

MEDIA RELEASE

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Asian Century White Paper a missed opportunity

The Gillard government's *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper 2012* shows Northern Australia can benefit from growth in Asia, but provides few concrete policies to make that happen, according to John Shipp, Director of the ANDEV/IPA North Australia Project.

Mr Shipp welcomed yesterday's white paper, but said it missed many opportunities. On Northern agriculture, he said the drafters avoided concrete policy.

"If the government is serious about unleashing North Australia's agricultural potential it must address the regulatory environment stifling growth. The government must create an environment that encourages investment in dams and other infrastructure, but the White Paper never mentions regulatory hurdles to the development of a Northern food bowl," Mr Shipp said.

Mr Shipp pointed to inconsistencies between the White Paper and the government's National Food Plan green paper released earlier this year.

"The White Paper says Asian capital and markets can drive the creation of a Northern foodbowl, while the Food Plan said this wasn't possible. The government must clarify this inconsistency between two of their major policy documents," Mr Shipp said.

Mr Shipp said the White Paper should have discussed the possibility of implementing Special Economic Zones to unleash growth in underdeveloped regions.

"The document acknowledges the important role Special Economic Zones have played in China's transformation from a poor and inward to a growing and globalised economy. It should have addressed their potential use in Australia as well," Mr Shipp said.

The White Paper also takes for granted that the mining boom will continue.

"We cannot afford to take continued investment in our resources sector for granted as the White Paper does," Mr Shipp said.

"Australia's resources sector is one of the world's most expensive to operate in, making it uncompetitive. The White Paper fails to address factors such as regulation, high taxes and an industrial relations environment prematurely ending the mining boom," Mr Shipp said.

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 visit www.andev-project.org.

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