

MEDIA RELEASE

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North Queensland Special Economic Zone proposal should be adopted in Pilbara

New proposals for a Special Economic Zone in North Queensland should be adopted by local councils in the Pilbara, according to John Shipp, Director of the ANDEV/IPA North Australia Project.

According to the *Courier Mail* yesterday, 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,” Mr Shipp said.

Mr Shipp said the Shires of Ashburton, East Pilbara, Roebourne and the Town of Port Hedland should also create a Special Economic Zone.

“It is great to see local governments in Northern Queensland taking the initiative to set up an SEZ. The four Pilbara councils could do exactly the same thing,” Mr Shipp said.

“There is already a mechanism in place to do this with the Pilbara Regional Council, which should turn its attention to cutting red-tape, co-ordinating development and attracting foreign investment. There is nothing stopping the Pilbara Regional Council becoming the basis of a Special Economic Zone.

“The benefits of a Special Economic Zone would be increased economic activity, more foreign investment and more jobs. It could also be designed to encourage more permanent housing, which would lead to higher rates of permanent settlement.

“The most important aspect of a Special Economic Zone is that it has a single development body given the authority to grant approvals on behalf of all levels of government. Streamlined approvals have made the difference between success and failure in overseas SEZs,” 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. That is what an SEZ is all about.”

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 68 per cent of Western Australians want a low-tax, low-regulation Special Economic Zone in North Australia.

The North Australia Project is a joint project of Australians for Northern Development and Economic Vision and the Institute of Public Affairs. For more information visit www.ande-project.org.

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