

Communiqué, Northern Australia Environment Alliance

Fix the south, don't ruin the north

November 17, 2006

Northern Australian Environment groups resoundingly reject the call by some politicians to send destructive agricultural practices into Northern Australia, away from degraded southern areas.

It is a misguided, irresponsible and short-sighted attempt to shift attention from the failed policies of governments and industries in southern Australia.

The statement arose from a two day meeting of the Northern Australia Environment Alliance (NAEA) in the Kimberley. At the meeting the 10 affiliate groups of the alliance discussed the latest opportunities for a truly sustainable future for Northern Australia: the Kimberley, Cape York, the Top End and Gulf Country.

Northern Australia is nationally and globally renowned for its intact landscapes and seascapes and significant natural and cultural values. Destructive practices such as large-scale land clearing, dams and major irrigation have degraded southern Australia and must not be repeated in the north.

The North is already under pressure from threats such as weeds, feral animals and fire that threaten the integrity of the regions' natural systems. It is crucial to avoid the expensive and damaging disasters of the Murray-Darling and the WA wheat-belt, as well as in tropical rivers such as the Ord and Burdekin.

Shifting destructive activities into Northern Australia is unacceptable. Northern ecosystems already support economic activity and maintain healthy country for healthy communities.

In Northern Australia we have an opportunity to apply what we have learned from the experiences of land management in southern Australia. It is the responsibility of all Australians to follow a path of development that will ensure a diverse, prosperous, sustainable and equitable future for the region.

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The Northern Australia Environment Alliance is:

Australian Marine Conservation Society, Australian Conservation Foundation, Cairns and far North Environment Centre, Conservation Council of Western Australia, Environment Centre of the Northern Territory, Environs Kimberley, North Queensland Conservation Council, Queensland Conservation Council, The Wilderness Society, WWF-Australia