



Warren Truss

**Leader of The Nationals
Shadow Minister for Trade, Transport, Regional Development
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Federal Member for Wide Bay**

M E D I A R E L E A S E

9 February 2010

Northern Australia Taskforce nobbled by Labor

The Rudd Labor Government has dealt a cruel blow to the hopes and aspirations of northern Australia through the release of its report on the development of the north, Leader of The Nationals and Shadow Minister for Regional Development, Warren Truss said today.

"The Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce report lacks vision. It draws the development equivalent of the wartime Brisbane line, effectively ruling out more intensive agricultural and other development in northern Australia," Mr Truss said.

"Northern Australia receives two thirds of Australia's rainfall but the report claims there is not sufficient rain in the north to support agriculture. The Taskforce was blinkered by Labor's no-dams policy.

"It is inconceivable that a competent report into the development capacity of the north would refuse to recognise the region's vast land and water resources. The substantial northern rain catchments should have been considered for their potential to unlock environmentally sustainable development and take pressure off drought stressed food producing areas in southern Australia."

The Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce was established by the former Coalition Government, however the committee's membership and terms of reference were drastically changed after the election of the Rudd Government.

"Labor nobbled the inquiry by removing representatives who had a vision and enthusiasm for northern Australia. They were replaced by academics, Aboriginal Land Council representatives and greenies who want to lock the region into a time warp," Mr Truss said.

"On one hand Labor talks of climate change and the threat it poses to Australia's food producing regions, yet it is not even prepared to consider northern Australia as a significant source of future agricultural wealth."

"The report has been a complete waste of time and money. Instead of identifying the potential of northern Australia, it seeks to secure Labor's preference deal with The Greens by arguing in favour of locking the region up and preventing development," Mr Truss said.

"This backward looking report is an insult to northern Australia.

"The Liberal and National Parties remain committed to developing the north and will not be deterred by Labor's negative attitude."

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