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## **Joint Communiqué: Northern Australia Ministerial Forum #3 5 October 2023, Cairns, Queensland**

### **Publication date: 5 October 2023**

The Northern Australia Ministerial Forum met today in Cairns on Gimuy Country to discuss state and federal government efforts to support liveable, safe, sustainable and healthy communities across Northern Australia.

Creating economic opportunity in the north requires the combined efforts of government and the private sector.

In the third meeting of the Ministerial Forum since it was re-convened in October 2022, ministers from the Federal Government and from the Queensland, Western Australia and Northern Territory governments met to progress key priority areas and policy issues of significance to the north.

### **Shared commitment to Defence in the north**

Northern Australia is strategically important for Australia's defence and national security. The Australian Defence Force (ADF) is a major employer and driver of economic growth in Northern Australia.

The Forum agreed to work together to maximise the economic and social impacts of the Australian Government's \$3.8 billion investment through the Defence Strategic Review and consider collaboration opportunities to grow the Northern Australia economy.

Ministers discussed the critical role that Northern Australia plays in securing our Nation, and agreed to work together with Defence on future planning, facilitated through bringing together the work of the existing cross-jurisdictional Heads of Planning group, the Northern Australia Working Group and Defence.

### **Driving First Nations outcomes through First Nations leadership**

The Forum welcomed a progress report from the Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group and thanked them for their ongoing contribution.

Ministers agreed the importance of enhancing the prosperity of First Nations Australians, in accordance with the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

### **Shaping the refresh of the White Paper on Developing Northern Australia**

Ministers acknowledged collective efforts to grow the economies and liveability of our northern States and Territory since the White Paper was released in 2015 and re-affirmed their commitment to the 14 agreed priority areas that underpin the White Paper refresh.

### **Details on the Forum**

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

- The Hon Glenn Butcher MP, Queensland's Minister for Regional Development
- The Hon Don Punch MLA, Western Australia's Minister for Regional Development and;

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- The Hon Nicole Manison MLA, Minister for Northern Australia and Trade (Northern Territory).
- Assistant Minister for Defence Matt Thistlethwaite also joined the Forum to brief ministers on the Defence Strategic Review and its implications for Northern Australia.

Ministers welcomed the invitation for the next Forum meeting in Northern Territory in the first half of 2024.