

**OFFICIAL**

## **Joint Communiqué: Northern Australia Ministerial Forum #4 4 September 2024, Broome, Western Australia**

**Publication date: 4 September 2024**

The Northern Australia Ministerial Forum met on the lands of the Yawuru people in Broome today to discuss opportunities and ways in which to collaborate to maximise benefits for the north across a range of shared priorities.

Ministers discussed:

- the Australian Government's Northern Australian Action Plan 2024–2029
- addressing urgent housing needs
- lessons learned from the Kimberley flood response
- trade and investment opportunities
- the role of overseas migration in the north
- the report by the Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group
- maximising local outcomes from Defence investment.

### **Northern Australia Action Plan and housing**

The Ministerial Forum recognises housing is a key priority across the north, and underpins the policy priorities outlined in the Northern Australia Action Plan.

Housing Australia outlined the funding and support available through the suite of Australian Government housing programs.

Ministers discussed the impact of housing supply on attracting the required workforce, community health, education and employment outcomes.

Ministers tasked Australian, State and NT Officials to work together to investigate housing challenges facing northern Australia and opportunities for collaboration to address issues. The working group will provide recommendations to the next Ministerial Forum meeting.

### **Kimberley flood response**

Ministers discussed the increasing impacts of extreme weather events in the north. The Hon Don Punch MLA, Western Australia's Minister for Regional Development, provided insights on the impacts and lessons from 2022–23 Tropical Cyclone Ellie on the Kimberley. Ministers recognised the importance of supporting resilient and well-resourced communities, particularly as northern Australia will continue to be impacted by unprecedented weather events. Ministers also emphasised the importance of working with local communities and businesses, to maximise the outcomes of infrastructure investment.

### **Trade and investment**

Ministers discussed the importance of trade and investment to grow the northern economy. A briefing was provided by Senator the Hon Tim Ayres Assistant Minister for Trade outlining the Australian Government's trade and market access strategy for the north.

## OFFICIAL

Ministers discussed shared opportunities and regional priorities to grow and build new and existing industries, with a focus on the opportunities driven by the transition to a net zero economy and the proposed Future Made in Australia Bill.

### **Regional migration settings**

Ministers noted the critical role of overseas migration in growing the north's population, meeting critical workforce needs and supporting northern universities. The Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP, Assistant Minister for Immigration provided a briefing on the Australian Government's Migration Strategy, and the current review of regional migration settings.

### **Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group**

Ministers noted the update provided by the Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group, and thanked them for their contribution to shaping government policy and initiatives that support First Nations businesses and communities in northern Australia.

Ministers acknowledged the IRG's work in 2024 has focused on growing First Nation's employment by prioritising local job opportunities, addressing the high cost of living in First Nations communities and strengthening and protecting First Nations' data sovereignty and knowledge.

### **Northern Australia Indigenous Development Accord**

Ministers noted the findings of the review of the Northern Australia Indigenous Development Accord. The review found that all governments had completed extensive work against the outcomes of the report in supporting First Nations economic development. The review also found that the outcomes and objectives of the Accord to support First Nation economic self-determination remain relevant.

### **Defence investment in northern Australia**

The National Defence Strategy 2024 highlighted the strategic importance of the north to national security and the need for a re-posturing of Defence personnel and equipment across northern Australia.

Mr Luke Gosling OAM MP, Special Envoy for Defence, Veterans' Affairs and Northern Australia provided an update on the pipeline of Defence investment in the north through the Integrated Investment Program, ADF housing, as well as Defence's transition to clean energy.

Ministers agreed to work together to maximise local outcomes through the Defence investment.

### **Forum details**

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

- The Hon Don Punch MLA, Western Australia's Minister for Regional Development

**OFFICIAL**

- The Hon Gerard Maley MLA, Deputy Chief Minister of the Northern Territory
- Ms Bernadette Zerba, as proxy for the Hon Glenn Butcher MP, Queensland's Minister for Regional Development
- Ms Bec Smith, National Indigenous Australians proxy for the Hon Malarndirri McCarthy MP, Minister for Indigenous Australians.

The forum members were also joined by:

- Senator the Hon Tim Ayres, Assistant Minister for Trade who provided a briefing on trade and investment
- The Hon Matt Thistlethwaite, Assistant Minister for Immigration who provided a briefing on migration and northern Australia
- Mr Luke Gosling OAM MP, Special Envoy for Defence Veterans' Affairs and Northern Australia who provided a briefing on defence investment in northern Australia
- Dr Jane Homewood, Regional Director Southern States, Housing Australia.