

Defence in Northern Australia

Northern Australia fact sheet



A strong north, makes for a more secure Australia

The Indo-Pacific region increasingly dominates the global economic, cultural and strategic shape of the world.

This rapidly changing geo-political landscape means that the Territory, and the wider Northern Australia, are critical to the security of Australia.

The Territory is strategically positioned as a regional hub for defence, border protection, humanitarian assistance, interoperability training and ensuring critical trade routes remain open.

Key points

- The Territory has a long and proud history of working with and supporting the defence presence and activities in Northern Australia and beyond our borders.
- The importance of Northern Australia is rising as the Indo-Pacific dynamics change rapidly, and as the Australian Government places more importance on Australia's hard and soft power in the region.
- Australia is reliant on the trade routes to the North; a strong defence presence in Northern Australia secures our nation's ability to trade, and our international fuel supply.
- Over the next 20 years the Australian Government's Integrated Investment Program (IIP), which accompanies the Defence White Paper will commit to the following investment in Northern Australia, which equates to 15% of defence expenditure:
 - \$18.5b in Defence facilities in the Northern Territory, as compared to
 - \$4bn in Western Australia
 - \$5.5bn in Queensland.
- In 2016-2017 approximately \$3.6 billion flowed into the Northern Australian economy via Defence spending in the form of: employee payments; supplier payments; purchase of inventory; purchase of other property and plant and equipment.
- Australia strongly supports the United States' strategic rebalance to the Indo-Pacific region, including the US Force Posture Initiatives with 1,587 US Marines currently based in Darwin.
- Large-scale resource sector investment, such as the Ichthys LNG project, demonstrate the Territory's sophisticated and diverse local industries that operate at international standards and drive innovation.
- The Territory Government will maintain a strong public policy focus on the role of the north in the broader security of Australia at a time when strategic circumstances are driving new policy thinking in Canberra.

- Any review of the 2016 Defence White Paper should consider expediting the timelines on developing defence and defence-supported investments in maritime infrastructure to support Australia's maritime defence capabilities.

Federal ministers affirmed the strategic importance of Northern Australia in the defence of our nation through their endorsement of a joint Northern Australia and Defence Statement "A strong north, makes for a secure Australia". (Attachment A)

More information

- 2018 Northern Territory Government 'Northern Territory Defence and National Security'.
- Our Future, Our North: White Paper on Developing the North (2015)
- Developing Northern Australia Implementation Report (2018)
- Defence White Paper (2016)
- Australia Strategic Policy Institute Special Report (2019) Strong and Free? The future security of Australia's north
- Australia Strategic Policy Institute – State of the North series: www.aspi.org.au
- www.industry.gov.au/strategies-for-the-future/northern-australia-agenda

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Northern Australia and Defence Statement: A strong North, makes for a more secure Australia

- Northern Australia is strategically important to the security of Australia and has long played a critical role in maintaining our sovereign borders, supporting a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific and deploying humanitarian assistance. Proximity to the Indo-Pacific region makes Northern Australia a focal point for Australia's national security, including energy, resources, maritime, biosecurity, economic and trade, immigration, and border control.
- Northern Australia has a long and proud history in working with and supporting the defence presence and activities in Northern Australia and beyond our borders. Defence is part of the fabric of our communities and our industries. We want defence families (serving and ex-serving) to have the confidence that their partners and children can come to the north with quality education and health services and fulfilling, well-remunerated jobs.
- A strong northern economy is fundamental to the ability of Northern Australia to build its capacity and capability to support Defence. Northern Australian industries are a fundamental input to Defence's capability through construction and the provision of maintenance and support services. Indigenous people and businesses play a key role in building the capacity and capability of our Defence industry across the north.
- Defence is making infrastructure-related investments of approximately \$28 billion over the next two decades in Northern Australia. We recognise the efforts of Defence through the pilot Local Industry Capability Plans (LICP) to increase opportunities for local northern Australia businesses. We are committed to working with the Department of Defence and industry to move LICPs from pilot to policy and to identify other measures. This includes our commitment to building the skills of the local workforce and using government procurement processes to maximise 'buy local'.
- Engaging the Department of Defence on long-term planning in Northern Australia will ensure future Defence needs are factored into infrastructure (e.g. road, maritime infrastructure, rail and digital infrastructure), industry and workforce development plans.
- An ongoing regular strategic dialogue between the Department of Defence and northern Australia jurisdictions, to understand better Defence's investment priorities and plans and future industry and workforce needs, will build the capacity and capability of the jurisdictions to better support Defence.