

IPA MEDIA RELEASE

Institute of Public Affairs | Australia's leading free market think tank

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60% THINK CANBERRA IS OUT OF TOUCH WITH NORTHERN AUSTRALIA

In a landmark Galaxy poll conducted exclusively for Australia's leading free market think tank, the Institute of Public Affairs, 60% of Australians have said that Canberra decision makers do not understand the needs of families and businesses living in Northern Australia. Only 16% of Australians thought that decision makers in Canberra were in touch with the needs of Northern Australians.

Director of the North Australia Project at the Institute of Public Affairs, Hugh Tobin, said that it was clear that Australians do not have faith in the government's current vision or management of Northern Australia.

'The government lacks vision for Northern Australia and it is not surprising when Canberra is half a continent away,' Mr Tobin said.

The survey asked 1,063 Australians across all states: 'In your opinion, do decision makers in Canberra understand the needs of families and businesses living in Northern Australia?' Other key findings from the survey were:

- 71% of Queenslanders and 65% of Western Australians thought that Canberra was out of touch;
- This compared with only 56% in the Southern States of SA, VIC, TAS and NSW;
- In regional WA and QLD 74% thought that Canberra was out of touch.

'People in Northern Australia have overwhelmingly said that they do not think that decision makers in Canberra understand their needs. Yet the current system of government has Canberra making decisions on their behalf. The government structure needs to be decentralised.

'The government should put in place a Special Economic Zone in Northern Australia. A low tax, low regulation zone would drive continued long term investment in the Australian resource industry.

'In establishing an economic zone the government would be recognising that people are best placed to make decisions about their own lives and that government interference is holding the North back.

'Even in the southern cities the majority of people realise that Canberra is out of touch with people living in Northern Australia. The current structure just doesn't make sense,' Mr Tobin said.

The IPA is working with Australian's for Northern Development and Economic Vision (ANDEV) to develop policies for a more competitive Northern Australia.

The Galaxy poll was conducted over the weekend of 13-15 May 2011. A full briefing document is available from the IPA at www.ipa.org.au. More information is also available at www.andev-project.org.

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