Joint Communiqué: Northern Australia Ministerial Forum #7

Publication date: Tuesday, 10 November 2026

Northern Australia Ministers met for the seventh meeting of the Northern Australia Ministerial Forum (ministerial forum) to discuss shared priorities, hear from industry and regional stakeholders, and agree practical actions to support the long-term development of Northern Australia.

Chaired by the Hon Madeleine King MP, Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to working collaboratively to address Northern Australia's opportunities and challenges through a more coordinated, outcomes-focused approach.

Workplan: Turning shared priorities into coordinated action

A key focus of the meeting was the future direction of the ministerial forum and how it can best drive practical outcomes on issues of shared importance.

Ministers considered advice from officials on the development of a collaborative Northern Australia workplan and agreed on the need for a more focused and action-oriented agenda centred on a small number of shared priorities.

Ministers agreed to focus collaborative effort on two priority areas where jurisdictions can work together to achieve practical outcomes:

- Telecommunications and Digital Connectivity
- Economic Transition of Communities

Ministers endorsed ongoing work by the Northern Australia Working Group to progress these agreed priorities and other issues of relevance to Northern Australia, and report on implementation at future meetings.

Ministers also acknowledged the importance of migration in supporting Northern Australia's workforce needs and economic development. Ministers noted the need for continued consultation across governments on migration settings.

Jurisdictional priorities for Northern Australia

Ministers exchanged updates on key priorities across the Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, and priorities for the Australian Government, highlighting the significant economic opportunities emerging across Northern Australia and the importance of collaboration to realise them.

Discussions focused on the critical role of enabling infrastructure, workforce attraction and development, investment attraction, First Nations economic participation and strong regional communities in supporting sustainable growth across the north.

Ministers agreed that many of Northern Australia's opportunities and challenges transcend jurisdictional boundaries and require coordinated action between governments, industry and communities.

Driving investment and economic growth

Ministers welcomed a presentation from the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility (NAIF) on its ongoing contribution to economic development across Northern Australia.

Ministers noted the important role of strategic infrastructure investment in unlocking private sector development, supporting regional communities and enabling major industry opportunities across the north.

Ministers also received an update on outcomes from the 2026 Developing Northern Australia Conference, with discussions reflecting strong stakeholder support for practical collaboration between governments to advance common priorities and strengthen Northern Australia's competitiveness, resilience and productivity.

Delivering projects across jurisdictions: Outback Way case study

Ministers heard from the Outback Highway Development Council on the Outback Way project, a nationally significant initiative connecting communities and economic opportunities across our northern jurisdictions.

The presentation highlighted the opportunities and challenges associated with coordinating infrastructure, services and regional development across multiple jurisdictions. Ministers acknowledged the significant investment already made in the Outback Way and the importance of effective coordination as the project progresses.

Ministers noted existing cross-jurisdictional coordination arrangements and agreed that officials would provide further advice on those arrangements and opportunities to strengthen coordination.

Looking ahead

Ministers welcomed the progress made since the previous meeting and reaffirmed their shared commitment to ensuring the forum remains a practical mechanism for advancing Northern Australia's development.

Ministers agreed to continue working together to translate shared priorities into coordinated action aimed at delivering tangible benefits for Northern Australian communities, businesses and industries.

Attendees

- Hon Madeleine King MP, Minister for Resources and Northern Australia (Chair)
- Senator the Hon Nita Green, Assistant Minister for Northern Australia
- Hon Stephen Dawson MLC, Minister for Regional Development (Western Australia)
- Ms Laurie Zio MLA, Assistant Minister to the Chief Minister, Assistant Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, Defence NT and Territory Coordinator (Northern Territory).
- Ms Ally Foley, Chief of Staff to and on behalf of Hon Dale Last MP, Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, Minister for Manufacturing and Minister for Regional and Rural Development (Queensland).