

Central Australia is the Territory's largest region, covering 42% of the total land area. The region is made up of small communities separated by long distances and is home to around 41,400 people, of whom about 43% are Aboriginal.

Alice Springs is the main centre in the region, with a population of around 29,200. About 34% of the region's population are aged 24 years or under and about 8% are aged 65 years or older.

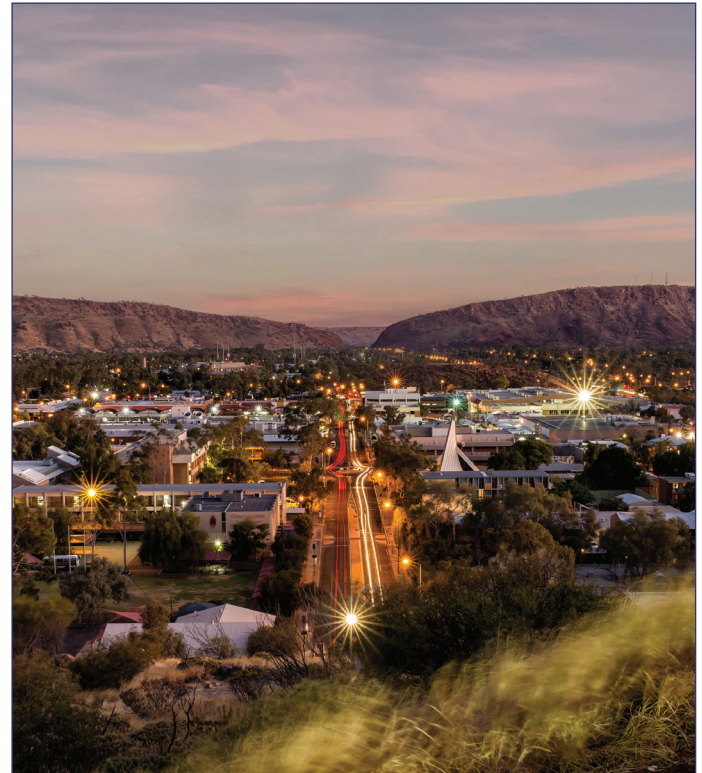
Major industries include tourism, mining, oil and gas exploration, pastoralism and construction. Tourism is an important contributor to economic activity with many natural attractions in the region including Kata Tjuta, Kings Canyon, Uluru and the West MacDonnell Ranges attracting a significant number of domestic and international visitors.

There are also a number of events unique to Central Australia that provide an authentic and culturally immersive experience including the Parrtjima Light Festival in Alice Springs, the Field of Light installation at Uluru, and the Desert Mob Festival.

National Aboriginal Art Gallery

Aboriginal tourism plays a vital role across the region, enabled by authentic cultural experiences.

The National Aboriginal Art Gallery project in Mparntwe (Alice Springs) is an exciting and transformative endeavour to create a world-class destination celebrating the artistic traditions and cultural expressions of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Budget 2024 includes \$54 million to continue progressing works on the National Aboriginal Art Gallery, with construction expected to begin in mid-2024 and be completed in 2027. An additional \$4 million over two years is also provided for operational and staffing support to deliver the project.

Roads and transport

Budget 2024 includes \$189 million for new and continuing works on the Outback Way to upgrade various sections of the Plenty Highway and the Tjukurura Road.

Works are also continuing on Roads of Strategic Importance in the region, which will upgrade priority sections to improve connectivity, flood immunity, safety and access, as well as economic development for the region. This includes:

- \$80 million to upgrade and seal 150 kilometres of the Tanami Road
- \$10.8 million for upgrades to Schwartz Crescent and Stuart Highway intersection
- \$1 million for upgrades of Maryvale Road.

Alice Springs Hospital

Budget 2024 continues to invest in health infrastructure across the Territory, including \$33.7 million for upgrades at the Alice Springs Hospital.

Investment includes \$26.9 million for the new ambulatory care centre, \$6.8 million to develop a hybrid operating theatre and stage 3 emergency electrical upgrades.

Land release

The Territory Government continues to support the growth and economic development of the Alice Springs region through investment to support a program of industrial land release, including:

- \$26 million to support heavy industrial uses at the Brewer Estate
- \$7.5 million to support light industrial and commercial uses at the Alice Springs airport.

Budget 2024 also includes \$38.4 million to progress headworks for stage 2 of the Kilgariff Estate, consisting of 88 residential lots (including social and affordable housing) and community sports facilities.

Improved corrections facilities

Budget 2024 includes \$34 million for critical infrastructure upgrades at Alice Springs Correctional Centre to provide improved prison facilities. This is in addition to \$35.2 million provided through the 2023-24 Mid-Year Report to support an additional 50 custodial staff and 40 support staff, and increased rehabilitation programs and reintegration support.

A further \$4 million is also provided in 2024-25 to support a new alternative to custody facility in Central Australia. The facility will support up to 30 Aboriginal male domestic and family violence offenders, and is anticipated to be operational in 2025.

Alice Springs Youth Detention Centre

The \$32 million redevelopment of the Alice Springs Youth Detention Centre is nearing completion and will provide young people detained in Alice Springs with improved amenities, and greater rehabilitation and education opportunities.

The 22-bed centre is a first of its kind in Australia, with high-tech security systems designed to keep young people, staff and the community safe. Final fitout of the detention centre commenced in February 2024 and the facility is anticipated to be fully operational by June 2024.

Residential youth justice facility

Budget 2024 invests \$5.5 million to establish a new residential youth justice facility in Alice Springs.

The live-in facility will be able to accommodate up to eight young people and ensure court sentences and orders are enforced, while also providing training and education services to help young people get their lives back on track and into the workforce.

Budget 2024 also includes \$10.1 million over two years to operate the facility including a youth justice camp program, with education and training provided through an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation service provider.

Tourism

The Territory Government continues to invest in growing the tourism industry in Central Australia and generating more visitors for the region, including:

- \$5.6 million in continuing works for a new multi-day walking track at Watarrka National Park
- \$4.4 million for Tourism Central Australia Information Centre
- \$3.5 million for strategic planning and works at the National Road Heritage Hall of Fame
- \$2.7 million to enhance visitor experience at the Alice Springs Desert Park
- \$2.6 million to implement a visitor experience development plan at Alice Springs Telegraph Station
- \$2 million for water security planning and design at Tjoritja (West MacDonnell) National Park.

Major works overview

	Capital works
	\$000
Transport	281 306
Recreation, culture and religion	70 465
Housing and community amenities	52 728
Public order and safety	40 039
Health	33 705
Economic affairs	30 850
Environmental protection	10 000
Education	5 440
Total Central Australia	524 534

Photograph courtesy of the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics