

Labor's Plan for Northern Australia

August 2021

On 16 August 2021, Senator Murray Watt as the Shadow Minister for Northern Australia, Disaster and Emergency Management, and Queensland Resources, delivered Labor's plan for Northern Australia at the Developing Northern Australia Conference 2021.

The plan aims to further develop the region in light of COVID-19, including addressing housing shortages, expanding skill bases and shifting reliance on overseas visitors and workers.

Industry Focus

Labor's plan aims to create jobs in existing industries, whilst focusing on newer industries where the region has a natural competitive advantage.

Existing industry focus includes agriculture, resources, and tourism. This is in addition to regional industries that often aren't in focus such as healthcare, education, and human services.

Newer industry focus includes renewables, hydrogen, advanced manufacturing, and aerospace.

Backbone Industries

Agriculture, forestry, and fishing, directly employ 50,000 people in Northern Australia. An elected Labor Government will support these industries to address issues emerging from climate change.

Labor will also support smaller industries such as aquaculture and carbon farming, to generate new revenues in a sustainable way.

An Albanese Labor government will ensure that the Resources portfolio remains in the Cabinet. Within this, Labor seeks to create jobs in the mining engineering, technology, and services sector. In addition, there will be a focus on regions with supplies of rare earths such as vanadium and lithium, to assist with the development of batteries.

Labor will also support the area's Tourism industry to focus on local First Nations cultures and food industries.

Hidden Industry

Over the past decade, the healthcare and social assistance industry has grown by 50% and is Northern Australia's largest employing sector. Employment in the education sector has grown by 30% in the past decade.

Labor's plan will further develop these industries to increase the liveability of the region.



New Industry

Labor believes that in conjunction with supplying the world's coal and gas needs, Northern Australia can supply the world with its renewable resources and hydrogen needs. The plan commits to developing Australia's first clean energy corridor.

Labor will also utilise the region's defence manufacturing capacities in Cairns and Darwin to produce wind turbines and solar panels, which are currently imported from overseas.

Commitments

Housing

Labor will assist Northern Australian employers to attract workers through housing supply improvements. Labor have already committed to a \$10 billion dollar Housing Australia Future Fund over the first five years, which will build 20,000 social houses and 10,000 affordable houses for essential workers.

Skills

To address skills shortages, exacerbated by the inability to bring in workers from overseas, a Labor Government will establish Jobs and Skills Australia. This will invest \$100 million to provide incentives for new energy apprentices. An elected Albanese Labor Government will mandate that one job in every ten on major Federal projects must be filled by an apprentice, trainee, or cadet.

Labor will also develop a new employment partnership program with First Nations peoples, to replace the current Community Development Program.

Infrastructure

In order to address issues with electricity transmission, an elected Labor government will invest \$20 billion into a 'Rewiring the Nation' policy. This will partner with industry to modernise and stabilise the electricity grid, allowing Northern Australia to link its renewable energy to the nation.

Federal Labor have also committed to a \$15 billion National Reconstruction Fund which will partner with private sector on major projects, particularly in the regions. This will see further development of industries such as renewables, defence, and medical manufacturing.

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