



The Coalition's plan for real action for
Northern Australia

**Stand up for Australia.
Stand up for real action.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Developing Northern Australia is crucial to the nation's future.

Northern Australia is our gateway to Asia and possesses vast natural resources. It contains unique and iconic areas of scenic beauty and indigenous culture and, given its abundant water, has immense potential for agricultural production.

Vital to this development are better road and transport systems, the capture and storage of water, greater co-operation between stakeholders, growth of local industries such as tourism, indigenous organisations, care for the environment and improved amenity for Australians living and working in our Northern regions.

The Coalition is committed to developing the vast, untapped potential of Northern Australia to boost the nation's economy, create jobs and position Australia strategically in world food, minerals, energy and tourism markets.

The Coalition's real action plan for Northern Australia will:

Offer leadership and better governance through –

1. Establishing a Northern Australia Alliance

This body will consult, lobby and advocate the interests of all Northern Australians.

2. Re-establishing the Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce

The Taskforce will return to its proactive, 'can-do' attitude to play a part in securing Australia's food resources.

Improve roads and other infrastructure by –

3. Funding major work on the Landsborough Highway

The Coalition will provide **\$57 million** for the Landsborough Highway (Longreach to Cloncurry).

4. Building a ring road around Mackay

The Coalition will commit **\$30 million** towards the design, engineering and preparatory work for the ring road's construction.

5. Replacing the Jubilee Bridge at Innisfail

The Coalition will contribute **\$8 million** towards replacement of the Jubilee Bridge.

6. Continuing the upgrade of the Outback Way

The progressive upgrade of the Outback Way will benefit the mining and beef industries, the tourism sector and Indigenous communities.

7. Rebuilding and repairing local road bridges

A Coalition Government will create a national **\$300 million** Bridges Renewal Programme to repair and rebuild thousands of ageing bridges.

8. Constructing new roadside stops

The Coalition will provide **\$300 million** over the next ten years to fund the construction of 500 roadside stops for long distance drivers.

9. Undertaking critical flood mitigation in Townsville

The Coalition will commit **\$21 million** towards flood mitigation works at Blakey's Crossing in Townsville.

10. Funding Townsville Oceans Terminal

The Coalition will commit \$7.5 million towards the Townsville Oceans Terminal.

11. Upgrading the Mackay Showgrounds

The Coalition will contribute \$5 million towards the upgrade of the Mackay Showgrounds.

12. Upgrading the Mackay basketball stadium

The Coalition will provide \$4 million to upgrade the Mackay basketball stadium at Candlestick Park.

13. Funding Townsville Entertainment Centre

The Coalition will contribute \$47.67 million as a one-third share of the Townsville Entertainment Centre.

14. Funding the Good Shepherd Nursing Home in Townsville

The Coalition will provide \$2 million towards the \$5.6 million cost of a new wing of the Good Shepherd Nursing Home in Townsville.

15. Funding the Cairns Tropical Sport and Cultural Precincts

The Coalition will provide \$40 million to kick off the Cairns Tropical Sports and Cultural precincts.

16. Funding the *Adventure Waters* Water Park in Cairns

The Coalition will provide \$100,000 towards the *Adventure Waters* water park in Cairns – an innovative project that is expanding the Cairns tourism market.

17. Improving the Bruce Highway at Yeppen Crossing, Rockhampton

The Coalition will provide \$25 million to improve road safety on the Bruce Highway at Yeppen Crossing, Rockhampton.

18. Constructing the Nelly Bay to Arcadia Boardwalk on Magnetic Island

The Coalition will provide \$4.7 million for the construction of the Nelly Bay to Arcadia Boardwalk on Magnetic Island.

19. Upgrading Riverway Drive, Townsville

The Coalition will provide \$9.5 million to upgrade Riverway Drive, Townsville to four lanes.

20. Upgrading the Mount Low Parkway, Townsville

The Coalition will provide \$6.5 million to upgrade the Mount Low Parkway, Townsville.

Improve health outcomes by –

21. Establishing an Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine

The Coalition will establish an Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine to provide leading edge research into major tropical health issues and develop workable biosecurity strategies.

22. Doubling the number of Medical Rural Bonded Scholarships

Much of Northern Australia suffers from medical workforce shortages. The Coalition will double the number of bonded scholarships.

23. Funding additional scholarships for rural and regional Nurse Practitioners

The Coalition will increase the scholarships available for registered nurses in regional and remote areas to pursue qualifications to become Nurse Practitioners.

24. Paying annual bonuses to Nurse Practitioners in regional towns

The Coalition will introduce an annual \$10,000 bonus for Nurse Practitioners who practice in remote communities that have no resident medical practitioner.

25. Introducing a pilot bonded scholarship scheme for rural dentists

To address the shortage of dental care in rural Northern Australia, the Coalition will pilot a rural bonded scholarships scheme for dentists.

26. Establishing an Indigenous Dental Programme

The Coalition will commit **\$22 million** to provide dental hygienists to remote Indigenous schools and Aboriginal Medical Services.

27. Funding vital diagnostic equipment

The Coalition will deliver Positron Emission Tomography (PET) scanners to Townsville and Darwin.

28. Establish New Headspace Centres

The Coalition will establish dedicated Headspace Centres (or outreach services) in Cairns, Mackay, Rockhampton, Darwin, Katherine, Alice Springs and Mt Isa to assist young people of Northern Australia who suffer mental illness.

29. Establishing the Cairns COUCH Wellness and Accommodation Unit

The Coalition will provide \$5 million to build the COUCH Wellness and Accommodation Unit to assist those undergoing cancer treatment and their relatives and carers.

Assist businesses in Northern Australia by –

30. Removing the threat of Labor’s mining tax

The Coalition will stop this tax so the sector can thrive and continue to create jobs in Northern Australia and economic wealth for all Australians.

31. Diversifying Tropical North Queensland tourism

To support jobs and economic growth, a Coalition Government will provide a **\$10 million** economic adjustment fund to diversify the Tropical North Queensland tourism economy.

32. Offering Domestic Tourism Development Grants

The Coalition believes Australia’s 67 Regional Tourism Organisations are best placed to promote local tourism and will provide **\$14 million** towards grants of up to \$100,000 per annum.

33. Providing Tourism Product Development Grants

The Coalition will provide **\$40 million** over four years towards a Tourism Infrastructure and Development Fund to drive investment in the tourism sector.

34. Promoting business events tourism

The Coalition will provide Tourism Australia with a **further \$10.5 million over four years** to increase the marketing capacity of Business Events Australia.

35. Establishing sensible and balanced Marine Park boundaries

The Marine Bioregional Planning Process will be immediately restructured in order to address community and industry concerns.

36. Overturning the Wild Rivers legislation

The Coalition will overturn the Queensland Government’s Wild Rivers legislation which seriously impedes economic development for Aboriginal people, particularly in the Cape York and remote communities.

Boost Agriculture in the North and across Australia with the following initiatives:

37. Increased funding for research and development in primary production

Commencing from 1 July 2011, the Coalition will increase the Commonwealth’s contribution to research and development from a matching contribution of \$1 for every \$1 raised by industry to \$1.25 for each of the 15 Rural Research and Development Corporations. This will increase research funding by up to \$150 million over the next three years.

38. Support for cutting edge research by Australia’s agricultural scientists

Australia needs to replenish our agricultural scientific ‘brains trust’ and ensure our scientists and researchers remain in Australia. Future Australian productivity relies on keeping our best minds working in Australian agricultural science. The Coalition will establish a \$5 million four-year pilot programme offering grants of up to \$50,000 for specialised research, mentoring or further study.

39. Improved water infrastructure through a 'Water Works' programme

The Coalition will provide grants of up to \$100,000 for farming enterprises to undertake water-saving activities such as installing pipes and troughs for stock water, and to improve grazing practices and protect environmental assets. Grants will also be available to introduce renewable energy technologies for pumps. The Coalition will provide \$50 million over four years for this initiative.

40. A large scale Feral Animal Control Programme

The CSIRO has estimated that pest animals directly cost Australian agriculture more than \$740 million per annum. Australia must put control programmes in place now to control pest animals. The Coalition will commit \$20 million over four years towards a large scale Feral Animal Control Programme.

41. Mapping Australia's Agriculture Carbon Footprint

There is increasing concern that some countries may use environmental issues as a trade barrier. It is important that, as a large exporting nation, Australia is able to prove our reputation as a supplier of clean, green products is factual and defended in the global market place. This \$8 million initiative will provide a 'third party' auditable map of the carbon foot print of all of Australia's agricultural production, from paddock to plate, to be used to ensure that our primary products can compete in the global market place.

42. 'Green Tape' Audit

An incoming Coalition Government will immediately commence an audit of all environmental legislation and regulation at Local, State and Federal levels. The audit will identify the 'green tape' which is unworkable, contradictory or incompatible with other legislation, affects food production or puts Australian lives at risk. The audit will also look at the impact environmental legislation can have on property rights.

43. Bio-security Flying Squad

Maintaining our clean, green, disease-free status is vital for the future of agricultural production in Australia. Any outbreak of imported disease could wipe out entire sectors of the industry, leading to the loss of billions of dollars of income and thousands of Australian jobs. The Coalition will provide \$15 million to establish a special agency to provide urgent additional resources when a bio-security risk is identified.

Strengthen local communities by –

44. Easing housing affordability pressures in Darwin

The Coalition will excise Defence land in Winnellie (Eaton) and release it for sale to help ease the pressure on the Darwin housing market.

45. Preventing local crime

CCTV funding will be made to Darwin, Palmerston, John Egan Park, Ayr, Home Hill, Airlie Beach and to protect the Nanango community.

46. Funding for 46 new homes on Palm Island, North Queensland

The Coalition will provide \$13.8 million to build 46 new homes on Palm Island.

47. Improved transport of fresh fruit and vegetables to Cape York and the Torres Strait

The Coalition will provide \$2 million for a farm gate distribution pilot program for transporting fresh fruit and vegetables to Cape York and the Torres Strait.

Restore technical education by –

48. Establishing new Australian Technical Colleges (ATCs) in Darwin and Tropical North Queensland

ATCs will provide a valuable pathway for young Australians into technical and vocational education by working in partnership with industry and providing high quality training for apprentices and trainees, including those undertaking school-based apprenticeships.

49. Integrate existing Trades Training Centres into the new ATC Network

The Coalition will provide \$35 million to integrate many of the former ATCs into the new Network.

Help secure our Northern borders by –

50. Tightening policies on unauthorised arrivals seeking asylum

The Coalition will restore offshore processing in Nauru and turn back boats when circumstances permit.

51. Increasing funding for cargo screening at local ports and airports

The Coalition will restore Labor's \$58.1 million funding cut for cargo inspection and provide a further \$35 million for more screening of air and sea cargo.

52. Upgrading action to prevent diseases and pests entering Australia from the North

The Coalition will provide \$40 million towards the establishment of the Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine which will play a major role in securing our northern borders from the incursion of tropical diseases.

Protect Northern Australia's environment by –

53. Encouraging more 'solar' homes

The Coalition will provide an extra \$1000 rebate for either solar panels or solar hot water systems.

54. Establishing solar projects in schools and communities

The Coalition will allocate **\$75 million** to a Solar Towns and Solar Schools initiative including projects at St Mary's Catholic Primary in South Mackay, Andergrove State Primary school in Mackay and Annandale State Primary school in Townsville.

55. Establishing a 'Green Army'

The Coalition will undertake Australia's first deployment of large numbers of people on behalf of the environment through the establishment of the 'Green Army'. Projects in Northern Australia include eradication of gamba grass in the greater Darwin area, conservation projects at Mitchell's Creek, conservation work in the Rapid Creek corridor, rehabilitation of tropical rainforest in Cape York, and weed removal, revegetation and wetlands rehabilitation in the Townsville area.

56. Creating urban forests and green corridors

The Coalition commits to the planting of an additional 20 million trees by 2020.

57. Cleaning up Darwin Harbour

The Coalition will provide **\$2 million** for an engineering study into Darwin's overloaded sewerage system.

58. Repairing and replacing ageing Torres Strait Sea Walls

The Coalition will commit **\$22 million** to repair and upgrade deteriorating sea wall infrastructure in the Torres Strait.

59. Preventing beach erosion in Mackay and the Whitsundays

\$2.8 million funding will go towards building rock walls at McEwens Beach and Midge Point, and maintaining an existing wall at Slade Point.

60. Enhanced Great Barrier Reef Protection Program

The Coalition will provide \$5 million additional funding to the Great Barrier Reef Protection Program to provide more funds to farmers to help them to prevent run off into the Great Barrier Reef and more funds for the tourism industry to help with the eradication of Crown of Thorns starfish.

61. Implementing a dugong and turtle protection plan

The Coalition will provide \$2.6 million for specialised Indigenous Ranger programs and the clean up of marine debris along the far North Queensland coast.

62. Taking Soil Carbon initiatives for northern farmers

Farmers in the North will be able to participate in the Soil capture of carbon to improve the environment and to receive payments for that capture carbon in soil.

63. Harnessing the potential of Algal Synthesis and Biofuels

The Algal fuel processing facility at James Cook University will benefit from the Coalition's commitment to funding for the testing process for algal energy.

Improve educational opportunities by –

64. Creating a \$1 billion Regional Education Fund

The Coalition will create a \$1 billion Regional Education Fund to invest in infrastructure and programmes in regional schools and universities to provide students and schools in remote and regional areas with better opportunities to link with and enjoy more of the learning experiences available in larger centres.

OTHER POLICIES

In addition to the above policies the Coalition has announced specific policies in particular portfolio areas, many of which have direct relevance to Northern Australia and which are available on www.liberal.org.au.

Further commitments announced prior to the election will be available at www.liberal.org.au

HOW LABOR HAS FAILED

After three years of Labor, Australia is on the wrong track.

Reckless spending, a \$93 billion debt, six interest rate increases in a row, a \$57 billion deficit and Labor borrowings of \$100 million a day have put the Australian economy in a highly vulnerable position.

Through their incompetence and waste, Labor has threatened our capacity to invest in the vast potential of Northern Australia.

Labor's failed policy for Northern Australia is all about patronising statements and more studies, more investigations, more bureaucracy and bureaucratic talkfests, more committees, more 'dialogue', 'engagement' and 'understanding'; in fact more talk, but no real action. As with everything Labor does it ignores the expertise and experience of people living and working in the North and relies on capital city based bureaucrats, politicians and 'experts' to tell Northern Australians what is best for them.

In very real ways, they have diluted and diminished programmes and initiatives that sought to improve the lives of Australians living in the North.

Labor abolished the successful 'Regional Solutions' programme which had offered answers to many of the problems in smaller communities in Northern and Remote Australia.

Labor changed the membership of the Northern Australian Land and Water Taskforce, fundamentally affecting its capacity to offer clear defined direction for the future.

They rebadged Area Consultative Committees, hoping this spin would create an impression of action. Instead, there is now confusion and uncertainty about their role.

Labor promised to invest \$2.2 billion in upgrades on the Bruce Highway, but have only allocated \$63 million for the entire Bruce Highway from Brisbane to Cairns.

They have increased the passenger movement charge, resulting in cutbacks in tourism in Cairns and the Whitsundays, Broome, Darwin and Alice Springs

Cutbacks have been made in natural resource management group funding. *Caring for Country* spends less in Northern and Remote Australia, in spite of promises to the contrary. Landowners who had agreed to improve their farming practices voluntarily and meet some of the costs themselves have lost faith in Labor and the NRM programme.

Staff cuts have been made at the Bureau of Meteorology in Australia's volatile climate region of Northern Australia.

Labor has failed to allocate significant funding for infrastructure projects in Northern and Remote Australia.

THE COALITION'S REAL ACTION PLAN FOR NORTHERN AUSTRALIA

The Coalition is committed to developing the vast, untapped potential of Northern Australia to boost the nation's economy, create jobs and position Australia strategically in world food, minerals, energy and tourism markets.

The Coalition's real action plan for Northern Australia will:

Offer leadership and better governance through -

1. Establishing a Northern Australia Alliance

Co-operation and co-ordination between key stakeholders is needed to agree on priorities for the development of Northern Australia. The Coalition will establish a Northern Australia Alliance comprised of elected leaders from local government, regional development associations, natural resource management groups, indigenous land management groups, industry and representatives of state and federal government agencies.

This body will consult, lobby and advocate the interests of all Northern Australians and will work with northern Parliamentary representatives to provide a real 'voice' into government.

The formation of this Alliance acknowledges that only 9 of Australia's 150 Parliamentarians reside in Northern Australia – an area that provides about 40% of Australia's export earnings.

2. Re-establishing the Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce

The Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce will be restored to the leadership role it played when first established by the previous Coalition Government. The Taskforce will return to its proactive, 'can-do' attitude to play a part in securing Australia's food resources.

Improve roads and other infrastructure by -

3. Funding major work on the Landsborough Highway (Longreach to Cloncurry)

The Coalition will provide **\$57 million** for the Landsborough Highway to prepare sections of the Highway for the heavy traffic that will come with development of the Galilee Basin.

4. Funding the Mackay Ring Road

A ring road around Mackay will remove heavy traffic from the inner city of Mackay and will also act as an alternative safer and speedier route from the growing Northern Beaches residential area to the major industrial employment locality of Paget. Currently, 1,500 trucks travel through the town each day.

The Coalition will commit **\$30 million** towards the design, engineering and preparatory work for the ring road's construction.

5. Replacing the Jubilee Bridge at Innisfail

The Coalition will contribute **\$8 million** towards replacement of the Jubilee Bridge. The current bridge is now potentially unsafe in the case of major flooding of the South Johnstone.

6. Completing the upgrade of the Outback Way

The Coalition will continue a progressive upgrade of the Outback Way. This will benefit the mining and beef industries by significantly reducing the cost of freight. It will open up new tourism opportunities and assist Indigenous communities across Central Australia. It will also enhance the defence of our Nation.

Completion of the Highway will reduce the trip across Australia by 1,600 kilometres and directly or indirectly affect 5.5 million Australians.

7. Rebuilding and repairing local road bridges

There are hundreds of small road bridges around Northern Australia, many in disrepair or decay. These bridges are often the only way local communities can access the broader road network, getting people to work and school.

A Coalition Government will create a national Bridges Renewal Programme to repair and rebuild thousands of ageing bridges. The Commonwealth contribution will be **\$300 million** to be matched by local and State/Territory government.

Many local councils have expressed serious concern about their ability to deal with the backlog of work on these bridges. They will be able to apply for funding under this programme through a transparent competitive application process.

8. Constructing new roadside stops

The Coalition will provide **\$300 million** over the next ten years to fund the construction of 500 roadside stops.

Truck drivers face mandated rest breaks as a result of the recently enacted national heavy vehicle driver fatigue reforms, yet most State highways and significant sections of the AusLink national road network are not compliant with the rest area guidelines issued by the National Transport Commission.

This is a major problem to truckies in Northern Australia given the vast distances they have to travel. In the interim, the Coalition will support some flexibility in the new fatigue guidelines in areas where no suitable rest areas are available.

9. Undertaking critical flood mitigation in Townsville

Residents of Northern Townsville are vulnerable to flooding each wet season along the critical route on Ingham Road leading into the Townsville CBD.

The Coalition's commitment of **\$21 million** towards flood mitigation works at Blakey's Crossing will ensure that the growing Northern Beaches community and Townsville's major industrial area are not faced with disruptions to their economic productivity and daily lives during the wet season.

10. Funding Townsville Oceans Terminal

The number of defence and cruise ships visiting Townsville is increasing, as is the general port trade activity, with limited berths available for defence and cruise ships (which currently share facilities with the live cattle, bulk sugar and general cargo berths).

The Coalition's commitment of \$7.5 million towards a dedicated Oceans Terminal will specifically accommodate visitors through the port away from the bulk and general cargo areas, improving port safety and amenity for visitors.

11. Upgrading the Mackay Showgrounds

The Mackay Showgrounds are an iconic part of the Mackay community and a focal point for local events.

The Coalition's commitment of \$5 million towards the upgrade of the Mackay Showgrounds will enable the showgrounds to expand as the region grows and improvements such as replacement of the horse stables and construction of new buildings can begin.

12. Upgrading the Mackay basketball stadium

The current basketball facilities at Candlestick Park are ageing and, with the population expansion in the Mackay region, are not adequate to meet the increasing need for first class basketball facilities.

The Coalition's commitment to provide \$4 million to upgrade the Mackay basketball stadium will be a substantial contribution towards Stage 1 of the redevelopment plan for Candlestick Park.

13. Funding Townsville Entertainment Centre

Townsville Enterprise and the Townsville City Council have listed a new, state of the art Entertainment Centre as a major priority for Townsville to replace the current ageing facility which floods during the wet season.

Townsville City Council last month released concept designs for a \$143 million state of the art convention and entertainment centre, with a capacity to seat more than 5,000 people and which would bring an extra \$96 million to the local economy through business tourism.

The Coalition will contribute \$47.67 million as a one-third share towards the total cost of the Townsville Entertainment Centre.

14. Funding the Good Shepherd Nursing Home in Townsville

There is a significant waiting list for high care beds in Townsville.

The Good Shepherd Nursing Home in Townsville is planning an expansion of its high care facilities, contributing \$3.6 million towards building a new wing within 12 months if government assistance is provided.

The Coalition will provide \$2 million towards the total cost of a new wing of the Good Shepherd Nursing Home.

15. Funding the Cairns Tropical Sport and Cultural Precincts

The Cairns Region lacks tropical sport and cultural precincts important to the expanding population.

The Coalition will provide \$40 million to kick off the Cairns Tropical Sports and Cultural precincts, including:

- \$3.5 million Hockey Stadium Stage 1;
- \$3.9 million Tennis centre roof covers;
- \$3.5 million Rectangular Stadium precinct upgrade;
- \$1.5 million updated business plan for the Tropical Sports and Cultural precincts which will include an upgrade of the Tobruk Memorial Hall, a rectangular stadium for soccer, rugby league and rugby union, a netball stadium and a 1500 seat performing arts centre and adjoining precinct.

16. Funding the *Adventure Waters* Water Park in Cairns

The Cairns tourism market is seeking ways to expand and diversify.

The Coalition will provide \$100,000 towards the innovative tourism product, the *Adventure Waters* water park in Cairns.

17. Improving the Bruce Highway at Yeppen Crossing, Rockhampton

An elected Coalition Government will invest \$25 million in funding for the Yeppen Bridge and roundabout project.

This project involves widening the bridge and creating new road access at the intersection of the Bruce and Capricorn Highways so traffic on the approaches to Rockhampton flows more freely.

18. Funding to construct the Nelly Bay to Arcadia Boardwalk on Magnetic Island

The pathway from Nelly Bay to Arcadia on the internationally acclaimed tourism destination of Magnetic Island is dangerous and crumbling. Pedestrians and cyclists have to use the narrow, winding roadway and are at risk from oncoming traffic. There is no access for pushers or wheelchairs.

The Coalition's commitment to provide \$4.7 million for a boardwalk around the coastline between the two bays will improve safety for tourists and residents of the Island.

19. Upgrading Riverway Drive, Townsville

Riverway Drive, Townsville is a major arterial route for transport accessing the Ring Road and bridge over the Ross River.

The Coalition will provide \$9.5 million to upgrade Riverway Drive, Townsville to four lanes to alleviate traffic congestion.

20. Upgrading the Mount Low Parkway, Townsville

The Mount Low Parkway provides the only entry and egress point for the rapidly expanding suburb of Bushland Beach, north of Townsville.

The Coalition will provide \$6.5 million to upgrade the Mount Low Parkway, Townsville, widening the road to provide turning lanes.

Improve health outcomes by -

21. Establishing an Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine

The nature and impact of a whole range of tropical diseases such as SARS, H1N1 and dengue fever is not well understood. These diseases can be devastating for individuals affected and have huge economic implications.

The Coalition will establish an Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine to provide leading edge research into major tropical health issues and develop workable biosecurity strategies. Specifically, it will develop and trial vaccines, other therapies and service delivery models and offer training and mentoring opportunities for young researchers.

The Institute's work will be undertaken in Townsville, Cairns, the Torres Strait and Darwin.

Total funding for infrastructure and operating costs during the forward estimates will be **\$40 million**.

22. Doubling the number of Medical Rural Bonded Scholarships

Much of Northern Australia suffers from medical workforce shortages. The Coalition will double the number of bonded scholarships under the *Medical Rural Bonded Scholarships* scheme from 100 to 200.

These scholarships offer \$24,207 per annum for students who study medicine and commit to a bonded term of six years in a rural community. However, the length of the bonded term is a significant deterrent to its uptake. The Coalition will reduce the length of the bonded term to three years. The scholarships will apply for the duration of the student's course.

23. Funding additional scholarships for rural and regional Nurse Practitioners

The Coalition will increase the scholarships available for registered nurses in regional and remote areas to pursue qualifications to become Nurse Practitioners.

The Federal Government funds scholarships of up to \$15,000 per annum for two years full-time study or the part-time equivalent for the duration of their course. The Coalition's policy will fund an additional 100 scholarships for nurses and midwives working in regional and remote areas to undertake postgraduate training to become Nurse Practitioners.

24. Paying annual bonuses to Nurse Practitioners in regional towns

A substantial number of small regional centres in Northern Australia do not have resident medical practitioners because of the difficulty of establishing economically viable practices in these areas.

The Coalition will introduce an annual \$10,000 bonus for up to 300 Nurse Practitioners who choose to practice in these centres. It is envisaged that the bonus will be provided to Nurse Practitioners who choose to practice in remote communities that have no resident medical practitioner.

25. Introducing a pilot bonded scholarship scheme for rural dentists

To address the shortage of dental care in rural Northern Australia, the Coalition will pilot a rural bonded scholarships scheme for dentists.

An initial 20 scholarships will be offered on similar terms to the Medical Rural Bonded Scholarships. The Coalition will consider funding additional scholarships, subject to evaluation of progress of the pilot scheme.

26. Establishing an Indigenous Dental Programme

The Coalition will commit **\$22 million** to provide dental hygienists to remote Indigenous schools and Aboriginal Medical Services.

A new Indigenous Dental Partnership will provide a team of dental professionals to provide better access to dental treatment. An Indigenous Dental Services Volunteer Group will bring together a volunteer group of dentists and dental hygienists to deliver services to remote locations where services are currently difficult to provide.

27. Funding vital diagnostic equipment

The Coalition will invest \$2.5 million to deliver a Positron Emission Tomography (PET) scanner to Townsville, supporting better health care services for Townsville, Thuringowa and the region.

It will also provide funding for a PET scanner to be located at the Royal Darwin Hospital.

28. Establish New Headspace Centres

The Coalition will establish dedicated Headspace Centres (or outreach services) in Cairns, Mackay, Rockhampton, Darwin, Katherine, Alice Springs and Mt Isa to assist young people of Northern Australia who suffer mental illness.

29. Establishing the Cairns COUCH Wellness and Accommodation Unit

The Coalition will provide \$5 million to build the COUCH Wellness and Accommodation Unit to assist those undergoing cancer treatment and their relatives and carers.

Assist businesses in Northern Australia by –

30. Removing the threat of Labor’s mining tax

Northern Australia is home to some of the most significant mining and resources projects in Australia. Labor’s mining tax is a \$10.5 billion hit on one of the most important sectors of the economy. Labor’s mining tax has undermined confidence in Australia as an investment destination and as a secure supplier of resources.

The Coalition will restore confidence, stability and security for the industry so it can thrive and continue to create jobs in Northern Australia and economic wealth for all Australians. The Coalition will stop this tax.

Even just the announcement of the mining tax had a huge adverse impact – not just on the mining industry but also on small and medium enterprises across Northern Australia providing the full spectrum of goods and services to the mining industry, its employees and contractors.

31. Diversifying Tropical North Queensland tourism

The Cairns and wider Tropical North Queensland tourism economy has historically been highly focused on the Japanese source market.

To support jobs and economic growth, a Coalition Government will provide a **\$10 million** economic adjustment fund to diversify the Tropical North Queensland tourism economy.

This fund will provide Tourism Australia and Tourism Tropical North Queensland with the resources to fund a four year marketing campaign aimed at the emerging market of China and to support the recent increase in aviation capacity from New Zealand.

32. Offering Domestic Tourism Development Grants

Domestic tourism is the industry’s ‘bread and butter’, accounting for around three quarters of Australia’s tourism GDP.

The Coalition believes Australia’s 67 Regional Tourism Organisations are best placed to promote local tourism to the domestic market.

The Coalition will provide **\$14 million** over four years towards Domestic Tourism Development Grants of up to \$100,000 per annum for Regional Tourism Organisations.

Recipients of these grants will include Southern Downs & Granite Belt Tourism, the Outback Queensland Tourism Association, Australia’s North West, Tourism Whitsundays, Mackay Tourism, Tourism Tropical North Queensland, the Tourism Top End RTO and Tourism Central Australia.

33. Providing Tourism Product Development Grants

The Coalition believes that the future of Australian tourism depends on building tourism infrastructure and increasing the appeal of what the country can offer.

The Coalition will provide **\$40 million** over four years towards a Tourism Infrastructure and Development Fund to drive investment in the tourism sector.

34. Promoting business events tourism

Centres such as Cairns and Darwin are perfect locations to host substantial business events. Business events produce the highest daily yield of any sector of the tourism industry.

The Coalition will provide Tourism Australia with **a further \$10.5 million over four years** to increase the marketing capacity of Business Events Australia.

The Coalition will also provide the Association of Australian Convention Bureaux with **\$17.5 million over four years** to operate a Business Events Bid and Boost Fund.

35. Establishing sensible and balanced Marine Park boundaries

Fishing is integral to the lives and livelihoods of many people in Northern Australia. The Marine Bioregional Planning Process will be immediately restructured in order to address community and industry concerns about the Labor Government's mismanagement of the process for declaring Marine Protected Areas.

In establishing Marine Protected Areas, the Coalition will consult closely with those people and industries that use the marine environment, including the recreational and commercial fishing sectors, to determine Marine Protected Area management plans in accordance with relevant legislation and other regulatory frameworks.

36. Overturning the Wild Rivers Legislation

The Coalition has already introduced legislation to overturn the Queensland Government's Wild Rivers legislation. These laws seriously impede economic development for Aboriginal people, particularly in the Cape York and remote communities.

Overturning the Wild Rivers legislation will not prevent the declaration of new national parks on Cape York, but will permit ecologically sustainable development of business ventures, provide employment and help bring essential services closer to Aboriginal people in remote communities.

Boost Agriculture in the North and across Australia with the following initiatives:

37. Increased funding for research and development in primary production

Agriculture research and development has been scaled back, particularly at a state level. At the federal level, Labor has shifted funding out of research designed to boost our economic productivity towards research for environmental purposes.

Australia needs new developments to provide farmers with the tools to help them maintain a competitive advantage in the market place.

Commencing from 1 July 2011, the Coalition will increase the Commonwealth's contribution to research and development from a matching contribution of \$1 for every \$1 raised by industry to \$1.25 for each of the 15 Rural Research and Development Corporations. This will increase research funding by up to \$150 million over the next three years.

38. Support for cutting edge research by Australia's agricultural scientists

The Coalition will establish a \$5 million four-year pilot programme offering grants of up to \$50,000 for specialised research, mentoring or further study.

The programme will provide access to mentoring and professional development in the applicant's chosen fields, especially in areas where Australia currently lacks skills such as taxonomy (discovery, description, identification and classification of organisms) and entomology (study of insects).

39. Improved water infrastructure through a 'Water Works' programme

The Coalition will introduce a 'Water Works' programme to provide grants to help farmers save water. Grants of up to \$100,000 will be made available for farming enterprises to undertake water-saving activities such as installing pipes and troughs for stock water, and to improve grazing practices and protect environmental assets. Grants will also be available to introduce renewable energy technologies for pumps.

The Coalition will provide \$50 million over four years for this initiative.

40. A large scale Feral Animal Control Programme

According to the CSIRO, pest animals directly cost Australian agriculture more than \$740 million per annum. This does not include long-term losses associated with land degradation, native vegetation destruction and the loss of native wildlife.

Australia's most destructive pests include rabbits, wild dogs, foxes, feral pigs, cane toads and feral camels.

The Coalition believes that control programmes must be put in place now before too many pest animals once again reach plague proportions.

The Coalition will commit \$20 million over four years towards a large scale Feral Animal Control Programme.

41. Mapping Australia's Agriculture Carbon Footprint

There is increasing concern that some countries may use environmental issues as a trade barrier. In some cases, trading partners are demanding an environmental audit of produce and concepts such as the United Kingdom's 'Food Miles'. Often these give a distorted picture of the real environmental impact of food production - to the detriment of Australia's exporters. It is important that, as a large exporting nation, Australia is able to prove our reputation as a supplier of clean, green products is factual and defended in the global market place. For example, Australian lamb uses about half the energy per kilogram as the equivalent United Kingdom produced kilo of lamb, even when transport is taken into account.

This \$8 million program would be a third party auditable map of the carbon foot print of all of Australia's agricultural production, from paddock to plate. This will then be used to ensure that our primary products can compete in the global market place.

42. 'Green Tape' Audit

An incoming Coalition Government will immediately commence an audit of all environmental legislation and regulation at local, State and Federal levels.

The audit will identify the 'green tape' which is unworkable, contradictory or incompatible with other legislation, affects food production or puts Australian lives at risk. The audit will also look at the impact environmental legislation can have on property rights. The Coalition will commit \$2 million to this initiative.

43. Establish a Biosecurity Flying Squad

Maintaining our clean, green, disease-free status is vital for the future of agricultural production in Australia. Any outbreak of imported disease could wipe out entire sectors of the industry, leading to the loss of billions of dollars of income and thousands of Australian jobs.

Labor's waste and mismanagement has led to cuts in critical areas, including the reduction in Customs' capacity to screen cargo entering Australia through our ports and airports. This has made it much easier for animal and plant disease to enter Australia, putting our agricultural sector at risk.

The Coalition has previously announced funding of \$93.1 million to reverse Labor's cuts and dramatically improve Customs' capacity to inspect incoming cargo. This additional funding will enable Customs to inspect an estimated additional 52,500 sea cargo consignments and at least 7.5 million additional air cargo consignments.

The Coalition will also provide \$15 million to establish a special agency to provide urgent additional resources when a bio-security risk is identified. The new agency will also randomly audit quarantine facilities and procedures, identifying problems and resolving them through direct co-operation with relevant agencies and industry.

Strengthen local communities by -

44. Easing housing affordability pressures in Darwin

The lack of land release in Darwin has led to skyrocketing house prices and rents in the Darwin housing market.

The Coalition will excise Defence land in Winnellie (Eaton) and release it for sale to help ease the pressure on the Darwin housing market by increasing supply. There are currently up to 395 houses on this land with around 100 of these houses already vacant.

45. Preventing local crime

The Coalition will re-establish the National Community Crime Prevention Programme. The Programme will provide funding support for grass roots projects that enhance community safety and prevent crime including CCTV equipment, security patrols, graffiti cleaning squads and other initiatives to make streets and neighbourhoods safer.

CCTV funding will be made to Darwin, Palmerston, John Egan Park, Ayr, Home Hill, Airlie Beach and to protect the Nanango community.

46. Funding for 46 new homes on Palm Island, North Queensland

The Coalition will provide \$13.8 million to build 46 new homes on Palm Island.

47. Improved transport of fresh fruit and vegetables to Cape York and the Torres Strait

The Coalition will provide \$2 million for a farm gate distribution pilot program for transporting fresh fruit and vegetables to Cape York and the Torres Strait.

Restore technical education by –

48. Establishing new Australian Technical Colleges (ATCs) in Darwin and Tropical North Queensland

ATCs will provide a valuable pathway for young Australians into technical and vocational education by working in partnership with industry and providing high quality training for apprentices and trainees, including those undertaking school-based apprenticeships.

49. Integrate existing Trades Training Centres into the new ATC Network

The Coalition will provide \$35 million to integrate many of the former ATCs into the new Network.

Help secure our Northern borders by –

50. Tightening policies on unauthorised arrivals seeking asylum

Northern Australia is the destination of boatloads of unauthorised arrivals seeking asylum. Since Labor weakened border control, hundreds of boats and thousands of people have sought to reach Australia.

The Coalition will immediately restore offshore processing by negotiating the reopening of the Australian built centre on Nauru. Where circumstances permit, boats will be turned back.

51. Increasing funding for cargo screening at local ports and airports

Darwin, Cairns, Townsville, Broome and Dampier (Karratha) are all major Australian ports through which thousands of tonnes of cargo pass.

The Coalition will restore the \$58.1 million in funding cut by Labor in the 2009-10 Budget for Customs cargo inspection which weakened Australia's border security.

The Coalition will also increase Customs' resources for screening by \$35 million, allowing a greater percentage of air and sea cargo to be screened and inspected for illicit goods that threaten our communities and agriculture.

52. Upgrading action to prevent diseases and pests entering Australia from the North

The Coalition will provide \$40 million towards the establishment of the Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine which will play a major role in securing our northern borders from the incursion of tropical diseases.

Protect Northern Australia's environment by -

53. Encouraging more 'solar' homes

With its abundant sunlight, homes in Northern Australia are perfectly suited for solar energy. To encourage take-up of these technologies, the Coalition will provide an extra \$1000 rebate for either solar panels or solar hot water systems. The program would be capped at 100,000 rebates per year.

The rebate will be on top of existing incentives and will replace the current solar hot water incentive when it ends. Given their solar energy classification, heat pumps will be eligible under the program.

54. Establishing solar projects in schools and communities

Recognising the potential for solar power generation at a community level, the Coalition will allocate **\$75 million** to a Solar Towns and Solar Schools initiative. Included in these projects will be St Mary's Catholic Primary in South Mackay, Andergrove State Primary school in Mackay and Annandale State Primary school in Townsville.

55. Establishing a 'Green Army'

The Coalition will undertake Australia's first deployment of large numbers of people on behalf of the environment through the establishment of the 'Green Army'.

This initiative will be the first time that Australia has approached environmental remediation with the same seriousness and level of organization that we have brought to dealing with bushfires or other local and regional emergencies.

Projects in Northern Australia include eradication of gamba grass in the greater Darwin area, conservation projects at Mitchell's Creek, conservation work in the Rapid Creek corridor, rehabilitation of tropical rainforest in Cape York and weed removal, revegetation and wetlands rehabilitation in the Townsville area.

56. Creating urban forests and green corridors

The Coalition commits to the planting of an additional 20 million trees by 2020. These trees will be for re-establishing urban forests and urban green corridors, using suitable public spaces in urban and regional corridors.

A Coalition Government will conduct an immediate audit of suitable available public space as a first step towards delivering this initiative.

57. Cleaning up Darwin Harbour

Darwin Harbour is currently being polluted by sewerage. The Coalition will provide **\$2 million** for an engineering study into Darwin's overloaded sewerage system.

58. Repairing and replacing ageing Torres Strait sea walls

The Coalition will commit **\$22 million** to repair and upgrade deteriorating sea wall infrastructure in the Torres Strait.

This is essential work to prevent salt water intrusion on the outer islands of the Torres Strait.

59.Preventing beach erosion in Mackay and the Whitsundays

The Coalition will provide **\$2.8 million** to fight erosion on beaches in Mackay and the Whitsundays.

The funding will go towards building rock walls at McEwens Beach and Midge Point, and maintaining an existing wall at Slade Point.

60.Enhanced Great Barrier Reef Protection Program

The Coalition will provide \$5 million additional funding to the Great Barrier Reef Protection Programme to provide \$3 million to farmers to help them to prevent run off into the Great Barrier Reef and \$2 million for the tourism industry to help with the eradication of Crown of Thorns starfish.

61.Implement a dugong and turtle protection plan

Dugong and turtle populations of far North Queensland and the Torres Strait Islands are under threat of poaching, illegal hunting and marine debris.

The Coalition will provide \$2.6 million comprising:

- \$1.6 million for specialised Indigenous Ranger programs for marine conservation along the Far North Queensland Coast and strengthened enforcement and compliance; and
- \$1 million towards helping to clean up marine debris along the Far North Queensland coast in consultation with Indigenous communities.

62. Taking Soil Carbon initiatives for northern farmers

The single largest opportunity for CO₂ emissions reduction in Australia is through bio-sequestration in general, and in particular the replenishment of our soil carbons. It is also the lowest cost CO₂ emissions reduction available in Australia on a large scale.

Significantly improving soil carbons also helps soil quality, farm productivity and water efficiency, and should be a national goal regardless of the CO₂ abatement benefits.

Through the Emissions Reduction Fund a Coalition Government will commit to a 'once in a century' replenishment of our national soils and farmlands.

Through the Fund we will support up to 85 million tonnes per annum of CO₂ abatement through soil carbons by 2020 – and reserve the right to increase this, subject to progress and evaluation.

Farmers will be entitled to tender for all verified new additions in soil carbon beyond the commencement of the Fund.

We will commence this work by offering to purchase 10 million tonnes of CO₂ abatement through soil carbons for 2012-13.

63. Harnessing the potential of Algal Synthesis and Biofuels

Algae can be used for capturing CO₂ emissions and as an alternative fuel source for electricity generation. There is potential for algae to be produced cheaply and to be widely employed as a carbon capture source.

For example, in a submission to Senate Committee, MDB Energy indicated that its algal synthesis process can lead to one-third of carbon emissions received from an emitter being converted into algae oil and the remaining two-thirds into algae meal for livestock.

Algal synthesis thus has widespread potential to create jobs and valuable supply-chain commodities.

The potential for algal synthesis has also been touted by the Queensland Premier, who has stated that the trials conducted by MDB Energy Limited and James Cook University show that Australia and the world may be about to turn an important corner on being able to set and attain significant CO₂ emissions reduction targets.

To maximise opportunities for harnessing the benefits of algal synthesis, a Coalition Government will conduct a 1 year testing process to ensure that algal energy and biofuels are both effective in reduction of quantifiable levels of CO₂ and that they will not distort the Australian food chain and food production processes.

The Coalition will allocate \$5 million to this analysis subject to matching funding from within the Algal Energy and biofuels sector.

Improve educational opportunities through –

64. Creating a \$1 billion Regional Education Fund

The Coalition will create a \$1 billion Regional Education Fund, to be used to invest in 21st century education and communication tools in the regions, and programs like encouraging quality teachers to move and stay in regional and remote schools.

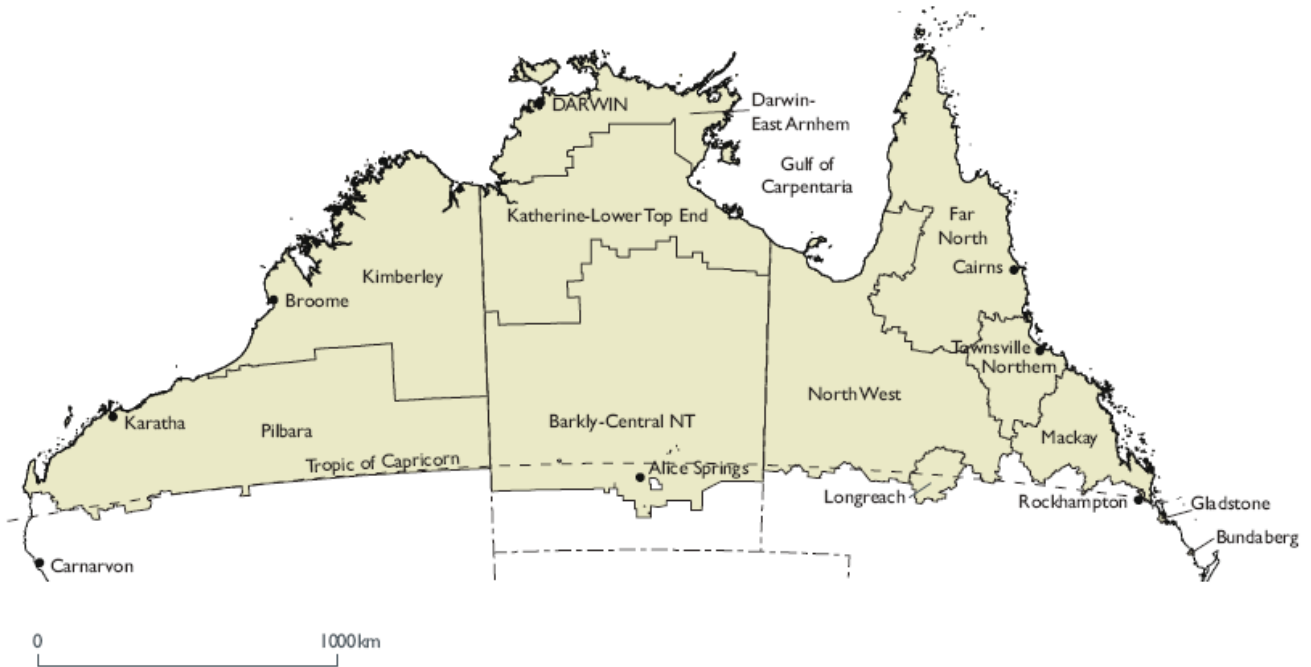
The Fund will support capital investment and initiatives in regional universities, to offer innovative educational opportunities for country students and to provide extra material support for students who need to move to obtain their higher education.

To oversee these initiatives, the Coalition will appoint a Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Education. The Coalition will also establish a dedicated regional unit within the Department of Education.

DEFINITION of NORTHERN AUSTRALIA

Northern Australia is defined as being that part of Australia north of the Tropic of Capricorn,.

This definition of Northern Australia is used by the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE) in its *Northern Australia statistical compendium 2009* with the addition of statistical information on areas which are adjacent to the Tropic of Capricorn, including Newman, Alice Springs, Longreach, Emerald and Gladstone.



Source: Geoscience Australia (2008 unpublished).

COSTINGS

Recurrent expenditure	2010-11 \$M	2011-12 \$M	2012-13 \$M	2013-14 \$M	TOTAL \$M
Establish a Northern Australia Alliance	-	.2	.2	.2	0.6
Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce	-	.5	.25	.25	1
Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine	-	1.5	2.7	3.35	7.55
PET machines in Townsville and Darwin	-	5.5	-	-	5.5
Diversify Tropical North Queensland tourism	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	10
Cleaning up Darwin Harbour	.5	1.5	-	-	2
Total	3	11.7	5.65	6.3	26.65

Capital expenditure	2010-11 \$M	2011-12 \$M	2012-13 \$M	2013-14 \$M	TOTAL \$M
Landsborough Highway	-	7	-	-	7
Mackay Ring Road	-	6	12	12	30
Jubilee Bridge	-	8	-	-	8
Townsville flood mitigation	-	10	11	-	21
Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine	2	10	12.45	8	32.45
Cairns Tropical Sport and Cultural Precincts	5	15	15	5	40
Repair and replacement of ageing sea walls	5	12	5	-	22
Preventing beach erosion	-	1.4	1.4	-	2.8
Total	7	62.4	49.85	29	163.25

* other costings can be found by portfolio policy documents at www.liberal.org.au

Authorised and printed by Brian Loughnane for the Liberal Party of Australia, Cnr Blackall and Macquarie Sts, BARTON ACT 2600.