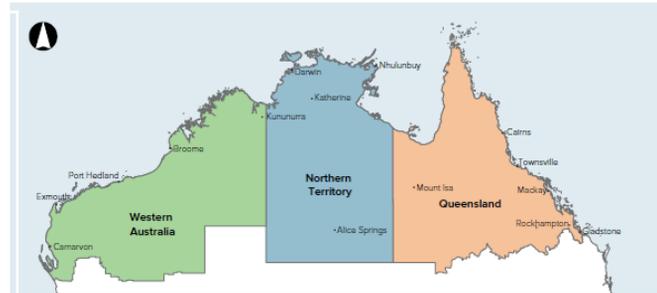


# Northern Australia

## Australian Infrastructure Audit

### Infrastructure can catalyse growth, but delivery can be a challenge

- There is untapped potential in northern Australia. Resource rich areas can generate inter-generational wealth, and benefit from proximity to growing Asian markets, undeveloped land and natural beauty.
- The right infrastructure at the right time can unlock growth, but delivery can be challenging due to boom-and-bust cycles, low population densities, weather and high costs.
- Centres vary in size and face different challenges - from urban Townsville and Cairns to remote Booraloola or Tiwi Islands - however some share common barriers. Many areas rely on few dominant local industries.
- Infrastructure can attract investment and employment, enhancing quality of life certainty about the sustainability of regional communities.
- Improved digital connectivity can open gateways for trade with domestic and global markets.
- Lessons learnt from the past and detailed analysis can unlock strategic opportunities.
- Access to productive water is crucial to the community and industry sustainability.



# 85%

of Australian goods exported were rural goods or mining products.

# 14%

of Northern Territory dwellings have a rooftop solar system.

#### Key Industries

- Mining
- Tourism
- Energy
- Agriculture

## Infrastructure in northern Australia

-  **Infrastructure for users:** Technologies can help to overcome barriers to service access as a result of distance or location.
-  **Industry efficiency, capacity and capability:** Further evidence is needed to inform decision making in the north.
-  **Passenger transport:** Regional and remote local governments struggle to fund and maintain roads and airports.
-  **Freight transport:** Highly variable and seasonal traffic can make investment and maintenance of railways difficult to justify.
-  **Social infrastructure:** Low service densities can limit the provision of accessible, continuous and quality social infrastructure networks and services in rural and remote areas. Technology can help to overcome distance challenges for some services.
-  **Energy:** There is an opportunity to leverage new local energy supply solutions that either replace or complement diesel generation.
-  **Telecommunications:** Mobile network upgrades in rural and remote areas often create gaps in crucial areas (productive land/transport corridors).
-  **Water:** Water infrastructure could help to unlock economic opportunities, supported by evidence-based assessments that take into account for costs and risks for industry, communities and the environment.

## Principle challenges and opportunities

**Challenge: Fluctuations in economic activity in regional industries make it difficult for infrastructure to efficiently and sustainably underpin long-term growth and development.** Failure to keep pace with growth can reduce productivity and output during boom years, while underutilised assets raise costs in areas with declining populations, undermining the long-term social and economic viability of regional communities.

**Opportunities: Infrastructure can help to catalyse growth across northern Australia, and unlock development across a range of industries.** Improving the resilience, reliability and efficiency of northern infrastructure could help to capitalise on the immense potential of northern regions, and improve the productivity, quality of life and competitiveness of its people and businesses.

**Opportunities: Development in northern regions could benefit from more detailed information and evidence-based studies of economic opportunities, as well as a better understanding of local needs and values, particularly of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.** Better information on opportunities and local needs can support more efficient investment and greater benefits for northern communities.