



Media Release

Senator Alan Eggleston

Liberal Senator for Western Australia

NORTHERN AUSTRALIAN TASKFORCE PRESERVES PAST, SHOULD FOCUS ON FUTURE, SAYS SENATOR EGGLESTON

Western Australian Senator Alan Eggleston is dismayed by the apparent lack of regard being paid to infrastructure ventures in Australia's northern parts by Rudd's Labour Government after the release of the Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce report.

The report, commissioned to investigate sustainable development opportunities in the north, was selectively leaked by the Rudd Labor Government and demonstrates their continued lack of interest in investing in long overdue projects in our vast northern outback.

"Those who participated in the Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce are well aware of the many potential projects and opportunities that exist in northern regions," Senator Eggleston said.

"It is disappointing to see a complete lack of support being shown by the Labor Government in taking these opportunities seriously; moreover they appear to be more than willing to stifle any discussion on significant potential prospects.

"Importantly, there is no commitment to industries which could create indigenous jobs. There is no help for indigenous people and leaves them in their current state of suspension with no prospect for earning a real living in a real job for the potential for real wages to enable them to improve their lifestyle and join the modern world.

"Clearly this is a report that looks to preserve the past rather than focusing on the future potential of the North. It makes one wonder how Mr Rudd's grand plan of a 'Big Australia' could ever be attained if he is willing to knock back suggestions of further developing northern Australia, even in the face of evidence that suggests there are many opportunities that exist.

"On the one hand we have a Prime Minister that wants to push for a massive population increase, concedes that the Murray-Darling Basin is facing environmental problems, and yet is unwilling to spend money on projects involving our already productive north.

"For a report such as this to arrive at such findings exposes the Taskforce for what it is – a good Coalition initiative turned bad by a Labor Government willing to replace Taskforce academics and scientists in favour of those willing to tow the party line.

"It is a poor reflection on the viability of northern Australia. Anyone reading the flawed conclusions that are drawn will believe there is little or no potential to further develop, for example, northern agriculture. The report lacks real vision for the North which has immense potential.

"With northern Australia already significantly contributing to the Australian economy, those living and investing in northern parts were looking for a clear and positive vision for the future.

"Unfortunately what has resulted is the Rudd-commissioned Taskforce has delivered a report that is at odds with much of the available information regarding the viability of the north. To suggest for example, that there is no opportunity to unlock the region's enormous water resources, is clear evidence of the report's failure," Senator Eggleston said.