



POSITION PAPER PROSPEROUS DIVERSE ECONOMY

JULY 2024

ABOUT THE KIMBERLEY REGIONAL GROUP

The Kimberley Regional Group (KRG) is an alliance of the four Kimberley Shires, being the Shire of Broome, the Shire of Derby West Kimberley, the Shire of Halls Creek and the Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley. Our Vision is to maintain and enhance the rich diversity and liveability of the Kimberley for its people and the world. Collaboratively the group seeks to drive positive impact across the region through improved social, economic and cultural outcomes. This paper is designed to highlight the issues as known to Local Government at the time of writing and the potential pathways that are supported.

CONTEXT

- The Kimberley region supports approximately 15,650 jobs and produces an annual economic output of \$7.744 billion¹.
- The Kimberley region has enormous potential to build on its comparative and competitive advantages to diversify its economic base and drive regional and State productivity. The Kimberley's key strengths as identified by Infrastructure WA include:
 - » Tourism, agriculture and food, and resources.
 - » Significant Aboriginal population, culture and heritage.
 - » Natural environment (including a World Heritage area)².
- Aboriginal business growth, in particular in tourism, cultural industries, and the pastoral and construction industries, provide enormous opportunities to drive economic development and create social prosperity.
- Much of the Kimberley's economic and social infrastructure is not fit for purpose leading to increased costs of production, supply chain disruptions, lack of access to global markets, and reduced value adding opportunities. Infrastructure WA recommended the following infrastructure direction to drive growth in the Kimberley:
 - » Support interstate and international tourism, and the Kimberley as a world-class tourism precinct;

- » Support agriculture and food, including realising the potential of the Ord River Irrigation Area; and
- » Support and advance Aboriginal enterprise and improve the liveability of remote Aboriginal communities and town-based reserves³.
- Land tenure is restricting the diversification of industries and new economic opportunities.
- The attraction and retention of residents is impeded by poor social infrastructure and services such as affordable housing, healthcare, childcare, aged care and recreational and community services to support individuals, families and their diverse interests.
- Government grants and incentives are critical to facilitate growth given the additional cost associated with establishing businesses in the region. Government incentives such as the WA Department of Transport Regulated Public Transport (RPT) air routes and Regional Airfare Zone Cap, the Kimberley Designated Area Migration Agreement (DAMA), and regional grants to deliver value and drive regional development.
- A co-ordinated network of regionally based State and Federal Government regional development agencies are important to drive a strong regional policy and investment agenda to central agencies.
- The Western Australian Regional Development Framework 2023 has a vision, That WA has sustainable, vibrant, and liveable regional communities supported by strong and prosperous economies. The Framework defines regional development as, fundamentally about the people who live, work, and invest in our regions. It is about the community and economies in these regions and how they contribute to a growing and sustainable future for all Western Australians⁴.
- The Commonwealth's Our North: Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia (2015) seeks to create successful business environments through prudent economic policies, the right infrastructure to get things moving, regulation that minimises costs on business, a workforce with the right skills, and basic research necessary for business to identify opportunities in the north. This paper is currently being refreshed⁵.

OBJECTIVES

- » **Increased awareness of economic opportunities.**
- » **Remove barriers to economic growth.**
- » **Leverage advantages to create capable people, jobs, and economic growth.**

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following guiding principles should underpin progression of a prosperous diverse economy:

- Environmentally, socially and culturally responsible growth and development.
- Build, attract and retain skilled workers and a local workforce.
- Mitigate and adapt to climate change through the use of renewable energy and sustainable technologies.
- Aboriginal economic participation.
- Supply chain resilience.
- Partnerships to leverage expertise and investment.
- Engagement with local government.
- Liveability of towns and communities.
- Place based approach

POLICY PRIORITIES

1. **Fit for purpose social and economic infrastructure and services that supports local jobs, and economic growth and diversification.**
 - 1.1 Economic
 - a. Strengthening the co-ordination and role of regionally based State and Federal Government regional development agencies and their coordination with local government.
 - b. A Major Kimberley Enabling Investment Package that reduces vulnerability and builds resilience.

- c. Upgrade of regional transport infrastructure, including key roads and airports, to improve access in the dry and wet seasons and to support supply chain connectivity and resilience.
 - d. Upgrade of key tourism infrastructure and increased product offerings to provide an improved visitor experience.
 - e. Planning and investment into aviation and marine port infrastructure to support growth.
 - f. Investment into reliable, renewable, affordable energy to support the diversification, of agriculture, climate resilience, and other emerging businesses, including distributed solutions to support a transition to net zero.
 - g. Investment in telecommunications infrastructure, including broadband, with the network expanded to include key projects to improve digital connectivity.
 - h. Improved protection and recovery from disasters, including investment into resilience planning, mitigation activities.
- 1.2 Social
- a. Social infrastructure and services to attract and retain local residents and a local workforce including affordable childcare options.
 - b. Improved waste management and resource recovery.
 - c. Affordable, climate appropriate housing options to meet current and projected demand.
 - d. Infrastructure and services to close the digital divide.
 - e. Transport subsidies that reduce the cost burden to local residents.
- 1.3 Access to markets
- a. Identify opportunities for investment in the region and encourage that investment.
 - b. Promote the region as a great place to visit, live and do business.
 - c. Removal of visa cost barriers for tourists.
 - d. Infrastructure to facilitate First Port of Entry status for all Kimberley ports and a local Australian Quarantine Inspection service.
- 1.4 Better land use planning and regulation
- a. Land tenure reform to unlock the economic potential of pastoral leases and Unallocated Crown Land that is easy to navigate, preserves the rights of Traditional Owners, improves project certainty, and has processes that are fair, responsive and timely.
- 1.5 Investment in workforce, local jobs and employment
- a. Targeted education and training pathways and wrap around support to deliver a local, skilled workforce.
 - b. Renewed focus on local defence investment and jobs.
 - c. Increased grants and incentives to support local business growth and development.
 - d. Tax reform to support a regional workforce and regional businesses growth.
 - e. Continuing of the Kimberley designated Migration Agreement (Kimberley DAMA) to provide increased access to the overseas workers then the standard skilled migration program.
 - f. Affordable housing options to meet current and projected employment growth.

ENDNOTES

1. REMPLAN data 2022 <https://app.remplan.com.au/kimberleyregion/economy/summary?state=grzqFNYpOlq9Mexua8nao9UVhYhY4q>.
2. <https://infrastructure.wa.gov.au/state-infrastructure-strategy/was-regions/kimberley-region>.
3. <https://infrastructure.wa.gov.au/state-infrastructure-strategy/was-regions/kimberley-region>.
4. https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2023-11/wa-regional-development-framework-october-2023_0.pdf
5. https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2023-11/wa-regional-development-framework-october-2023_0.pdf