Gary Higgins  
Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries  

Request for Proposal – Ord Stage 3 Irrigated Agricultural Development  

3 April 2016  

The Ord Stage 3 irrigated agricultural development has taken a major step forward.  

The proposed development will provide up to 14,500 hectares of new farming land by extending irrigation channels from Western Australia into the Northern Territory.  

Primary Industry and Fisheries Minister Gary Higgins said the Northern Territory Government and the Northern Territory Land Corporation has begun a Request for Proposal (RFP) process seeking private sector proponents to facilitate development of the irrigated agricultural area – the Spirit Hills Pastoral Lease – of Ord Stage 3.  

“Ord Stage 3 is an extension of the iconic Ord Irrigation Scheme, with Stages 1 and 2 located in Western Australia, and will provide investors with the opportunity to develop premium crops for global markets,” Minister Higgins said.  

“This project will help diversify the Northern Territory economy, create jobs for local people, boost the regions, provide economic opportunities for Indigenous people and leverage off investment in Ord 1 and 2.  

“Ord Stage 3 provides an opportunity for investors which are seeking to develop large greenfield agricultural projects in north Australia.”  

Mr Higgins said the Proponent would be responsible for negotiating with native title holders, building the necessary irrigation channel infrastructure and seeking all of the necessary approvals, including sacred site and environmental approvals to develop the Ord Stage 3 irrigated agricultural area.  

Ord Stage 3 was made an NT Government Major Project in 2012, with a project team established in the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries to work alongside the West Australian Government.  

“Projects of this size take a long time to develop and the Territory Government has consulted with native title holders, the Northern Land Council and with local stakeholders in Kununurra as well as the WA and Commonwealth Governments to guide management decisions to progress this area for irrigated agriculture,” Mr Higgins said.
“We now consider that a proponent led development is the best option and will put the native title holders in direct contact with the end developer, enabling a better outcome for both parties.

“The Northern Territory Government has a vision for more agricultural precincts in the NT - that’s why we’re investing in soil and water studies like the recently released Larrimah studies.

“Ord Stage 3 is strongly aligned with the Commonwealth Government’s Developing Northern Australia White Paper and the Northern Territory Government’s Economic Development Strategy and we believe it will deliver huge benefits.”

The indicative timeframes for the RFP are:

- Proposal lodgement date – end of May 2016
- Evaluation and assessment – Mid June 2016
- Negotiations with preferred proponents – June/July 2016
- Execution of Project Agreement – End of July 2016

The successful Proponent will enter into a Development Agreement with the Northern Territory Land Corporation and the NT Government and is required to develop a detailed plan for the future use of the Pastoral Lease, including the development of the Ord Stage 3 irrigated agriculture area.

The Chairman of the Northern Territory Land Corporation Peter Blake said: “The Corporation has held the Spirit Hills Pastoral Lease since late 1994, for the purpose of developing Ord Stage 3 and the proposed extension of the Keep River National Park. The Corporation supports the Request for Proposal process, which will result in the successful proponent progressing this important development for the Northern Territory.”

Prospective proponents can register their interest at www.dcm.nt.gov.au/ordstage3

ATTACHED:

Pic 1 – Keep River Plain, looking south
Pic 2 – Ord channels through to NT
Pic 3 – Map, Spirit Hills zone – various stages

Media Contact:
Lorelei Fong Lim, 0400 165 743

Pic 1
Pic 2
Pic 3