

**SPEECH NOTES FOR  
THE HON KEN VOWLES MLA  
MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRY AND RESOURCES**

**Opening address to the Crawford Fund Forum  
Parliament House, Thursday 10 May 2018, 3pm**

**Key Points/Current Status:**

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*NT Support for International Agriculture*

- It is impossible to live in Darwin and not be regularly reminded how close we are to our neighbours to the north.
- Indonesia, Timor Leste and Papua New Guinea are not just physically close to Darwin. We also have strong economic links and these will only grow and diversify in coming years, providing the basis for the Territory's prosperity.

- We have educational links, with so many students from Charles Darwin University coming from nearby countries, along with research partnerships and shorter training courses.
- We have close cultural connections through our diverse Darwin population and our long history of interaction with Southeast Asia. This will be demonstrated next year when the newly revived Arafura Games take place from 27 April until 4 May. Over the last few months I have been busy inviting countries from the Asia-Pacific region to take part.
- Prosperity in the countries to our north is also essential for Australia's security.

- A major part of all these relationships is agriculture. Food security and rural livelihoods are the top priorities for most of our neighbours with their rapidly growing populations. Therefore the NT Government has contributed, and continues to contribute, significant resources to international agricultural development in this region. Let me give you a few examples:
- My Department of Primary Industry and Resources has helped the development of successful cattle and buffalo industries in Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam for most of the last 25 years.
- Recently the emphasis have been on breeding cattle in Indonesia. NT Government staff have recently finished a successful 2½ year project in East Kalimantan where 2000 cattle were dispersed amongst 1000 smallholder farmers, and

the farmers and local Government staff were trained and mentored to achieve good animal welfare and production. This project is being used as a pilot for livestock development across the whole of Indonesia.

- The Department will now be part of a new 3-year project researching cattle under palm, helping to mentor Indonesian universities in successful cattle management. The NT also provides regular training for both university students and industry, such as last week's training course in Katherine on cattle breeding for 20 commercial operators from across Indonesia.
- I should also commend the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association for their great efforts to help Indonesian industry. Their student program in particular attracts attention both in Indonesia and Australia.

When this year's batch of students arrive in July to start their three weeks' training followed by six weeks working on NT cattle stations, this will be the fifth year of the program. It has made a huge difference to the lives of the 75 students have so far gone through the scheme, and it has helped to set up long lasting relationships between these future leaders and young people in our cattle industry.

- Horticulture is a major field where the interests of the NT and the countries to our north intersect. I will mention three recent examples where our DPIR Plant Industry people have been able to make a significant contribution to International Agricultural Development, with projects in:

- **Cambodia**, where our work on mango is helping to develop their mango industry and provide benefits for the Australian industry at the same time. I am very pleased to see that one of the presenters today is Maddison Clonan one of the department's staff who was sponsored by the Crawford Fund to work on improving fruit quality in Cambodian mangoes through post-harvest handling practices.
- **Timor Leste**, where our staff have been conducting research on the biocontrol of papaya mealybug, a serious insect pest.
- **Philippines** where we have been able to share research and development on the tropical fruit industry (including jackfruit) that has implications for both the Philippines and North Australia.

- Looking to the future, the NT Government is keen to assist the people of Timor Leste, a country where food security is particularly important. Our Government will be continuing discussions on the best way of assisting the development of Timor Leste's agricultural industries once their current round of parliamentary elections are complete.
- I therefore commend the goals and operations of the Crawford Fund. Sharing our agricultural expertise with our neighbours, and enabling our young professionals to acquire overseas experience are both very worthwhile goals.
- Thank you for the invitation to address your forum and I hope you have fruitful discussions.