

# Our North, Our Future: 2021-2026

## Targeted Growth

November 2021





# Acknowledgment of Country

The Office of Northern Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea, and community. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

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Throughout this document, the term 'Indigenous' has been used to collectively refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. However, we acknowledge the differences in culture, history, and language, not just between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, but also between communities.

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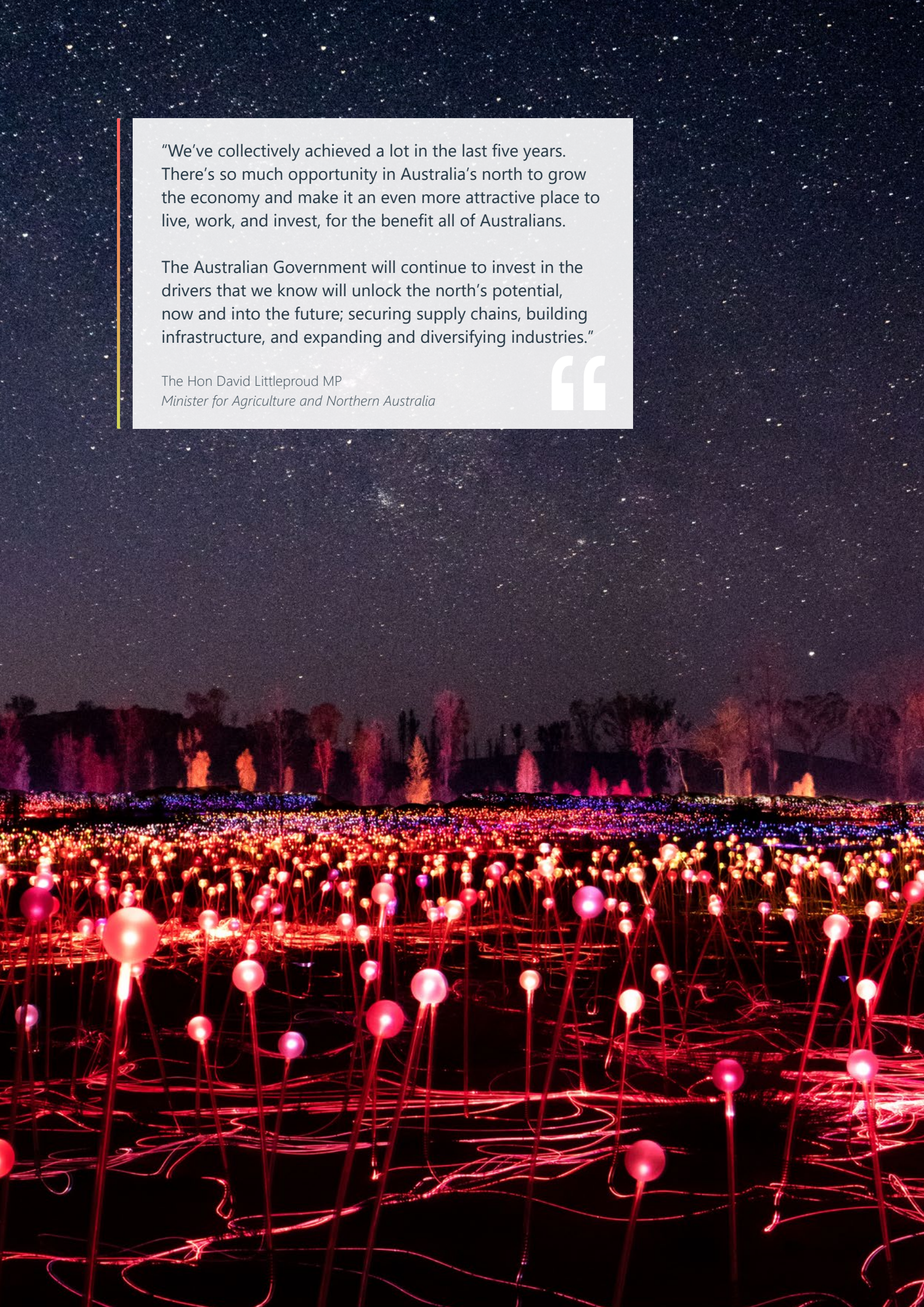
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A night landscape featuring a field of light poles with glowing spherical tops in various colors (red, orange, yellow, blue, purple). The poles are arranged in rows, and their lights reflect on the ground. In the background, there are silhouettes of trees and hills under a dark sky filled with stars and the Milky Way. A white text box is overlaid on the upper left portion of the image.

"We've collectively achieved a lot in the last five years. There's so much opportunity in Australia's north to grow the economy and make it an even more attractive place to live, work, and invest, for the benefit all of Australians.

The Australian Government will continue to invest in the drivers that we know will unlock the north's potential, now and into the future; securing supply chains, building infrastructure, and expanding and diversifying industries."

The Hon David Littleproud MP  
*Minister for Agriculture and Northern Australia*





## Foreword



**The Hon David Littleproud MP**

*Minister for Agriculture and Northern Australia*



**Senator Susan McDonald**

*Special Envoy for Northern Australia*

From cotton in Kununurra, minerals in the Pilbara, Barramundi in Darwin, to aquaculture in Townsville, Northern Australia's vast array of economic opportunities is driving economic growth for the benefit of all Australians.

Every time I travel throughout the north I am always struck by the resilience and dedication of the people I meet. Along with my colleague, Senator Susan McDonald, the Special Envoy for Northern Australia, we have been listening to what industry, business and communities tell us they need to tackle the challenges they face and give it a go.

Our Government has delivered over \$6.2 billion in funding to implement the recommendations of the 2015 *Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia*. Our focus is on leveraging the north's many advantages and creating the right conditions for business and industry to thrive.

This year, we have launched our first business growth and diversification grants programs worth \$111.9 million. The Northern Australia Development Program will give businesses, industry, and other organisations a helping hand to scale up and diversify. We are also addressing the challenges of keeping people connected and doing business, with \$68.5 million to tackle digital connectivity and mobile black spots across the north.

We are pleased to release *Our North, Our Future: 2021-2026 'Targeted Growth'*. This is our Government's plan for the next five years that is focused on further economic development by maximising our investment and creating a path forward for greater private sector investment.

In particular, we will bring to life Regions of Growth through Master Plans. In collaboration with state and territory governments, we will invest in water infrastructure, energy, minerals, or logistics infrastructure, to accelerate growth in the north. The \$9.3 million pilot Regions of Growth program will start in early 2022, with consultations on locally-focused investment opportunities in three initial regions – Mount Isa to Townsville, Beetaloo Basin to Katherine to Darwin, and Broome to Kununurra to Darwin.

Through the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility (NAIF) we have committed over \$3.1 billion to finance projects from fish farms to energy projects, transport, and social infrastructure facilities which will generate \$16 billion in public benefit and over 10,000 jobs. The NAIF will drive greater investment into pipelines of infrastructure across all sectors, guided by the Regions of Growth Master Plans.

The opportunities of the north can be greatly improved with the participation and knowledge of Indigenous Australians. Our northern agenda will enable Indigenous Australians to capitalise on their knowledge of their land. The second Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group will soon be in place and we look forward to their indispensable contribution to the north.

Building economic opportunities in the north requires the combined efforts of many government and private sector partners, local businesses, and communities. The coordinated, targeted and sustained development of Northern Australia will make it a region that people from all over want to work in, live in, and invest in.

The Hon David Littleproud MP



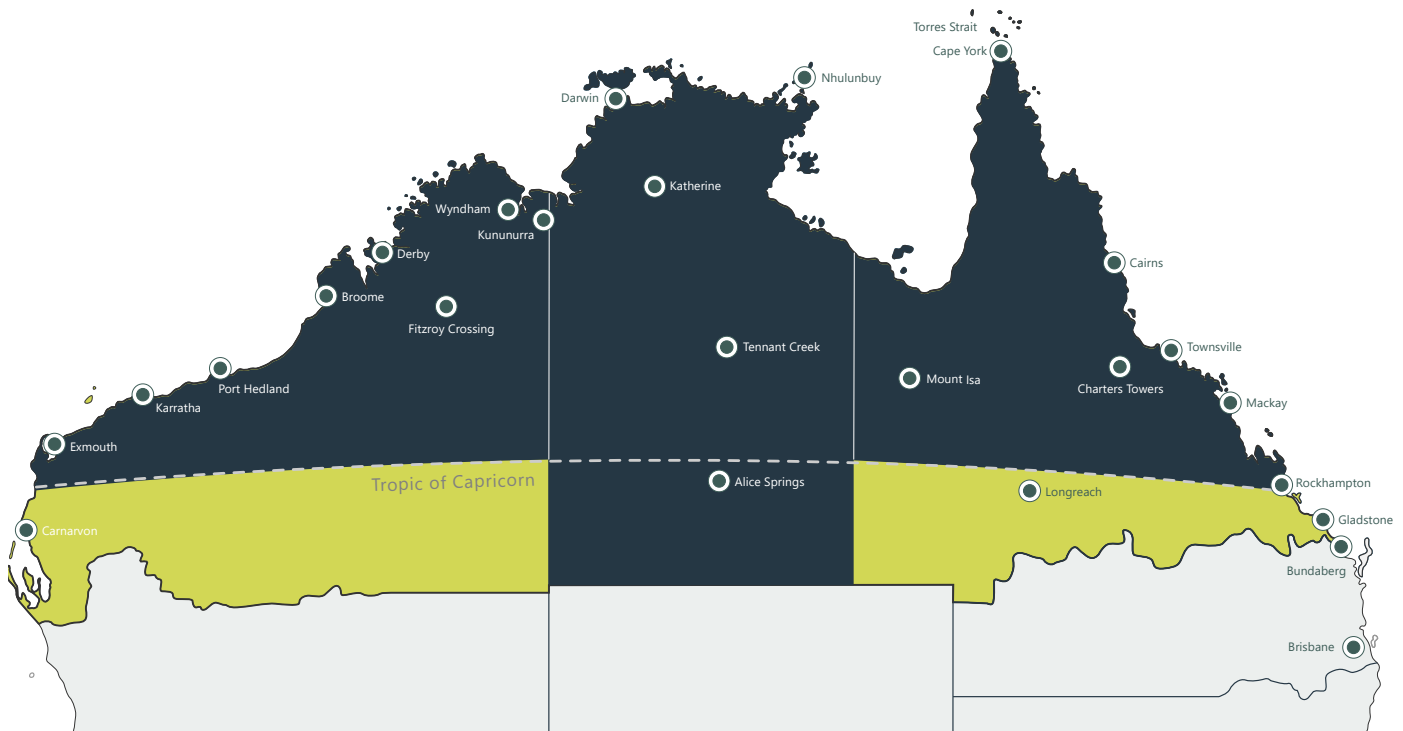
# Defining Northern Australia



Northern Australia is a large, diverse landscape with a range of natural assets, a young, multicultural population, and has a wide range of opportunities for growth.

Northern Australia is defined in the map below. The *Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia* (White Paper) defines Northern Australia as all of the Northern Territory (NT) and those parts of Queensland (QLD) and Western Australia (WA) above the Tropic of Capricorn.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, Northern Australia can include parts of Queensland and Western Australia above and directly below or intersecting with the Tropic of Capricorn and the regional centres of Gladstone, QLD, Carnarvon, WA, and Exmouth, WA; the Local Government Areas of Meekatharra, WA; Wiluna, WA; and the Shire of Ngaanyatjaraku, WA. Territorial seas up to 12 nautical miles offshore adjacent to these areas are also included in the definition.



**Map of Northern Australia**  
Navy shading: White Paper definition  
Green shading: broader definition

Using the broader definition, Northern Australia encompasses 53 per cent of Australia's landmass, but accounts for only 5.3 per cent of Australia's population.<sup>2</sup> Northern Australia's diverse industries include: resources and energy, defence, horticulture, aquaculture and fishing, agriculture, tropical health research, tourism, and education, among others.

Northern Australia produces more than 93 per cent of Australia's mangoes,<sup>3</sup> more than 94 per cent of Australia's bananas,<sup>4</sup> and more than 95 per cent of Australia's sugar.<sup>5</sup> It has 64 per cent of Australia's national beef cattle herd<sup>6</sup> and over 70 per cent of Australia's known resources of iron ore, lead, and zinc.<sup>7</sup> The north's natural landscapes and seven World Heritage sites<sup>8</sup> attract more than a million international visitors each year.<sup>9</sup>

By capitalising on the north's natural assets, comparative advantages, young population, and unique cultural context, there is a real opportunity for tailored and targeted investment to accelerate industry growth, create jobs, and add value to the Australian economy. This is why developing Northern Australia is at the heart of Australian Government policy.



**53%** of Australia's  
landmass



**1.3 million**  
people



**2 million** gegalitres of  
rainfall per year



more than **94%** of  
Australia's bananas



## Office of Northern Australia

The Office of Northern Australia (ONA) is the Australian Government's area of expertise for Northern Australia. The ONA supports the Minister for Agriculture and Northern Australia and the Special Envoy for Northern Australia, and sits within the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications.

The ONA coordinates the implementation of the Government's Northern Australia policy agenda, including the White Paper, to achieve a sustainable and contemporary northern economy. The ONA provides policy advice, coordinates operational support for the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility, supports Indigenous inclusion, coordinates whole-of-government reporting, and facilitates governance structures.

Communications and engagement are vital to keep stakeholders across the north, and the nation, informed of opportunities and progress. The Minister for Northern Australia's Annual Statement to the Parliament, the annual Developing Northern Australia Conference, and regular roundtable discussions and events across Northern Australia provide national coverage of the Northern Australia agenda. The whole-of-government suite of policy and programs are informed by people in the north, advocating for the region they live, work and are invested in.

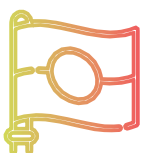
Working with key partners such as the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility (NAIF), the Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia (CRCNA), and the Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group (IRG) is integral to operations. The ONA headquarters are in Darwin, with staff and offices in Cairns, Townsville, Brisbane, Perth, and Canberra.

## Working in partnership

The Office of Northern Australia is delivering the Government's Northern Australia agenda in partnership with agencies and organisations including:

- ♦ Attorney-General's Department;
- ♦ Australian Trade and Investment Commission;
- ♦ Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia;
- ♦ Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment;
- ♦ Department of Defence;
- ♦ Department of Education, Skills and Employment;
- ♦ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade;
- ♦ Department of Home Affairs;
- ♦ Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources, including AusIndustry;
- ♦ Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications;
- ♦ Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet;
- ♦ Developing Northern Australia Conference;
- ♦ Government of Western Australia;
- ♦ Indigenous Reference Group for Northern Australia;
- ♦ Infrastructure Australia;
- ♦ Joint Standing Committee on Northern Australia;
- ♦ National Indigenous Australians Agency;
- ♦ National Recovery and Resilience Agency;
- ♦ Northern Regional Development Australia Alliance;
- ♦ Northern Australia Alliance;
- ♦ Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility;
- ♦ Northern Territory Government;
- ♦ Queensland Government;
- ♦ Senate Select Committee on the effectiveness of the Australian Government's Northern Australia Agenda;
- ♦ The Treasury; and
- ♦ The many passionate and dedicated people that live, work, and invest in Northern Australia.

Visit [www.northernaustralia.gov.au](http://www.northernaustralia.gov.au) for more information.



**15%** of the population  
is Indigenous



more than **93%** of  
Australia's mangoes



**7** world  
heritage sites



more than **1 million**  
visitors per year



# Recap on the first five years: 2015-2020

## Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia

In 2015, the Australian Government released its long-term, strategic vision for the sustainable economic development of Northern Australia.<sup>10</sup> The *Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia* (White Paper) is the Government's 20-year framework to guide policy makers and investors in building a strong, prosperous, resilient northern economy.

The White Paper is dedicated to unlocking the strategic potential of the north. It is focused on developing industries and facilitating long-term economic growth. The White Paper has underpinned all of the Government's policy activities over the past five years. The White Paper has positioned Northern Australia as an attractive environment for businesses to invest and communities to flourish.



## Progress

This whole-of-government agenda has achieved significant progress since the 2015 White Paper was published. Key achievements include, but are not limited to:

- ♦ established the \$5 billion NAIF to drive private sector investment in infrastructure through concessional finance to projects such as airport facilities, solar and energy storage, and major new mining projects.<sup>11</sup> The NAIF has made 29 investment decisions totalling \$3.1 billion, supporting projects with an estimated total capital value of \$6.6 billion as at November 2021. These investments are forecast to generate around \$16 billion in economic benefit and support more than 10,000 jobs;<sup>12</sup>
- ♦ invested over \$3.16 billion into critical road infrastructure, supporting economic activity and jobs;<sup>13</sup>
- ♦ committed more than \$500 million to support water infrastructure projects in the north through the National Water Grid Fund;<sup>14</sup>
- ♦ invested \$15 million for three CSIRO-led Northern Australia Water Resource Assessments and an extra \$10 million for assessments and water modelling of the Roper River, NT and the Great Artesian Basin, QLD to inform the future development of sustainable water infrastructure and harness the large amounts of rainfall the north receives each year;<sup>15</sup>
- ♦ created the \$75 million, 10-year CRCNA for industry-led research that supports pathways for diversity and greater productivity;<sup>16</sup>
- ♦ enhanced access to business support and expertise from the Entrepreneurs' Programme by lowering the threshold for northern businesses,<sup>17</sup> resulting in eligibility extended to an additional 500 northern businesses;<sup>18</sup>
- ♦ invested \$12.4 million in the Indigenous Rangers Program to undertake biosecurity activities, surveillance, and protection across the north.<sup>19</sup> More than 2,100 full-time, part-time, and casual jobs in land and sea management have been created by the program nationally with over 69 Indigenous Ranger groups operating in Northern Australia;<sup>20</sup>
- ♦ provided almost \$50 million in capacity building for Prescribed Bodies Corporate through regional forums, education materials, land arrangements pilot reform projects, and enabling township leasing to support investment on Indigenous land;<sup>21</sup>
- ♦ invested in significant infrastructure redevelopments and upgrades to defence facilities and fleets by the Australian Defence Force, providing business opportunities for local service providers,<sup>22</sup> and resources for Defence personnel and their families serving in the north;<sup>23</sup>
- ♦ invested over \$20 million to bolster capacity and investment in tropical medicine research and commercialisation opportunities;<sup>24</sup>
- ♦ enhanced safety and accessibility of aerodromes in remote and very remote areas of Northern Australia through grants under the Remote Airstrip Upgrade Program with an initial \$30.8 million invested, and over 114 airstrips upgraded;<sup>25</sup>
- ♦ expanded the Seasonal Worker Programme to support the agricultural<sup>26</sup> and tourism and hospitality sectors<sup>27</sup> and established the Pacific Microstates-Northern Australia Worker Pilot Program which was grandfathered into the Pacific Labour Scheme in 2018;<sup>28</sup>
- ♦ sponsored the annual Developing Northern Australia Conference since its inception in 2015, enabling the promotion and building of partnerships across the north; and
- ♦ established the Office of Northern Australia headquarters in Darwin, NT; a key recommendation of the White Paper.<sup>29</sup>







Commenced the \$9.3 million initiative for 20-year Master Planning to accelerate the Regions of Growth initiative announced in Budget 2021-22

Extended the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility for a further five years until 2026

Opened the \$111.9 million Northern Australia Development Program to stimulate economic growth and diversification.

Established the \$68.5 million Northern Australia Connectivity initiative to improve voice and digital connectivity

Announced the Northern Australia Insurance Package, improving insurance affordability with the intention of establishing a reinsurance pool from 1 July 2022, (backed by a \$10 billion Government guarantee), and a \$40 million North Queensland Strata Title Resilience Pilot Program, both building the resilience of northern communities to natural disasters<sup>30</sup>

Renewed commitment to the Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group to ensure advice and strong engagement on maximising benefits for Indigenous northern Australians

Increased commitment to \$1.96 billion over 10-years in Northern Australia through Roads of Strategic Importance to upgrade key corridors to enhance road reliability, better connect industry to market, and provide improved access for communities<sup>31</sup>

Facilitated the Developing Northern Australia Conference virtually from Darwin, NT

Delivered the 6th Annual Statement to the Parliament

Signed the \$78.4 million Barkly Regional Deal in the NT to improve the productivity and liveability of the Barkly region by stimulating economic growth and improving social outcome<sup>32</sup>

Agreed the Northern Australia Indigenous Development Accord through First Ministers

Commenced the \$3.6 million Roper River, NT and the \$6.5 million Great Artesian Basin water resource assessments announced in Budget 2019-20

Invested \$180 million into the Hughenden Irrigation Scheme in QLD to increase the value of agriculture production<sup>33</sup>

Commenced construction and repair of sea transport infrastructure projects as part of a \$25 million package in the Torres Strait Islands, QLD to reduce risk of flooding and improve community safety<sup>34</sup>

Held the Developing Northern Australia Conference in Karratha, WA

Delivered the 4th Annual Statement to the Parliament

2021

2020

2019

2018

Undertook COVID-19 economic responses with immediate assistance provided through JobKeeper with more than 340,000 applicants in Northern Australia, and supported more than 95,000 Northern Australians through JobSeeker<sup>35</sup>

Released the \$224 million Beetaloo Strategic Basin Plan, the first deliverable under the Government's Gas-fired Recovery Strategy<sup>36</sup>

Established an Advisory Group for Northern Australia that provided stakeholder advice and input which informed *Our North, Our Future: 2021-2026*

Continued construction on the \$3.16 billion investment to northern road projects

Commenced construction of the Rookwood Weir, QLD, with a \$183.6 million in Government investment to help grow and diversify agriculture and support industrial and urban water uses<sup>37</sup>

Invested an additional \$21 million in capacity building for Prescribed Bodies Corporate<sup>38</sup>

Northern Australia Insurance Inquiry Final report released by the ACCC bringing together significant analysis of the operation of the markets for home, contents, and strata insurance in Northern Australia<sup>39</sup>

Held the Developing Northern Australia Conference in Rockhampton, QLD

Delivered the 5th Annual Statement to the Parliament

Completed the \$15 million Northern Australia Water Resources Assessments for the Fitzroy, WA, Darwin, NT, and Mitchell, QLD catchments<sup>40</sup>

Announced \$1.5 billion Roads of Strategic Importance northern package

Agreed to employment targets for Indigenous Australians for northern roads projects<sup>41</sup>

Signed the Darwin City Deal in the NT – a ten-year plan to position Darwin as a vibrant and liveable tropical capital city, supported by a growing population and diverse economy<sup>42</sup>

Held the Developing Northern Australia Conference in Alice Springs, NT

Delivered the 3rd Annual Statement to the Parliament

## Timeline of Key Milestones 2015-2021

- Established the \$75 million Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia
- Established the Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group
- Held the Northern Australia Investment Forum in Cairns, QLD bringing together more than 500 delegates including 179 global investors from 101 companies from 25 countries
- Commenced construction on first tranche of projects under the \$700 million Northern Australia Roads and Beef Roads programs
- Commenced the \$100.5 million Exploring for the Future Program in Northern Australia<sup>43</sup>
- Finalised the Productivity Commission report into fisheries and aquaculture to report on opportunities to improve fisheries regulations without compromising fishery policy and environmental objectives<sup>44</sup>
- Established the Pacific Microstates-Northern Australia Worker Pilot Programme to facilitate the temporary entry of Pacific citizens to Australia to undertake work in lower-skilled occupations in Northern Australia and/or study or training to undertake that work<sup>45</sup>
- Held the Developing Northern Australia Conference in Cairns, QLD
- Delivered the 2nd Annual Statement to the Parliament

- Established the Office of Northern Australia headquarters in Darwin, NT to drive the Northern Australia development agenda
- Released the Northern Australia Infrastructure Audit to identify the key challenges and critical infrastructure requirements for Northern Australia across the transport, water, energy and communications sectors<sup>46</sup>
- Held the Northern Australia Investment Forum in Darwin, NT bringing together 350 invite-only investors and providing an opportunity to better understand the scale and diversity of investment opportunities
- Enhanced access to the Entrepreneurs Programme for northern businesses by lowering the business turnover threshold to \$750,000
- Held the inaugural Developing Northern Australia Conference in Townsville, QLD

2017

2016

2015

- Established the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility through the *Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility Act 2016*
- Released online guides to land tenure, providing business-friendly information on the different land tenure arrangements to increase the appeal of investing<sup>47</sup>
- Reported on Northern Australia Insurance Premiums with a dedicated taskforce considering the feasibility of options to lower insurance premiums in areas subject to high cyclone risk<sup>48</sup>
- Signed Designated Area Migration Agreement for the NT to access a broader range of overseas workers than available through standard skilled visa programs
- Invested \$6.8 million into tropical health research capacity and \$8.5 million into commercialisation opportunities
- Extended the Working Holiday Maker visas to support northern agriculture and hospitality sectors
- Expanded the Seasonal Worker Programme, removing 2015 caps
- Opened the Major Projects Facilitation Agency in Darwin, NT to provide proponents with projects worth over \$20 million in Northern Australia assistance to navigate Australian Government approvals process<sup>49</sup>
- Signed the Townsville City Deal in QLD – a 15-year commitment from governments to a collective program of planning, reform, and investment for Townsville<sup>50</sup>
- Held the Developing Northern Australia Conference in Darwin, NT
- Delivered the 1st Annual Statement to the Parliament



# Our North, Our Future: 2021-2026

## Whole-of-Government Northern Australia Agenda

The Australian Government is building on the existing whole-of-government approach to northern development, in collaboration with key delivery partners.

There are strong foundations to build on over the next five years. The focus now is to leverage the advantages and strengths of the north to overcome obstacles and create the right conditions for industry to thrive and achieve a sustainable northern economy.

From 2021-2026, the Government will invest in transformational and enabling projects through a whole-of-government approach, in partnership with state and territory governments. The foundations for regional growth include:



Connectivity  
and infrastructure



Human capital  
and skills



Regional employment  
and business



Leadership  
and collaboration



Amenity and  
liveability



Sustainable  
natural resources

Developing Northern Australia and realising its economic opportunities requires the collective efforts of all levels of government, the private sector, and communities. Working together will secure the north's strong and sustainable future.

Our priorities:

- ♦ Indigenous economic growth – building capacity and supporting business and entrepreneurs;
- ♦ energy – affordability and supporting infrastructure;
- ♦ supply chain infrastructure – roads, rail, airports, storage, and logistics;
- ♦ communications – black spots and bandwidth;
- ♦ water infrastructure – to support agriculture, industry development, and water security;
- ♦ affordable insurance – to support households and business;
- ♦ critical minerals – value-add and diversification;
- ♦ tourism recovery – bouncing back after COVID-19;
- ♦ workforce training and education – addressing critical skills shortages and labour supply; and
- ♦ social services – focusing on housing, health, and aged care.

**"Governments' role is to create successful business environments, not successful businesses. This is best achieved through prudent economic policies, the right infrastructure to get things moving, regulation that minimises costs on business, a workforce with the right skills, and basic research necessary for business to identify opportunities in the north."**

*White Paper, pg. 2*

With a whole-of-government approach, the Government will support investment in sectors that are aligned with national priorities including:



Energy  
and minerals



Water  
infrastructure



Food  
and fibre



Supply  
chains



Community  
amenities



Tourism

Our investments:

- ♦ 20-year Master Plans with state and territory governments - a prospectus of investment opportunities in Northern Australia, with accountability in action plans to drive growth and report back to Government for transparency;
- ♦ NAIF financing to increase private sector partners aligned with Australian Government priorities;
- ♦ Government funding for transformational and enabling projects in partnership with state and territory governments, e.g. Infrastructure Investment Program and the National Water Grid Authority;
- ♦ regulatory reform to promote effective market operation across jurisdictions e.g. water regulation, land use planning, and licensing;
- ♦ a reaffirmed commitment to working with the Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group; and
- ♦ Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia collaboration with the research community and industry.



## Office of Northern Australia's Role

To implement the Australian Government's vision, the Office of Northern Australia (ONA) will:

- ♦ lead the coordination and accountability for each Master Plan;
- ♦ provide a point of entry for private and public partners to identify and remove barriers to investment and project delivery;
- ♦ partner with jurisdictions, government agencies, and other entities to align resources to deliver results;
- ♦ work with communities and industry to unlock further investment and realise economic benefits;
- ♦ deliver grants to support businesses to scale-up, skill-up, and diversify to create jobs;
- ♦ keep communities informed through contemporary communications and engagement; and
- ♦ have more staff located in the north, increasing local capability and capacity.

The ONA will report on progress and success through six-monthly updates via [northernaustralia.gov.au](http://northernaustralia.gov.au); and through regular eNewsletters and social media.

For more information and to subscribe for updates, visit [northernaustralia.gov.au](http://northernaustralia.gov.au).



# Our North, Our Future: 2021-2026

## Master Plans

The Australian Government has committed \$9.3 million to develop Master Plans to accelerate Regions of Growth and grow the Northern Australian economy.

The Master Plans will set out the strategic direction for efficient economic development. They will deliver a 20-year blueprint for the economic development of a region, supported by five-year action plans and regular progress reports. Master Plans will anchor resources and investment from across all levels of government to maximise the long-term public benefit of regional planning and development. Existing and planned projects will continue in parallel to the master planning process.

The first three priority Master Plans will focus on locations within three Regions of Growth corridors:

- ◆ Mount Isa to Townsville (QLD);
- ◆ Beetaloo Basin to Katherine to Darwin (NT); and
- ◆ Broome to Kununurra to Darwin (WA and NT).

An investment pipeline will be mapped out by mid 2022 and by late 2022 the Australian Government and northern jurisdictions will have identified preferred infrastructure investments.

The next priority Region of Growth corridor is Cairns to Gladstone (QLD). The master planning process for this will commence in late 2022.

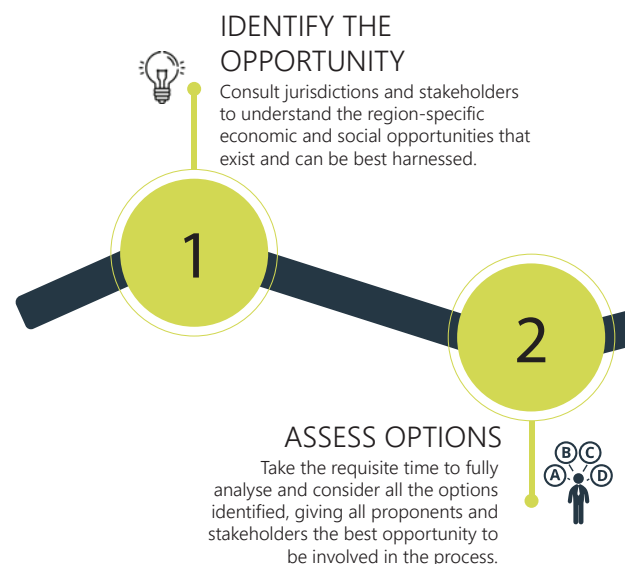
The key criteria used to identify Regions of Growth were selected based on their potential to:

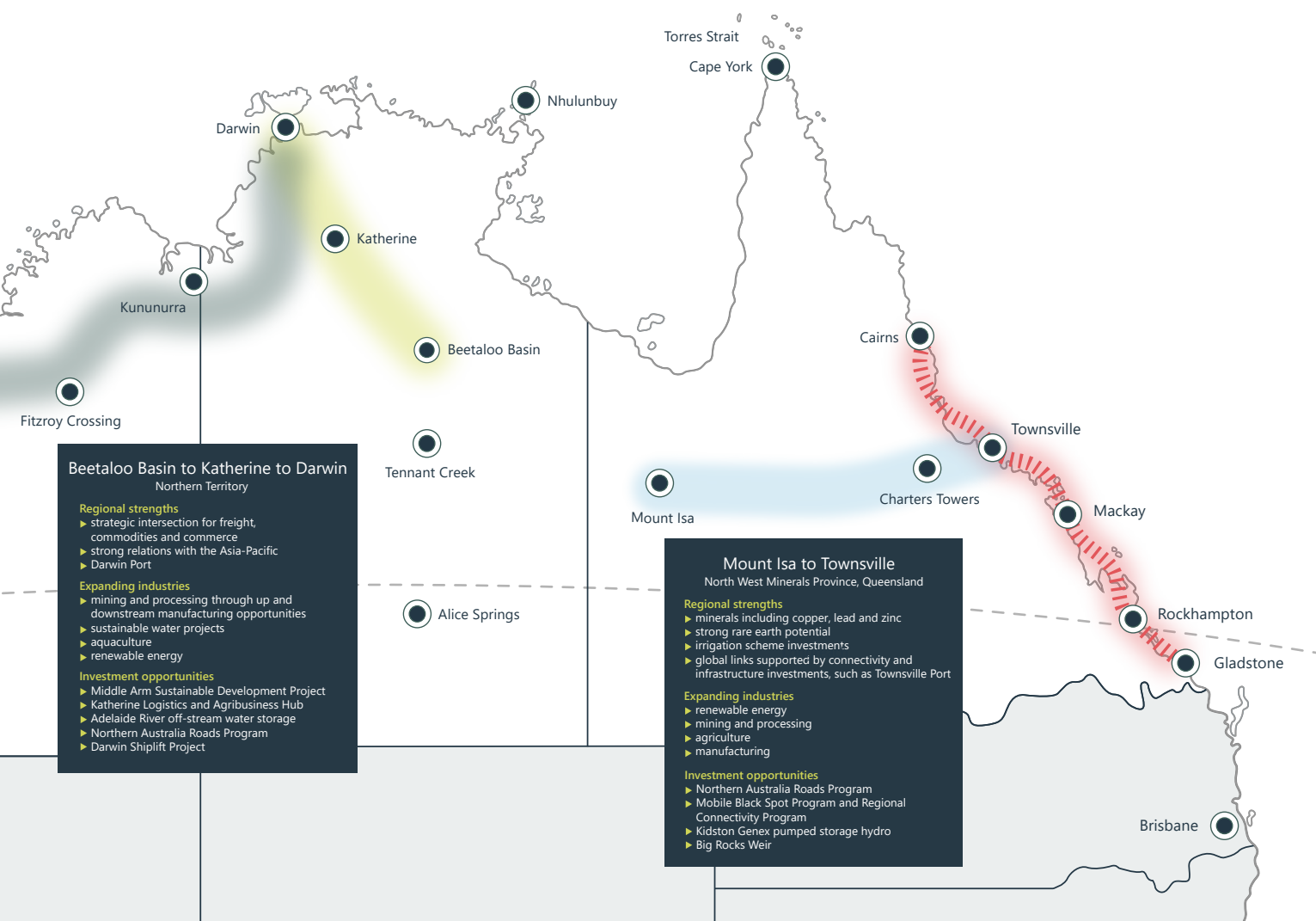
- ◆ align to and expand on existing government planning and investments, including City and Regional Deals, Infrastructure Australia planning, Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility (NAIF) projects, and state/territory and local government priorities;
- ◆ enable connective infrastructure of airports, ports, major transport routes, water and digital. The Regions of Growth are largely based on existing supply chains and have the potential to further advance supply chains for industry to access domestic and international markets, and build resilience and adaptability to business risk in the north; and
- ◆ build economies of scale by capitalising on comparative advantages, drive multi-sectoral industry growth, value-add, activate labour force, and attract more investment like critical minerals extraction and downstream processing. Each Region of Growth has an identified comparative advantage, for example critical minerals and processing or irrigated agriculture.

Each Master Plan will identify core transformational infrastructure investment for the region such as water infrastructure, energy, minerals, or logistics infrastructure. Prioritising efforts through Master Plans will create positive spill over effects into surrounding areas. This will grow ancillary services and improve the prospects of greater private sector investment.

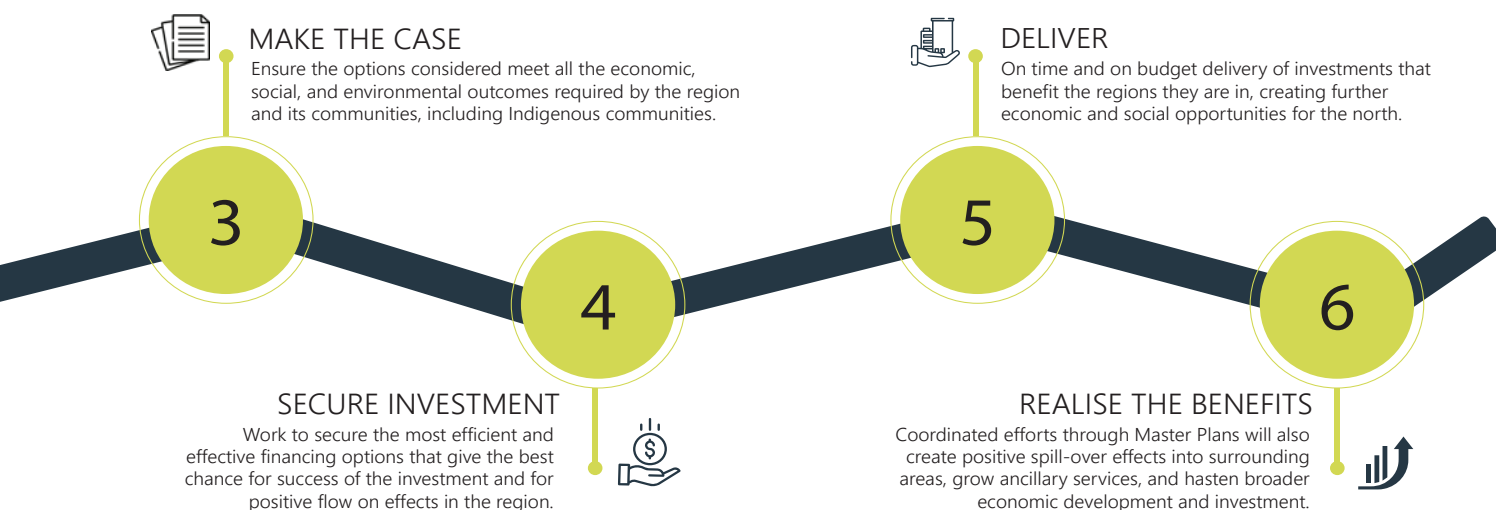
Master Plans will also identify complementary and supporting investments required for success. Investments that will maximise the full economic and social benefits for that region. These investments could include enabling infrastructure (roads, water, ports and communications); social infrastructure (housing, health, schools); or workforce planning requirements (training and education).

Master Plans will be supported by an on-ground presence to focus on localised sectoral strengths. Extensive consultation with Indigenous Australians, industry, local government, Northern Regional Development Australia Alliance, community groups, and others will inform the development of the Master Plans. Master Plans will help governments, decision-makers, Traditional Owners, land owners, and private investors better align investments across Northern Australia.





**Concept map for Regional Master Plans**  
Shaded lines: First priority Regional Master Plans  
Hatched line: Next priority Regional Master Plan





# Our North, Our Future: 2021-2026

## Business Grants

The Australian Government is investing \$111.9 million towards the Northern Australia Development Program for grants and a business advisory service to enable Northern Australia based businesses, including Indigenous businesses, to grow and diversify.

The aim of the NADP is to create new jobs in Northern Australia and strengthen business capability and resilience.

For more information on northern grants programs, visit [business.gov.au](https://business.gov.au).

### Northern Australia Development Program

The Northern Australia Development Program (NADP) supports business growth and diversification to improve business capability and resilience, and create employment opportunities. The grant funding will help create jobs in Northern Australia and drive the development of diverse and profitable businesses across the north.

The NADP will provide funding for business development, including funding new capital expenditure investments, such as constructing infrastructure, and/or industry transformation to establish a new industry or significantly grow an existing industry.

There are two simultaneous NADP grant streams:

- ♦ Business Development Grants - funding between \$50,000 and \$2 million for small to medium sized businesses; and
- ♦ Industry Transformation Grants - funding between \$3 million and \$10 million for medium to large businesses.

The NADP also has a dedicated business advisory service which will provide eligible businesses with access to face-to-face advice and/or workshops to build long-term resilience and business strength.

The first round of the program opened in 2021, and the first grants will be awarded from early 2022.





## Connecting Northern Australia

Digital connectivity is a key enabler of economic development and job creation. It leads to increased participation and productivity for businesses and communities across Australia.

Expanding mobile coverage has clear economic, social, and public safety benefits for people living, working, and travelling in regional and remote areas of Australia. However, Australia's large land mass and relatively small and dispersed population makes providing mobile connectivity a challenge, especially in remote areas.

The Australian Government is providing funding to improve telecommunications infrastructure across Northern Australia. The \$68.5 million (GST exclusive) Connecting Northern Australia initiative will be delivered through two existing national programs – the Mobile Black Spot Program (MBSP) and the Regional Connectivity Program (RCP).<sup>51</sup>

The MBSP is a grants program funding telecommunications infrastructure to improve mobile coverage and competition across Australia. The first five rounds of the program have created more than 1,270 new mobile base stations across Australia, with 927 base stations now complete.<sup>52</sup>

In Northern Australia, 214 base stations have been funded, representing a \$44.6 million investment by the Australian Government for improved mobile phone coverage.<sup>53</sup>

The RCP is a grants program targeting investment in telecommunications infrastructure projects which respond to local priorities and maximise economic and social benefits for regional, rural, and remote Australian communities and businesses. In the first round of the RCP, the Government awarded \$35.7 million for 45 projects in Northern Australia.<sup>54</sup> This represented over 30 per cent of all projects funded, demonstrating the demand for high-speed connectivity solutions in Northern Australia.<sup>55</sup>

The Connecting Northern Australia initiative is expected to open for applications in late 2021.<sup>56</sup>

For more information, visit [infrastructure.gov.au](https://infrastructure.gov.au).



### Case Study: Arnhem Fibre Upgrade Project

Through Round 1 of the RCP, the Australian Government – in partnership with the NT Government, Developing East Arnhem Land Ltd, and Telstra – has invested \$8 million towards improvements in connectivity services in East Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory.<sup>57</sup>

The Arnhem Fibre Upgrade Project will upgrade core transmission equipment at Telstra sites across East Arnhem Land, increasing existing backhaul capacity between Darwin and Nhulunbuy from five GigaBits per second to 100 GigaBits per second. The project will also upgrade the capacity of the existing Telstra 4GX base station at Mount Saunders near Nhulunbuy.<sup>58</sup>

“Improving telecommunications in regional and remote Australia is a challenging and expensive task, and joint funding partnerships are essential in helping make this happen,” said Nikos Katinakis, Telstra’s Networks and IT Group Executive. “Delivering telecommunications to these areas can require a range of technologies and infrastructure, and Telstra welcomed the flexibility that this program offered in how these outcomes could be delivered.”<sup>59</sup>

The upgrades will support business development opportunities and increasing data needs in a number of sectors, as well as improving access to telehealth, education services and public safety connectivity.



# Spotlight on our Partners

## Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility

The Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility (NAIF) is a Corporate Commonwealth Entity dedicated to driving economic activity, job creation, and positive Indigenous outcomes in Northern Australia.

Established in 2016, the NAIF is a \$5 billion facility to support projects in key sectors including airports, ports and rail, agriculture, water, resources, energy, social infrastructure (including property, tourism, education and health), manufacturing, and telecommunications.

As at 15 November 2021, the NAIF had made 29 investment decisions worth \$3.1 billion, supporting projects with an estimated total capital value of \$6.6 billion.<sup>60</sup> These projects are forecast to generate around \$16 billion in economic benefit and support around 10,000 jobs in the north.<sup>61</sup>

The NAIF will continue to be one of the Government's critical levers to drive development under the regional Master Plans and the Regions of Growth initiative. The NAIF takes a proactive role in project development, providing financial support to achieve positive impacts for local communities, and championing meaningful Indigenous outcomes so the economic benefits of investments are retained in the north.

In May 2021, the Australian Government passed a package of reforms to increase flexibility and access to NAIF finance, speed up investment approvals,<sup>62</sup> and extend investments for

**"The NAIF is investing in infrastructure in a range of sectors that are vital economic drivers of Northern Australia. Through innovative financing we are playing a key role in unlocking the potential of the region."**

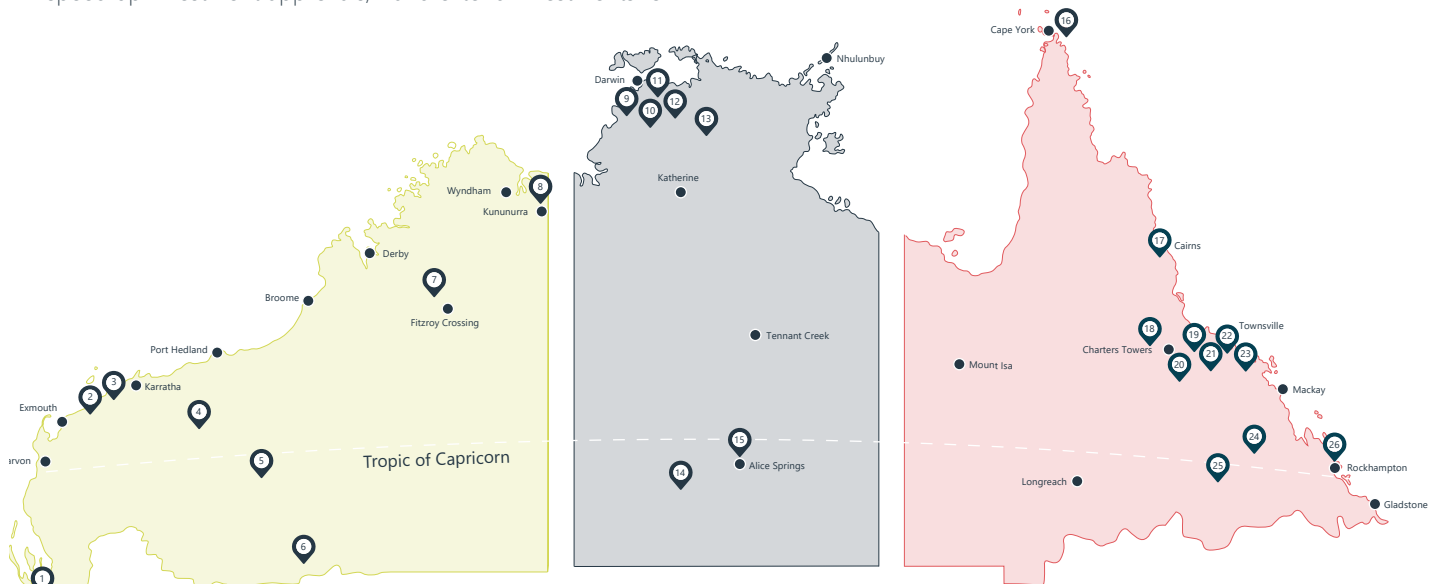
*Tracey Hayes  
Chair, NAIF Board*



an additional five years through to 2026.<sup>63</sup> These reforms allow the NAIF to invest directly in projects without funds being passed through jurisdictional governments, opening the door to smaller investments to further stimulate economic activity, and allowing the NAIF to make non-majority equity investments.

Positive Indigenous outcomes are being delivered by NAIF proponents through compulsory Indigenous Engagement Strategies to achieve greater employment and procurement, through deliverable, realistic, measurable, and relevant activities. The NAIF has a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Indigenous Australians Agency, Indigenous Business Australia, and the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation,<sup>64</sup> which allows for greater partnerships and collaboration to maximise the benefits of NAIF investment for economic participation and growth for northern Indigenous Australians. The MoU facilitates cooperation on assessing the feasibility of financing models and partnerships, which enables greater financing opportunities for Indigenous projects.

For more information, visit [naif.gov.au](http://naif.gov.au).



### Western Australia

1. Coburn Heavy Mineral Sands, Strandline Resources
2. Onslow Marine Support Base
3. Mardie Salt and Potash, BCI Minerals
4. Chichester Solar Gas Hybrid, Alinta Energy
5. Beyondie Sulphate of Potash, Kalium Lakes\*
6. Lake Wells Sulphate of Potash, Australian Potash
7. Thunderbird Mineral Sands, Sheffield Resources
8. Cotton Gin, Kimberley Cotton Company

\* denotes two investment decisions were made for separate projects or project phases

### Northern Territory

9. Hudson Creek Power Plant and Batchelor Solar Farm, Merricks Capital
10. Northern Territory Airports Expansion, Airport Development Group
11. Darwin Ship Lift Facility
12. City campus, Charles Darwin University
13. Farm Expansion, Humpty Doo Barramundi\*
14. Connellan Airport Upgrade, Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia
15. Remote Cold Storage, Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation

### Queensland

16. Bauxite Hills Mine, Metro Mining
17. Capex Program, CQUniversity Australia
18. Kidston Pumped Storage Hydro Project, Genex
19. Townsville Airport, Queensland Airports
20. Charters Towers, Agripower Australia
21. Townsville Community Training Centre, Cowboys
22. Hospital Carpark, Mater Townsville Hospital
23. Student Accommodation and Technology Innovation Complex, James Cook University\*
24. Olive Downs Steelmaking Coal, Pembroke Resources
25. Beef Processing Facility, Signature Onfarm
26. Rockhampton Maintenance Facility, Alliance Airlines

Map of NAIF Projects  
Up to date as of 15 November 2021



## ► Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia

The \$75 million Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia (CRCNA) is funded through the Australian Government's Cooperative Research Centre Program.<sup>65</sup>

The CRCNA brings together industry, research organisations, all northern jurisdictions, and international partners in a collaborative industry-led research and development venture. The CRCNA's research and development partnerships deliver real-world outcomes and commercial opportunities which help facilitate economic development and growth in Northern Australia.


The CRCNA invests in research and programs of work in the initial focus areas of agriculture and food, health service delivery, and Traditional Owner-led agricultural and health service business and enterprise development. The CRCNA's work directly supports the drivers of northern development including: enabling infrastructure; water infrastructure; activating the Indigenous Estate; and streamlining policy. It does this through providing a clear evidence base that de-risks the north's investment landscape and provides a pathway to sustainable growth and development.

For more information, visit [crcna.com.au](http://crcna.com.au).

"As we look forward to a post COVID-19 economic recovery, we need to support the north to do the heavy lifting. We know what the opportunities are, and we understand what we need to do to unlock them. We need to shift the paradigm and demonstrate why northern development will benefit communities across Australia."

*Sheriden Morris, CRCNA Chair*





"Indigenous community stakeholders have a mutual interest in maximising the economic opportunity and contribution of Northern Australian Indigenous businesses, individuals and communities in the northern development agenda [...] Better outcomes will be achieved by working together through a genuine and collaborative partnership-based approach, which involves engagement with a broad range of Indigenous stakeholders across the north."

*Northern Australia Indigenous  
Development Accord, pg. 3*





## Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group

Enhancing the economic prosperity of Indigenous Australians in the north in accordance with Indigenous aspirations will ensure the full benefits of northern development are realised now and into the future.

The Australian Government recognises that northern development can only be achieved if it benefits all people in the north, including Indigenous Australians. The *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* commits all levels of governments to change how they work with Indigenous Australians.<sup>66</sup> It recognises that achieving the aspirations of Indigenous Australians can only occur through genuine partnership and shared decision-making on policies and programs. The Government is committed to working with Indigenous Australians, as demonstrated through the IRG and other initiatives.

A revitalised IRG is being established to advise the Minister for Northern Australia on practical actions to assist in unlocking the Indigenous Estate. This IRG will build on and acknowledge the work of the original IRG, established in 2017, and support developing the Master Plans to maximise Indigenous outcomes and benefits.

The IRG use their Indigenous knowledge of country, culture and business to directly influence economic advancement. The IRG provides advice on measures that will contribute to a greater understanding of the northern Indigenous business sector, including but not limited to:

- ♦ aquaculture and agriculture, including native foods and botanicals, and carbon farming;
- ♦ land management and biodiversity stewardship;
- ♦ water availability and sustainable development; and
- ♦ tourism.

The work of the IRG will align with the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* and the *National Roadmap for Indigenous Skills, Jobs and Wealth Creation* that focuses on traditional, expanding and emerging industries, increasing Indigenous workforce participation, and providing more Indigenous business support.

In December 2019, the Australian Government and northern jurisdictions also endorsed the *Northern Australia Indigenous Development Accord*, an intergovernmental agreement that provides an authorising framework for jurisdictions to work together and individually to advance Indigenous economic development.<sup>67</sup>

## Developing Northern Australia Conference

The annual Developing Northern Australia Conference (the Conference) is a platform to unite leaders, decision makers, industry representatives and community members to advance Northern Australia.

The Conference showcases growth and innovation occurring in the north, aligns with the Australian Government's northern agenda, and is sponsored by the Office of Northern Australia.

Running since 2015, the Conference brings people from across Australia and internationally to discuss ideas and opportunities, gain insights into new investment opportunities and projects, reflect on progress being made, and inform policy and decision making.

Connections are made east to west, north to south, and from the north to the wider world. The Conference creates an environment where partnerships for business, research, investment, and problem solving emerge.

Importantly, it also enables strong Indigenous and other important voices from across the north to come together to share stories across diverse themes such as investment, health, defence, workforce and industry development and natural resource management.

For more information, visit [nortaust.org.au](http://nortaust.org.au).

"Our Conference continues to grow every year, along with the national momentum for achieving better economic, social and environmental outcomes for the north and its people. It is that one regular opportunity for Northern Australians and their supporters from across the nation and the world to come together to celebrate progress and to refine strategic efforts."

Professor Allan Dale  
CRCNA Chief Scientist



# Infrastructure for the North



## Road Investments

The road network in Northern Australia is essential for the movement of people and freight, and for connecting dispersed communities and businesses. Often the only transport link available, good quality sealed roads are vital for accessibility to markets, to grow the tourism industry, attract and retain workers, and invite investment.<sup>68</sup>

The Australian Government has improved road infrastructure by upgrading key corridors that enhance road reliability, better connect industry to market, and provide improved access for communities, including through the:

- ♦ Roads of Strategic Importance (ROSI) - a \$4.9 billion initiative that is sealing, strengthening, widening and realigning roads, improving flood immunity, rehabilitating pavements, and upgrading bridges and culverts.<sup>69</sup> The Government has committed \$1.96 billion of ROSI funding to projects in Northern Australia in the 10-years to 2028.<sup>70</sup>
- ♦ Northern Australia Roads and Beef Roads programs - \$700 million for two programs that are delivering upgrades to high priority roads essential to the movement of people and freight.<sup>71</sup>

The Government committed an additional \$1.4 billion through Budget 2021-22 into road infrastructure projects that are critical to business and industry growth in Northern Australia including the following:

### Northern Territory

- ♦ \$173.6 million for Gas Industry Roads Upgrades<sup>72</sup>
- ♦ \$150 million for Phase 2 of the Northern Territory National Network Highway Upgrades<sup>73</sup>

### Queensland

- ♦ \$400 million for the Inland Freight Route upgrades – Mungindi to Charters Towers<sup>74</sup>
- ♦ \$240 million for the Cairns Western Arterial Road Duplication<sup>75</sup>
- ♦ An additional \$400 million for Bruce Highway Upgrades<sup>76</sup>

### Western Australia

- ♦ \$48 million for the Marble Bar Road upgrade<sup>77</sup>
- ♦ \$48 million to upgrade the Great Northern Highway between Broome and Kununurra<sup>78</sup>



As part of the National Partnership Agreement on Land Transport Infrastructure Projects, the Indigenous Employment and Supplier-use Infrastructure Framework (Framework) applies to new road and rail construction projects. The Framework sets out a whole-of-government approach to increase opportunities for Indigenous job-seekers and businesses' participation in delivering Australian Government-funded land transport infrastructure projects.

For more information, visit [investment.infrastructure.gov.au](https://investment.infrastructure.gov.au).





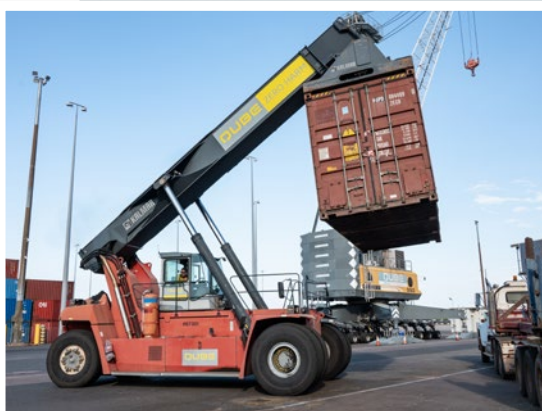
## Water Investments

Water is our most precious resource, and Northern Australia receives 60 per cent of the national rainfall each year.<sup>79</sup> To drive new agricultural activity, the Australian Government has invested more than \$500 million to support water infrastructure projects in the north through the \$3.5 billion National Water Grid Fund.<sup>80</sup>

Some investments in the north to support expanded agricultural activity and water security for communities include:

- ◆ \$183.6 million for the Rookwood Weir near Rockhampton, Queensland;<sup>81</sup>
- ◆ \$30 million to support the construction of Big Rocks Weir near Charters Towers, Queensland;<sup>82</sup>
- ◆ \$24 million for the Hells Gates Dam business case, Queensland;<sup>83</sup>
- ◆ \$10 million to fully fund the Hughenden Irrigation Scheme detailed business case with a further \$170 million toward construction (a total of \$180 million), subject to a positive business case and agreement from the Queensland Government for appropriate water allocation to the project;<sup>84</sup>
- ◆ \$11.6 million to support the Mareeba-Dimbulah Water Supply Scheme in Queensland;<sup>85</sup>
- ◆ \$22.7 million for the Urannah Dam business case in Queensland;<sup>86</sup>
- ◆ \$10 million for Lakeland Irrigation Area in Queensland business case;<sup>87</sup>
- ◆ \$3 million to undertake an Upper Burdekin feasibility study in Queensland;<sup>88</sup>
- ◆ \$2 million to develop a business case for off-stream water storage on the Adelaide River in the Northern Territory;<sup>89</sup>
- ◆ \$3.5 million for a Water Resource Assessment for the Roper River in the Northern Territory;<sup>90</sup>
- ◆ \$6.5 million to undertake water modelling in the Great Artesian Basin;<sup>91</sup>
- ◆ \$18.9 million for five Northern Australia projects under the Connections Funding Pathway;<sup>92</sup> and \$13 million for construction of the Charleston Dam in Queensland (\$10 million through the National Stronger Regions Fund and \$3 million through the Community Development Grants program).<sup>93</sup>


For more information, visit [nationalwatergrid.gov.au](http://nationalwatergrid.gov.au).



Road investments are complemented by funding to upgrade regional and rural airports, including \$1.5 million to upgrade six airports in Northern Australia through the Regional Airports Program.<sup>94</sup> The Remote Airstrip Upgrade Program has improved access to essential services, fresh foods, and employment, particularly during the wet season for over 120 airstrips in the north.<sup>95</sup>

For more information, visit [infrastructure.gov.au](http://infrastructure.gov.au).





## Case Study: Outback Way

With long distances between urban centres, the quality of road infrastructure is vital for Northern Australia's ongoing economic development, movement of people and freight, tourism, increased employment opportunities, and social and health outcomes. Often the only transport link available, the reliability of roads in the north can be hampered by the climate, especially during the wet season, and intensive heavy vehicle usage.

The progressive sealing, road widening, and upgrading of sections of the 2,800 kilometre Outback Way is no small task, and the Australian Government has committed \$330 million to upgrade this important corridor.<sup>96</sup>

Nicknamed 'Australia's longest shortcut', the Outback Way links Laverton in Western Australia with Winton in Queensland via Alice Springs in the Northern Territory<sup>97</sup> and provides a continuous east-west link across a substantial section of central Australia. Much of the road is gravel, corrugated, susceptible to flooding and washouts, and can be challenging to access. On average there is fuel every 350 kilometres.<sup>98</sup>

However, a sealed Outback Way would be, and in places is, "great for the mining, cattle, and tourism industries, and excellent for rural and remote communities in these areas," says Helen Lewis, General Manager of the Outback Highway Development Council.<sup>99</sup>

In Queensland, more than 90 per cent of the Outback Way is now fully sealed, following a number of key developments and cooperation between all levels of government. Upgrade works on the Kennedy Developmental Road between Winton and Boulia on the Outback Way have wrapped up, and the widening of the Diamantina Developmental Road between Boulia and Dajarra was completed in April 2021.<sup>100</sup>

In Western Australia, the Outback Way is being sealed in 20 kilometre stretches based on priority – the sections that require the most maintenance are being sealed first. Work on the first two sections of the Great Central Road near Laverton have recently been completed, and planning is underway to commence the next section in early 2022. The work is being undertaken by the Wongutha Way Alliance with the objective being to maximise Aboriginal employment and business opportunities to help benefit local communities.<sup>101</sup>

In the Northern Territory, upgrades to the Outback Way are split in two sections: the Plenty Highway and the Tjukururu Road. Construction has started on both sections, with the former due to be completed in late 2021,<sup>102</sup> and the latter in late 2022.<sup>103</sup>

There is little doubt among stakeholders in Northern Australia that improved road infrastructure benefits everyone – from business, to tourism, to agriculture.

For more information, visit [investment.infrastructure.gov.au](https://investment.infrastructure.gov.au).





## Case Study: NAIF Infrastructure

With financing support from the NAIF, Australia's first Sulphate of Potash (SoP) mine was established in 2019, at the Kalium Lakes Beyondie SoP mine in the Pilbara region, Western Australia.<sup>104</sup>

NAIF's \$74 million loan (plus additional \$10 million facility) will be used for key infrastructure including a lateral gas pipeline, gas fired power station, upgrade of a connecting road, communication facilities and accommodation village.<sup>105</sup> The project aims to produce SoP, a high yield, premium fertiliser, used to cultivate fruits, vegetables, berries, potatoes, beans, cocoa, tobacco, and tree nuts. The project aims to commence production at 120,000 tonnes per year of SoP, before ramping up to 180,000 tonnes per year. It is designed to be a low cost, long life, and high margin producer with an initial mine life of between 30-50 years.

This infrastructure project is scheduled to commence commercial production in 2021. The mine is forecast to create 150 jobs during construction and 60 during operations. The mine will generate long-term opportunities in both the mining and agricultural industries in Northern Australia, including access to affordable, locally produced high quality fertiliser, as well creating jobs in northern communities.<sup>106</sup>

The SoP sector is a high quality, specialised fertiliser that cultivates nutrient-rich fruit and vegetable crops. Over 250,000 tonnes of potash are consumed each year by Australian farmers, mostly imported from Russia, Canada, and Germany.<sup>107</sup>

NAIF financing is helping to establish a local SoP industry that will cut costs for Australian farmers, as well as provide a major new economic opportunity for the region.

For more information, visit [naif.gov.au](http://naif.gov.au).

# Agriculture Sector

## Ag2030

**Resilient and productive agribusinesses that support vibrant rural communities and economic opportunities underpin a strong Northern Australia.**

The Australian Government is committed to assisting Australian farmers, fishers, and foresters in their goal of achieving \$100 billion in farm-gate value by 2030, an increase from \$71.2 billion in 2020-21.<sup>108</sup> The Government is setting the foundations to support Australia's agricultural industry achieve this target, increase productivity, drive growth, and create jobs, including in Northern Australia.

In Budget 2021-22, the Government committed over \$850 million in new initiatives to tackle emerging trade challenges, protect the country from pests and diseases, support industry resilience, promote innovation, and encourage better land management and protect on-farm biodiversity.<sup>109</sup>

This includes measures to modernise Australia's agricultural innovation system to drive improvements in collaboration and commercialisation to grow productivity and competitiveness, including developing a National Agricultural Innovation Policy Statement under the National Agricultural Innovation Agenda.<sup>110</sup>

The Government is also continuing to progress significant reforms under the \$328.4 million Busting Congestion for Agricultural Exporters package, announced in Budget 2020-21, which will modernise and streamline Australia's export system and make it easier for Australian producers, including those in the north, to get their products to overseas markets quicker.<sup>111</sup>

Agribusinesses in Northern Australia will also benefit from measures to increase access to farm labour, such as AgATTRACT and AgFAIR to increase the attractiveness of the industry for Australians.<sup>112</sup> These measures aim to change the perception of the agriculture industry and improve working conditions across the industry and encourage young Australians to take up careers in our primary industry sectors.

Australia's agriculture industry depends on a biodiverse and well-managed resource base. The Government is recognising the critical role farmers play in looking after our resource base, ensuring the health and prosperity of our environment, regional communities and the broader economy. This includes \$22.3 million to conduct on-ground trials to reward farmers for improving native vegetation and the \$214.9 million National Soil Strategy, both announced in Budget 2021-22.<sup>113</sup>

For more information, visit [awe.gov.au](http://awe.gov.au).



## Australian Agriculture Visa

The Australian agricultural industry has long experienced challenges in securing enough labour to meet its needs.

*"The Ag Visa gives our farmers another option to help solve workforce shortages that affect our farms, particularly during harvest season, and allow the industry to tap into a much larger labour pool."*

*Paul Burke  
CEO Northern Territory  
Farmers Association*



The success of Australian agriculture, including in the north, relies on continued and sustainable access to skilled labour.

In August 2021, the Government announced a new category of visa to help agriculture businesses meet critical labour shortages – the Australian Agriculture Visa (Ag Visa).<sup>114</sup> The new Ag Visa is available to skilled, semi-skilled, and low-skilled workers across agricultural industries, as well as in the fishery and forestry sectors.

The Ag Visa will supplement the existing Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme (PALM Scheme), which will remain the primary way for agricultural businesses to meet labour shortages.<sup>115</sup> As at October 2021, there are more than 17,000 Pacific and Timorese workers in Australia under the PALM Scheme.<sup>116</sup> This is the largest number since the scheme commenced and the Government has committed to bringing in an extra 12,500 workers by March 2022.<sup>117</sup>

For more information, visit [dfat.gov.au/agriculturevisa](http://dfat.gov.au/agriculturevisa).





## Case Study: Cotton Industry

Cotton is an emerging industry in Northern Australia, but already presents a clear economic opportunity. Government funding combined with innovation will help build the northern cotton sector into a \$925 million industry.<sup>118</sup>

Australia is one of the world's largest cotton suppliers. More than 90 per cent of production<sup>119</sup> is exported, generating over \$3 billion in annual export revenue.<sup>120</sup> Cotton production, research and development, and technological advancements mean Australia's cotton industry is one of the most water efficient in the world.<sup>121</sup>

Cotton is well established in Clermont, Emerald, Biloela, and Theodore in Queensland.<sup>122</sup> There are now six properties growing cotton in Katherine and the Top End regions of the Northern Territory. Combined, these properties produced over 800 hectares of cotton in 2019 and 2020.<sup>123</sup>

Kununurra's farmers in Western Australia have received a boost with the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility (NAIF) approving a loan of up to \$32 million to construct stage 1 of a cotton gin in the Kimberley town.<sup>124</sup> The Ord River District Cooperative, Kimberley Agricultural Investment, and the Yawoorroong Miriung Gajerrong Yirrgeb Noong Dawang Aboriginal Corporation (MG Corporation) are working collaboratively to build this gin from the ground up. The cotton gin will establish a new cotton growing industry in Northern Australia worth an estimated \$925 million and create 30 full time jobs during construction and 21 new jobs during operations.



## Case Study: Cattle Industry

The cattle industry is a strength of the Northern Australian economy, employing around 10,000 people across the north<sup>125</sup> and makes up 90 per cent of Australia's live cattle exports annually.<sup>126</sup>

The majority of Australia's live exports are to South East Asia, with 59 per cent to Indonesia.<sup>127</sup> The cattle industry also represents the largest economic land use in the north, covering around 60 per cent of Northern Australia's land area.<sup>128</sup>

The northern cattle industry has a number of competitive advantages including adapted production systems, low cost base, and geographic location.<sup>129</sup> However, there is opportunity and capacity for the northern cattle industry to scale up to higher productivity, ensuring future viability.

Road quality is a major facilitating factor to improve the efficiency and economic viability of the cattle industry in the Northern Territory, allowing producers to access processing and export facilities and at a lower cost. In 2015, \$100 million was invested into the Northern Australia Beef Roads Program.<sup>130</sup> This program made targeted upgrades to key roads to improve the reliability, productivity, and resilience of cattle supply chains in Northern Australia, reducing freight costs and strengthening links to markets.<sup>131</sup> As at November 2021, 17 of the 18 projects under the Beef Roads Program have been completed.<sup>132</sup>

The Government is supporting the domestic processing of export-accredited beef through a \$24 million Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility loan to Signature Onfarm Beef in central Queensland.<sup>133</sup> The 5,500 square metre processing facility will provide local beef producers more avenues to market their beef domestically and internationally, increase efficiency and productivity of the industry, and contribute 200 construction and 70 ongoing jobs to the local economy.<sup>134</sup>



## Innovation Hubs

The Australian Government's new Innovation Hubs (Hubs) will work to transform drought resilience and agricultural innovation across Australia.<sup>135</sup>

Eight Hubs are being established in agricultural regions nationally through the Australian Government's \$5 billion Future Drought Fund.<sup>136</sup> Two will be based in Northern Australia – the Northern WA/NT Hub at the Charles Darwin University in Darwin, Northern Territory<sup>137</sup> and the Tropical North Queensland Hub (TNQ) at the James Cook University Ideas Lab in Cairns, Queensland.<sup>138</sup> A further Hub – the South-West WA Hub – based at the Merredin Dryland Research Institute extends into Northern Australia at Carnarvon, Western Australia.

Through the Hubs, farmers, Indigenous landholders, communities, researchers and business will come together to co-design approaches and solutions for drought resilience in the north. The Hubs will also translate research into impact through a focus on development, extension, adoption and commercialisation. The Hubs will partner with relevant organisations to co-design innovative practices that support producers to achieve greater efficiency and sustainability in agricultural land management.

The Northern WA/NT Hub will focus on pastoral, broadacre, horticulture and forestry systems, and water management.<sup>139</sup> It will be supported by four nodes/shopfronts in Katherine, Alice Springs, Broome, and Perth, where interested parties can connect directly with the Hubs' expertise.

The TNQ Hub will focus on agriculture industries including sugar, beef, dairy, vegetable, citrus and tropical fruit.<sup>140</sup> It will also be supported by five nodes/shopfronts in the Gulf Savannah, Gulf of Carpentaria, Fitzroy, Mackay and Whitsundays, and the Burdekin, where interested parties can connect directly with the Hubs' expertise.

The South-West WA Hub will focus on drought-resilience activities that use innovative technology to transform farming systems across the grain, sheep, beef, dairy, viticulture, and horticulture sectors. It will be supported by eight nodes/shopfronts, including one in Carnarvon in Northern Australia, where interested parties can connect directly with the Hubs' expertise.

For more information, visit [awe.gov.au](http://awe.gov.au).

**"Drought is an unpredictable driver of productivity in the cattle industry. Preparation for it, and resilience to it, offer real value to the northern regional and remote economies."**

*Emma White  
Kimberley Pilbara Cattlemen's Association<sup>141</sup>*





4,000,000

trays of mangoes produced in the Northern Territory annually

\$21 million

for the Mango Roads project to improve corridors essential to mango freight

\$110 million

Nationally, the mango industry is worth more than \$110 million, heavily concentrated in the NT and QLD



## Case Study: Mango Industry

The north is the epicentre of Australian mango production, with over four million trays produced each year in the Northern Territory alone.<sup>142</sup> Nationally, the mango industry is worth more than \$110 million, and is heavily concentrated in the Northern Territory and Queensland.<sup>143</sup>

The Australian Government has introduced a number of measures to support mango farmers improve production and get their products to market. High quality transport infrastructure, including storage facilities, are vital to efficiently deliver premium fruit to the global consumer.

In 2019, the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility approved financing of \$150 million for upgrades to Northern Territory airports, which along with other benefits, will support mango farmers transporting their goods to market.<sup>144</sup> This includes construction of cold storage facilities, solar energy farms, and an export hub at Darwin International Airport.<sup>145</sup>

The Government identified the road networks in the Northern Territory's most productive mango growing region under the Roads of Strategic Importance initiative.<sup>146</sup> The \$21 million Mango Roads project, a joint Australian and Northern Territory Governments project, is strengthening and widening corridors essential to freighting mangoes from farm to market.<sup>147</sup>

Upgraded roads will improve mango quality during transport, increase local industry productivity, and ensure safer year round access. The roads project is due to be completed in late 2021.

Government-funded research is also supporting productivity improvements for mango farmers. New in-stream water storage options have been identified around Darwin that could support up to an additional 40,000 hectares of irrigated mangoes, adding \$2.3 billion and 2,500 jobs to the regional economy.<sup>148</sup> Researchers are working with mango producers to collect supply chain, production, and market data,<sup>149</sup> and establish commercial scale research trials to facilitate next-generation, high-productivity orchard systems.<sup>150</sup>

The Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia is also funding the Transforming Mango Futures project to establish high-density mango orchard technologies for commercial scale research trials to facilitate next-generation, high-productivity orchard systems in the north.<sup>151</sup>

The Government is also helping mango farmers access the labour they need through the existing Pacific Labour Scheme and Seasonal Worker Programme, and the newly announced Australian Agriculture Visa.<sup>152</sup>

# Indigenous Australia

## Indigenous Rangers

Northern Australia's vast, sparsely populated coastline is the frontline for many high-risk animal and plant pests and diseases arriving from overseas or from other areas within Australia.<sup>153</sup> This could have a devastating effect on Australia's \$71 billion agriculture industry and seriously impact Northern Australia's agricultural and economic potential.<sup>154</sup>

Maintaining a strong biosecurity system to protect our current and emerging industries is a vital part of achieving a strong, resilient north. Indigenous Rangers are critical to ensuring our biosecurity system is strong.

The Indigenous Rangers Program was established in 2007.<sup>155</sup> In 2021, the Government committed an additional \$746 million over seven years to expand the program with funding for more groups and increased support for strategic land and sea country management.<sup>156</sup>

The Indigenous Ranger Biosecurity Program (IRBP) engages Indigenous rangers on a fee for service basis to undertake biosecurity surveillance and monitoring activities to help protect Australia from the threat of exotic pests, diseases and weeds. Indigenous Rangers have traditional knowledge of lands and waterways including areas that are sparsely populated and remote. They are well placed to help recognise biosecurity threats. Indigenous Rangers undertake a range of activities, including assisting with animal, plant and aquatic health surveys, insect trapping, plant host mapping, collection and destruction of biosecurity risk material, and public awareness activities in remote communities.

The IRBP supports rangers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to access technical training and practical skills development, including through grants, and economic

opportunities. This includes \$2.4 million in grants provided under the Biosecurity Business Grants program in 2021 to help groups undertake activities like developing biosecurity master plans, weed identification workshops and a feasibility study for an Indigenous business to operate a biosecurity hub on Badu Island.<sup>157</sup> Ranger Capability Grants provided a further \$1.1 million in funding in 2021 for groups to purchase new equipment, undertake training, and attend regional ranger forums.<sup>158</sup>



A great example of the outcomes of the IRBP is the recent detection of the exotic marine pest, the Asian green mussel, by the Yirrganydji Land and Sea Rangers in Cairns, Queensland, where trained rangers detected and reported this dangerous pest before it could spread.<sup>159</sup>

For more information, visit [awe.gov.au](http://awe.gov.au).



## Prescribed Bodies Corporate

Since the historic Mabo decision in 1992, native title has been an important feature of Australian legal doctrine and society.<sup>160</sup>

Under the *Native Title Act 1993*, Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBCs) were established to support native title holders to take advantage of opportunities arising from their native title rights, and make informed choices about how they can maximise economic development opportunities on their land. There are currently 231 PBCs in Australia, 165 of which are in Northern Australia.<sup>161</sup>

The Australian Government has allocated \$47 million over the next four years (2021-22 to 2024-25) to support PBCs to undertake capacity building.<sup>162</sup> The Prescribed Bodies Corporate Capacity Building Program aims to build the capacity of PBCs to generate economic benefits and manage their land effectively and sustainably.<sup>163</sup>

The operation of PBCs was included in the National Indigenous Australian Agency's 2020 *Review of the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (CATSI Act), published in February 2021.<sup>164</sup> The report makes 72 recommendations outlining suggested changes to the CATSI Act. Therefore, there will likely be substantial changes to PBCs moving forward, including increased transparency and a new regulatory function.<sup>165</sup>

For more information, visit [niaa.gov.au](http://niaa.gov.au).



# The First Five Years: 2015-2020

## ▶ Backing Indigenous Business

A strong and prosperous Indigenous business and entrepreneurial sector is key to job creation, financial security for families and communities, and contributing to the growth of local economies.

The Government is investing in business development, mentorship, and access to financial services so Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can grow their businesses into long-term, sustainable enterprises, and be in the best position to access bigger markets.<sup>166</sup>

In 2021, the National Indigenous Australians Agency released a Discussion Paper for the National Roadmap for Indigenous Skills, Jobs and Wealth Creation (Roadmap).<sup>167</sup> The Roadmap will focus on short, medium, and long-term actions that increase economic opportunity for Indigenous Australians, complementing the implementation of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.<sup>168</sup>

In October 2021, the Government announced it would be expanding its successful Indigenous business and employment hub model into Darwin, as part of the Indigenous Business Sector Strategy.<sup>169</sup> The Darwin Hub will provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and job seekers with advice to realise the ever-increasing opportunities through procurement policies and emerging commercial prospects.<sup>170</sup> The Darwin Hub, with satellite services in other key locations across the Northern Territory, will be co-designed with local Indigenous business leaders and other key Northern Territory stakeholders to provide the right solutions for the local market.

Indigenous owned businesses are at the heart of Northern Australia's tourism and creative arts industries. The Government is backing these businesses to respond to the challenges of COVID-19, and continue to showcase Australia's unique heritage to the world. Indigenous tourism businesses can access up to \$12 million in grants under the new Indigenous Tourism Fund, as well as mentoring and practical business advice.<sup>171</sup>

Other national measures that are supporting northern Indigenous business include the \$200 million Indigenous Business Sector Strategy,<sup>172</sup> the Indigenous Business Solutions Program,<sup>173</sup> and the Indigenous Procurement Policy.<sup>174</sup>

For more information, visit [indigenous.gov.au](https://indigenous.gov.au).

"The Indigenous population is comparatively younger, growing faster and critical to future local labour supply, particularly for many regional economies. There are many success stories of Indigenous Australians in the economy – but barriers have meant the success is not broad or deep enough to drive a sustained change in economic outcomes for Indigenous Australians."

*The National Roadmap*

## Case Study: Aboriginal Economic Development Forum

One of Australia's premier events, the Aboriginal Economic Development Forum provides an opportunity for Aboriginal businesses to showcase their products and services, reflecting diversity and growth across a broad range of industries.

Participants share knowledge and experiences, connecting with Aboriginal entrepreneurs, industry, public and private sector entities. The 2021 theme was 'industry': a system that, from the ground up, intricately connects our businesses, networks, and communities.

The Forum is focused on developing Aboriginal business and private sector investment to support the growth of this exciting Northern Territory economy.



# Social Infrastructure and Communities

## Health

The Australian Government is improving access to healthcare in remote and rural communities, to ensure everyone has access to a world class health system, supported by a highly trained, qualified, and well distributed workforce.

The Government recognises the importance and challenges of regional health and is strongly committed to improving access to services for people living in rural and remote areas through support for front-line service delivery.<sup>175</sup>

Communities in Northern Australia will benefit from national measures to improve the quality of the healthcare workforce and access to healthcare in rural areas, including the ten-year \$550 million Stronger Rural Health Strategy announced in 2018.<sup>176</sup>

The Government has invested in aged care infrastructure across Australia, including in the north, through the 2020 Aged Care Approvals.<sup>177</sup> The Government is transitioning to a new system where places will be allocated directly to senior Australians, improving access to quality aged care services.<sup>178</sup>

Established in 2020 to contribute to closing the gap in health outcomes, the Indigenous Australians' Health Program (IAHP) has allocated around \$280 million over 2021-23 to healthcare providers across Northern Australia to improve health outcomes for Indigenous populations.<sup>179</sup> The IAHP funds work under four themes:

- ◇ primary health care services;
- ◇ improving access to primary health care;
- ◇ targeted health activities; and
- ◇ capital works for buying, leasing, building, or upgrading infrastructure.

For more information, visit [health.gov.au](https://health.gov.au).



## Tropical Health

Northern Australia is home to world-leading tropical health research institutions that are at the forefront of improving health in rural, remote, Indigenous, and tropical communities within Australia and globally.

Menzies School of Health Research in the Northern Territory and James Cook University in north Queensland work throughout the Asia-Pacific region, which is home to over 50 per cent of the world's population, many of whom live in poverty.<sup>180</sup> Their research tackles key areas of public health concern, including malaria, tuberculosis, bacterial infections, and maternal and child health and nutrition.

Through collaborative research and capacity building, Northern Australian researchers find meaningful and relevant ways to improve the health of people in Australia and around the world.<sup>181</sup>

The Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia is also leading world-class research with a range of innovative collaborations. An industry-relevant micro-credentials project will revolutionise the digital capability of healthcare professionals across Northern Australia, integrating technology into various healthcare settings.<sup>182</sup> A Cairns biotechnology company has its sights set on curing Type 2 diabetes – with a little help from Northern Australia's unique array of parasitic worms which may provide new treatments from the protein secretions of the worms.<sup>183</sup>

For more information visit [menzies.edu.au](https://menzies.edu.au), [jcu.edu.au](https://jcu.edu.au), and [crcna.com.au](https://crcna.com.au).





## Creative Industries

Australia's visual and creative arts are world-famous, and bring a myriad of economic opportunities to the north – from tourism to direct employment.

The Australian Government is supporting arts organisations and creators to produce, promote, and showcase Northern Australia's art and cultural heritage.

Since 2014, the Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support Program has helped to support and promote professional Indigenous artists by providing grants to Indigenous-owned art centres, regional hubs, art fairs and professional organisations.<sup>188</sup> Around half of the recipients are in the north.<sup>189</sup> For example, in 2021-22, the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair will be supported with \$485,000 in grants under the Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support Program to attract new audiences and provide professional development to Indigenous artists and arts workers from over 40 arts centres nationally.<sup>190</sup>

The Government is also supporting arts and cultural events in regional and remote parts of Australia, through the \$3.6 million annual Regional Arts Fund,<sup>191</sup> and the \$400 million Location Incentive Program, which provides financial incentives for international film production to come to Australia, including to the north.<sup>192</sup>

For more information, visit [arts.gov.au](https://arts.gov.au).

## Community Programs

Building a strong north means focusing on the economy and ensuring communities are resilient, robust, and vibrant.

There are a range of community grants programs available to support the creation of jobs, drive economic growth, and build stronger communities across Northern Australia.

Grants awarded as part of the \$300 million Building Better Regions Fund (BBRF) have driven community improvements across the north since the BBRF began in 2017.<sup>184</sup> For example, the Barkly Regional Council in the Northern Territory received \$7.6 million to deliver youth infrastructure including a cycle/walking path and the Youth Linx Youth Centre in Tennant Creek, and replace the Ali Curung Sport and Recreation Centre, as well as construct a basketball court cover at Wutunugurra.<sup>185</sup> The Australian Government announced \$250 million in Budget 2021-22 towards a sixth round of the popular BBRF.<sup>186</sup>

Communities in Northern Australia are also benefiting from the Government's Regional Jobs and Investment Package, with \$20 million provided to Tropical North Queensland and \$30 million to Bowen Basin to diversify their economies and unlock new sources of sustainable growth and employment.<sup>187</sup>

For more information, visit [infrastructure.gov.au/territories-regions-cities](https://infrastructure.gov.au/territories-regions-cities).



## Skills and Employment

Employers across the north need a reliable workforce to support a diversified economy with a range of skills for the jobs of today and the future. The Australian Government's education and skills development programs support opportunities to connect people with skills in demand and provide industry specific training to inspire and inform.

With over 15 broad industry groups ranging from agribusiness and food, health and community, sports and recreation, arts and culture, defence industry to utilities or transport,<sup>193</sup> there are programs available to support future workforces to achieve their full potential in new and existing occupations.

### Job Fairs

To support job seekers the Government held a series of national Job Fairs throughout 2021.

In the north these were in Darwin, Alice Springs and Townsville.<sup>194</sup> The face-to-face or virtual Fairs complement the National Harvest Labour,<sup>195</sup> and the Queensland Virtual Tourism and Hospitality Jobs Fairs.<sup>196</sup>

Additional events are planned to maximise opportunities and connect local workers and employers to meet skills gaps.<sup>197</sup>

For more information, visit [dese.gov.au/jobs-fair](https://dese.gov.au/jobs-fair).



### JobTrainer

Over 70,500 job seekers in Northern Australia have benefited from access to training under the JobTrainer initiative introduced in 2020.<sup>198</sup>

JobTrainer is a \$2 billion Government and state and territory fund providing free or low-fee training courses across the nation to help the country respond to COVID-19.<sup>199</sup>

Building on the success of JobTrainer, the Government is negotiating a new National Skills Agreement with states and territories to increase investment in vocational training and expand access across Australia, including in the north.<sup>200</sup>

For more information, visit [myskills.gov.au](https://myskills.gov.au).



Agriculture



Science and Technology



Government, Safety, and Environment



Tourism and Hospitality



Construction and Mining





## Indigenous Skills and Employment Program

The Government has also established programs to support Indigenous jobseekers. The new Indigenous Skills and Employment Program (ISEP) announced in Budget 2021-22 will contribute to Closing the Gap in employment through flexible, locally informed investment pathways.<sup>201</sup>

The ISEP co-design, in consultation with key stakeholders, will be based on the need to:

- ♦ address specific barriers to employment at the regional and local levels;
- ♦ work with local communities to identify existing and emerging employment opportunities;
- ♦ be responsive to emerging regional labour market needs and opportunities for both job seekers and businesses;
- ♦ target specific cohorts of Indigenous Australians based on data and evidence, supplemented with local knowledge and need; and
- ♦ support employers to understand and realise the potential of the Indigenous workforce.

For more information, visit [niaa.gov.au](http://niaa.gov.au).

## Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements

The Australian Government's \$2.8 billion Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements (BAC) wage subsidy package supports businesses and Group Training Organisations to take on new apprentices and trainees.<sup>202</sup>

The BAC aims to build a pipeline of skilled workers to support sustained economic growth.<sup>203</sup>

For more information, visit [www.dese.gov.au/boosting-apprenticeship-commencements](http://www.dese.gov.au/boosting-apprenticeship-commencements).



Health and  
Community Services



Arts and Culture



Business, Education,  
and Training



Manufacturing and  
Engineering



Transport

# Disaster Recovery and Insurance



## Disaster Recovery

As one of Australia’s most disaster prone and at-risk areas, Northern Australia will benefit from the Australian Government’s commitment to support communities all over Australia prepare for, respond to, and recover from natural disasters.

Managing and reducing risk is key to limiting the impacts of disasters, and risk reduction was a focus of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements.<sup>204</sup> Nationally, the Government committed \$600 million from 2021-22 to 2026-27 for the Preparing Australia Program to support projects that mitigate or reduce the disaster risk, impact and consequence associated with large-scale natural hazards.<sup>205</sup> The Government also committed \$130.5 million over five years from 2019-20 to reduce the risk and impact of natural disasters on Australian communities.<sup>206</sup>

The Government established the Australian Climate Service to inform customers of threats posed by changing climate and natural hazards.<sup>207</sup> It also established the National Recovery and Resilience Agency to provide direct support to communities affected by disaster, which has officers located throughout the north.<sup>208</sup>

In 2020-2021, the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements were activated for 14 disaster events across Northern Australia, including for the Severe Tropical Cyclone Seroja in Western Australia and Tropical Cyclone Niran in Queensland.<sup>209</sup> Following Severe Tropical Cyclone Seroja in April 2021, a jointly funded \$107 million Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements package is providing support for recovery efforts across disaster affected communities in 16 Local Government Areas (LGAs).<sup>210</sup> Following Tropical Cyclone Niran in March 2021, the Australian and Queensland Governments activated Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements for eight LGAs. Support includes concessional loans of up to \$250,000 and freight subsidies of \$5,000 and Recovery Grants of up to \$75,000 for primary producers.<sup>211</sup>

For more information, visit [recovery.gov.au](https://recovery.gov.au).

**\$130.5 million**

committed funding to reduce the risk and impact of natural disasters

**13 events**

13 disaster events across Northern Australia in 2020-21

**\$40 million**

to establish a North Queensland Strata Title Resilience Pilot Program in 2022



## Insurance

Insurance costs in Northern Australia are generally higher than in the rest of the country.<sup>212</sup> Contributing factors are a high risk of natural disasters, local market dynamics, insurance pricing structures, and difficulty comparing insurance options.<sup>213</sup>

Insurance costs in Northern Australia have risen significantly in recent years, with home insurance growing by over 178 per cent from 2007-08 to 2018-19, compared with 52 per cent for the rest of Australia.<sup>214</sup> The high costs risk driving consumers away from insurance, leaving families and businesses unable to rebuild in the event of a disaster.

The Government has committed to tackling rising insurance costs in Northern Australia. A new reinsurance pool for cyclones and related flooding is intended to be established from 1 July 2022, backed by an annual \$10 billion government guarantee.<sup>215</sup>

This new arrangement will increase the availability of insurance by helping insurers reduce their exposure risk and reduce the cost of providing insurance, which should be passed onto consumers as lower premiums.

The Government is providing \$40 million to establish a North Queensland Strata Title Resilience Pilot Program in 2022 to subsidise mitigation works to both improve resilience of strata title properties and insurance affordability.<sup>216</sup> The pilot will be delivered in collaboration with the Queensland State Government commencing in January 2022.

For more information, visit [treasury.gov.au](https://treasury.gov.au).



## Defence Industry Support

The Australian Defence Force is a major employer and driver of economic growth in Northern Australia. Defence works closely with industry to deliver local procurement outcomes that support growth and innovation of regional businesses while also contributing to increased Defence capability.

Government investments to Defence present prime economic opportunities for northern businesses to supply products or services. The Government is maximising local jobs through a targeted industry plan to contract local businesses throughout the entire supply chain.<sup>217</sup>

There are grant programs available for eligible small to medium-sized businesses to assist with expanding their defence-related capabilities, such as overcoming barriers to exporting defence products or skill development relevant to the defence industry.<sup>218</sup>

Defence infrastructure in Northern Australia can include constructing and redeveloping bases, ports, airfields, training areas and logistics facilities. This underpins the Defence Force's ability to prepare for, conduct and sustain military operations, including in response to national disasters.<sup>219</sup>

Defence infrastructure investments maximise opportunities for local workforces so the benefits stay local. The upgrade of strategically important bases like the RAAF Base Darwin, RAAF Base Tindal, Larrakeyah Barracks, Robertson Barracks and HMAS Coonawarra, RAAF Base Curtin, RAAF Base Learmonth, RAAF Base Townsville, and HMAS Cairns Base have been important economic boosts to these regions.

The north also supports ongoing training relationships with both the United States<sup>220</sup> and Singaporean<sup>221</sup> militaries, which includes significant rotations of US military personnel and training activities for Singapore. It also supports development of training areas and facilities.

For more information, visit [www.defence.gov.au](http://www.defence.gov.au).



# Resources and Mining

**Northern Australia's abundant energy resources represent a key opportunity for development in the north; creating jobs, generating new revenue streams, and contributing to energy security across Australia.**

The nation's resources sector is strong, resilient, and maintains its well-deserved reputation as a consistent supplier of energy and resources to the world. Global demand for resources and energy commodities is expected to recover from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and even expand.<sup>222</sup>

To support this, the Australian Government is investing \$20.1 million over two years to deliver a *Global Resources Strategy*.<sup>223</sup> The strategy will help strengthen Australia's resources exports, secure new global markets, and promote Australia as a reliable and responsible supplier to the world. The strategy is part of a whole-of-government effort to build Australia's resilience to trade shocks such as the COVID-19 global pandemic.

The strategy will help maximise Australia's long-term economic opportunities and job creation by expanding the sector's export opportunities. As demand for critical minerals grows, there are significant economic opportunities for Northern Australia.

With existing projects and significant geological reserves of minerals deemed critical by other nations the north is well placed to capitalise on rising global demand for secure supplies of critical minerals.

Australia has the world's third largest reserves of lithium and is the largest producer of lithium in the world; is ranked sixth in the world for rare earth elements and second for production, yet many of these deposits remain untapped; and has large resources of cobalt, manganese, tantalum, tungsten, and zirconium.

Australia also has world-leading expertise in resource extraction and processing, high-tech engineering, and renewables research. Northern Australia is a highly attractive destination for investment, with competitive advantages across the minerals and resource sectors in technology, training, research and development, environmental and labour standards, and legal and regulatory certainty.<sup>224</sup>

For more information, visit [industry.gov.au](http://industry.gov.au).

## Case Study: Beetaloo Basin

The Beetaloo sub-basin in the Northern Territory has the potential to be a world-class gas province and the Australian Government is taking action to capitalise on this opportunity. In January 2021, the Government released the \$224 million Beetaloo Strategic Basin Plan (Beetaloo Plan) which "sets out bold, innovative and cooperative actions to accelerate gas development and seize the opportunities presented by the natural resources in the Beetaloo".<sup>225</sup>

Modelling has shown that under a high development scenario, development in the Beetaloo could produce 6,000 jobs by 2040, contributing to economic development throughout the Northern Territory. Developing the Beetaloo could also spur significant downstream manufacturing opportunities and deliver cheaper and more reliable gas to households and industry.<sup>226</sup>

The Government is committed to ensuring that Beetaloo development is safe and sustainable, including guaranteeing that development benefits local communities, Traditional Owners, Territorians, and the broader Australian population. To this end, the Government is working closely with the NT Government and industry to ensure that development is in line with world leading environmental practices and maximises employment opportunities for local workers.

Importantly, \$2.2 million has been committed through Budget 2021-22 to support the Northern Land Council (NLC) to facilitate land use agreements and drive economic opportunities in the Beetaloo.<sup>227</sup> The NLC is the statutory representative for the Traditional Owners of the land and must consult with, and represent the views of the Traditional Owners in the Beetaloo region throughout the process.

The Beetaloo Strategic Basin Plan is the first deliverable under the Gas-Fired Recovery Strategy and is the first of five plans delivered under the Strategic Basin Plans program announced in Budget 2020-21.<sup>228</sup>

For more information, visit [industry.gov.au](http://industry.gov.au).





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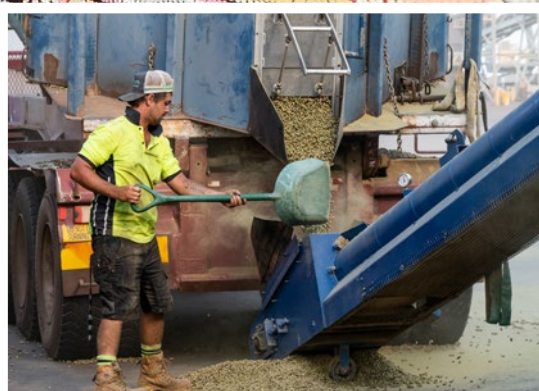
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Unless otherwise indicated, all images in this report were taken with the permission and cooperation of businesses across Northern Australia between September and November 2021 by Jessica Wright and Robert Blake from the Office of Northern Australia.

Descriptions from left to right.

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*First row:* Stephen Cardona, Rapid Cleaning, Darwin NT; Margetta Avlonitis, Darwin NT; Camels on Cable Beach, Broome WA

*Second row:* Lake Argyle, Kununurra WA (Credit: Phil Fitzgerald); Coomalie Holding Depot, Adelaide River NT; Desert Knowledge Australia Solar Centre, Alice Springs NT

*Third row:* Karla Cardenas Gomez, Menzies School of Health Research, Darwin NT; Cattle export truck at Darwin Port, Darwin NT

*Fourth row:* Banana plant, Darwin Fruit Farms, Darwin NT; Bush Raisin by Esther Bruno Nangala, This is Aboriginal Art, Alice Springs NT; Mangoes, Mareeba Golden Drop Winery, Mareeba QLD

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*Third row:* Banana plantation, Darwin Fruit Farm, Darwin NT; Margetta Avlonitis, Darwin NT; Darwin Port, Darwin NT

*Fourth row:* Stuart Highway, NT; Naomi Anstess, Northern Territory Indigenous Business Network at the Aboriginal Economic Development Forum opening ceremony, Alice Springs NT

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### Back cover

*First row:* Jorja Purdie and Erin Selleck, Duprada Dance Company, Alice Springs NT; Propel Innovations and Treeti, Darwin NT; Rabbit Hole Cafe, Darwin NT

*Second row:* Tipperary Station, NT; Vanessa Rigas, Menzies School of Health Research, Darwin NT; Willie Creek Pearls, Broome NT

*Third row:* Darwin Port, Darwin NT; Tjanpi Desert Weavers, Alice Springs NT; Mango trees, Darwin Fruit Farm, Darwin NT



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