Chief Minister Clare Martin and the Premiers of Queensland and Western Australia have signed an historic agreement, joining forces to fight tropical diseases like malaria and to assist tropical communities throughout the world.

Ms Martin, Queensland Premier Peter Beattie, and Western Australia Premier Geoff Gallop have agreed to establish a new Co-operative Framework on Tropical, Science, Knowledge and Innovation.

The strategic alliance aims to ensure the two States and NT work together to build on Australia’s world-class reputation for using science to achieve sustainable development in the tropics.

Australian scientists are currently addressing many key issues for tropical communities.

Ms Martin today added her signature to the new Cooperative Framework at a two-day Tropical Futures Forum in Darwin attended by many of Australia’s foremost scientists.

She described Australia’s capabilities in tropical science as “first class” and said the new Agreement represented a further step in establishing the nation as a global leader.

“The Northern Territory is well placed to make a significant contribution to the challenges faced by tropical regions both nationally and internationally. Our location offers unique capabilities in areas of tropical expertise, such as health and marine science,” she said.

“The world class Menzies School of Health Research is an outstanding example, with pioneering studies in Indigenous health issues including infections, chronic and tropical diseases.”

Premier Beattie said Queensland scientists were at the forefront of research efforts.

“Like their WA and NT counterparts, our scientists are producing cutting edge results in the fight against tropical diseases such as Dengue Fever and malaria and infectious diseases like SARS,” he said.

“They are also finding ways to achieve sustainable growth in mining; helping to predict and manage climate change; and coming up with strategies to control environmental threats to our rainforests, reefs and savannas.”

Premier Beattie said the Cooperative Framework heralded a new era of unity, maturity and strength for tropical science in Australia.

“I look forward to working with Dr Gallop and Ms Martin to promote our strengths to the Commonwealth and internationally,” he said.

Dr Gallop said he was very excited about both the signing of the Cooperative Framework for Tropical Science Knowledge and Innovation and also the Tropical Futures Forum.

"This forum and the signing of the Cooperative Framework between NT, QLD and WA will assist the NT in its efforts to strengthen its capacity in tropical science, knowledge and innovation," he said.

The historic agreement aims to ensure the two States and the Northern Territory work together to build on Australia’s world-class reputation for using science to achieve sustainable development in the tropics.

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Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory provide a ground-breaking opportunity for building an impressive strength, by world standards, in tropical science knowledge and innovation,” he said.

The Tropical Futures Forum is expected to recommend a range of actions to promote tropical science and technology for consideration by the three governments.

**Key Tropical Science facts:**

An example of the expertise in the Northern Territory includes:

- Indigenous tropical knowledge enterprises, such as leading edge research on fire management and rangeland monitoring in association with the Indigenous owners of Arnhem Land, and the Cooperative Research Centre for Tropical Savannas.

- Partnership in ten Cooperative Research Centres, including the CRC for Desert Knowledge, the CRC for Tropical Savannas and the CRC for Aboriginal Health.

- Newly formed Institute of Advanced Studies at the Charles Darwin University to focus on the NT’s areas of research excellence.

- World class capacity in tropical health, such as research by the Menzies School of Health Research.

- Environmental baseline studies and monitoring by the Environmental Research Institute of the Supervising Scientist (ERISS), Northern Territory based scientists and technicians, recognised for their expertise in environmental monitoring and management involving mining in tropical wetlands.

- Applied taxonomic research by the internationally respected Museums and Art Gallery of the NT (MAGNT) and collaborative research in areas such as box jellyfish toxicology, global species identification and biodiversity programs.