NTDC
NORTHERN TASMANIA
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD

August 2026

Submission to the Tasmanian Government - Draft Economic Diversification and Investment Strategy

About NTDC

Northern Tasmania Development Corporation Ltd (NTDC) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Tasmanian Government's draft Economic Diversification and Investment Strategy.

NTDC brings Northern Tasmania together to shape and advance shared priorities that strengthen the region's economic, social, community and cultural development. Our emerging 2026–2029 Strategy is focused on four outcomes: aligning and leading the region; building the evidence for better decisions; advancing priorities into outcomes; and strengthening NTDC's capability and trust.

NTDC works with its member councils and partners across government, industry, community and other sectors on opportunities and challenges that extend beyond individual municipal boundaries.

Our approach is deliberately focused. NTDC intends to pursue a limited number of region-shaping priorities where there is a clear regional mandate, credible evidence of public and regional value, a defined role for NTDC, and a realistic pathway to decision, investment, funding or implementation.

Overall position

NTDC supports the intent and broad direction of the draft Economic Diversification and Investment Strategy.

The Strategy appropriately recognises that Tasmania's future prosperity will require greater private investment, increased productivity and participation, stronger regional opportunity, and more coordinated government decision-making. Its six strategic priorities provide a useful framework for aligning investment, innovation, productivity, regional development, workforce capability and enabling infrastructure.

However, NTDC considers that the final Strategy should more clearly recognise the factors that create and sustain Tasmania's competitive and comparative advantage.

For a small regional economy, competitiveness cannot be understood solely in terms of industry scale, physical infrastructure or the immediate requirements of individual investment projects. Tasmania's economic proposition is also shaped by the quality of its places, natural environment, cultural and creative capacity, education, amenity and liveability. These attributes influence where people choose to live and work, where businesses invest, the capacity of regions to attract and retain skilled workers, the visitor economy, innovation, and the value attached to Tasmanian products and experiences.

The final Strategy should therefore make a stronger connection between economic diversification and investment in the underlying attributes that make Tasmania and its regions distinctive and competitive.

NTDC particularly supports the proposed Activating our regions priority.

The recognition that Tasmania's economic future will be shaped region by region, and that different regions have different strengths, constraints, workforce requirements and infrastructure needs, is strongly supported. NTDC also welcomes the recognition that economic activity does not necessarily align with

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administrative boundaries and that councils, communities, regional authorities and other partnerships have an important role in regional implementation.

Northern Tasmania already has many of the institutional relationships and regional capabilities required to put this approach into practice.

The opportunity is therefore not to create another layer of governance. It is to make better use of existing regional capability so that State Government receives clearer priorities, better evidence, more mature investment propositions and a more coordinated regional interface.

NTDC considers that the final Strategy should go further in defining how this regional implementation model will work.

Recommendations

NTDC recommends that the final Economic Diversification and Investment Strategy:

1. **Recognise capable regional leadership and development organisations as formal implementation partners**, providing a structured interface between State Government and regions for priority setting, evidence, advocacy and implementation.
2. **Establish a shared regional evidence and data model**, with State Government and regional partners collaborating on economic, workforce, demographic, infrastructure, housing, liveability and related indicators rather than developing parallel systems.
3. **Create a disciplined regional priority and project pathway**, enabling strategically significant initiatives to move from identified regional need through evidence, options analysis, business or benefits cases and investment readiness before seeking major government commitments.
4. **Pilot an integrated regional implementation model in Northern Tasmania**, connecting regional priority setting, regional evidence, investment readiness and coordinated State Government engagement.
5. **Identify and invest in the foundations of regional competitive advantage and liveability**, and adopt a benefits framework that recognises how housing, education and skills, childcare, transport, recreation, cultural and creative capacity, environmental quality and other place-based assets support workforce attraction and retention, innovation, value-adding, regional brand and market access.

1. Strengthen the regional implementation model

The draft Strategy identifies an important challenge: State-level economic priorities need to connect with the strengths, workforce needs, infrastructure and practical constraints that exist within individual regions. It proposes tailored regional approaches and identifies the need to align regional partnerships and strengthen regional capability.

NTDC strongly supports this direction.

However, the final Strategy should provide greater clarity about how regional priorities will be developed, aggregated and communicated to government.

Without an effective regional mechanism, governments can receive multiple overlapping or competing propositions from councils, industry groups, individual proponents and other stakeholders. This can make prioritisation harder, reduce regional influence and make it difficult to distinguish genuinely region-shaping priorities from individual organisational or project interests.

NTDC's emerging strategy seeks to address precisely this issue in Northern Tasmania.

NTDC proposes an annual regional priority-setting process through which member councils and regional partners identify a limited shared agenda, supported by coordinated advocacy and government engagement. The intention is that government and investors receive a more consistent and credible regional proposition rather than multiple disconnected asks.

This model does not require additional bureaucracy or decision-making layers.

Regional bodies should not replace the role of councils, government agencies, industry or project proponents. Their value is in convening, aligning, testing and progressing issues whose benefits and impacts extend across municipal or organisational boundaries.

NTDC recommends that the final Strategy explicitly recognise this role and provide a structured mechanism through which capable regional organisations can engage with the Tasmanian Government.

2. Build a shared regional evidence base

NTDC strongly supports the draft Strategy's proposal to improve regional economic, development, liveability and demographic data and projections.

Good regional decisions require a shared understanding of both opportunity and constraint.

The draft Strategy correctly identifies the importance of understanding regional strengths, workforce needs, infrastructure opportunities, land-use barriers and housing capacity. It also recognises housing supply, land readiness and infrastructure sequencing as economic enablers where they constrain workforce and investment.

NTDC's emerging strategy similarly commits to becoming a trusted regional source of evidence and insight. This includes establishing a regional data hub and dashboard, publishing an annual Northern Tasmania Regional Outlook, commissioning targeted research where evidence gaps are impeding decisions, and applying consistent evidence standards to major advocacy and investment propositions.

There is an opportunity to develop this capability in partnership with the Tasmanian Government rather than duplicate data collection, analysis and reporting.

NTDC proposes that State Government explore a formal regional data partnership for Northern Tasmania. This could involve agreed indicators, access to relevant datasets and projections, common definitions, data-sharing arrangements and collaboration on significant regional research.

The objective should be a shared evidence base that can inform local and regional planning while also improving State Government decision-making.

A practical partnership of this kind could become a model for other regions.

3. Move beyond regional project lists to investment-ready propositions

NTDC supports the draft Strategy's emphasis on more disciplined prioritisation of government effort and public resources.

The Strategy notes that government has multiple economic levers available and proposes greater alignment in how interventions are assessed, with decisions informed by an integrated framework and consideration of public interest.

A corresponding discipline should operate at the regional level.

Historically, regional advocacy can become dominated by long lists of projects seeking government funding. While many individual projects may have merit, this approach does not always provide government with sufficient evidence about relative regional significance, readiness, benefits, dependencies or the next decision required.

NTDC is moving toward a different model.

Its proposed region-shaping project gateway progressively tests regional significance, the underlying problem or opportunity, available options, readiness and viability, formal commitment, implementation and benefits. Each priority initiative is expected to have an identified owner, a defined role for NTDC, a clear next decision or gateway, an assessment of benefits and risks, and a defined pathway for NTDC to exit, transfer or close its involvement.

The intent is straightforward: fewer priorities, supported by better evidence and progressed more consistently.

NTDC believes there is considerable value in connecting such a regional project gateway with the Tasmanian Government's own investment and intervention assessment processes.

Doing so would help priority regional initiatives arrive at government in a more mature state, with clearer regional support, better evidence, greater understanding of benefits and risks, and stronger delivery pathways.

4. Northern Tasmania as an early implementation partner

NTDC proposes that the Tasmanian Government consider Northern Tasmania as an early implementation partner for the regional elements of the Economic Diversification and Investment Strategy.

This could bring together four connected elements:

Regional priorities → shared evidence → investment readiness → coordinated government pathways.

Northern Tasmania provides a practical environment in which to test this model because NTDC is already establishing the governance, evidence and project disciplines required to support it.

Under NTDC's proposed 2026–2029 delivery roadmap, the initial phase includes agreeing a regional priority agenda, launching a regional data hub, implementing a project gateway framework and confirming a focused portfolio of priority initiatives. Subsequent phases are intended to progress initiatives through benefits cases, business cases and implementation readiness, secure partnerships and ultimately deliver measurable value.

A partnership could therefore build on work already underway rather than establish a new structure.

NTDC would welcome discussion with Building Tasmania and relevant State Government agencies about what such a model could look like, including appropriate governance, data-sharing arrangements, government interfaces and measures of success.

5. Build competitive advantage through place, people and liveability

NTDC supports the Strategy's strong economic focus. Private investment, productivity, innovation, workforce capability, participation and enabling infrastructure are fundamental to Northern Tasmania's future.

At the same time, regional economic development cannot be separated from the conditions that allow people and businesses to succeed in a place. Housing availability, population change, education and skills, transport, childcare and other services, recreation and community infrastructure, cultural vitality,

environmental resilience and liveability can all influence the ability of a region to attract and retain workers, accommodate investment and sustain economic growth.

This is particularly important for Tasmania and its regions, which will not compete on scale in every sector. Diversification should therefore be about differentiation and resilience as much as scale: identifying where regions have genuine comparative and competitive advantage, investing in the assets and capabilities that strengthen those advantages, moving products and services into higher-value markets, and improving access to domestic and international customers.

NTDC's 2024 population analysis, prepared by the Tasmanian Policy Exchange, reinforces this point. It found that Northern Tasmania had exceeded its employment growth target while falling well short of its population growth target, concluding that population change is shaped by factors beyond employment alone, including lifestyle, amenity, liveability and place attachment.

That work also identified the infrastructure, place assets and community connections that underpin liveability as a central population priority. Workshop participants highlighted childcare, public transport, appropriate housing, green space and recreation facilities as important to supporting families with young children. These are not simply social outcomes that follow economic growth; where they influence workforce attraction and retention, they are also economic enablers.

Culture and creative capacity should be considered in the same way. They contribute to the distinctiveness and vitality of places and can support innovation, design, entrepreneurship, tourism, events, food and other experience-based industries. A strategy that seeks stronger innovation should recognise the role that creative capability can play in generating new ideas, products, services and market propositions.

Tasmania's natural environment performs a similarly important economic function. Environmental quality underpins much of the State's visitor appeal, regional identity and liveability, and contributes to the market proposition of Tasmanian products and experiences. Protecting and strengthening this advantage should be part of the State's long-term investment thinking.

NTDC therefore recommends that the final Strategy provide a practical mechanism for regions to identify their distinctive competitive and comparative advantages; understand the investments required to protect and strengthen them; connect research, creative capability and innovation more explicitly with industry development; strengthen regional and place-based market propositions; and identify pathways into higher-value domestic and export markets.

Not every economic initiative will require every measure. However, major regional investments should be capable of demonstrating their wider benefits and impacts where material, including who benefits, where benefits occur, and whether an initiative strengthens the long-term capacity, resilience and attractiveness of the region.

Opportunities for Northern Tasmania

NTDC does not propose that the Economic Diversification and Investment Strategy become a catalogue of individual regional projects.

Rather, the Strategy should establish the framework through which the strongest regional opportunities can be identified, tested and progressed.

For Northern Tasmania, this should begin with a clear understanding of the region's areas of genuine advantage and the conditions required to strengthen them. These include established and emerging strengths in food and agribusiness, manufacturing and maritime capability, renewable energy, freight and

logistics, research and education, and the visitor economy, together with enabling advantages such as the region's natural and cultural assets, liveability and distinctive communities.

The objective should not simply be to increase the scale of activity across a larger number of industries. In a relatively small economy, there is greater value in identifying areas where Northern Tasmania can be distinctive, innovative and competitive; moving products and services further up the value chain; strengthening market positioning and regional brand; and opening new domestic and export pathways.

This also requires the connections between economic priorities to be considered explicitly. An industrial investment may depend on energy, land, freight, housing, skills and workforce services. Population growth may depend on employment, housing, education, childcare, transport, recreation, cultural life and environmental quality. Visitor economy growth may depend on the protection and enhancement of natural, cultural and community assets.

A regional approach provides the mechanism for identifying and resolving these connections. It can bring together regional priority setting, shared evidence, investment readiness and coordinated government pathways while ensuring that investment decisions reflect the full set of conditions required for long-term regional prosperity.

NTDC's proposed Northern Tasmania implementation partnership would provide a practical opportunity to test this place-based approach: identifying regional advantages, establishing the evidence for investment, progressing a limited number of region-shaping priorities, and assessing economic outcomes alongside workforce, liveability, cultural, environmental and distributional benefits where relevant.

Conclusion

NTDC supports the Tasmanian Government's intention to develop a clearer, more coordinated and more disciplined approach to economic diversification and investment.

The draft Strategy provides a useful foundation, but NTDC believes its impact would be strengthened by a more complete conception of what drives regional competitiveness. Tasmania's long-term economic advantage will depend not only on attracting individual investments, but on sustained investment in the places, people, capabilities and natural and cultural assets that allow industries, businesses and communities to thrive.

For this priority to succeed, regional implementation should be more than consultation with individual stakeholders. Tasmania needs effective mechanisms that bring councils, industry, community and other partners together around a limited set of priorities; develop trusted evidence; mature significant opportunities; and provide government with a coherent regional proposition.

NTDC's emerging strategy is designed to support this role by aligning regional priorities, credible evidence and disciplined project development.

NTDC therefore invites the Tasmanian Government to work with us on the practical implementation of the Economic Diversification and Investment Strategy in Northern Tasmania.

Specifically, we would welcome further discussion on: recognising NTDC as a regional implementation partner; establishing a shared regional evidence framework; connecting regional project gateways with State investment decision-making; investing in the foundations of regional competitive advantage and liveability; and using Northern Tasmania as an early demonstration of an integrated regional delivery model.

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