



Campaign Media Release

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd

GROWING THE NORTH: A PLAN FOR NORTHERN AUSTRALIA

The Rudd Labor Government will drive growth and jobs in northern Australia with new incentives for investment, a significant expansion of the Ord Irrigation Scheme and strategic development blueprints for key regional centres.

Growing the North: A Plan for Northern Australia is a three-point strategy to develop and diversify the economy of northern Australia, which straddles a vast area across north Queensland, the Northern Territory and north-west Australia.

It includes a commitment to establish a Northern Special Economic Zone focussing on the Northern Territory to encourage businesses to expand and to attract new businesses to the region.

Northern Australia is home to around one million Australians and is critical to our nation's economic future.

This is why the Rudd Government will work with business and other levels of government to help the region tap into the rapidly-growing markets of Asia.

This is a key part of Labor's plan to keep Australia's economy strong by creating new jobs for the future as the decade-long China resources boom is coming to an end.

The *Plan for Northern Australia* will:

- Create a Northern Special Economic Zone focussing on the Northern Territory to attract new Australian and foreign investment through simplifying investment rules, streamlining regulation and application processes for major projects, and introducing new tax incentives with the objective of reducing the company tax rate for Northern Territory based companies in five years.
- Expand the Ord Irrigation Scheme Stage 3 by providing \$10 million to the Northern Territory Government to help facilitate expansion of the Scheme from its current 29,000 hectares to 43,000 hectares. This will increase economic output in northern Australia by an estimated \$150 million every year, mainly through expanded sugar production and agricultural crops.
- Develop twenty-year growth plans for the regional hubs of Darwin, Cairns, Townsville and Mackay. Infrastructure Australia will oversee these plans, based on the successful Mount Isa to Townsville Economic Development Zone supply chain model, developed in collaboration with the private and

public sectors. These plans will target key industry sectors and include strategies for increasing trade, investment and employment in these regional centres.

Northern Australia has tremendous natural advantages.

It is well placed to benefit from the new markets being created by the rise of an increasingly affluent Asian middle class.

However development in the region has been held back by infrastructure shortages, high business and living costs in the north and a lack of economic diversity.

The Rudd Labor Government has made an unprecedented commitment to northern Australia since 2007 through our:

- \$1.1 billion Nation Building Program in the Northern Territory.
- \$1.5 billion Remote Jobs and Communities Program.
- Defence spending in Northern Australia totalling \$1.18 billion since 2007.
- More than \$300 million in grants for community and social infrastructure in the region.

Since 2007, almost one million jobs have been created in Australia.

Australia is now entering tougher economic times as we confront the end of the China resources boom.

We need a new way where governments, businesses and unions work together to make our economy more competitive.

We need to diversify our economy beyond the mining sector to ensure we don't have all our eggs in one basket.

Growth of regional hubs like Darwin, Cairns, Townsville and Mackay, domestically and as gateways to Asia, will be critical to achieving a more diverse national economy and creating the jobs of the future.

Growing the North is a long-term strategy for ensuring Northern Australia benefits from the transforming national economy with stronger growth and new jobs.

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