WHAT THE TERRITORY NEEDS TO REALISE THE BEETALOO OPPORTUNITY

DMBG's response to the Beetaloo Development Outlook



DARWIN MAJOR BUSINESS GROUP

Preparing the Territory for the Beetaloo opportunity

The Darwin Major Business Group (DMBG) strongly encourages government, industry and the wider community to prepare now to maximise the economic and social benefits of Beetaloo development. With the right planning, investment and policy settings, the Beetaloo Basin has the potential to strengthen the Territory's economy, support local businesses, create enduring jobs and improve living standards. DMBG supports responsible development that delivers lasting benefits for all Territorians.

We commissioned Vantage North Group to prepare the Beetaloo Development Outlook because businesses and communities need a clearer picture of what development could require. This response sets out DMBG's recommendations for consideration by government, industry and the wider community.

The next step in our economic work

In 2024, DMBG's 'What the Territory Needs Now' publication linked higher living standards to stronger economic growth and called for a public campaign explaining Beetaloo's economic benefits.

In 2025, we pressed for faster action on investment, Beetaloo development, onshore processing and enabling infrastructure.

Our 2026 response recognised improvement in population, employment and housing investment, while calling for a stronger private sector and more value retained from major supply chains. It proposed a Beetaloo Authority and emphasised that business, government and the community share responsibility for growth.

The Beetaloo Development Outlook advances that work by examining what development could involve and what we need to do to be ready. DMBG sees Beetaloo as an opportunity to build the Territory's broader economic capacity, alongside defence, minerals, tourism, agriculture and other industries.

What the Outlook means for Territorians

The Outlook describes a staged development scenario, not guaranteed production, jobs or revenue. Progress depends on well performance, customers, finance, agreements, approvals and infrastructure. Its quantified analysis focuses on finding, drilling and producing gas; it does not model the full downstream pipeline and gas facility construction task.

Our response focuses on decisions over the coming decade, recognising that operating activity could extend much longer. DMBG recommends an approach that responds as evidence changes, while giving businesses enough confidence to prepare.

Roads take time to build. People take time to train. Businesses need time to invest. Timely housing and essential services are equally critical. Waiting until every commercial decision is final would leave too little time to prepare.

A Territory First approach means Territorians helping shape these decisions and securing an enduring share of the benefits. For DMBG, success means local careers, stronger businesses, liveable communities and productive assets that serve the Territory for years.

SEVEN RECOMMENDED PRIORITIES

DMBG recommends a coordinated response across the following seven priorities. These are our proposed actions arising from the Outlook and our wider economic work.



1. A BEETALOO AUTHORITY AND A STAGED DELIVERY PLAN

DMBG reaffirms the call in What the Territory Needs 2026 for a Beetaloo Authority.

Development requires connected decisions across government, operators, infrastructure investors, Traditional Owners and communities. We recommend a body with a clear mandate to coordinate that work and keep decisions moving.

DMBG asks the NT Government to consider the an Authority's remit, resources and accountability, including its relationship with the Territory Coordinator and existing agencies. We recommend that this consideration include a dedicated economics group and specialist communications team. Its design would make responsibilities clearer and reduce duplication. DMBG supports arrangements that respect statutory assessment responsibilities and Traditional Owner decision-making.

The Authority can lead a staged readiness plan with Commonwealth participation, connecting basin development with Darwin, Katherine and the supporting communities and transport corridors. Each major dependency would have a responsible party, decision date, funding pathway and evidence required before the next commitment.

DMBG recommends a plan that would cover slower and faster development scenarios and publish progress against priority decisions. We encourage industry to provide useful demand information while protecting legitimate commercial confidentiality. We also encourage urgent work to continue through existing arrangements as the Authority proposal is progressed.

2. COORDINATED PLANNING FOR ENABLING INFRASTRUCTURE

The Outlook identifies a substantial task in roads, rail access, logistics areas, regional aerodromes and communications.

Our 2026 response also called for port, power, water and transport capacity to keep pace with investment. DMBG recommends planning these requirements together to support Darwin's role as Northern Australia's supply-chain hub and Katherine's role as a regional centre.

Priority work would establish the required upgrades to all-weather basin access, including the role of the Buchanan Highway; assess bulk freight connections to the Darwin–Tarcoola railway; and plan logistics capacity in Darwin, Katherine and the basin. DMBG supports regional aviation arrangements that provide emergency access and help workers live in the Territory.

Our call to progress Adelaide River Offstream Water Storage remains part of the wider Greater Darwin growth agenda. We recommend that the readiness plan identify the relevant AROWS stages and decision dates for urban and industrial demand. Basin water needs require their own location-specific assessment and approvals.

DMBG encourages governments to advance business cases for shared infrastructure and seek suitable Commonwealth and private finance. Where high upfront costs prevent essential infrastructure proceeding, we ask governments to consider targeted underwriting or co-investment. We recommend staging any support against commercial progress, with demonstrable public benefit, transparent risk sharing and limits on public exposure.

3. CONDITIONS FOR INVESTMENT AND MORE VALUE ADDED HERE

The Outlook identifies different potential uses for Beetaloo gas, including Territory electricity generation, industrial feedstock, east coast supply and LNG exports.

Each has different infrastructure requirements and different implications for the value retained in the Territory.

DMBG wants those choices assessed against Territory outcomes as well as commercial viability. Our 2026 response backed downstream processing and the Middle Arm Sustainable Development Precinct. Reliable, competitively priced energy could support existing employers, manufacturing and suitable digital infrastructure. Each opportunity needs a credible customer base and assessment of its power, water, land and workforce requirements.

DMBG strongly encourages the Commonwealth and NT governments to provide clear, durable policy settings that allow investors to assess projects over their operating lives. We ask that domestic supply policy take account of the cost of developing new northern supply and transporting it to customers. Secure supply depends on a workable investment case.

DMBG asks that decisions about gas markets and nationally significant infrastructure take the Territory's circumstances into account from the outset. Where development would support national energy security or wider economic resilience, we encourage the Commonwealth to consider a proportionate role in enabling infrastructure, subject to a sound business case.

The investment task extends to smaller firms expanding workshops, equipment and services. These investments build a broader economy, and DMBG recommends giving them practical attention alongside major projects. We recognise that proposed downstream developments require individual assessment; inclusion in a scenario does not make them committed investments.

SEVEN RECOMMENDED PRIORITIES

4. EARLY PREPARATION FOR TERRITORY BUSINESSES TO BECOME COMPETITIVE SUPPLIERS

Our 2026 response called for a major buy-local campaign around supply chains. DMBG sees Beetaloo as an opportunity to turn that intent into practical outcomes.

Local firms need early information to plan equipment, staff, certification, finance and partnerships; a general promise of future contracts is insufficient.

DMBG encourages operators and major contractors to provide early, regularly updated information about likely work packages, standards and procurement timetables. We recommend clear advice on which opportunities are firm, which remain conditional and when suppliers can expect greater certainty.

We encourage operators to structure packages so capable Territory firms can compete, to provide tender feedback and to use payment terms that support suppliers' cash flow. DMBG also encourages government to deliver on faster payment practices. Local firms must meet safety, quality and delivery standards, identify capability gaps and prepare to invest as demand becomes clearer.

DMBG wants local participation measured by economic activity retained here: people employed in the Territory, skills developed, purchases from local suppliers and investment in lasting capacity. A local address alone is an inadequate measure. DMBG recommends applying these principles through subcontracting chains as well as at the principal contract level.

5. A RESIDENT WORKFORCE AND COMMUNITIES PREPARED FOR GROWTH

A sustained workforce requires somewhere to live and a reason to stay. Training places will have limited value if workers cannot find housing, childcare or reliable transport.

DMBG supports industry growth that expands the Territory's capacity without leaving existing residents and employers carrying avoidable shortages and higher costs.

DMBG encourages government, employers and training providers to connect Beetaloo planning to the whole-of-Territory workforce approach advocated in our 2026 response. We recommend using likely demand across energy, defence, construction and other sectors to guide training lead times and pathways from school, apprenticeships and existing employment into new work.

DMBG recommends combining attraction and retention with local training. We ask the Commonwealth to consider migration settings that reflect the Territory's particular needs, and encourage employers to create credible pathways for workers and families to settle here.

DMBG encourages early planning for housing, serviced land and community facilities against development scenarios, with funding and delivery linked to demand. Katherine's role deserves particular attention, alongside Darwin and communities near the basin. DMBG is calling for this planning; the Outlook does not provide a housing demand forecast.

Remote operations will require workforce travel and camps. Wherever practicable, DMBG encourages rosters and air connections that allow workers to make their homes in the Territory. Health care, education, childcare and community safety are economic priorities because they influence whether people can build a life here.



6. TRADITIONAL OWNER AND REGIONAL COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Informed decision-making by Traditional Owners about development affecting their country is fundamental.

DMBG supports early engagement through appropriate representatives, with time and resources for independent advice. DMBG does not speak on their behalf or presume their support.

DMBG encourages agreement-making that addresses participation over the life of development. Depending on the choices of the parties, that may include employment, business opportunities, equity participation and other arrangements that deliver enduring benefit. DMBG supports the protection of cultural heritage and the proper consideration of land access and community priorities through the relevant processes.

Aboriginal businesses need practical opportunities to grow and retain value through contracts and partnerships. We encourage capability development that responds to identifiable work and respects the ambitions of those businesses.

DMBG encourages early involvement of regional and local governments in planning for roads, waste, emergency services and other community demands. We recommend agreement on responsibilities and funding before additional costs fall on small communities.

7. PUBLIC CONFIDENCE THROUGH EVIDENCE AND PERFORMANCE

Investment and public confidence depend on clear requirements and credible performance.

DMBG supports efficient, coordinated decisions, backed by properly resourced assessment and oversight. We support predictable processes alongside rigorous standards.

Territorians are entitled to understandable information about water, emissions, land use, rehabilitation and cumulative impacts. DMBG recommends public access to relevant monitoring results, compliance information and responses to material problems. Technical claims need qualified evidence.

The Outlook identifies matters that could change the pace or scale of development, including well performance, markets, capital, water and agreement-making. We recommend keeping those uncertainties visible as plans are updated. Public confidence is weakened when conditional estimates are presented as settled outcomes.

DMBG also encourages government and industry to explain how community concerns will be heard, answered and tracked. DMBG's contribution is to press for evidence, practical solutions and accountability while keeping the broader Territory interest in view.

PROPOSED NEXT STEPS FOR CONSIDERATION

DMBG asks the NT Government to consider these recommendations and invites discussion with government and industry on the indicative timetable below. This is intended to support timely decisions, build on work already underway and allow adjustments as evidence changes.

Within three months of the public release

- ✔ Government consideration of DMBG's Beetaloo Authority proposal and a delivery pathway, including its remit, resources and relationship with existing bodies.
- ✔ Agreement on interim responsibility for urgent work.
- ✔ Publication of an initial staged readiness plan, identifying the most urgent dependencies, responsible parties and the next decisions required.
- ✔ Early sharing of forward workforce and procurement information by operators and major contractors.
- ✔ Assessment by Territory businesses of capability gaps and the partnerships or investment needed to compete.

Over the following nine months

- ✔ Progress on priority infrastructure business cases, corridor and land planning, and funding negotiations against published decision milestones.
- ✔ Development of workforce and housing responses for plausible development scenarios, including the implications for existing communities and employers.
- ✔ Agreement on measures of local participation and community outcomes, establishment of a baseline and publication of the first progress report.

DMBG proposes measuring progress by decisions completed and capacity created.

We encourage transparent explanations where milestones slip, including why, what is affected and how the plan will change.

How we judge success

Production volumes and capital expenditure will tell only part of the story. DMBG wants a clear account of how development changes the Territory economy and the lives of people who live here. DMBG recommends a practical public reporting framework to track:

- ✔ Investment decisions and enabling infrastructure delivered against agreed milestones.
- ✔ Territory residents employed, apprentices and trainees progressing, and workers choosing to settle here.
- ✔ Contracts and expenditure retained by Territory and Aboriginal businesses, with transparent definitions.
- ✔ Housing and essential service capacity keeping pace with demand, including effects on existing communities.
- ✔ Progress against environmental obligations, public monitoring and the resolution of significant concerns.

Targets would follow agreed definitions, a credible baseline and consultation with those responsible for delivery. This would allow Territorians to see where progress is being made and where intervention is needed.

DMBG will keep the focus on delivery

Darwin Major Business Group represents businesses across the Territory economy, including businesses with interests in energy and associated services. Our members employ Territorians, invest here and depend on the Territory's long-term prosperity. That gives us a direct interest in both development opportunities and how well they are managed.

Business has work to do as well. We must assess our capability honestly, form partnerships where needed, train people and make informed investment decisions. Government can improve the conditions for growth; businesses must respond to the opportunities those conditions create.

DMBG will seek responses to these priorities from responsible Ministers and industry leaders, report progress to members and keep outstanding decisions before Territory and Commonwealth decision-makers. We invite businesses and the wider community to help refine the actions required.

The opportunity warrants preparation now. The Territory needs decisions that give businesses confidence to invest, equip people to participate and leave communities stronger. That is the standard against which DMBG will judge progress.

Our corporate members

Margetic & Sitzler Consolidated Holdings Pty Ltd

Hannon Group

Paspaley

Mindil Beach Casino Resort

Relkdar Pty Ltd. Consulting

VIGR Group

HB Group Australia

airnorth together we fly

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Airport Development Group

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Sentinel Property Group

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Jape Group

Beetaloo Energy Australia

VTG Waste & Recycling

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McArthur River Mining
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Our associate member

KPMG

About this response

This response draws on Vantage North Group's Beetaloo Development Outlook and DMBG's What the Territory Needs responses for 2024, 2025 and 2026. Read it alongside the Beetaloo Development Outlook Executive Summary.

The call for a Beetaloo Authority and wider investment priorities continue DMBG's published positions. The detailed delivery arrangements and timetable proposed here are for consideration; they are not commitments by governments, operators or other parties.

DARWIN MAJOR BUSINESS GROUP

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