

The Barkly is the Territory's third largest region and extends along the Stuart Highway from Tara to Elliott and east across the Barkly Tablelands to Queensland.

The region is made up of small communities separated by long distances and is home to about 6,000 people, of whom about 71% are Aboriginal. Tennant Creek is the main centre with a population of about 3,500 people.

A high proportion of people living in the region are young, with about 39% aged 24 years and under, and about 7% aged 65 or older.

Major industries in the region include government services, agriculture, construction, and mining. The Barkly and Tennant Creek pastoral district accounts for a substantial proportion of the Territory's cattle industry. The Territory Government is also investing to develop Tennant Creek as a mining and mineral services centre.

Roads of Strategic Importance

Budget 2023 includes \$78.9 million for upgrades to the Tennant Creek to Townsville road corridor, including sealing, strengthening, widening and road safety improvements. The corridor is a key freight route for mining, agriculture and tourism. The upgrades are expected to be completed by 2026 and are aimed at:

- ensuring efficient connection of agricultural and mining regions to ports, airports and other transport hubs
- providing a more reliable and safe road network, especially during the wet season
- improving access for higher capacity vehicles
- facilitating other economic opportunities, especially tourism.



Tourism

Budget 2023 invests \$10.5 million in tourism opportunities in Barkly to generate jobs and economic opportunities, including:

- \$7 million for the Tennant Creek Nyinkka Nyunyu Arts and Culture Centre extension to provide a new artist studio, upgraded gallery, performance and storage spaces and immersive audio visual displays and experiences that share history, stories, arts and culture
- \$3.5 million for the creation of a new visitor experience in Tennant Creek, which will include gold rush and ore mining interpretive displays.

Barkly Regional Arts, through Activate Territory, has also been granted \$32,000 to undertake a street art project, including community consultation on design of the artwork, development of senior and emerging youth artists, and installation to improve Tennant Creek's streetscape.

Ali Curung aerodrome

Budget 2023 commits \$2.4 million for Ali Curung airstrip to be sealed and line marked, making access to the community safer.

Land release

The Territory Government is investing \$9.7 million in the Parntali Road industrial subdivision to continue subdivision works and support the release of new industrial land in Tennant Creek.

Budget 2023 also includes \$5 million for headworks infrastructure to support the release of Chittock Crescent stage 3, providing new residential land for subdivision to support residential housing growth in Tennant Creek.

Tennant Creek watch house

In 2019, the Territory committed \$3.4 million to renovate the Tennant Creek watch house as part of the Barkly Regional Deal.

The scope of the project has been revised to construct a new, larger police watch house with contemporary facilities at a total cost of \$11.5 million.

The facility will be built on vacant land within the same lot as the existing police station and watch house and funding includes demolition of the current watch house once construction is complete.

Tennant Creek visitor park

Budget 2023 invests a further \$5.8 million for the Tennant Creek visitor park, taking the total amount allocated to the Barkly Regional Deal project to \$10.8 million.

The visitor park will provide safe, secure and alcohol-free accommodation for visitors to Tennant Creek from remote communities and outstations.

Social infrastructure

Budget 2023 commits \$5.6 million in social infrastructure for the Barkly region. Key social infrastructure includes:

- \$3.2 million for staff accommodation at Tennant Creek Hospital
- \$1.3 million for new fencing at Murray Downs School and Tennant Creek High School.

Critical minerals

The Territory is emerging as a key player in the global supply chains for critical minerals. Two mineral leases have been granted to Perth-based Avenira Ltd, giving exclusive rights to the Wonarah phosphate deposit in the Barkly region.

The project is scheduled to start with trial mining at test pits in the second quarter of 2023, creating up to 50 jobs. Test pit operations will establish supply chains enabling direct-shipped ore production.

The mine has a projected life of more than 30 years and potential to create 1,000 jobs.

Regional economic growth

Endorsed in December 2022, the Barkly Economic Growth Strategy identifies six priority targets:

- attracting people into local jobs in human services
- growing and expanding service industries to meet increasing demand and improve liveability
- supporting employers to create high performing, culturally safe and responsive work environments
- attracting and creating opportunities through renewable energy and environmental management
- increasing the productivity of food production and managing supply chains to drive economic outcomes
- making the most of every opportunity arising from the minerals and mining sector.

Major works overview

	Capital works
	\$000
Transport	81 287
Housing and community amenities	14 674
Public order and safety	11 498
Recreation, culture and religion	10 472
Economic affairs	9 748
Health	3 175
Social protection	2 673
Education	427
Total Barkly	133 955

Photograph courtesy of the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities