

PRESS RELEASE – ADC FORUM

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MASSIVE NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT A CERTAINTY, SAYS SUMMIT

After a century of debate and high hopes, it looks like Northern Development is going to be pushed into a reality because of a convergence of forces from within Australia as well as the region to our North.

Months of intense analysis by five special working groups is converging on a consensus that the whole of Australia lying North of the Tropic of Capricorn must be massively developed to ensure the nation continues to have control over its own resources.

Speaking at the Northern Development Summit in Townsville, Mr Anton Roux, who is CEO of ADC Forum, the independent think-tank supporting the Summit, said there are three main forces that are new to this era.

“We’ve talked about it since Federation, we almost got it off the ground post-War, there’s been talk ever since, but this time is much different.

“If we don’t act, we’ll likely lose control over the shape development takes, partly because of intense private-led development that is already happening, partly because of growing investment power in our region, and partly because of massive population growth in Australia itself.”

“We know the Southern states are reaching saturation points in unaffordable housing and transport, where going up or going out present a host of problems. Either way, the Southern states can’t afford to house an additional 23 million Australians as early as 2053. The burden needs to be shared by the North, and this has the advantage of easing pressure on the South whilst building development in the North.”

“What’s more, we have a situation where younger Australian families simply can’t afford to buy homes in the major cities whereas the North is growing so fast it needs more and more workers, infrastructure and housing.”

The main industries set to grow, according to the Summit so far, include tourism, tropical medicine and technology, new forms of tropical agriculture, mining, and possibly renewable energy production. Many of these aim at servicing the needs of our broader regional neighbours as they likewise grow in prosperity.

The obstacles identified by the working groups include over-regulation, complex land tenure, labour costs, capital finance and infrastructure.

When it comes to the nexus between infrastructure and population, the Chair of the special working group charged with finding a solution, Adm Chris Barrie, has listened carefully to submissions across the board and concludes that, in balance, we will need to build massive new cities in the North.

As to infrastructure spending, successive waves of governments, even despite riding the wave of the mining boom, have squandered opportunities and left a deficit of \$250 billion.

“This deficit was shown by our colleague in Melbourne, Dr Peter Brain. Now contrast this with the \$80 billion earmarked for investment by Infrastructure Australia. It’s not the amount I object to so much as the fact almost nothing of this spending is aimed at the North where it is needed now

“Inevitably, and most probably sooner rather than later, Australia will absolutely need to build a megacity in the North, one of a size and scope rivalling Singapore. Whether a second is built depends on infrastructure spending, the tyranny of distance and whether and how we might start to build a distributed system of interconnected satellite cities much bigger than ever before.



ADC Forum (Founded as the Australian Davos Connection) is a not-for-profit leadership organisation founded in 1996 by the Australian members and participants of the World Economic Forum.

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“Let me not understate that this is important for the welfare of the whole nation - not just the North. If we don’t do this, we risk becoming increasingly marginalized in a massively growing region of 7 billion people.

“By contrast, if we can make sure we value and preserve the very things that make the North special - tourism, natural resources, its landscape, fauna and flora, health, education and agriculture, we can build urbanized tropical cities that are thoroughly unique.”

The Northern Development Summit is exploring the landscape of possibilities for the development of Australia above the Tropic of Capricorn, balancing its needs across population, major settlements, energy and minerals, tourism, biodiversity and sustainability.

The public can follow other Summit highlights on Twitter.

NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT UNVEILS PREFERRED LOCATION FOR AUSTRALIA’S FIRST NORTHERN MEGA CITY

Months of intense analysis by a special working group on population and infrastructure, one of five specially tasked groups of experts, was unveiled to delegates on Friday morning at the Northern Development Summit.

The group, led by Adm Chris Barrie, has said the location of Australia’s first mega city could be shifted West-wards all the way to the North West Shelf, centered on the shores of Lake Argyle.

This adds a completely new dimension to the jostling between Darwin and Townsville as the big contenders for Northern development.

“This doesn’t put Darwin, Townsville and many other contenders out of the race,” says Adm Barrie. “The reasons we’re looking at Lake Argyle is that this place offers an opportunity on 6700 hectares to build a model city of the future, whose airfields also give us a chance of flying directly into London and the rest of Europe from Australia while giving people a wonderful lifestyle and affordable housing on the shores of the lake.

“I know this is visionary, and will need strong, determined leadership from a champion but we have a terrific opportunity to do something very different and something that is important for our region.

“Now we need to hear the counter-arguments based on thoughtful analysis, with due consideration of the efficiencies that could emerge from a careful balance of distributed, networked cities, and their relative sizes.

“For now, however, the North West Shelf is looking like the most sensible contender for the development as Australia’s first mega-city.”

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ADC Forum is an independent not-for-profit organisation delivering high-level strategic leadership forums including the annual Australian Leadership Retreat on Hayman Island and the annual Future Summit.

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