



MEDIA RELEASE

PORT OF DARWIN SELECT COMMITTEE

31 March 2015

Darwin Port Visit and Public Hearings

The Port of Darwin Select Committee visited the Port of Darwin this afternoon and held public hearings with Asciano/Patrick Stevedoring and the Port of Darwin Steering Committee, which comprises Chief Executives of Government Agencies working on the proposed lease.

“The visit to the Port of Darwin and discussions with the steering committee have given the Committee a better understanding of the case for leasing the Port,” Mr Nathan Barrett MLA, Chair of the Committee said.

“The Steering Committee outlined the importance of the Port to the Northern Territory’s emerging economy, and noted a number of potential markets that would require further investment in the Port. The Government had been seeking Federal funding to develop the Port for many years, but as this had not been forthcoming it is now exploring private sector options.

“The Steering Committee made it clear that a priority for the Government was to find a partner who had an aligned vision for growth and development of the Port.

“Another clear message was that assuring appropriate access and price regulation was key. It was important to get the balance right between commercial and the public interest. As the Port was a monopoly provider, regulation was required to ensure fair access and pricing that would promote economic development. At the same time, any port operator has an interest in developing its customers and regulation needed to be sufficiently light to enable markets to flourish.

“Much work had been done on drawing from the experience of previous port privatisations around Australia, and the Territory’s existing public private partnerships, such as the Darwin to Tarcoola Railway. For example, the Steering Committee was confident it had done adequate work on land valuation to avoid the kind of rent increases experienced with the Brisbane and Melbourne ports.

“Tomorrow the Select Committee will be hearing from a range of other organisations with an interest in the Port of Darwin. The Committee looks forward to testing the explanations it was given today and hearing other perspectives on how the Territory can best manage the Port of Darwin,” Mr Barrett said.

The schedule for tomorrow’s hearing is at <http://www.nt.gov.au/lant/parliamentary-business/committees/pod/Inquiries.shtml>.