

Katherine and Big Rivers Region   
**Regional Economic Development Committee**STRATEGIC PLAN 2015 - 2017

12 December 2014

**Katherine and Big Rivers Region Regional Economic Development Committee (REDC)**

**STRATEGIC PLAN 2015-2016**

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# INTRODUCTION

The Regional Economic Development Committee (REDC) has the opportunity to drive opportunities for the Big Rivers region through action and advocacy. Big Rivers region has significant opportunity to enhance their economic and employment, and enhance the vibrancy, quality of life and long-term economic sustainability of the region. This document focuses on activities which are within the REDC scope of influence and are a mix of long term aspirational and short term ‘low hanging’ initiatives. –

The Strategy focuses on enablers and economic drivers and key industry sectors. It is informed by the NT Government’s policy and strategic agenda and by a depth of local knowledge and experience from REDC members.

# BIG RIVERS REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The Big Rivers Regional Economic Development Committee’s purpose is to assist Katherine and the Big Rivers region to grow its economic base. The REDC takes actions that include but are not limited to:

* Strengthening networks and partnerships with other industry and regional leaders;
* Identifying and prioritising local economic development opportunities;
* Identifying barriers to economic development and potential solutions to these issues;
* Developing and implementing proposals that will drive economic growth in the region, including activities that can be undertaken both with and without direct government support;
* Promoting economic and employment growth, and contributing to development and investment attraction in the region; and
* Engaging in two-way dialogue with the Northern Territory Government on planning, policy development and priority setting for the region, including on proposals and recommendations for consideration by the Northern Territory Government Regional Development Senior Officers Group (RD SOG) and the Regional Development Australia Northern Territory (RDA NT) Committee.

The REDC has the flexibility to meet its objectives in the way that Committee Members consider most appropriate and effective. The REDC is an important source of advice to the Northern Territory Government on the regional development needs and priorities of the community and other stakeholders. The content of the advice is at the Committee’s discretion, however Committee Members should consider current government policy in relation to regional development and related activities when providing advice to government.

# SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC APPROACH

In the next 18 months, the REDC will:

* Identify and promote investment opportunities through the publication of a directory of regional investment concepts and proposed projects.
* Open up opportunities for private sector investment by advocating for and facilitating provision of infrastructure, including - forwarding communications outlining specific requirements and opportunities to NT and Australian Governments and peak industry and investment organisations.
* Promote skill and training pathways and the development of a skilled workforce through communicating industry needs, connecting industry and education/training bodies, facilitating new avenues for youth using existing infrastructure.
* Connect, create and coordinate tourism initiatives for the region, focusing on retail, nature-based and cultural activities by drawing together up a working group of key stakeholders to develop and implement initial projects
* Promote the region as a host for projects – actively seeking pilot and demonstration projects from government (such as Department of Corrections, CRC agricultural precinct) and facilitating establishment of new and expanding enterprises.
* Advocate for economic enablers - commencing with transport and communications infrastructure (securing aviation, the development of an intermodal transport hub, and enhanced electronic communications).
* Capitalise on opportunities for local business through networking and information exchange activities – with REDC initiating some of these events and working other groups to develop events (e.g. ICN, events delivered in partnership, speakers on key regional opportunities).
* Consider facilities and services for seniors in the community
* Promote the REDC, REDC partners and businesses in the region through the production of deliverable(s) and media.

The key industry sectors that the REDC will focus on are:

* Defence
* Tourism
* Horticulture/ Agriculture
* Mining
* Transport and Freight

These sectors are considered opportunities for the Big Rivers region and Katherine town and are the industries with the most potential for growth. Activities based on these industries have the potential to have the greatest positive and sustainable contribution to the region’s economy.

Tourism is regarded as having the most immediate, inexpensive and short-term possibilities with positive impact across retail, accommodation, restaurants and cafes, transport and Indigenous cultural aspects of the economy. Agriculture can build on initiatives and research from Department of Primary industries, the proposed AgNorth CRC, existing agricultural and horticulture enterprises and changes in the Pastoral Lands Act. Opportunities in defence are presented through RAAF expansion, housing and population (in the town), and in the growing regional expenditure in the region. Transport and logistics infrastructure would capitalise on Katherine’s location as the key crossroad west from WA / Ord River, east to Queensland, north to Darwin/ Kakadu, south to Alice Springs/ South Australia.

As part of the REDC’s general approach, the Committee will connect to, support and build on existing regional and NT initiatives:

* Linking local business and current and emerging mining ventures in the region through Katherine Mining Services Association.
* Accelerating the creation of a regional Indigenous development strategy by accessing and piloting DCM’s developing NT Indigenous Economic Development Strategy and other initiatives.
* Channelling land use planning advocacy through current discussions with the Planning Commission and Department of Lands Planning & Environment and by initiating new discussions with the Northern Land Council with regard to the Aboriginal Land Right Act, the Native Title Act and the Katherine Land Use Plan.
* Facilitating Indigenous employment through initiatives such as that of the Department of Corrections and capitalising on Indigenous employment targets in existing contracts such as the housing maintenance contract.
* Reinvigorate tourism in the Big Rivers region – by building on the current facilities and events of the Katherine Cultural Centre, the current festival program, and in partnership extend the current activities with targeting cultural and nature-based initiatives.

# PRIORITY INDUSTRY SECTORS - IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNTIES

## 4.1 Defence

Defence contributes an estimated $42 million annually in direct and indirect expenditure on goods and services, plus wages associated with the operation of Tindal RAAF Base. The base employs around 600 defence personnel and brings a further 1800 dependants to the Big Rivers region. Direct expenditure is estimated at $40 million and indirect $2 million. The contribution of defence to the Big Rivers economy, and in particular the Katherine economy, is substantial and the sector is an important economic driver. Around 46 percent of businesses service the defence sector in some form.

### *Opportunities –*

* To maximise benefit from defence housing by integrating homes in Katherine residential development
* To activate existing clauses in Defence contracts to increase regional Indigenous employment

### *Strategic Actions:*

* To progress Big River region’s capacity to tender for defence contracts.

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| **Action:** Economic Development DCM Darwin with REDC Deputy Chair Craig Lambert and DCM Economic Development to request advice from the Solicitor for the Northern Territory (SFNT) on the optimum legal entity for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peak bodies and businesses. **Timing:** by December 2014. |

* To flag Big Rivers region’s desire and capacity to tender for defence contracts, particularly contracts located at Tindal, to the Ministers for Indigenous Affairs and Defence.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with Economic Development DCM Darwin and REDC Deputy Chair Craig Lambert to forward a letter to the Ministers for Indigenous Affairs and Defence flagging Big Rivers region’s desire and capacity to tender for defence contracts at Tindal RAAF Base and seeking support through ADF procurement contacts details. **Timing:** by December 2014. |

* To more fully integrate and benefit from the Defence housing in Katherine, take advantage of the change of administration from BAE to Transfield to seek opportunities for location of housing in town and increased local procurement in construction.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with REDC Chair Fay Miller and DCM Economic Development to set up a meeting with Department of Business Defence to gain background on Tindal RAAF Base, Delamere Air Weapons Range and the Army’s Bradshaw Field Training area. **Timing:** by June 2015. |

* Invite Defence representatives to brief REDC on synergies with Katherine and Big Rivers region.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with the support of REDC Chair Fay Miller send an invitation to Department of Business and Tindal RAAF Base to brief the REDC on defence opportunities for the Big Rivers region and include an item on an REDC agenda to allow the REDC Committee members to brainstorm opportunities. **Timing:** by June 2015. |

* To secure maximum advantage from Defence housing expansion the REDC will directly advocate to the Federal Department to locate more housing in Katherine taking advantage of new administrative arrangements where the Australian Government has retained more control than previously.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with support from REDC Chair Fay Miller work with Department of Business Defence staff to build a business case and set an advocacy meeting with the Federal Government to secure more defence housing in Katherine. **Timing:** by August 2015. |

* To maximise Indigenous employment opportunities lead the preparation of a proposal for the Department of Defence to activate the 10 percent Indigenous percent employment clause in the defence contract.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with support from Kalano Association (REDC member Rick Fletcher) and the Jawoyn Association (REDC member Joanna Holden) identify current defence contracts which have an Indigenous employment clause, and organise Indigenous capability to meet these existing contracts. **Timing:** by August 2015. |

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with support from REDC Chair Fay Miller meet with Tindal RAAF Base, Delamere Air Weapons Range, the Army’s Bradshaw Field Training area to discuss existing and new contracts with Indigenous and local procurement requirements. **Timing:** by September 2015. |

* To provide career pathways for local people advocate to Defence for defence contractors to offer traineeships as well as casual work.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with support from Chamber representative (REDC member Kevin Grey) advocate to Defence for defence contractors to offer traineeships as well as casual work, e.g. SCRCO, the major contractor operating the catering services for defence, detention centres with core services such as gardening, security and catering. **Timing:** by August 2015. |

* To gain maximum benefit from Defence procurement ensure existing businesses are aware of the commercial opportunities of partnering with Indigenous business or employing Indigenous people places firms in a stronger position to win Defence contracts.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with support from Kalano Association (REDC member Rick Fletcher), Centrefarm (Lindy Andren) and the Jawoyn Association (REDC member Joanna Holden) prepare a flyer outlining current Indigenous capabilities available to private sector firms in the Big Rivers region which would assist them secure Defence contract. **Timing:** by September 2015. |

* To develop business models around the provision of services to defence establishments and training areas.

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| Action: Executive Officer with support from REDC member Geoff Crowhurst, to engage with DSRG- NT specifically the Base Support Manager for RAAF Tindal, and NT-K Regional Training Areas Manager to determine when and where services are required. Engagement should also occur with Joint Logistic Unit – North JLU(N) who are responsible for the provision of supply chain  and maintenance support to the RAAF base. Opportunities exist along a number of lines directly to Defence Business units or through sub contacts to a Prime (Transfield) .**Timing:** by June 2015. |

* To seek Defence Support & Reform Group (DSRG) support to understand the business opportunities and provide training/information sessions on how to access and bid for contracts. DSRG Pamphlet  *Supporting Defence-2013* at <http://www.defence.gov.au/dsg/docs/DSRG-Supporting-Defence-2013.pdf> provides an overview of doing business with DSRG.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with support from REDC member Geoff Crowhurst to formally request an information session be provided by DSRG NT representatives for the committee initially and for local business to understand the opportunities. **Timing:** by June 2015. |

* To capture opportunities for regional business/ NT business to be engaged during the planning and scoping of the construction works for the RAAF Tindal redevelopment work.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with support from REDC member Geoff Crowhurst in conjunction with DCM Strategic Defence Liaison to write to Head Infrastructure Division (VCDF Group) to outline the infrastructure capacity that exist in the NT and request a briefing on the proposed scope of works and project time line. **Timing:** by June 2015. |

* The ADF has a challenge in meeting the provisions of Health support to enable training in a number of Northern Territory regions. There is a great reliance of the existing NT health elements (Care Flight, Royal Darwin Hospital). Contracted/ Department of Health deployable health teams that could provide RESUS and trauma surgery can also enhance the provision of health support to remote communities. This could set the conditions for a cost sharing model for remote health support. Establishing a working group to discuss the provisions of remote health and trauma care would enable the ADF to exercise more freely in training areas such as Delamere and Bradshaw, and would have the effect of ADF being able to spend more in the Katherine /Big Rivers Region

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| **Action:** Executive Officer, with support from REDC member Simon Quility, and the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre, Defence Joint Health Command, and NTG Department of Health, to establish a working group to discuss the provisions of remote health and trauma care to aid the ADF to exercise more freely in training areas such as Delamere and Bradshaw, to facilitate the ADF spending more in the Katherine /Big Rivers Region. **Timing:** by June 2015. |

## 4.2 Tourism

Tourism is a major contributor to the Katherine economy creating demand and generating significant employment in hospitality, accommodation, retail and transport. Tourism in Big Rivers is highly seasonal with peak activity between May and August. The sector contributes around $119 million per annum, based on travel, accommodation and average visitor expenditure. The region has an annual average of 232,000 overnight visitors, or 17 percent of the Northern Territory’s total visitors for period 2012-13. Domestic visitors account for the majority of visitors to the region (81 percent), while international holiday makers accounted for 18 percent of total visitors.

### *Opportunities –*

* To provide a focus for tourism in the region
* To increase strategic attention on and marketing for Big Rivers region
* To capitalise on an immediately available product development opportunities
* To grow offer increased choice for visitors, enhance visitor experience and shape tourism product to align with latest industry trends

### *Strategic Actions:*

* To drive and provide focus for tourism in the region by leading the establishment of a Big Rivers tourism leadership and networking group.

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| **Action:** REDC Chair (REDC member Fay Miller) with the support of the Executive Officer to invite key tourism stakeholders to a meeting to form the leadership group and map out goals and desired outcomes. **Timing:** by May 2015. |

* To increase strategic attention on and marketing for Big Rivers region by advocating for increased support and recognition from Tourism NT and Tourism Top End.

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| **Action:** REDC Chair (REDC member Fay Miller) with the support of the Executive Officer to write to Tourism NT and Tourism Top End outlining aspirations and requesting specific support to achieve objectives. **Timing**: by June 2015. |

* To capitalise on an immediately available opportunity through the tourism leadership partners, shape and deliver a product for The Ghan travellers (as of the 400 travellers per train, 100 take the Nitmiluk Cruise, leaving a 300 people who are in Katherine for the 4 hour stop).

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with the support of the REDC Chair (REDC member Fay Miller) organise a working group of stakeholders to design and deliver a pilot product. **Timing:** by September 2015. |

* To capitalise on a key tourism trend where visitors seek experiences, lead the exploration into new opportunities in nature-based and cultural tourism experiences focusing on consistency and reliability.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with the support of the REDC member Simon Quilty to Tourism NT requesting they provide a brief (with evidence base, options and recommendations) scoping nature-based and cultural tourism opportunities for the Big Rivers region. **Timing:** by October 2015. |

* To grow value and offer increased choice for visitors, lead the exploration opportunities in adventure tourism.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with the support of the REDC Chair (REDC member Fay Miller) write to Tourism NT requesting they provide a brief (with evidence base, options and recommendations) scoping adventure tourism opportunities for the Big Rivers region. **Timing:** by July 2015. |

* To improve the visitor experience and grow the market through word–of-mouth referral by refining and enhancing the current product based on NT Tourism and peak tourism body expertise in digital marking and product delivery.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with the support of REDC member Simon Quilty) write to Tourism NT inviting specialists in these fields to brief the REDC members at a REDC Committee/ tourism networking meeting. **Timing:** by July 2015. |

* To heighten the profile of the region in the domestic and international setting revitalise the Big Rivers region brand building, ‘Never Never’ brand.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with the support of the REDC Chair (REDC member Fay Miller) write to Tourism NT marketing requesting a briefing on the brand. **Timing:** by July 2015. |

* To expand the tourism sector and increase the businesses tourism base, and tap into the trend for experiences such as developing ‘dude ranching’ and station stays.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with the support of the REDC Chair (REDC member Fay Miller) guide the tourism leadership group (along with stakeholders) to look at models, examples and case studies which would be useful to developing this product strand in Big River. **Timing:** by December 2015. |

* To build on the existing regional events strength by connecting to and supporting Katherine Town Council’s ‘Festivals in the Dry’ (May – August) and other regional festivals.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with the support of REDC member Simon Quilty and the tourism leadership group identify and utilise REDC/DCM connections within NT and Federal Governments to promote the Festivals in the Dry and other Big Rivers festivals. **Timing:** by August 2015. |

* To attract more visitors to the Big Rivers region use the evidence on choice models that shows that holidays that include more than one destination are more appealing, promote the Kakadu/ Litchfield/Katherine triangle /loop concept by connecting and working with partners.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with the support of the REDC Chair (REDC member Fay Miller) and the tourism leadership group contact Tourism NT requesting their advice on the most effective way to package and promote the Kakadu/ Litchfield/ Katherine triangle and the Savannah Way. **Timing:** by August 2015. |

* To gain maximum impact when creating new and refining existing tourism initiatives use Tourism NT research data and strategic recommendations that show gaps or most effective strategies.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with the support of REDC member Simon Quilty) to contact the Tourism NT Research by June 2015 requesting a detailed data and information profile for the Big Rivers region to be delivered to the REDC by August 2015. **Timing:** by June 2015. |

## 4.3 Horticultural

Fruit and vegetable production in Big Rivers region accounts for approximately 26 percent of the Northern Territory total production. Field crops represent 47 percent of the Territory’s total production. Mangos and melons are the predominant fruits and provide high levels of seasonal employment. Hay/fodder and citrus are also grown. Horticulture is a seasonal employer and taps into the transient tourist sector, generally employing backpackers during the picking season.

### *Opportunities –*

* To secure new investment in horticulture
* To diversify the horticulture base ,including the development of Indigenous lands in the region
* To higher yield and more volume
* To develop high-profit opportunities for the Big Rivers region
* To grow the sector and broaden the horticultural and agricultural employment opportunities
* To capitalise on Katherine’s strategic intermodal location for horticultural exports
* To capitalise on the emerging Asian demand for increased levels of and western-style food

### *Strategic Actions:*

* To capture potential new investment in horticulture by connecting to the AgNorth CRC bid and promoting Big Rivers region as the location for the NT agricultural precincts.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with support of Roper Gulf Regional Council and Victoria Daly Regional Council (REDC members Michael Berto and Stuart Duncan) write to DPIF to propose joint work developing a business case for agricultural precinct(s) in Big Rivers region. **Timing:** by May 2015. |

* To diversify the horticulture base by tapping into the research and funding for horticulture offered through the proposed AgNorth CRC.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with support of Deputy Chair (REDC member Craig Lambert) write to Katherine CDU and NT Cattlemen’s Association to propose an investigation into most promising opportunity. **Timing:** by June 2015. |

* To higher yield and more volume out of the region by capitalising on NT Government research and crop testing station.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with support of Kalano Association (REDC members Rick Fletcher) contact DPIF to enquire how the REDC could support existing initiatives to facilitate transfer of research from the research station to farmers and pastoralists. **Timing:** by June 2015. |

* To keep aware of new and emerging economic development opportunities in agriculture in the region and with the Ord by maintaining contact with Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with support of Deputy Chair (REDC member Craig Lambert) write to Katherine CDU and NT Cattlemen’s Association to propose an investigation into most promising opportunity. **Timing:** by June 2015. |

* To capitalise on the arable land, strong rainfall in Wet (Oct to April) and good conditions for a variety of crops to investigate the commercial potential of new crops such as blood red grapefruit, lemons, poppies.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with the support of the Kalano Association (REDC member Rick Fletcher) to write to DPIF requesting a brief report identifying the most commercially promising new opportunities with a view to inclusion in the regional directory of investment opportunities. **Timing**: by May 2015. |

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with REDC member Craig Lambert identify a key opportunity which would benefit from detailed investigation and encourage a key stakeholder to submit a Regional Economic Development Fund application to secure funds to implement. **Timing:** by May 2015. |

* To develop high-profit opportunities for the Big Rivers region based on current horticulture exploring packaging and value-adding opportunities. Action: Executive Officer with the support of the Chamber of Commerce (REDC member Kevin Grey) to write to Department of Business requesting a brief report identifying most commercially promising new value-add horticulture opportunities with a view to inclusion in the regional directory of investment opportunities.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with support of Deputy Chair (REDC member Craig Lambert) write to Katherine CDU and NT Cattlemen’s Association to propose an investigation into most promising opportunity. **Timing:** by June 2015. |

* To grow the sector and broaden the agricultural employment opportunities, facilitate development on Indigenous land.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with the support of the Kalano Association (REDC member Rick Fletcher), Centrefarm (REDC member Lindy Andren) and Jawoyn Association (REDC member Joanna Holden) representatives to draft a two-page brief to the REDC Committee identifying the most promising agricultural employment opportunities on Indigenous land in the Big Rivers region. **Timing:** by August 2015. |

* To secure further investment into horticulture, canvass opportunities for the development of food processing in the Big Rivers region through the regional directory of investment opportunities and other REDC–lead initiatives.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer to invite a DPIF representative to present on possible food processing opportunities and add an item on an REDC agenda to allow the REDC Committee members to brainstorm food-processing opportunities. **Timing:** by July 2015. |

* To attract new investment into horticulture in the Big Rivers region, lobby for certainty on water, environmental approval, export certification and biosecurity.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with Support from REDC member Joanna Holden advocate by writing to the Minister for Primary Industries & Fisheries requesting clarification for investors in water, environmental policy and trade support. **Timing:** by June 2015. |

* To capitalise on the emerging Asian demand for increased and western-style food, connect to initiatives to build Asian relations.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer to extend an invitation to the Office of Asian Engagement Trade and Investment NT Government to brief the REDC by August 2015. **Timing:** by June 2015. |

* To capitalise on the opportunities emerging from the Developing Northern Australia White paper for the Big Rivers region.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer to assist in the organisation of Big Rivers consultation session on Deloitte’s *Positioning for Prosperity – Catching the Next Wave* paper which will feed into the Australian Government’s Developing Northern Australia White Paper. **Timing:** by June 2015. |

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| **Action:** Executive Officer to invite a NT Government Developing Northern Australia Office representative to present on opportunities and add an item on an REDC agenda to allow the REDC Committee members to brainstorm opportunities. **Timing:** by July 2015. |

## 4.4 Pastoral

Big Rivers region accounts for $67 million or 33 percent of the Northern Territory’s pastoral production. The region has 246 registered properties, holding more than 838 000 head of cattle and buffalo (around 38 percent of all Territory cattle). Northern Territory live cattle are exported through the Port of Darwin, primarily to south East Asia with some transported to Queensland for the eastern feedlot trade, and the remainder for domestic markets. Total export accounted for 321 151 head at a value of $204.4 million. The pastoral sector manages land in the region by actively controlling erosion and weeds. Traditionally around 47 percent of businesses service the pastoral sector in some form.

### *Opportunities -*

* To take advantage of changes in the Pastoral Land Use Act which mean that up to 30 percent of pastoral lease land can be converted to other land use (e.g. horticulture, tourism) to diversify the Big Rivers region economic base.
* To strengthen Big Rivers pastoral expertise
* To profit from value-adding opportunities

### *Strategic Action:*

* To take advantage of changes in the Pastoral Land Use Act to diversify the regional economic base by promoting the Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries Roadshow in 2014 which will provide detailed information to pastoralists on the possibilities now open to them with this legislative change.
* To capitalise on pastoral land conversation opened up through the changes to the Pastoral Land Act to higher value add enterprise and increase the amount of trade in the region through the promotion of case studies of successful conversion models.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with the support of the Kalano Association (REDC member Rick Fletcher) to work with DPIF to contact all pastoralists in the region to promote the Roadshow. **Timing:** by April 2015. |

* To highlight the opportunities to grow new destination markets such as the development of buffalo export to Asia to investors.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with the support of the Kalano Association (REDC member Rick Fletcher) to write to DPIF requesting their identification of new opportunities with a view to inclusion in the regional directory of investment opportunities. **Timing:** by April 2015. |

* To deepen Big Rivers pastoral expertise through creating stronger links between pastoral companies and CDU agricultural trainers.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with support of Roper Gulf Regional Council and Victoria Daly Regional Council (REDC members Michael Berto and Stuart Duncan) to write to Katherine CDU and other RTOs active in the region, NT Cattlemens’ Association and DPIF to propose a networking event linking CDU trainers and pastoralists in Big Rivers. **Timing:** by June 2015. |

* To profit from value-adding opportunities inherent in the pastoral industries, such as growing feed for livestock live cattle trade.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with support of Roper Gulf Regional Council and Victoria Daly Regional Council (REDC members Michael Berto and Stuart Duncan) write to DPIF and NT Cattlemen’s Association request a report identifying commercial opportunities which value-add to the pastoral sector suitable to the Big Rivers. **Timing:** by June 2015. |

* To develop new industries for the region based on existing facilities and skills through offering agricultural studies for international students, such as Indonesian students’ tertiary work placement and block work at CDU Katherine (with students living at CDU).

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with support of Deputy Chair (REDC member Craig Lambert) write to Katherine CDU and NT Cattlemen’s Association to propose an investigation into most promising opportunity. **Timing:** by June 2015. |

**4.5 Mining**

There are a number of mining businesses in the region. Many of these are exploration operations, and account for a significant expenditure and jobs. Major mining operations include McArthur River Mine (employs 628 people) Redbank Mine (3 people) Mataranka Limestone (12 people). There are also a number of quarries and extractive operations (sand, soil, rock, gravel).

Recent developments (Past 12 months) include:

* Australian IIimenite Resources’ SILL80,
* Western Desert Resources’ Roper Bar,
* Crocodile Gold’s Cosmo Deep and Rising Tide

Pending (Next 12 Months) include:

* Sherwin Iron’s Roper River
* Thor Mining’s Spring Hill

Potential (Next 12 – 48 months) include:

* Crocodile Gold’s Maud Creek
* Vista Gold’s Mt Todd

### *Opportunities –*

* To develop Katherine as the regional service and supply hub to the mining & oil/gas sectors
* To increase mining sector service and supply contracts and sales to business in the region
* To develop employment pathways for local young people in mining

### *Strategic Action:*

* To enable the region’s Big Rivers businesses to capitalise on mining opportunities by ensuring all pertinent firms are listed on ICN database.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with support from Chamber of Commerce (REDC member Kevin Grey) to write to NT ICN extending an invitation to meet with and record capabilities of Big Rivers businesses and develop a regional capacity guide. **Timing:** by July 2015. |

* To increase mining sector service and supply contracts and sales to business in the region by supporting and promoting Katherine Mining Services Association annual conference and initiatives which make connections with clients and suppliers.

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| **Action:** REDC member Geoff Crowhurst to forward details of the conference and other initiatives to Department of the Chief Minister, Department of Business and REDC members for promotion to the mining businesses and local businesses through their networks. **Timing:** by early April 2014. |

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with REDC members Geoff Crowhurst identify a key opportunity which would benefit from detailed investigation and encourage Katherine Mining Services Association to submit a grant application (for example to the Regional Economic Development Fund) to secure funds to implement the initiative. **Timing:** by May 2014. |

* To increase employment pathways for local young people by advocating for mining training at CDU Katherine campus orientation and work experience (Year 11 and 12).

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with support from REDC member Geoff Crowhurst to contact CDU and mining companies. **Timing:** by June 2014. |

* To increase the numbers of Big Rivers people employed in mining by promoting the concept of apprenticeship training at CDU facilities with trainers living in Katherine to enable day and night courses.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with support from REDC member Geoff Crowhurst to contact CDU, mining companies and pertinent secondary schools. **Timing:** by June 2014. |

## 4.6 Transport Freight and logistics

The 2,200-km South North rail line from Tarcoola-to-Darwin railway is owned by the American firm Genesee and Wyoming (GWA). GWA operates six services a week from Adelaide to Darwin. GWA carries around 800,000 tonnes of intermodal freight and 70,000 tonnes of bulk liquids between Adelaide and Darwin each year. Great Southern Rail operate the iconic train, The Ghan, which travels on this line, stopping at Katherine Wednesday, Saturday, Monday and Thursday each week. Most tourists come by road or rail. Currently there are no passenger flights through Katherine airport. Katherine is a major road junction, west to the Ord River and Kimberly region of WA, north to Kakadu and Darwin and south to Alice Springs, South Australia and east to Queensland. Freight loaded at Katherine heads north to Darwin Port or south to Adelaide.

### *Opportunities –*

* To increase scale
* To up-sell to transport providers
* To package and transform goods

### *Strategic Action:*

* To advocate for increased primary production to generate increased freight movement by writing a formal request to Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries to develop a Big Rivers region agricultural land use strategy.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with support from Kalano Association (REDC member Rick Fletcher) to write to Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries to develop a Big Rivers region agricultural land use strategy. **Timing:** by February 2015. |

* To actively support the establishment of transport hub by working with Departments of Transport and Business and by partnering in negotiations with potential transport companies and regional business to attract participants to use the intermodal hub.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with support from Business Advisory Council representative (REDC member Julie Newton) . **Timing:** June 2014 through to December 2014 in accord with the Department of Transport time frame. |

* To attract investment which will increase freight demand by detailing the attributes of the intermodal transport hub using the set criteria in the regional directory of investment opportunities.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with support from REDC Deputy Chair (REDC member Craig Lambert) to set and lead an agenda on an REDC Meeting to brainstorm optimum attributes of the intermodal transport hub, using the set criteria in the NTG regional directory of investment opportunities**. Timing:** by June 2015, in accord with the Department of Transport time frame. |

* To capitalise on the opportunity presented by the hub by packaging and transforming of goods that arrive when the transport hub is established.

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| **Action:** Watching brief by Executive Officer. |

* To capitalise on the intermodal transport hub through provision of accommodation and food for truck drivers, mining stockpiles, stockyards, bulk fuel stores, cold storage by detailing commercial opportunities ripe for development now and when transport hub is established.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with support from REDC Deputy Chair REDC member Craig Lambert detailing the intermodal transport hub opportunities using the criteria in the regional directory of investment opportunities. **Timing**: by June 2015. |

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with REDC member Craig Lambert identify a key opportunity which would benefit from detailed investigation and encourage a key stakeholder to submit a Regional Economic Development Fund (REDF) or other grant application with a view to secure funds to implement a feasibility study on these commercial opportunities. **Timing:** by July 2015. |

# 5. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ENABLERS

## 5.1 Land

Development in Katherine is regulated by the Planning Act and the Northern Territory Planning Scheme. As Katherine is poised to take advantage of a number of growth opportunities across the region based on the expansion of mining and growing tourism and agribusiness sectors and a land use plan has been developed to strategically position the town to respond to these growth opportunities. The Katherine Land Use Plan Consultation Paper re-examines the potential of current growth areas, and explores possible locations for rural living and rural residential, industry, commercial and horticulture land uses.

Land throughout Katherine is held under various forms of tenure, which has an impact on the ease and timeliness with which land can be released for development to meet market demand. Two native title claimant applications under the Native Title Act (Commonwealth) affect the Town of Katherine. The Katherine native title claims are currently scheduled for a determination in the Federal Court. Under the Native Title Act, the Territory has the capacity to “extinguish” native title either through an Indigenous Land Use Agreement or by acquisition. The resolution of commercial and equity issues can result in delays in the release of land for development. To speed development, it is useful to identify locations planned for growth to inform and assist the resolution of land tenure in advance of the development. It is also important to engage from the beginning with the Northern Land Council as the relevant statutory authority representing Indigenous interests in the region, and with the Jawoyn Association as the locally representative body. Consideration could be given to ALRA lands, as Aboriginal Freehold lands, and the opportunities presented through these areas.

The Territory has begun the process of acquiring native title rights and interests in areas identified as priority residential and industrial development areas in Katherine. The Department of Business NT Government is currently leading negotiations for 250 hectares of land from Manbulloo Station to be designated for use as the Katherine Transport Hub.

### *Opportunities –*

* To secure increased private sector investment by conveying certainty in landuse.

### *Strategic Action:*

* To secure increased private sector investment by conveying certainty in landuse, through making optimum use of the Katherine Land Use Plan’s outline of strategic planning, land availability and land use over the next three decades.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with the support of Katherine Town Council provide a briefing to REDC on ways to optimise the use of the Katherine Land Use Plan to secure investment. **Timing:** by August 2015. |

* To reduce impediments to commercial land development

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with the support of Katherine Town Council seek feedback from recent developers, through either individual meetings or public forum, on the planning-based restrictions which inhibit development in the region with view preparing memo to Katherine Town Council (Planning), Department of Land Planning & Environment and Red Tape Reduction - Department of Business. **Timing:** by September 2015. |

## 5.2 Labour

The region has 20,349 residents. Big Rivers region has a labour force of 7550, an unemployment rate of 9.6 % and participation rate of 59.2%. Fifty-two percent of the region’s population is Indigenous. 49. 5 percent have post school qualifications.

### *Opportunities –*

* To offer employment pathways for local young people
* To maximise Indigenous employment
* To promote existing businesses, the REDC and REDC partners’ strategic work for employment and economic development

### *Strategic Action:*

* To offer pathways for local young people, the REDC will advocate for the use of existing facilities to offer training and industry-education links to shape employment pathways.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with support from REDC member Geoff Crowhurst to meet with CDU representatives to outline regional industry requirements/demand, and explore and negotiate training options and course delivery (September 2015). **Timing:** by August 2015. |

* To maximise Indigenous employment opportunities by leading the preparation of a proposal for the Department of Defence to activate the 10 percent Indigenous percent employment clause in the Defence contract.

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| Action: Action: Executive Officer with support from Kalano Association (REDC member Rick Fletcher), and the Jawoyn Association (REDC member Joanna Holden) identify current defence contracts which have an Indigenous employment clause, organise Indigenous capability to meet these existing contracts, and meet as a three body partnership with Defence to deliver and discuss a proposal to reach these targets. **Timing:** by August 2015. |

* To provide career pathways for local people advocate to Defence for defence contractors to offer traineeships as well as casual work.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with the support of REDC member Fay Miller with DCM Defence to advocate to Defence for defence contractors to offer traineeships as well as casual work, e.g. Transfield, the major contractor operating the catering services for defence, detention centres with core services such as gardening, security and catering. **Timing:** by August 2015. |

* To consider what facilities and services are required to enable retiring, seniors and aged individuals to stay in Katherine and he Big Rivers region.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer and DCM Darwin obtain and synthesise the current research being undertaken by Alice Springs REDC, NT Government and other organisations pertinent to retaining the long-term residents in the region and the economic opportunities this provides to a region. **Timing:** by September 2015. |

* To develop and submit a grant application to secure funding to produce publications and media promoting local businesses and the REDC and REDC partners’ strategic work.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with the support of the Kalano Association (REDC member Rick Fletcher ) to submit a grant application to secure funding to produce publications and media promoting local businesses and the REDC and REDC partners’ strategic work. **Timing**: by June 2015. |

* To retain and encourage participation of young people in employment and positive social pathways in the region.

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| **Action:** EDO with support of REDC member Emma Cooper to draft an article promoting regional mental health and social support services for young people in the Big Rivers region, to be forwarded to the Katherine Times and primary and secondary schools in the Big Rivers region for inclusion in their newsletters. **Timing:** by May 2015. |

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| **Action:** EDO with support of REDC member Emma Cooper to outline existing and potential entertainment and activities that meets the needs of young people aged 12 to 14 years, mechanisms to attract organisations and volunteers to implement such activities and ways of delivering such initiatives in Katherine /Big Rivers region. **Timing:** by June 2015. |

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| **Action:** EDO with support of REDC member Emma Cooper to identify current services delivering resumes writing/ job application skills and basic job skills/attitudes services for clerical/administration/office roles in Katherine and Big Rivers region. **Timing:** by May 2015. |

## 5.3 Capital

The Workshop discussion revealed that although access to banking facilities was considered good there were significant concerns about the level of authority in decision-making on small business operational matters.

### *Opportunities –*

* To secure a greater decision-making authority and SME business expertise at the regional level in the banking sector.

### *Strategic Action:*

* To address the perception of poor access to effective banking connect with NT Government Department of Business in relation to bank forums to add topics of the level decision-making authority and the level of industrial business expertise at regional centres, such as Katherine.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with support from REDC members Geoff Crowhurst and Craig Lambert write to Department of Business banking services requesting NT Government hold a banking forum of major bank and financial institution representatives at Katherine. **Timing:** by August 2015. |

## 5.4 Infrastructure

Katherine has an excellent level of infrastructure. This includes a 60-bed hospital that serves both regional and defence needs; an airport shared with the RAAF Tindal Air Base, several private and community medical clinics, five university campuses (including specialists in horticulture, remote health and Indigenous education), two high schools, five primary schools, swimming pools, cinema and national retail outlets. There are also established public and private education institutions including Charles Darwin University, NT Rural Clinical School, Centre for Remote Health.

Borroloola is currently benefiting from a $32 million package from McArthur River Mine Community Benefit Trust that will provide community infrastructure in the Borroloola area over the 25 year life of the mine. One of the key current initiatives is the Borroloola Multi-Purpose Centre a $5 million project to house all local government administration and meeting room facilities.

Transport infrastructure is strength and an enabler for freight movement, agricultural product distribution and tourism arrivals with strong rail and road connections.

### *Opportunities –*

* To capitalise on the excellent infrastructure in Katherine to attract new residents to the town and the region
* To increase connectivity by re-establishing flights to the airport

### *Strategic Action:*

* To capitalise on the excellent infrastructure in Katherine by promoting lifestyle supported by this infrastructure to attract new residents to the town and the region.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with the support of REDC Chair Fay Miller prepare a brief to the REDC providing examples of other towns investment attraction and marketing based on infrastructure as a model for Katherine to be presented at an REDC meeting. **Timing: by** October 2015. |

* To increase connectivity by re-establishing flights to the airport to specifically benefit tourist and business movement.

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| **Action:** Executive Officer with the support of REDC members inform current DCM Economic Development work with local knowledge and data. **Timing:** by August 2015. |

1. **ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY AND COMMUNICATING THE PLAN**

The importance of communicating the objectives of the Strategic Plan with the wider community is recognised by the REDC. Discussion and engagement with all groups in Katherine and across the Big Rivers region is essential to create momentum and achieve goals with broad community involvement and support.

### *Opportunities –*

It is proposed that the Katherine REDC Strategic Plan be:

1. shared with key stakeholders with a view to forming partnerships on key advocacy and action objectives;
2. placed on public exhibition with invitations extended to the public to provide comment;
3. discussed at a public forum – which could focus on an industry sector, issue or opportunity;
4. outlined in an article in local newspapers (The Katherine Times)
5. highlighted in the Katherine Town Council and three Regional Council newsletters;
6. announced in the regional primary and secondary schools’ newsletters; and
7. promoted by REDC members through their organisation and business networks.

### *Strategic Actions:*

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| **Action:** EDO with support of REDC member Fay Miller to draft an article on the REDC and the REDC Strategic Plan for inclusion in the four Councils’ newsletters. **Timing:** by February 2015. |

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| **Action:** EDO with support of REDC member Emma Cooper to draft an article on the REDC Strategic Plan to be forwarded to the Katherine Times and primary and secondary schools in the Big Rivers region for inclusion in their newsletters. **Timing:** by February 2015. |

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| **Action:** REDC members to liaise with their organisational, professional and business networks for inclusion of the article on the REDC Strategic Plan in their newsletters and noticeboards. **Timing:** by February 2015. |