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Dear Members,

We have completed our series of Regional and Industry Council Annual General Meetings. My congratulations to the new Committees and Chairs and to all of the Members of the Regional and Industry Council Executives. I wish you well in your continuing contribution to, and promotion of, the Chambers ideals and objectives through 2010.

The Chambers Annual General Meeting will be held on 21 October 2009 and our Annual Dinner on 7 November 2009. I look forward to meeting you at each event.

The Chamber has had a busy year dealing with the many issues that confront business in the Northern Territory. I am pleased to report confidence is positive in our Regions, including the Top End, and demand remains generally strong, fortified by stimulus coming from the Federal and Territory Government's and private investment.

Some of the highlights of the year include:

- The Chambers inaugural Northern Territory Summit held on 25 March 2009, at the Darwin Convention Centre. We released the Summit's findings on 27 August 2009. The Summit discussed the themes of Infrastructure; Growing the Manufacturing base; and Lifestyle.
- Several trade delegations, including a large delegation from Darwin in May 2009 to Timor-Leste. Many Northern Territory firms supply both goods and services to the UN, NGO's, the international missions and projects in Timor-Leste.
- In June, Darwin hosted one of the largest international conferences yet to visit our city. More than 1,600 delegates of the Australian Petroleum Production & Exploration Association met in Darwin over a number of days.
- In July, the Northern Territory Chamber was very proud to host a meeting of the Board and General Council of Australia's peak employer organisation, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI).
- The Northern Territory Exporters Awards in September honoured Energy Resources of Australia (Minerals and Energy; and Exporter of the Year); North Australian Cattle Company (Agribusiness); Linetec Engineering (SME Manufacturer); OM Manganese Limited (Emerging Exporter); Australian Skills Training (Services); and Alice Springs Helicopters (Small Business).

In relation to Northern Territory government policy, we are looking forward to working with government regarding to the Territory 2030 Strategic Plan; the Working Towns / Closing the Gap initiative; and the development of the regional transport strategy.

The coming year will see the Chamber work towards meeting our financial and operational targets as outlined in the Business Plan; continue our engagement with Government and Government Departments on behalf of members; work with our indigenous businesses, including establishing an Indigenous Business Council within the Chamber; engagement with key organisations involved in the offshore oil and gas industry on behalf of members; continue the Chambers work providing range of tailored and responsive services to assist members meet their business objectives; and reinforce the Chambers position in the Territory business community, including its lead communication role.

In 2010, we will also see business deal with managing the impost on the economy of the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme and important changes to our system of industrial relation.

Starting 1 January 2010, business will need to apply the new mandatory employment standards. We will also need to deal with the new industrial awards. I urge you to familiarise yourself with the National Employment Standards and the Award that will apply to your industry.

The design of the CPRS will inherently raise the costs of goods and services across the economy. In its CPRS Information Sheet, while ACCI estimates only 1,000 businesses will be liable under the CPRS, ACCI notes that the “introduction of the CPRS will cause significant structural change to the Australian economy, as the pricing of emissions will drive demand towards low-emission goods, technologies and processes. It will increase the relative cost of emission intensive products such as coal, gas, iron, steel, livestock and some manufactured products. Importantly, it will increase transport fuel costs and energy prices...The extent and severity of its impact will however vary from business to business, sector to sector and region to region.”

Through next year, we will also have opportunity to continue our input regarding the harmonisation of OHS legislation. The Commonwealth and most state and territory governments have committed to the harmonisation of OHS legislation by December 2011. Chamber policy is to support a model OHS framework, particularly to reduce the costs of complying with multiple systems. On behalf of the Chamber, ACCI has made submissions regarding the model OHS laws to ensure the interests of business are addressed.

I thank our Members for their support, which keeps the Chamber strong and capable of effectively representing member’s interest at all levels of government, locally and nationally.

I wish you health and success in your endeavours.

Sincerely,

George Roussos
President, Chamber of Commerce, Northern Territory