Media Release

Willem Westra van Holthe, Member for Katherine
Deputy Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries

**Northern Territory Government opens door to new industry**

19 March 2015

The Northern Territory is one the verge of a major breakthrough in the production and commercial sale of tropical oysters.

Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries Willem Westra van Holthe said the Tropical Oyster Program at the Darwin Aquaculture Centre (DAC) was showing great promise.

“Tropical oysters have never been cultivated in the Northern Territory before. My Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries (DPIF) has been working closely with communities on Goulburn and Melville Islands to look at suitable sea-based farming methods,” Minister Westra van Holthe said.

“Juvenile oyster spat are flown from the DAC to remote Indigenous communities. They are then grown close to shore in floating or fixed baskets.

“The fixed farm design trialled on Melville Island has shown good results for growth and survival, encouraging further trials in the region,” he said.

Blacklip oysters take around 18 months to grow from thumbnail to market size. Current trials are developing methods to improve growth rates to ensure economic viability of future enterprises.

“The NT Government is promoting the Territory as a gourmet food producer. This initiative has the potential to provide a nutritious food source to our Indigenous communities, while also potentially opening up the opportunity for commercial sales in the future,” he said.

“Oyster farming could provide business opportunities for Indigenous people across the Top End, giving them culturally suitable employment within their community.

“In addition to the work on oysters, research and development is also being conducted into giant clam and sea cucumber farming, with the intention of exporting to markets including the United States.”

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