

MEDIA RELEASE

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North Queensland Special Economic Zone proposal welcome

New proposals for a Special Economic Zone in North Queensland are a welcome recognition that our system of governance is failing Northern Australians, according to John Shipp, Director of the ANDEV/IPA North Australia Project.

According to the *Courier Mail* today, Cairns, Townsville, Mackay and Rockhampton will unite under a new economic co-operation plan being considered by state and federal governments.

Since 2010, the ANDEV/IPA North Australia Project has called for an SEZ across North Australia with low tax rates and less regulation.

“The North Australia Project has been calling for a Special Economic Zone in North Australia for over two years. It is gratifying to see this idea gain the wider recognition it deserves.”

“Any Economic Zone in North Queensland should be incorporated into a wider zone covering all of North Australia. Problems identified with current arrangements in Queensland – like the disconnect between local needs and Canberra and Brisbane based decision-making – apply equally to the Northern Territory and the Pilbara and Kimberley regions of Western Australia,” Mr Shipp said.

“If North Australia is going to break out of its underdeveloped and underpopulated malaise, it needs a new vision for a system of governance that empowers local communities, attracts investment and human capital, and unshackles North Australians from the red- and green-tape imposed on them by southerners.”

Mr Shipp also pointed out that a Special Economic Zone would be a popular move. A poll conducted for the Institute of Public Affairs in June 2011 found 70 per cent of Queenslanders want a Special Economic Zone in North Australia.

Mr Shipp particularly welcomed the early focus on cutting red-tape.

“Paul Bell, the head of the Local Government Association of Queensland, is right to identify red-tape as a major barrier to economic development up North,” Mr Shipp said.

“Special Economic Zones around the world have proved most effective when they streamline regulatory approvals. This is what North Queensland needs more than anything; a one-stop-shop development authority empowered to grant approvals on behalf of all levels of government.”

The North Australia Project is a joint project of Australian for Northern Development and Economic Vision and the Institute of Public Affairs. For more information, including poll results, visit www.andev-project.org.

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