NT has freed up approximately \$300,000 of NT Government money which must remain within industry. This investment needs to be retained.



KEY ISSUES

1. Roads and transport

NTCA Policy states that:

The NTCA believes all of industry should be serviced by roads capable of providing a reliable, safe means of road transport that meets the economic and social needs of all users in an equitable manner. Arterial Roads are to be sealed and at 1 in 30 year standard by 2015. Access Roads are to meet Pastoral Road Design Standards and are to be able to accommodate reasonably a 6-deck road train and allow 2wd access year round by 2012.

Long term infrastructure requirements meet the current and emerging needs of the pastoral industry.

The NTCA believes that the upgrading of the regional road network in the Northern Territory (including gazetted pastoral access roads) is the responsibility of the Northern Territory and Federal Governments. Primary and secondary roads remain the responsibility of the NT and federal government. Local roads shall remain the responsibility of the NT Government until secured funding and competency based standards can be met by the local government authority.

Construction and maintenance must be undertaken to meet recognized standards.

No roads should be handed over to Local Government Councils until they meet the relevant standards and have a sufficient amount identified and provided from the NT or federal sources for maintenance.

The NTCA believes that all members are serviced by roads capable of providing a reliable safe means of transport that meets the economic and social needs of all road users in an equitable manner. Arterial Roads are to be sealed and at 1 in 30 year standard by 2013. Access Roads are to meet Pastoral Road Design Standards and are to be able to accommodate reasonably a 6-deck road train, 2wd access year round by 2012.

The NTCA acknowledges the work of the NT Government and Deputy Chief Minister in working with the Federal Government to secure up to \$2 b for major road works in the NT. This investment is seen as essential to the long term development of the NT.

We would point out, however, that there has been a major change in the nature of the NT pastoral production system and its markets in the last 15 years. Today the industry manages livestock more intensively, humanely and effectively in order to meet increasing economic pressure and changing market expectations.



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Increasingly our industry is expected to produce cattle 12 months of the year for both the live and slaughter trades. Currently Indonesia buys 90% of the NT live trade and this is expected to double in the next 4-6 years placing challenges in front of producers and the infrastructure on which this growth is dependant. The Ramadan period sees a peak demand for cattle in SE Asia with supply largely during the northern dry season. Ramadan is getting 2 weeks earlier each year and in 6-7 years time the peak supply period will coincide with the Northern wet season at a time when roads are inaccessible for long periods of time.

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The majority of roads servicing the cattle industry are sub-standard. It is hard to comprehend the appalling standard of the key regional roads in the NT, whose deteriorating condition is contributing to accidents and fatalities. Recognition of the life expectancy and age of our roads, and especially of the enhanced design standards that are required to tolerate the much larger truck sizes and traffic volumes generated by tourism, mining, community use and the recent Federal Government intervention, needs to be the first step for the NT Government.

In 2010/11 there are immediate priorities which require attention in order to see the delivery of the most basic user needs. Of the total NT network 24% is sealed. The NTCA estimate that in order to address the most immediate needs of State Arterial and Secondary Arterial network approximately \$1.7 billion dollars must be spent to seal and upgrade more than 4,300kms. This represents approximately 74% and 50% of the State Arterial and Secondary network respective. This does not account for local roads and the National Highway. These are outlined in **Table 1** below:

Economic implications of NT's road network

The NT Cattle production is a 365 day per year industry. Poor roads and lack of access restricts economic development. Trucking companies place a surcharge on clients living on poorly maintained roads and the absence of efficient and cost-effective transport links restricts economic growth for the whole of the NT. Export-related transport networks are hampered by poor roads.

At the same time the increase in tourist traffic and the regular use by communities, mining and other users is leading to a break down in road standards, safety and efficiency.

Social implications of NT's road network

Health issues related to dust in communities where roads are inadequately surfaced and dust suppression is not well managed. No services to outstations during the wet season means that people move back to communities and place pressure on housing and other facilities and services, whilst housing in the outstations deteriorates, with no-one living there for up to 5 months. There is a lack of provision of proper parking bays on major and arterial roads and individual assets (vehicles) are ruined quickly on poorly maintained roads.



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An improved standard of living would be achieved if road access was available year-round. Economic resources in communities are often drained by the high cost of air freight for basic goods and services while the difficulty in recruiting skilled tradesmen and professional staff to remote areas is exacerbated.

Environmental implications of NT's road network

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Climatic factors (wet season in north, sudden floods in south) exacerbate the poor state of the roads often resulting in additional damage to the roads, then made worse with people driving too soon after the wet season, creating braided roads, increased risk and economic loss.

Remote Australia Livestock Transport Scheme (RALTS)

The 'Remote Australia Livestock Transport Scheme' (RALTS) is a comprehensive occupational health and safety and animal welfare quality assurance package. It is intended to cover all remote highway road safety issues pertaining to the Australian livestock transport industry. The central theme of RALTS in general terms is raising the management standards of both the trucking and pastoral industries of remote Australia and at the same time, increasing the awareness and consequent management of fatigue and other safety issues across the supply chain including the safety of the driver, other road users and the livestock carried. This includes the application of "Fitness for Purpose" principles which includes, fitness for duty of the driver during the journey, equipment that is fit for purpose, fitness of the livestock being loaded for transport and the overall operation and management of tasks from the point of preparation for transport to the point of unloading at the destination.

RALTS includes the Fatigue-Risk Management System (FRMS) and the associated policy which serves as an extension and alternative compliance model of the Advanced Fatigue Management (AFM) Standards outlined in the Heavy Vehicle Driver Fatigue National Model (May 2008) Legislation. The policies and principles set out in the FRMS are concerned with managing fatigue risks in connection with livestock transport operations in the industry.

The progress of this initiative has been boosted with its championing by the NT Government and the Transport Minister Gerry McCarthy. This has included the support of his Department in ministerial representation to the WA, Qld and SA ministers and federal Transport Minister Albanese.

The progress of this initiative requires the comprehensive trialing of interstate routes and involves endorsement from each jurisdiction. Harmonisation of legislation and regulations across state and territory borders, where it does not disadvantage NT industry and road users, is critical. With the intended implementation in 2010 – 2012 a commitment is required to support the roll out, training, accreditation process.

Recommendation 1.1: That the NTG renew its commitment to the Remote Australia Livestock Transport Scheme (RALTS) and allocate resources and funds to support the roll out, training, accreditation process over 2010-12.

This commitment should include working closely with stakeholders from the pastoral and transport industries to work towards harmonisation of legislation and procedures across State and Territory borders, where it does not disadvantage Territory road users.

Indicative cost: \$120,000 pa



Immediate Priority

Recommendation 1.2: That the NT Government commit to the upgrade and seal of more than 4,300kms of the State Arterial and Secondary Arterial network to a cost of approximately \$1.7 billion to ensure the future development of the NT, its people, industries and their economic, social and environmental wellbeing. This does not account for local network and national Hwy. It is estimated a further \$300 million is required to upgrade the local road network.
Overall indicative cost: \$2.0 billion

This does not include national highways, access roads and other minor feeder roads.

Table 1

Top-End	12 month access and major upgrade program
Secondary Arterial Priority Cattle #'s	Point Stuart and Harrold Knowles Roads Extremely High 25,000+ Seal and upgrade. Vital late dry season / early wet season access to finished cattle from floodplains destined for live export.
Secondary Arterial Priority Cattle #'s	Douglas Daly Roads Extremely High 30,000+ Seal and upgrade. Critical wet season access for cattle to destined for live export. Increased pressure from timber and other emerging industries.
State Arterial Priority Cattle #'s	Arnhem Highway Very high 50,000+ Maintenance and upgrade to crossings, shoulders and seal. All year access critical for floodplain and breeding operations, tourism and community.
Secondary Arterial Priority Cattle #'s	Kakadu Highway Low 2,000
Secondary Arterial Priority Cattle #'s	Litchfield Park Road Medium 20,000 Late dry season access for floodplain cattle for live export market, tourism and community access.



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<p>Secondary Arterial Priority Cattle #'s</p>	<p>Ringwood Road (Darwin) Very High 5,000. Late dry and early wet season access to floodplain and live export supply.</p>
<p>Katherine</p>	
<p>State Arterial Priority Cattle #'s</p>	<p>Buntine Highway Extremely High 90,000+ Complete seal and upgrade to crossings and bridges. Major artery for supply of pastoral, community and mining. Peak use in dry season and increasing demand during the wet season. This will become increasingly problematic within next 4-7 years with live export peak supply moving towards the wet season.</p>
<p>Secondary Arterial Priority Cattle #'s</p>	<p>Buchanan Highway Extremely High 45,000+ Seal and upgrade to crossings and bridges. Major supply and link road through to the VRD from the Stuart Hwy for pastoral mining and community. This will become increasingly problematic within next 4-7 years with live export peak supply moving towards the wet season.</p>
<p>State Arterial Priority Cattle #'s</p>	<p>Central Arnhem Highway / Bulman Track Extremely High 8,000+ Complete seal and upgrade to crossings and bridges. Major artery for supply of pastoral, community and mining. Peak use in dry season and increasing demand during the wet season. This will become increasingly problematic within next 4-7 years with live export peak supply moving towards the wet season.</p>
<p>Secondary Arterial Priority Cattle #'s</p>	<p>Larrimah Western Ck Link Road Extremely High 15,000+ Complete seal and upgrade. Major access and supply for Sturt Plateau and its increasing economic development. Requires an investment to facilitate future development. Wet season access and supply will become increasingly critical with demand for cattle and other agricultural products during the wet season.</p>



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	This will become increasingly problematic within next 4-7 years with live export peak supply moving towards the wet season
Secondary Arterial Priority Cattle #'s	Sturt Plateau Ring Road Extremely High 25,000+ Complete seal and upgrade. Major access and supply for Sturt Plateau and its increasing economic development. Requires an investment to facilitate future development. Wet season access and supply will become increasingly critical with demand for cattle and other agricultural products during the wet season. This will become increasingly problematic within next 4-7 years with live export peak supply moving towards the wet season
Secondary Arterial Priority Cattle #'s	Roper Highway Extremely High 25,000+ Part seal and upgrade. Major route for pastoral, mining and community.. Coming under increasing pressure with further development of the region and expansion of communities and mining.
Secondary Arterial Priority Cattle #'s	Hodgson River / Nutwood Road High 15,000+ Part seal and upgrade. Major route for pastoral, mining and community.. Coming under increasing pressure with further development of the region and expansion of pastoral, communities and mining.
Secondary Arterial Priority Cattle #'s	Duncan Road Extremely High 30,000+ Weaving down the WA border (in and out of the NT) it requires seal and major upgrade. Critical to supply of cattle to live export in Wyndham and Darwin. Increasing pressure with further development of the region and expansion of pastoral, communities and mining. This will become increasingly problematic within next 4-7 years with live export peak supply moving towards the wet season



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Arterial Priority Cattle #'s	Dorisvale Road Very High 4,000 Part seal and upgrade. Major route for pastoral, mining and community. Increasing pressure to get access to cattle in the wet season.
Secondary Arterial Priority Cattle #'s	Edith Farms Road Medium 2,000+ Part seal and upgrade. Agricultural produce and supply route vital for increasing intensification and value adding. Requiring wet season access.
Secondary Arterial Priority Cattle #'s	Nathan River Road High 1,500 Link and supply road to Borroloola and Carpentaria Hwy. Regional access and Increasing pressure to get access to cattle in the wet season.
Barkly	
Secondary Arterial Priority Cattle #'s	Barkly Stock Route Incl Calvert Road Extremely High 45,000+ Upgrade and seal. Increasing production from the Barkly Region, mining, tourism and community access is placing undue pressure which will not sustain future demands and requirements to access 12 months per year.
Secondary Arterial Priority Cattle #'s	Ranken Road Extremely High 35,000+ Upgrade and seal. Increasing production from the Barkly Region, mining, tourism and community access is placing undue pressure which will not sustain future demands and requirements to access 12 months per year.



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State Arterial Priority Cattle #'s	Carpentaria Highway Extremely High 70,000+ Upgrade to crossings, and bridges, seal widening, shoulder and seal maintenance required. Critical pastoral, mining, tourism and community road. Increasing pressure with further development of the region and expansion of pastoral, communities and mining. This will become increasingly problematic within next 4-7 years with live export peak supply moving towards the wet season
Secondary Arterial Priority Cattle #'s	Wollogorang Road Very High 8,000 Seal and upgrade. Critical pastoral, mining, tourism and community road. Increasing pressure with further development of the region and expansion of pastoral, communities and mining.
State Arterial Priority Cattle #'s	Tablelands Highway Extremely High 100,000 This road is part of the 24% of sealed roads and requires major upgrade and reseal along its entire length. Currently deteriorating rapidly.
Alice	
State Arterial Priority, cattle #'s	Plenty Highway Extremely High 80,000+ Requires upgrade and seal to entire length. Critical 12 month access to Qld and Central Australia, for pastoral, tourism, mining and community. Region is experiencing growth beyond the capacity of the road. Seasonal rainfall and poor maintenance renders large sections inaccessible for long periods. Costs of freight or preparedness of contractors to use the road costing business and having untold social costs.



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State Arterial Priority Cattle #'s	Sandover Highway Extremely High 20,000+ Requires upgrade and seal to entire length. Critical 12 month access to Qld and Central Australia, for pastoral, tourism, mining and community. Region is experiencing growth beyond the capacity of the road. Seasonal rainfall and poor maintenance renders large sections inaccessible for long periods. Costs of freight or preparedness of contractors to use the road costing business and having untold social costs.
State Arterial Priority Cattle #'s	Tanami Highway Extremely High 50,000+ Requires upgrade and seal to entire length. Critical 12 month access to WA and Central Australia for for pastoral, tourism, mining and community. Region is experiencing growth beyond the capacity of the road. Seasonal rainfall and poor maintenance renders large sections inaccessible for long periods.
Feeder Priority Cattle #'s	Finke Road Very High 45,000 Requires upgrade. Access for southern producers and southern market supply and supply to Qld and NSW via Central Australia. Increasing mining, tourism and community use.
Feeder Priority Cattle #'s	Maryvale Road Very High 5,000 Requires continuing upgrade. Access for southern producers and southern market supply and supply to Qld and NSW via Central Australia. Increasing mining, tourism and community use.
Feeder Priority Cattle #'s	Hugh River Stock Route Low 1,000



Industry-specific Associated Infrastructure

NTCA policy states:

Port of Darwin: *The NTCA believes that the Northern Territory should be serviced by a port able to efficiently accommodate the expanding requirements of Live Cattle export and other resource sectors.*

Yards-Export: *The NTCA believes that the Northern Territory should be serviced by strategically placed, high quality export yards compliant with best practice animal welfare standards with direct access to the port for loading.*

Yards-Spelling/other: *The NTCA believes that the Northern Territory should be serviced by an efficient network of spelling yards and rest areas able to accommodate the combined requirements of driver fatigue, animal welfare and transport efficiency.*

Recommendation 1.3: That the NTG review Port of Darwin operations for their capacity, and in particular the need for high quality export yards with direct access for loading, to accommodate an expansion in the live cattle export trade in the future.

Indicative cost:150,000

Recommendation 1.4: That the NTG and the NTCA collaborate on planning spelling yards and rest areas for greater efficiency and safety in transporting animals through the Territory.

Indicative cost excluding capital development costs: \$150,000

2. NT Agribusiness and related issues

Introduction

The Northern Territory has demonstrated a capacity to produce food and trade that food with the rest of Australia, and the world. This is at a time of increasing world demand for food, increasing pressures from climate variability and tightening economic conditions. There is no doubt however, that despite projected changes, there is an opportunity for the NT to continue to increase levels of production to supply NT, Australian and world food demand.

Currently the NT does not have any targets for current or future food production and there is limited cross departmental cooperation on common issues of major economic benefit to the NT. By way of example, agricultural, horticultural and pastoral production is impacted by policy and legislation from at least 3 departments including NRETAS, DPI and DR. It appears that in many cases, there is little cooperation across these departments or ministries directly impacting our future production capacity.



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It is for this reason that the NTCA broadly supports the NT Government's *Growing our Primary Industries*. For the Strategy to be more workable and effective, however, we contend that representatives of those primary industries need to more closely involved in its continuing development. While we acknowledge the role of scientific, technical and governmental expertise in making policy, we believe the people who own and manage the land also have a solid contribution to make and their contribution should be on an equal basis. Given that much of the Territory's formal expertise is imported and here for the short-term, on-ground knowledge that has developed over generations and continues to develop needs to be incorporated into policy development.

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We note that the Strategy promotes the Department of Resources as an advocate for industry (p5). Again, we hope the advocacy is informed by the Department involving industry groups in considering primary industries development. This is more in depth than 'working closely with industry' (p12) and it will give the Government the broad view it requires.

The strategy will need to knock down the barriers between departments and we further suggest that it be the primary responsibility of the NT Chief Minister as it will require a multi-ministry cooperation effort. The success of the NT Agribusiness Strategy will live or die depending on its capacity to take control of government environmental and policy settings and drive infrastructure planning and development.

The policy effort, then, should not be centralized in Darwin or Alice Springs. We are fortunate in having the combination of a small enough jurisdiction, a committed, expert and vocal industry and imported expertise to make developing policy a collaborative effort. Negotiation on an equal basis – in other words being asked to help initiate, rather than simply to respond – will be more productive and effective in the long run.

Our approach is informed by our body of knowledge, our active membership of national and international producer and R&D organisations. As mentioned earlier, we are already involved in promoting a number of issues which are highly relevant to both the NT Agribusiness Strategy and the NT Climate Change Policy.

The NTCA Budget Submission 2010 considers aspects of the Strategy and makes a number of recommendations.

Research and development

A sound evidence base is critical for policy, procedure and practice. We acknowledge the significant research base the Department of Resources has built up, but suggest that producers need to be partners, participants and instigators of research if it is to meet the needs of industry and community. NTCA policy states:

'Advancing and protecting the interests of the cattle producers in the Northern Territory'



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The NTCA supports regional advisory committees working with Government in identifying Research and Development demands associated with the pastoral industry and upholds the value of good R&D in delivering long term profitability.

The application and extension of research finding, whether that be the result of departmental or other research is, and will increasingly become critical to the long term sustainability of industry. Changes due to market, climate and financial variability alone will place increasing pressure on industry viability. Industry viability is directly connected to long term environmental health and the health of almost 505 of the NT landmass.

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Recommendation 2.1: That the NT Agribusiness Strategy be an initiative of the Chief Minister of the NT, requiring multi-ministry and departmental cooperation and agreement including environmental legislation and policy.

That the NTG invite the NTCA and other industry groups to play a formal role in developing its proposed Primary Industry Research Strategy.

Bio-security early warning and response capability

For the health of people, wildlife, industry and the NT economy, it is of vital importance that there is effective bio risk surveillance, at a regional level, as an early warning system, and to provide trends over time. Maintenance of our vital export industries is critical and with increasingly rapid movement of people around the world and with the nation experiencing variable seasonal conditions, bio security presents one of our greatest risks. Investment in bio security capability by the NT government needs to be increasing, rather than decreasing.

Exotic disease, industry liaison officers are part of the network devoted to provide a network of immediate response to a disease outbreak. Currently there is a network of liaison officers and there is a need to increase numbers as part of the responsibility of industry to make people available under the government / industry cost sharing arrangement.

Furthermore there is a need for the government to provide well trained staff to attend to all exotic disease responses and these staff need to be drawn from across government so as to provide the capacity to sustain a prolonged response and control centre.

Recommendation 2.2: That the NTG increase the level of funding and support for bio-security early warning, detection and response capability with the immediate increase of technical and extension staff by four and the corresponding resources.

The NTG should maximise coordination and cooperation with AQIS and other responsible agencies including support of local and regional early warning capability in communities many of which are located along our northern coastline.

Indicative cost: \$1.2 m



Recommendation 2.3: That the NTG fund training for industry liaison officers and government disease response officers.

Indicative cost: \$50,000 pa

Indigenous pastoralism and development

NTCA Policy states:

The NTCA supports the long term and successful development of the educational, social, cultural and economic foundations of indigenous families, communities and regional groups for the overall prosperity of the NT.

The NTCA has been actively investing in increasing the participation of indigenous people in the pastoral industry and currently employs 2 full time staff on indigenous employment initiatives and continues to be involved in the development of agreements for the utilization of indigenous land for pastoral production under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1976 (ALRA). The NTCA welcomes Indigenous participation in the pastoral industry and is pleased to note the inclusion of Indigenous Pastoral Initiatives in the Strategy. The NTCA is particularly keen to see Indigenous landholders participating in long-term and comprehensive planning for the future of the industry. This planning approach needs to involve all land tenures as we believe Indigenous and non-Indigenous landholders alike need the capacity to diversify their land use. Equally the mechanisms to facilitate diversification and improved land use while under federal legislation provide the NT Government with the opportunity to engage with industry, federal government and indigenous landowners to find workable tenure arrangements that will facilitate greater investment and long term security. This requires dedicated resources in the form of skilled and specialist staff.

Partnerships

As discussed throughout this Submission, partnerships between industry, government and the broader community need to be meaningful. We take the term 'partnership' to imply that we are all operating on an equal basis. In that light, we believe section 10 of the Strategy needs strengthening. Stakeholders (and particularly industry stakeholders) need to be *involved*, not merely 'consulted', in setting research, development, policy and extension priorities. To that end, we urge the Government to adopt the recommendation from the Primary Industries Review and proceed with developing formal and effective stakeholder engagement forums to help set these priorities.

Recommendation 2.4: That the NTG proceed with action recommended by the Primary Industries Review to establish stakeholder engagement forums. The purpose of these will be to involve industry stakeholders in setting research, development, policy and extension priorities.

Indicative cost: \$50,000 pa



The effectiveness of the concept of 'partnership' could be further enhanced with the appointment of a fully-funded position within the industry to drive the Strategy. This offer has been made to government and it is considered to be essential to the success of the Agribusiness strategy.

Recommendation 2.5: that the NTG fund a two-year full-time industry position to drive industry involvement and investment in the NT Agribusiness Strategy, assist in development and roll out. The position will work across NTCA, NTHA and AT Ag. This has been supported by each of these associations.

Indicative cost: \$150,000 pa

Land ownership, access, use

Increasing demand for agricultural production and food and the increasing need to manage risk is driving a push to increasingly diversify and intensify production capacity. Pastoral production is predominantly on pastoral lease and diversification is often problematic. Future development requires a coordinated effort across departments to see a rational and effective process to facilitate diversification and development and needs to be a core tenement of the agribusiness strategy. Opportunities for the development of Indigenous land under the (ALRA 1976) for primary production require detailed cooperation across NT and Federal departments to explore equitable and beneficial agreements. Ultimately, in order to see significant investment there will need to be long term agreements, able to be traded and used as collateral for development finance. Existing agreements tend to be shorter term and do not provide adequate security for long term development capital.

Recommendation 2.6: that the NTG dedicate resources to the explore opportunities for land tenure developments to enable long term primary production agreements under the NT Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1976.

Indicative cost: provided from core government operations

Extension

There has been a net reduction in extension and project staff across the department of Resources at a time of increasing complexity and change. More than ever the adoption of new technology, skills and knowledge is essential to the long term viability and sustainability of the primary production sector. Environmental values are best enhanced and protected with a viable industry and the wellbeing of up to 50% of the NT landmass is intrinsically linked to an efficient and vibrant industry. This position is supported by effective research and implementation of change. Reducing numbers of extension staff will compromise industry adaption and change management capacity.

Recommendation 2.7: That the NTG increase the level of extension in key locations to ensure maximum uptake of new skills and knowledge. Staff number to be increase by 4 across the NT.

Indicative cost: \$600,000 pa



3. Climate change policy

Introduction

NTCA policy states:

Carbon trading and emissions: *The NTCA supports efforts to reduce world greenhouse gas and is able to make a positive contribution as part of the solution. The NTCA does not support the inclusion of agriculture in a cap and trade emissions trading scheme until such time as it can be demonstrated that there will be no detrimental impact on international competitiveness and profitability. This position acknowledges the inappropriateness of current international carbon accounting standards where they apply to agriculture. While the NTCA does not support the inclusion of agriculture it does support the establishment of offset market and voluntary schemes to promote the role of farmers and pastoralists in increasing the carbon storage and capture.*

Carbon emissions and sequestration R&D: *The NTCA actively seeks increased investment in R&D to reduce emissions and increase efficiency in energy use. The NTCA seeks increased R&D into carbon measurement, storage and capture including an equitable focus across the arid zone and northern savannahs.*

The bottom line for the NTCA is that managing the various aspects of climate change, particularly managing carbon emissions and their impact, is a matter for the widest discussion, bringing together government, industry and the community. We appreciate that governments need to show leadership and understand this being an important goal of the NT Government's Climate Change Policy. Leadership without guidance, however, may jeopardise the effectiveness of the policy. It is our view that a properly negotiated policy is more likely to achieve aspirational and practical goals and we urge the NT Government to bring together stakeholders to work together on this critical issue.

With this in mind, we propose in this submission to comment on some of the targets and question the basis of some of the Government's core proposals.

Target 14, Action 14.1: It is NTCA policy (see above) to support offsets in both voluntary and official markets. It is heartening that this Action begins with the words '**work with** Territory land managers, landowners and investors...'. This is paramount.

The pastoral industry also feels there needs to be an opening for pastoralists to help develop income-generating off-market and potentially on-market carbon offset schemes. A dedicated position in the industry could underpin a research and development effort for a carbon offset initiative.

Recommendation 3.1: That the NTG fund a dedicated position with the pastoral industry to work with pastoralists and coordinate a research and development efforts towards workable carbon offset initiatives for the industry.

Indicative cost: \$150,000 pa



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Target 14, Action 14.3 It is critical that the NT work with the Australian Government and we are conscious of and support the need for national recognition of Territory land management projects in offset standards.

Target 14, Action 14.4. We agree that the question of carbon property rights needs to be clarified. The NTCA maintains that managing carbon – which is the underlying determinant of soil fertility and therefore profitability - is part of any grazing operation and is therefore central to the purpose of a pastoral lease. As we also believe that those who manage carbon have a right to derive benefits that may flow from this, we are keen to be represented in developing any policy on carbon property rights.

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Recommendation 3.2: That the NTG invite representatives of land managers, landowners and leaseholders eg NTCA, North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA), Northern and Central Land Councils (NLC; CLC) to participate in developing all aspects of new policy on carbon offsets.

Recommendation 3.3: That the NTG accept and act on the principle that land managers who are managing carbon have a right to benefits that may flow from it.

Target 15, Action 15.1: Again, NT land managers, owners and leaseholders need to be considered as part of any governance structure for managing financial arrangements for a Territory carbon fund.

Recommendation 3.4: That the NTG involve NT land managers, landowners and leaseholders in governance structures for managing financial arrangements for a Territory carbon fund.

Target 16 and 17: There needs to be a solid commitment from the NT Government to fund work towards the achievement of these targets as outlined in the Policy. Achieving Target 16 would involve a substantial upgrade to existing extension capacity and not simply adding to the workload of existing extension officers.

It is particularly important that the NTG collaborates with land managers on the kinds of research proposed and works with them to maximize leverage of R&D funds from Government and other sources.

Recommendation 3.5: That the NTG fund additional carbon emission education programs and other associated work, notably the measurement and monitoring systems; and work with land managers to develop on-farm best practice carbon emission management.

Indicative cost: \$300,000 pa

Recommendation 3.6: That the NTG seek opportunities to maximize leverage of R&D funding from the Australian Government and other sources.

Indicative cost: funded from core operations



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Target 18: The NTCA is completely behind this Target and its specifications. Noting, however that the example of WALFA cited is a community-based enterprise that was originally run through the Community Development Employment Program—funded local ranger group, we suggest achieving these actions needs appropriate levels of continuing funding.

We welcome the reinstatement of the North Australian Fire Information website as a critical element in monitoring and managing carbon emissions and suggest the 'alternative funding models to be developed' retain a substantial NTG contribution.

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Recommendation 3.7: That the NTG devote appropriate and realistic levels of funding to developing offset products in partnership with the private sector, recognizing that private sector contributions, particularly from Territory landowners and land managers, may often be in-kind.

Indicative cost: from normal operations

Recommendation 3.8: That the NTG, in recognition of the important role NAFI will play in monitoring and managing carbon emissions, continues to contribute substantially to its upkeep.

Target 20 overall is a little disjointed and concentrates on camels when other feral animal species may have an equally severe impact on native flora and both the social and physical landscapes. As well as 'ensuring control programs are designed' and monitoring vegetation recovery, the NTG needs to commit funding first to make sure that we can deal with a variety of weed and animal pest outbreaks and then to put appropriate control, recovery and monitoring programs in place.

Recommendation 3.9: That the NTG review Target 20 and commit to adequate support and resources for control, recovery and monitoring and reporting programs for all pest species.

Recommendation 3.10: That the NT Government match federal funding for the Central Australian Camel eradication program as new and additional funding over and above existing funding.

Indicative cost: \$3.0 million pa

Target 37 is problematical because it offers a simple (perhaps even simplistic) solution to a complex issue. It is based on the premise that reducing land clearing will reduce emissions. The Target and its related Actions ignore the fact that the territory is already a low land-clearing jurisdiction, with less than one per cent of the land mass cleared. Land clearing is already contained.

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Clearly Action 37.2 - stronger legislation to protect native vegetation – the NT is, unlike all other states and territories, over 98% native vegetation which is backed by sound legislation on pastoral land and other tenure. There is no requirement for specific legislation or increasing complexity but rather the need for a balanced interaction between production, conservation and biodiversity.

Setting a limit on the number of hectares that may be cleared is meaningless and inappropriate. Firstly, there is no evidence that it will deliver any environmental guarantees whatsoever. Secondly, it gives no one – government, industry or community – room to move to meet changing environmental, economic or social needs. If there is to be clearing, it needs to be integrated into an informed planning process at catchment, regional and Territory levels. Thirdly, while land clearing may produce an initial spike in emissions, land that is developed for pasture or crops will have a different emissions profile where there is no annual burning. The ability of pastures to sequester carbon has been shown to exceed that of mature forest. Concentrating on emissions ignores this important part of the response to climate change. Fourthly, capping clearing means landholders are being asked to bear a disproportionate amount of the cost of reducing emissions. They would be penalized through loss of opportunity to develop and take advantage of changing and growing markets.

The research base is sparse, but there are sound research-based arguments against simply capping land clearing. Modelling by environmental scientists at Charles Darwin University for the NTCA's Futures Project, using data from the NT's Department of Resources, the CSIRO and the Meat and Livestock Australia, suggests that diversification will improve environmental, economic and social resilience to the challenges of climate change and market failure. Strategically planned land development – including clearing – is an essential element in diversifying land use. Landholders interviewed during consultations for the Futures Project showed a strong desire to diversify.

There is a way through this maze of complex issues and it involves negotiating a planned approach to resource use and emissions reduction with both landholders and the conservation lobby, building a proper research base and strategic planning. This will enable the Territory to continue developing pastorally and agriculturally while it maintains environmental integrity. Negotiation of a holistic, fair and defensible strategy based on cooperation would be an opportunity for the NT to take the lead.

Recommendation 3.11: That the NTG reconsider this Target from its Climate Change Policy in light of the need for a holistic, fair and defensible strategy and engage with land managers and landholders, the conservation movement and the wider community to deal with:

- Carbon emissions, carbon trading and the Emissions Trading Scheme
- Sustainable integration of conservation and production – an environmental stewardship approach
- Maintaining and developing a viable agricultural sector
- Planned development
- Effective environmental management



4. Improved health services right across the NT and improved access to medical assistance in regional and remote areas.

Increasingly the retraction of services and support for those living in regional and remote areas is a barrier to economic development, management of land resources and maintenance of community. Most directly, withdrawal of health capability has led to deaths and a general decline in the numbers of people and families willing to move from major centers. The lack of non specialist and specialist health services, education and effective telecommunications is a major barrier for many skilled and educated people contemplating careers or opportunities in the NT. It is also driving people to Darwin or interstate.

Recommendation 4.1: That the NTG increase incentives for specialist and other services to deliver services to regional and remote areas.

The NTCA notes that a tender has been announced for Airmed services and will involve an integrated, fixed wing and rotary service with all medical and support staff. This service needs to be completely integrated within the health system and other emergency services.

A successful tenderer will be required to find a suitable hanger and associated facilities at the Darwin airport. Given the current demand and availability, and the term of the contract this may be a major impediment to a successful tender. It is recommended that the NT Government take responsibility for the provision of the hanger facilities. This will remove a major obstacle for tenders and provide the NT Government with a greater level of control over the contract and contractor.

Delivery of a Territory wide emergency coordination centre is of critical importance to the overall emergency response capability of the NT and delivers on a key undertaking of Government.

Recommendation 4.2: That the NTG purchase / build and control a hanger and associated facilities suitable for the long term needs of northern air medical services at the Darwin airport in order to support a long term integrated contract
Indicative cost: \$10 million



5. Dedicated investment in education services across all sections of the community, but particularly in regional and remote areas.

There remains a need for education to regional and remote communities to be properly resourced in the NT, particularly for remote Aboriginal communities and cattle stations. Rural and remote students need the best possible technology to access the full range of educational opportunities. To harness the full potential of the technology, NTG must provide adequate resources to ensure timely delivery of services, maintenance of software and hardware and support for teachers to explore and maximize use of the technology. Staff with local knowledge in regional locations is critical to achieving this. Acknowledging that the NT is at the forefront of Interactive Distance Learning, the NTCA urges the NTG to place the highest priority on regional and remote needs.

Recommendation 5.1: That the NTG increase resources to support, promote and advance new technology and initiatives to improve educational outcomes outside major centres.

Indicative cost: \$400,000

An opportunity exists to promote the rural industry through school programs. The issue arises that there is no co-ordination or resource sharing between schools which would allow extension of these programs to all interested schools. There are several excellent agricultural education products, already mapped to curriculum outcomes, but no mechanism exists to introduce, promote and support these in NT schools. Sustainable agriculture education programs support NTG land management policy and equip future generations of primary producers and policy makers to make informed decisions, especially in light of the high media coverage of messages from the animal welfare lobby and conservation groups. Several government departments have community education officers but the Department of Resources does not. A model for achieving implementation of the concept is to employ an Ag in Schools coordinator, as per the model of Agforce in Queensland.

Potential roles and duties for an Ag in Schools Coordinator could be:

- Circulate regular newsletter providing updates on projects and products available
- Liaise with the national committee and other state co-ordinators to share ideas and resources
- Source further funding for projects
- Promote good news stories about projects to the wider community
- Provide perspectives to industry about concerns of youth
- Promote industry/departmental programs within schools
- Liaise with education department to ensure smooth introduction of programs in regards to meeting curriculum requirements of current and developing products
- Customise products for the NT and assist in their development. E.g. Nutrition EDGE and Grazing Land Management for schools, CDU's "Outback Mobs" CD and website
- Promote agricultural careers to school teachers and school leavers



- Promote ag careers at field days, school career days and other relevant forums
- Liaise with all funding partners to keep updated and assist with meeting their requirements
- Support implementing current projects, playing a networking role in linking up relevant people, eg. Departmental staff or private industry/service sector.

Recommendation 5.2: That the NTG fund a rural coordinator to work with urban, regional and remote students in an Ag in Schools program.

Indicative cost: \$120,000 pa

A recently released report prepared for the Australian Farm Institute (*Essential Services in Urban and Regional Australia – A Quantitative Comparison*) found that the cost of accessing primary and tertiary education for rural residents is between two and three times greater than their metropolitan counterparts, and the cost of accessing secondary schools is nearly seven times greater. The disparity in the NT is likely to be much greater again. Equitable access to quality education requires the maintenance of current Student Assistance Schemes as well as serious consideration to extending that assistance through widening eligibility criteria (eg. distance travelled, interstate boarding) and increasing subsidy and reimbursement rates.

Recommendation 5.3: That the NTG promote and maintain Student Assistance Schemes for those disadvantaged by distance or isolation, and re-evaluate eligibility criteria and assistance rates.

6. Improved access and use of modern telecommunication technology for business, community and private benefit.

Extension services, the education of children on pastoral properties and the general wellbeing of pastoral families in remote areas depend on reliable access to information and communications technology. With the available technology, we see no reason for remote families throughout the Territory to be denied fast, secure and equitable access to high-speed Broadband and the latest in mobile and landline technology. All Australians should have equal access to the best in communications.

Recommendation 6.1: That the NTG urge the Australian Government to deliver, as part of its National Broadband proposal, equitable access to high-speed broadband and a broader network of mobile phone access.

Indicative cost: Nil



7. Occupational health and safety

OH&S is a critical issue in the pastoral workplace and the NTCA welcomes the proposed roll-out of Worksafe coverage for the industry. We have developed a pioneering OH&S manual. With the appropriate resourcing, NTCA could work in partnership with the NT Government to facilitate a more positive engagement in Worksafe from the industry.

Recommendation 7.1: That the NTG resource NTCA to facilitate pastoral industry engagement in improving Occupational health and Safety during the Worksafe roll-out. It is suggested that this position may also work across agriculture and horticulture.

Indicative cost: \$150,000 as a fully resourced position

8. Pest management

The Northern Territory is under constant pressure from a range of introduced and native species which pose various treats to the environmental, economic and social fabric of regional and remote areas. These include vertebrate pests such as camels, horses, donkeys, dogs and pigs and weeds such as mimosa, parkinsonia and bellyache bush, which in some cases have been periodically controlled in a coordinated manner across land tenure. To the large however control measures are inadequate and indigenous land owners and pastoralists are particularly impacted and groups are making one off applications to federal government programs.

There is also an emerging and critical issue with explosion of wallaby numbers in a number of areas in northern NT. In many cases this explosion of numbers is leading to significant degradation of water ways and reserves, economic loss and significant social dislocation such as that experienced with termination of night medical evacuations form Katherine airport.

Federal programs of support are spasmodic and linked to funding rounds and priorities often based in Canberra and southern Australia.

There is a clear need for:

- NT Government leadership in coordination and representation to maximize federal governmental spend on pest management.
- Increased NT Government direct investment in pest management.



Recommendation 7.1: That the NTG take a lead in negotiation of federal resources to manage pest species .
That the NT Government increase direct investment in pest management, coordination and cross departmental cooperation to mitigate current and emerging threats.
Indicative cost: \$150,000 for coordination.
Indicative cost: increase existing spend on programs by 25%.

9. Other industry support programs

Maintenance of the following industry support programs need to remain in place to ensure the long term industry development:

Water enhancement scheme

This program has contributed to the sensible development of water points and increased dispersal of grazing pressure, improved control and management of environmental and production variables. The program remains fully subscribed each year and continued NT Government investment in this scheme is essential.

Former FarmBis allocation

An annual allocation of \$300,000 to match federal FarmBis funding has been utilised for training and capacity development across the primary Industry sector. This allocation needs to remain to fill a gap made with the implementation of the new FarmReady program which has failed to meet the needs of the wider primary Industries sector in the NT.

Renewable Energy

Removal of the subsidy for off grid renewable energy installations has seen uptake stall. This is impacting indigenous communities, stations, farms and various tourism and other remote and regional businesses across the NT. While the NT Government has been proactive in the promotion of renewable energy, increased pressure is required on the Federal government to reintroduce sensible incentives for the uptake of renewable energy systems for power generation and water pumping.

Recommendation 9.1: That the NT Gov maintain the water enhancement scheme and retain the \$300,000 investment in industry training and capacity development formerly engaged under the FarmBis program.

Recommendation 9.2: The NT Gov increase pressure on the Federal Government to provide workable off grid renewable power incentives for power generation and water.

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