



First Northern Taskforce meeting: How will it avoid the environmental mistakes of the past?

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The Wilderness Society today raised concerns about the absence of any environmental terms of reference for the Northern Development Taskforce, which is meeting for the first time today in Canberra. The Taskforce is chaired by Senator Bill Heffernan, who has said he 'doesn't want to repeat the mistakes made in southern Australia'. Yet, the focus of the task force appears to be irrigation options in North Australia.

The Terms of Reference for the Taskforce fail to address the costs and benefits of various pathways to development for the people of the region, including the role of conservation, land and water management and the emerging carbon economy.

“As massive amounts of taxpayers' money is being used to fix the salinity, land degradation, failing river systems and loss of biodiversity in the South, the Taskforce appears to be proposing to transplant the same industries to the North”, said Larissa Cordner, Wild Rivers Campaigner for The Wilderness Society

“The Taskforce is working to narrow terms of reference and has ignored the environment in its haste to explore traditional, damaging options for the North” she said

“The Wilderness Society will be inviting the members of the Taskforce to view and take on board the best available science on Northern Australia to ensure its members understand the environmental impacts of proposed development options. We would also like the taskforce to recognise and address the development potential of environmental services and the conservation economy”.

“The tropical North is a special place for all Australians. It has world standard conservation values that rival the Amazon. It would be tragic if the North was sacrificed in pursuit of short term, outdated and destructive concepts of development.”

For more information, please contact: