

Big Rivers is the Territory's second largest region, covering almost 25% of the Territory's land mass from the Joseph Bonaparte Gulf and Lajamanu in the west to Numbulwar and Borroloola in the east.

The Big Rivers region is made up of small communities separated by long distances and is home to around 21,400 people, of whom around 57% are Aboriginal. The town of Katherine is the region's main centre with a population of around 10,800 people. About 39% of the region's population is aged 24 years and under, while around 7% is aged 65 years and over.

Major industries in the Big Rivers region include tourism, horticulture, pastoral, mining and defence. The region has a significant defence presence, including the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Base Tindal, Bradshaw field training area and Delamere air weapons range. Key tourist attractions include Nitmiluk Gorge, Leliyn (Edith Falls), Mataranka and recreational fishing in the region's big rivers.

### Borroloola Health Centre

Budget 2024 includes \$20 million for construction of a new health centre in Borroloola to support delivery of health services from the existing health centre.

The new health centre will enhance delivery of healthcare to the community and assist in attracting and retaining clinical staff. It will include clinical and pharmacy spaces, emergency resuscitation equipment, consulting spaces, morgue facilities and a separate patient and visitor entrance from staff. 2024 Budget also provides \$500,000 for new medical equipment at the facility.



### Improving access across the region

Budget 2024 continues to enhance accessibility across the Big Rivers region to improve freight efficiency, connectivity, road safety and economic productivity by investing \$212 million, including:

- \$169.8 million for major road upgrades, including:
  - \$112.4 million for new and continuing works under the Buntine Highway upgrade program to improve access for remote communities and support economic growth
  - \$37.4 million for continuing works to upgrade the Carpentaria Highway, a key route for supplies and transport for Glencore's McArthur River Mine, major access road to the Beetaloo Sub-basin and Borroloola, and an important service route for the Borroloola community and pastoral, tourism, agricultural and mining sectors
  - \$20 million for Phelp River crossing works on Numbulwar Road, including construction of concrete floodways, culverts and bridges

- \$41.9 million for Roads of Strategic Importance, comprising:
  - \$41.6 million for new and continuing works to upgrade the Newman to Katherine road corridor, including sealing, strengthening and widening, and road safety improvements
  - \$330,000 for continuing works to seal between the Roper and Wilton River bridges.

## Katherine Logistics and Agribusiness Hub

The Territory Government is committed to developing Katherine's regional horticultural and agricultural potential, as well as a logistics hub to strengthen the town's role as a transport junction for Queensland and Western Australia commodities.

Budget 2024 includes \$30 million for continuing headworks and subdivision works to develop the Katherine Logistics and Agribusiness Hub. The hub will be a multi-discipline logistics and agribusiness hub to meet the current and future growth needs of Katherine, the Top End region and northern Australia.

## STEAM centre

Work has commenced to construct the \$16.7 million Katherine High School science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) centre.

Territory contractor, M+J Builders, have commenced constructing the facility, which includes purpose-built classrooms, art and music studios and a tiered performance space. The project will also see a mix of upgrades to existing facilities and the development of new areas.

## Residential youth justice facility

Budget 2024 commits \$5.5 million to establish a new residential youth justice facility in Katherine, which will be gifted to the Jawoyn Association once completed.

The live-in facility will 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 \$7.7 million over two years to operate the facility, including providing youth justice camp programs, education and training, which will be provided through an Aboriginal community controlled organisation service provider.

## New therapy dog for Katherine Hospital

Katherine Hospital has welcomed Daisee the therapy dog, who will bring cheer, reduce anxiety and assist patients in their recovery. In a Territory first, the two-year-old non-allergenic poodle will be the first support and wellness dog to live and work permanently at a Territory hospital.

## Major works overview

	Capital works
	\$000
Transport	212 742
Economic affairs	34 111
Health	20 000
Housing and community amenities	18 064
Education	14 774
Environmental protection	9 400
Recreation, culture and religion	2 592
<b>Total Big Rivers</b>	<b>311 684</b>

Photograph courtesy of the Department of Health