

## Big Rivers

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 22,000 people, of whom around 57% are Aboriginal. The town of Katherine is the region's main centre with a population of around 11,300 people. About 37% of the region's population is aged 24 years and under, while around 8% 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.

### Beetaloo Sub-basin

As the Beetaloo Sub-basin moves toward commercial production, the Territory Government has unlocked a further 4,000 square kilometres (five times the size of Singapore) of highly prospective land surrounding premium shale gas holdings by INPEX and Tamboran Resources, paving the way for Beetaloo gas to supply the Territory from mid-2026.

The release will unlock a strategically important gas resource, supporting domestic energy security, creating local jobs and driving economic growth across the Big Rivers and Barkly regions.

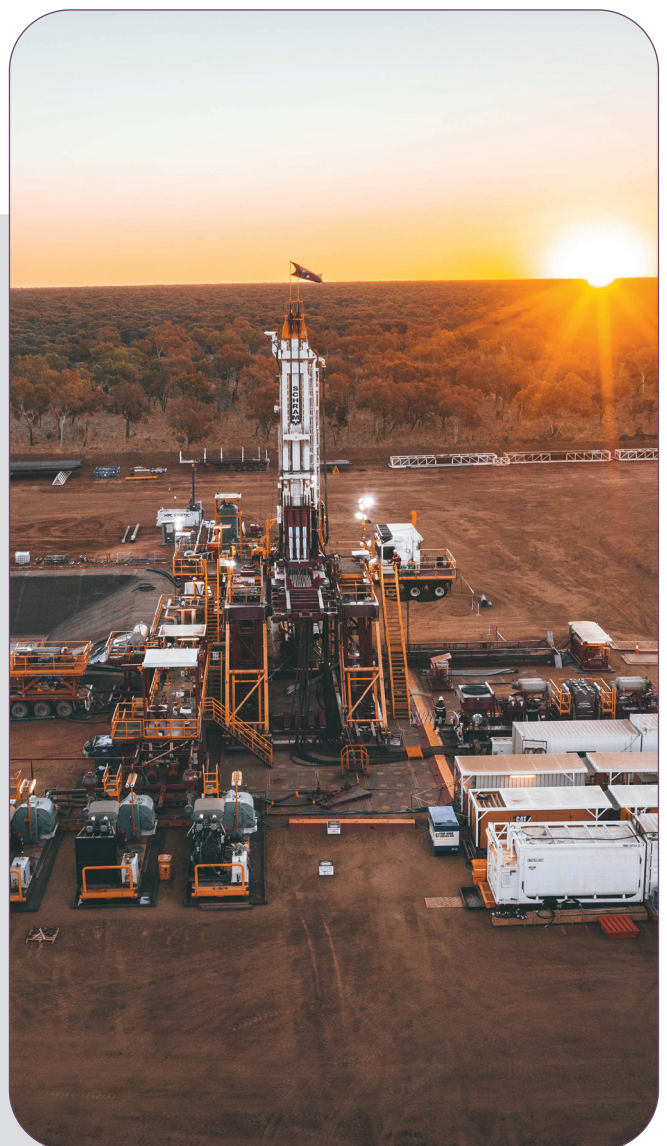
With Beetaloo Energy's final investment decision confirmed for the Carpentaria gas plant, first gas is on track for 2026. Santos and INPEX are also advancing major drilling, stimulation and gas supply projects, which will further position the Beetaloo as a cornerstone of the Territory's energy future and economic prosperity.

### Katherine work camp

The Territory Government is progressing the Katherine work camp project, a new employment-focused, low-security rehabilitation facility with capacity for up to 198 prisoners, delivered in partnership with Charles Darwin University at the Katherine rural campus.

A total of \$42.8 million has been allocated for design and staged construction of the facility throughout 2026, allowing progressive transfer of prisoners.

Construction is scheduled to commence mid-2026, with full completion expected in 2027. The facility will support skills development, rehabilitation outcomes and reduced re-offending.



## Lifestyle

Katherine will celebrate its centenary on 1 July 2026, with the Territory Government partnering with Katherine Town Council and other key stakeholders, including RAAF Base Tindal, to deliver an engaging calendar of events for the public to acknowledge and celebrate the town's gazettal in 1926.

Consultation was conducted on the proposed extension of Limmen Bight Marine Park. Members of the public had their say on extending the footprint of the park to include an additional 185 square kilometres, creating a continuous marine corridor to increase the park's capacity for conservation and recreational fishing.

Bookings to hike the Jatbula Trail in 2026 opened on 3 February 2026, with places selling out in less than 24 hours. The multi-day trail traverses Nitmiluk National Park from Nitmiluk Gorge to Leliyn (Edith Falls), offering travellers the opportunity to experience parts of Jawoyn country that are not generally accessible.

## Land release

The Territory Government continues to monitor residential land supply to maintain development-ready land, and support land affordability and economic growth. This work is underpinned by investments in market analysis, land planning consultation and stakeholder engagement.

Works are progressing to facilitate future land release projects in Katherine East, with a focus on developing residential land outside flood zones to improve natural disaster resilience.

## Remote housing

There has been significant work completed in the Big Rivers region under the 10-year remote housing program including:

- 81 new homes built
- 10 homes upgraded/refurbished
- six housing lots completed.

A further 34 new homes are planned for 2026-27 along with an expected 18 upgrades and refurbishments, and preparation of 21 new lots.

## Buntine Highway upgrade

The 2026 Budget includes \$114 million for Buntine Highway upgrades and rest areas.

A contract to upgrade a 21 kilometre section of the Buntine Highway is expected to be advertised in the September quarter 2026. A further contract to upgrade a 16.5 kilometre section of the Buntine Highway is expected to be advertised in the December quarter 2027. It is anticipated 10 kilometres of road will be sealed in 2026-27.

### Flood recovery

The Territory Government introduced the \$100 million Flood Recovery Fund resilience initiative and a further \$30.5 million on the Roads Repair Package to rebuild critical road infrastructure vital to connecting remote communities and regional economies that support industries to keep the Territory moving.

The Roads Repair Package encompasses \$16 million for Big Rivers roads, including:

- Roper Highway (including Donkey Flat floodway and Salt Creek)
- Central Arnhem Highway
- Carpentaria Highway and Bing Bong Road.

Additionally, an immediate \$12.5 million commitment to boost the first phase of the broader Flood Recovery Fund and flood mitigation works includes:

- \$4 million for Katherine North levee and drainage works
- \$0.6 million for the design of upgrades on the Maud Creek bridge.

The Territory Government is also committed to strengthening long-term resilience and early warning capabilities for future disasters, including allocating \$2.5 million to develop Territory-wide early warning IT solutions.