

In Queensland, CSIRO have identified the Mitchell catchment (yellow area above) as the greatest potential to increase greenfield development opportunities in Northern Australia, and the coastal regions of the Fitzroy and Burdekin River catchments for enhancements. However, developments in these would do nothing for the water poor, rich soil areas of Clermont, Richmond, Longreach, Barcaldine, Murrumbidgee that already have established agricultural infrastructure that could be expanded, established human settlements (and importantly voters), and further west potentially channel water into the Murray Darling Basin. The CSIRO studies have not, so far, evaluated the feasibility of aqueducts between catchments. Therefore, the locations they identify rely on the coincidence of good soils, dam locations and rainfall. They do not consider connected water networks with harvesting levees and high catchment dams, or aqueducts that could transfer water between high rainfall poor soil, to low rainfall good soil locations. Not considered, also, are potential higher returns from enhanced town water supplies.

The problem - very few people live in the Mitchell catchment or want to go there (see map). I am concerned the CSIRO are going down the wrong path again, potentially creating another massive 'white elephant' like the Ord River Irrigation Scheme that may take 100's of years to reach the projected potential. A system of gravity-fed aqueducts from the high rainfall northern rivers of Tully and the Walsh Rivers into the existing populated outback areas with irrigation potential - aka the new Bradfield Scheme - needs to be included in the CSIRO feasibility studies.

CSIRO have investigated the potential of northern Australia's water resources to support increased regional development as part of our engagement in delivery of the Australian Government's *White Paper on Developing Northern Australia*, for which one of the key initiatives is the development of northern Australia's water resources. They have delivered [water resource assessments](#) for three priority regions in northern Australia for the Australian Government after working with northern jurisdictions, research partners and communities over 2.5 years. An orphaned dam in the Mitchell catchment is all we get? Disappointing.