

Position Paper – Infrastructure

The Issues and Our Position

High quality public infrastructure such as roads, rail, and air transport systems, and utilities such as power and water and communications systems for voice and data are all critical to the success, growth and competitiveness of the Territory's horticulture, cropping, nursery and forestry industries.

Agribusinesses make a very substantial contribution to the economic and social well-being of communities across the NT - particularly in the more remote and rural parts of the Territory. These rural enterprises underpin and sustain a myriad of related businesses – from freight and transport to packaging, fencing, fertiliser and equipment suppliers. Agricultural businesses also engage large numbers of permanent and seasonal staff whose wages circulate through urban and regional centres and the Territory economy.

As much of our farming community's production comes from regional and remote locations, the quality and maintenance of road networks connecting agricultural areas to our major highway network is vital to getting product to market in a timely manner and in good condition. The maintenance and continual upgrading of the major highway networks is also critical as these highways support the efficient movement of our production to southern and international markets. Adequate funding for the maintenance and continuing expansion of a high quality road network across the Territory is therefore important to all growers.

It is also important to strengthen road, rail, sea and air transport connections in order to broaden freight and logistics options and to improve access to a wider range of markets (nationally and internationally).

NT Farmers supports efforts to expand the rail network with east and west connections to the current north/ south line. It also supports efforts to improve the reliability of the current rail service by progressively upgrading sections that are vulnerable to flooding and derailment.

NT Farmers expects that its members will have access to high quality and reliable utility infrastructure and services – particularly electricity supply infrastructure that is reliable and delivered at nationally competitive rates.

NT Farmers also expects that its members will have access to the same quality of communications infrastructure and services as is enjoyed by urban citizens right around the nation. Farming enterprises have an ever increasing reliance on high speed and reliable data and voice communications, not only to be effective and competitive in their industry but also to support essential social and community connection needs that are even more important in remote and rural settings.

Our Commitment

NT Farmers will:

- work with national and Territory partners, policy makers and delivery agencies to ensure that the essential infrastructure priorities of the NT farming sector are well understood;
- work with NT farmers to document shortcomings in infrastructure that supports farming and production areas within the Territory;

- provide an effective conduit and communication channel between growers, supply chain partners and government delivery and policy agencies regarding the infrastructure needs and priorities of the NT farming sector; and
- work with NT and Local Governments to ensure road networks meet the transport needs of producers.

Our Expectations

NT Farmers seeks and expects:

- adequate recognition of the importance of contemporary, reliable and well maintained infrastructure for the viability and competitiveness of NT agricultural enterprises; and
- government agencies and industry bodies to engage with NT Farmers (early, frequently and with integrity and openness) in respect of road, transport networks, utilities and communications infrastructure spending priorities.

Our Agenda Items

- Substantially improved standard of voice and data communications for all NT Farmers members including along major arterial routes.
- Continue to improve road networks through all major farming areas.
- Continuing improvements and expansion of road, rail, sea and air infrastructure networks in ways that support the growth of the farming sector and the expansion of market opportunities.
- Improvements to the reliability of utilities (electricity supply) infrastructure to support production regions.
- Assist growers in the assessment of alternate energy options.
- Facilitate communication and awareness sessions with service providers.
- Access to and provision of weather forecasting services (ie: radar) and inclusion of NT Farmers in planning for service provisioning, including when planning to reduce or alter services and infrastructure.
- Re-installation of the Tennant Creek weather radar.