

NORTHERN TERRITORY

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Introduction

The Northern Territory covers about one sixth of the Australian continent with an area of 1.35 million km² which is equal to the combined areas of France, Spain and Italy. About four-fifths of the Territory (1.09 million km²) lies within the tropics and the 6200 km coastline is generally flat and backed by swamps, mangroves and mudflats, rising to a plateau no higher than 450 m.

In central Australia, the Territory is crossed by the east-west ridges of the Macdonnell Ranges, which reach heights of more than 600 m. The well-known monolith, Uluru (Ayers Rock), 348 m high, is near the south-west corner of the Territory.

The northern quarter, known colloquially as the “Top End”, is a distinct region of savannah woodlands and pockets of rainforest. In the north-east, the Arnhem Land plateau rises abruptly from the plain and continues to the coast of the Gulf of Carpentaria. Much of the southern three-quarters of the Territory consists of desert or semi-arid plain.

Darwin, the capital (population 79 000) is situated in the north-western corner of the Territory.

Climate

Rainfall varies from an average 1570 mm a year in the far north to less than 150 mm in the south. About two-thirds of the Territory receives less than 500 mm a year. In the north, monsoonal influences produce two definite seasons known locally as “the wet” (October to April) and “the dry” (May to Septem-

ber). During the wet season, the coast is subject to tropical cyclones (hurricanes or typhoons).

The temperature in Darwin remains almost constant throughout the year. The daily average maximum in January is 31.8 C and the average minimum 24.8 C. In July, the average maximum is 30.3 C and the minimum 19.3 C.

Population

The Northern Territory's population of 169 298, includes people of many ethnic backgrounds as well as those of aboriginal descent. In 1977 - federal legislation enabled aboriginal descendants to claim traditional ownership of vacant Crown land and today Aboriginal land trusts hold title to a large part of the Territory.

Primary industry

In 1992-93, the value of live cattle exports from the Territory was \$28.8 million. Exporters supply Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei and the Philippines. In 1992-93, the Territory supplied beef, veal and game meats valued at \$29 million to European, American, Asian and Pacific countries. Seafood landed in the Territory in 1992-93 had an estimated value of \$69 million. Prawn fishing - worth an estimated \$60.7 million, continues to dominate the industry.

Mining

Mineral and hydrocarbon production have been a major contributor to the

Northern Territory's economic development. In 1992-93 mining contributed 21 per cent of gross state product compared with an average of five per cent elsewhere in the country.

During 1993, \$64.8 million was expended on mineral exploration in the Territory and known mineral resources include:

- bauxite, with the third largest bauxite mine in Australia at Gove;
- gold, with major mines in the Pine Creek area, the Tanami Desert and the Tennant Creek area;
- manganese on Groote Eylandt - one of the world's four major producers of high grade ore;
- zinc, lead and silver, including one of the world's largest known ore bodies at McArthur River; and
- bismuth, copper, diamonds, galena, mica, molybdenum, ochre, opal, palladium, phosphate, platinum, tantalite, tin, tungsten, turquoise, rubies and wolfram.

Defence and science

Because of its strategic location, Darwin is an important base of the Australian defence services. Units of the Navy, Army and Air Force are stationed there and Darwin is the site for defence communications bases.

Scientific installations, mainly in Darwin and Alice Springs, are involved in a wide range of international and domestic services including defence commu-

nications, geophysics and seismology, meteorology, agriculture, animal husbandry and wildlife.

Transport

Sealed roads include the three major interstate links - the Stuart Highway from Darwin to the South Australian border, the Barkly Highway from Tennant Creek to the Queensland border and the Victoria Highway from Katherine to the Western Australian border.

Darwin is a first port of call for many international aircraft flying from Asia. From Darwin there are connections to all Australian capital cities.

The Port of Darwin is the foremost deep water port in the north of Australia. A new Port of Darwin, across the harbour from the existing port, is scheduled for completion in 1995. There are two other major ports in the Northern Territory - Milner Bay and Grove, both managed by mining companies.

Tourism

Tourism is one of the Northern Territory's fastest-growing industries, generating about \$603 million in direct revenue in the financial year 1993-94.

Major developments have been established from the "Centre" of Australia to the "Top End" including the Uluru (Ayers Rock - Mt Olga) Resort, the Darwin and Alice Springs casinos, Plaza Hotels in Darwin and Alice Springs, the Beaufort Hotel in Darwin and the Kakadu "Crocodile Motel" at Jabiru.

Established destinations for visitors include Kakadu National Park, Katherine

Gorge and Aboriginal cultural facilities provided by traditional owners at Melville Island, Kakadu, Arnhem Land, the Katherine Region and at Ipolera in the Centre. A wide range of accommodation from caravan parks to five-star hotels is available. Wilderness attractions include the Wilderness Lodge at Seven Spirit Bay on the Cobourg Peninsula and at Kings Canyon. The Conservation Commission and the Tourist Commission work together to protect the Territory's unusual environmental and cultural resources while providing amenities for visitors.

Education

Schooling is compulsory in the Territory between the ages of six and 15. In some areas, Aboriginal pupils are taught in both English and their tribal language. The larger towns also have residential colleges for Aboriginal students.

The Northern Territory University in Darwin is the largest provider of tertiary education in the Territory, offering bachelor, master and doctorate degree programs, diploma and certificate courses, general-interest programs and short professional development courses. The University's Institute of Technical and Further Education provides a wide range of trade and technical courses, as well as programs designed to develop managerial and supervisory skills.

Government

Since 1968, the Territory has had one member with full voting rights in the

Australian House of Representatives and, since 1975, two senators have represented the Territory in the upper house. The Territory has had self-government since 1978 with a Legislative Assembly containing 25 members elected by popular franchise.

Source: DFAT