

East Arnhem

The East Arnhem region is situated in the far northeastern corner of the Territory and covers East Arnhem Land, Groote Eylandt, Bickerton Island and Elcho Island.

The region is home to around 14,900 people, of whom around 70% are Aboriginal, with major population centres in Nhulunbuy and Alyangula, and several other large communities.

The population in East Arnhem is relatively young and dispersed, with around 40% aged 24 years and under and only around 5% aged 65 years and over.

Due to seasonal road accessibility constraints, transport for travellers and freight to East Arnhem is mainly by air or sea. Major industries in the region include mining, buffalo farming, tourism, aquaculture and fishing.

Mining is the main contributor to economic activity in the region. Traditional Aboriginal cultural experiences, Aboriginal art, and the remote and natural wilderness attract tourists to the region, providing further economic and employment opportunities.

Cyclone shelter

Together with the Commonwealth, the Territory Government is progressing the \$30 million Nhulunbuy cyclone shelter and multipurpose centre, a critical resilience and community infrastructure investment for East Arnhem.

In February 2026, a site infrastructure assessment and concept design was undertaken, with the facility set to provide emergency shelter for up to 1,800 people while also delivering long-term sport and recreation benefits for Nhulunbuy and surrounding communities.

A recoverable works agreement is being developed with Nhulunbuy Corporation Limited, which will assume ownership and operational responsibility upon project completion.

Roads

The 2026 Budget includes \$201 million for continuing works to deliver long-term upgrades along the 685 kilometre Central Arnhem Road corridor that connects Nhulunbuy to the Stuart Highway. The road services several communities and homelands, and through the dry season, is a key tourism drive and freight route.

Upgrades to the Central Arnhem Road are progressing across multiple packages. Road construction is currently underway at Mountain Valley and expected to be completed in 2026, while Eva Valley to Barunga is scheduled to commence construction in July 2026 following tender close.

Consultation with Traditional Owner groups has commenced for Birany Birany to Dhupuma Road, with progressive design and construction expected from 2026-27 through to 2028-29, subject to endorsement.

Other packages are progressing through detailed design and consultation, with additional works to be released to tender in coming years, ensuring the staged delivery of this important regional transport corridor.

Remote housing

The Territory Government is committed to improving living conditions in remote communities across East Arnhem. 122 new homes have been delivered and a further 43 homes have been upgraded or refurbished under the 10-year remote housing agreement co-funded by the Territory and Commonwealth. In 2026-27, a further 90 homes are expected to be constructed, six homes refurbished and 109 lots delivered.

Territory Communities free Wi-Fi

The Territory is investing \$12 million to deliver free community Wi-Fi in the Barkly, Big Rivers, Central Australia, Top End and East Arnhem regions.

Co-funded with the Commonwealth, the delivery of free community Wi-Fi will support better access to essential services such as healthcare and education, and strengthen community connections.



Alternative to custody – Groote Eylandt

The 2026 Budget continues to support alternatives to custody as an effective and sustainable response for managing lower risk offenders and re-offenders.

The Territory Government is investing \$3.1 million to support the community-led Anindilyakwa Healing Centre in Groote Eylandt, providing a six-month program that incorporates culturally safe rehabilitation efforts, ensuring connection to community is not lost.

First Circles program

The Territory Government continues to empower bush communities and grow strong Aboriginal leaders through the First Circles program. Members of the program have the opportunity to engage directly with government, providing advice, and solutions on policies and projects impacting Aboriginal Territorians.

Members attend face-to-face workshops and are mentored by the Aboriginal Partnerships and Reform team. Workshops are delivered in regions across Katherine and Alice Springs with presentations from several corporations including Aboriginal Investment Northern Territory, Larrakia Corporation and the Northern Territory Indigenous Business Network.

Gunyangara (Gove Port) Tourism Precinct

The transformation of the Gunyangara (Gove Port) Tourism Precinct has been officially unveiled, which is set to unlock a host of opportunities for the East Arnhem region, as the local mining industry winds down.

The facilities will enable larger commercial and recreational vessels, such as yachts, pleasure craft, cruise ship tenders and charter vessels to use the facilities to increase visitation and tourism activity in the area.

At the same time, Inverell Bay has been transformed with improved marine and landside facilities, including a 60 metre floating pontoon, a new carpark, and vital amenity and safety upgrades.

The \$9 million project was jointly funded by the Territory and Commonwealth governments, the Developing East Arnhem and Gumatj Corporation.