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Joint Communiqué: Northern Australia Ministerial Forum #6

Publication date: Thursday, 23 April 2026

The Northern Australia Ministerial Forum met today in Darwin on Larrakia Country. This meeting marks the sixth Forum on developing Northern Australia and centred on data and evidence which underpins sustainable economic development across the north, including research and development, labour and skills data and the approach for a collaborative action plan to address shared priorities.

Ministers discussed the impact of the current fuel security crisis on Northern Australia.

To support this the Forum received an update from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet on fuel security and the implications of recent disruptions for supply chains across the north. Ministers noted the importance of Commonwealth and state and territory action to strengthen supply resilience, improve contingency planning for remote communities, and support logistics capability. They highlighted the opportunities that Northern Australia has in building sovereign capacity for Australia and our regional partners through developments in energy and critical minerals.

The role of research and development in Northern Australia's economic development.

Senator the Hon Tim Ayres, Minister for Industry and Innovation joined the Forum, leading discussions on the role of research and development in Northern Australia's economic development.

Ministers noted the critical role of research, development and innovation in lifting productivity and enabling new industries across Northern Australia. Discussion highlighted the importance of ongoing funding and support for research and development, and translating research into commercial outcomes, and strengthening collaboration between government, industry and the research sector.

Northern Australia workforce

Jobs and Skills Commissioner, Prof Barney Glover AO presented phase 2 of the Jobs and Skills Roadmap for Regional Australia including labour data in the north.

Ministers welcomed the presentation and contribution of improved labour market data to workforce planning and targeted skills initiatives in the north.

The Forum also heard from Councillor Darriea Turley AM, Vice-President of the Australian Local Government Association who provided local government insights on workforce and skills in Northern Australia, outlining the key priorities for councils to address these challenges.

The cost of insurance and its unique impacts on the North

The Hon Dr Daniel Mulino MP, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Financial Services joined the Forum proceedings to lead discussions on the cost of insurance and its unique impacts on communities and businesses across Northern Australia.

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Ministers discussed the impact of rising insurance premiums on households and businesses across Northern Australia, including compounding effects of current cost-of-living pressures. Ministers noted the impact on communities, essential infrastructure and services, of the unprecedented climate related events during the 2025-26 wet season. Ministers noted the need for better data and transparency on risk pricing, mitigation and resilience measures, and close engagement with industry and relevant Commonwealth processes and regulators, as well as the insurance sector.

Collaborative action for Northern Australia

Ministers agreed to a collaborative workplan approach for Northern Australia.

Ministers agreed to progress a coordinated, forward work program for the Forum, including targeted “deep dives” on shared priorities.

Ministers reaffirmed their collective commitment to the long-term development of Northern Australia, recognising the Forum as the central mechanism for leadership and coordination across jurisdictions.

Forum details

The Federal Minister for Northern Australia, the Hon Madeleine King MP, chaired the Forum, and was joined by:

- Senator the Hon Malarndirri McCarthy, Minister for Indigenous Australians (Australian Government)
- Hon Robyn Cahill OAM MLA, Minister for Trade, Business and Asian Relations; International Education, Migration and Population; Workforce Development; Advanced Manufacturing; Children and Families; Child Protection; Prevention of Domestic Violence (Northern Territory)
- Hon Dale Last MP, Minister for Natural Resources and Mines; Manufacturing; Regional and Rural Development (Queensland)
- Hon Stephen Dawson MLC, Minister for Regional Development; Ports; Science and Innovation; Medical Research; Kimberley (Western Australia)
- Senator the Hon Tim Ayres, Minister for Industry and Innovation; Science (Australian Government) via videoconference (agenda item 3)
- The Hon Dr Daniel Mulino MP, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Financial Services (Australian Government) via videoconference (agenda item 4)
- Senator the Hon Nita Green, Assistant Minister for Northern Australia (Australian Government)
- Mr Luke Gosling OAM, MP, Special Envoy for Defence, Veterans Affairs and Northern Australia (Australian Government)

Forum members welcomed the invitation for the Northern Australia Ministerial Forum to hold a special meeting in Canberra during the *Annual Statement to the Parliament on the Northern Australia agenda* proceedings, in the second half of 2026.