

# WHAT THE TERRITORY NEEDS

HIGHER LIVING  
STANDARDS  
FROM STRONGER  
ECONOMIC  
GROWTH



A conversation starter from the  
Darwin Major Business Group

# ABOUT THE DARWIN MAJOR BUSINESS GROUP

---

The Darwin Major Business Group is made up of 15 Darwin-based larger businesses. All member businesses are long term investors in the Northern Australia economy, they are larger employers and their futures are tied to the Darwin, Top End and Northern Australia economies.

Together, we seek to interface with all levels of government to realise the opportunities and resolve the challenges that the Top End faces, with the aim of making both Darwin and the Northern Territory a great place to live and invest.

In our globalized world, collaboration is more important than ever. Capital and talent is scarce, so we need to fight for it and be competitive. We can only do so successfully if we combine our efforts and do it together.



15 Darwin-based  
larger businesses



Realising  
opportunities



Collaborating and  
combining efforts

## Focused On Securing Our Future

Why live and work in Darwin when you can live and work in Cairns, Adelaide or Perth and why invest in Katherine when you can invest in Geelong, Newcastle or the Sunshine Coast?

To answer these important questions, we invested in economic research to understand the challenges and opportunities across our economy.

Based on this research, we have identified a range of initiatives that could be used to reinvigorate economic activity.

**We want to start a conversation about what the Territory needs, how we can improve living standards and create economic opportunities for all.**



A detailed data-based report by a national economics firm (AEC) forms the basis of the priorities identified in this document.

# DESPITE THE OPPORTUNITIES, THE NT IS BEHIND ON ITS GROWTH

---

In November 2020, the Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission (TERC) delivered its report to the NT Government. The report purpose was to attract investment and build on the NT's comparative advantages to grow the economy following the COVID-19 pandemic.

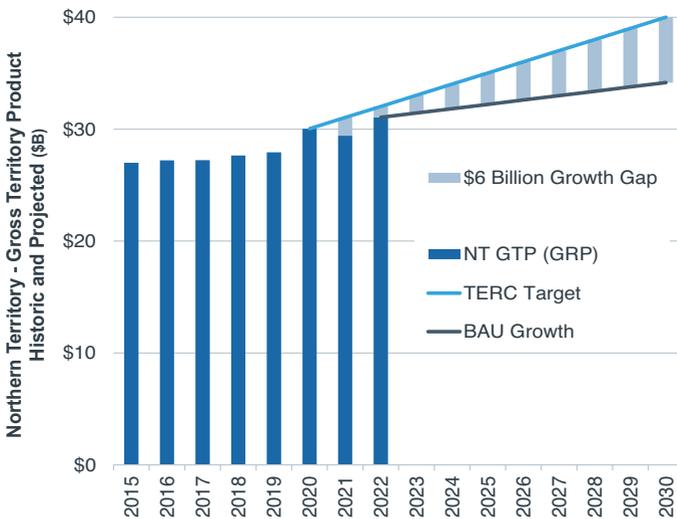
The TERC Report outlined a range of actions to transition the NT economy from one reliant on government stimulus to one that can grow through private investment to \$40 Billion by 2030.

In the two years since the release of the TERC Report the NT's economy has not achieved growth targets.

The reasons for below expectations growth are complex, but two key economic drivers can highlight the challenge ahead: low population growth and low private sector investment.

## Northern Territory GSP

If we continue business as usual, the NT economy will be \$6 billion smaller than planned by 2030, impacting the living standards of all.



# KEY ISSUES HOLDING BACK THE NT

---

## Population Growth

The three components of population growth include natural increase (births minus deaths), overseas migration (migrant arrivals minus departures) and net regional migration/retention (people in Australia moving to minus moving from a location).

Over the past 5 years, population growth has averaged 0.1% in Greater Darwin and 0.15% across the NT, far lower than Australia's average growth rate of 1.23%. For the NT economy to grow to \$40 billion by 2030, population growth must be higher than the Australian average.

Between 2003 and 2013 the NT population increased by 40,000; between 2013 and 2023 it grew by 10,000.\* The Northern Territory was the second slowest growing jurisdiction over the year to March 2023.^

### **Western Australia**

Annual growth rate: 2.8%  
Total population: 2.9m

### **Victoria**

Annual growth rate: 2.4%  
Total population: 6.8m

### **Queensland**

Annual growth rate: 2.3%  
Total population: 5.4m

### **ACT**

Annual growth rate: 2.0%  
Total population: 465k

### **New South Wales**

Annual growth rate: 1.9%  
Total population: 8.3m

### **South Australia**

Annual growth rate: 1.6%  
Total population: 1.8m

### **Northern Territory**

Annual growth rate: 0.9%  
Total population: 252k

### **Tasmania**

Annual growth rate: 0.4%  
Total population: 573k

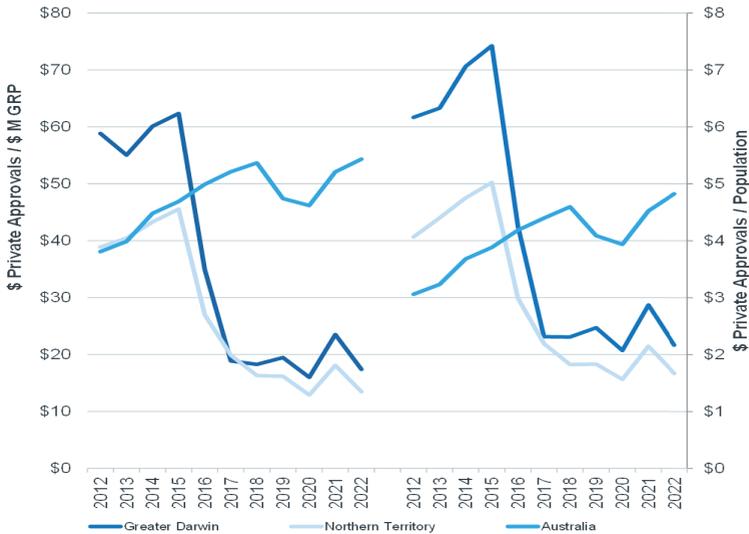
\* (ABS:31010do001\_202309 National, state and territory population, Sep 2023) ^ source: <https://population.gov.au/data-and-forecasts/key-data-releases/national-state-and-territory-population-march-2023>

# Private Investment

Private investment (most notably through buildings and machinery) is essential to support both current and future business activity that drives household incomes, exports and taxes to support government infrastructure and welfare initiatives.

There is a big gap in the level of private investment in Greater Darwin and the Northern Territory than across Australia generally - both on a per capita and per unit of GRP.

For the NT economy to grow to \$40 billion by 2030, private investment must be higher than the Australian average.



# THE DATA TELLS US WE NEED TO:

---

1

## **Kick Start Investment**

Make the Territory an attractive investment destination.

---

2

## **Seize Opportunities for Commonwealth and Defence Investment**

Develop a Territory Defence Attraction and Retention Strategy, making the case for additional troops to be based in Darwin and the Northern Territory, and fully utilise existing facilities.

---

3

## **Accelerate Housing Supply**

Identify and pursue opportunities to increase the supply of new rentals and re-open incentives for home ownership, including for new Territorians.

---

4

## **Reclaim Our Cities and Towns - Dealing with Crime and ASB**

Invest in higher visibility police and better utilise existing police powers to address anti-social behaviour.

---

5

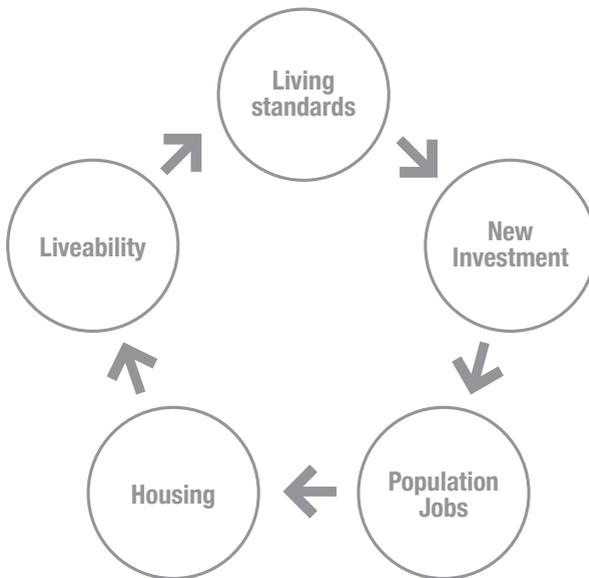
## **Rejuvenate the Territory's Liveability**

Invest in public infrastructure, like urban renewal and liveability projects, to incentivise private investment.

# TO IMPROVE LIVING STANDARDS, WE NEED TO GROW THE ECONOMY

---

Every day, across the world, people make billions of choices, such as how much they are willing to pay for vegetables, how much time they should spend on fixing their car, or whether they will keep their Netflix subscription or switch to another streaming service. At the individual level, you might call these personal preferences, but when you add them all up, you have an economy.



Source: [Caltech.edu/about/news/individual-decisions-and-compomex-economies](https://caltech.edu/about/news/individual-decisions-and-compomex-economies)

# KICK-STARTING THE NT ECONOMY

---

The Darwin Major Business Group wants to be part of kick-starting the NT economy and achieve or better the \$40B by 2030 target. Here are some of our suggestions on how we could do that.

## **Priority 1 - Kickstart investment**

---

- Adopt a 'winning investment' mandate and drop 'facilitation' as a mantra.
- Accelerate public consultation on Carbon Capture & Storage (CCS).
- Benchmark the NT against competing investment destinations.
- Upgrade Investment and Major Projects Commissioners to statutory positions.
- Establish a continuous Public Company Board attraction program.
- Establish an independent data office that publishes Territory economic metrics.
- Establish an annual 'Investment Success Conference'
- Develop an evolving public campaign explaining the economic benefits of Beetaloo.

## **Priority 2 - Seize opportunities for C/W and Defence investment**

---

- Develop a Territory Defence Attraction and Retention Strategy.
- Secure the ADF's medium landing craft investment for Darwin.
- Partner with the ADF and Allies to create the Top End Military Zone.
- Develop an eco-system of local firms capable of supporting Defence activities at all stages (Business as Usual, Surge & Conflict).
- Allocate land for a Fleet Base North.
- Increase capacity to support Defence investment.

### **Priority 3 - Accelerate housing supply**

---

Allocate \$30m from the Infrastructure Program to build the best incentives package for new housing in Australia (buyers, investors, affordable housing).

Create a government 'mortgage insurance' provider to take the risk, and cost, from new home buyers.

Create a Veterans Home Assistance Package to encourage veterans to remain in the NT.

Ensure a continuous supply of titled residential land in all major centres.

Re-purpose under-utilised urban sites into integrated housing developments offering social, affordable, rental, and purchase housing.

### **Priority 4 - Reclaim our cities and towns - deal with crime and ASB**

---

Repeat property offenders to make restitution through work.

Establish prison farms for youth offenders.

Open Youth Drop-In Centres in key suburbs and towns.

Give Courts the power to enforce community service obligations on parents.

Ensure sufficient police numbers to deal with crime and anti-social behaviour.

### **Priority 5 - Rejuvenate the Territory's liveability**

---

Fast-track Stage 2 of Darwin Waterfront.

Rebalance planning scheme towards growth and development.

Expand, reinvigorate and activate the Alice Springs CBD with multi story accommodation and new urban streetscapes.

Reinvigorate and activate the Katherine town centre with multi story accommodation, new urban streetscapes and develop a new regional airport runway, terminal and freight facility separate from Tindal.

### **Other actions**

---

Provide access to faster Permanent Residency status for migrants who want to stay in the Territory.

Broaden the NT Skilled Occupation Priority List to include non-skilled occupations, where there are identified shortages e.g. hospitality.

Establish a Simulator School for plant, equipment and heavy machinery.

Lift the threshold for payroll tax to \$2m in wages per annum.

Hold a TERC Conference in 2024.

Negotiate a 'Kakadu in the Wet' Infrastructure Program with the Australian Government.

Negotiate an Arnhem Land Centenary Infrastructure Package with the Australian Government.

Prioritise the replacement of Darwin Hospital Central Tower, Katherine Hospital Relocation, a dual separated-lanes Stuart Highway from Darwin to Katherine, Wet Season access to Kakadu, and 21st century infrastructure for Arnhem Land.

**Give us your feedback**

For more information: [admin@dmbg.com.au](mailto:admin@dmbg.com.au) | [www.dmbg.com.au](http://www.dmbg.com.au)