North and North West Queensland Regional Community Forum members met in Townsville on 28 October 2019 for the first Regional Community Forum to support the Queensland Regional Communities Program.

The meeting was one of seven held across Queensland, and the participants assembled to explore the strengths, priorities and needs of North and North West Queensland.

The North and North West Queensland Forum is Chaired by Mr Scott Stewart MP, Member for Townsville and Mr Aaron Harper MP, Member for Thuringowa. Forum members were supported by the Honourable Cameron Dick MP, Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning and the Honourable Coralee O’Rourke MP, Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors.

North and North West Queensland region

Forum members agreed to work together and to engage with their communities to raise awareness of the Queensland Regional Communities Program.

They will explore the region’s opportunities to create new jobs and drive economic development, discuss the priorities for the future and find local solutions to address local challenges.

This is an opportunity for the people of the North and North West Queensland region to use their knowledge and passion to inform their own future, backed by the Queensland Government.

The Chairs and Ministers committed to engaging across government and with Forum members to build on the strengths of the region and to address the needs identified by the Forum.

Forum members agreed that the region contributes to Queensland through strong industries such as mining, agriculture, and unique and cultural tourism, as well as by providing a service hub for the region in Townsville.

Forum members also discussed the challenges faced through community retention, raising issues such as public safety, job opportunities, shortage of skilled workers, an aging population, need for incentives for business to locate in the region, red and green tape. The Forum agreed that priority focus should be given to boosting confidence in our towns by incentivising business in the region, support development of industry, job creation and public safety.

A specific challenge independently identified by a number of Forum members was the, sometimes negative, portrayal of the region in the media creating a disincentive for people to invest in, live in and holiday in the region.
A strong and sustainable regional economy for the North and North West Queensland region

In order to reach its potential as a strong and sustainable regional economy, Forum members agreed to find local solutions to further industries such as tourism, agriculture and export by working with the community to reinvigorate Chambers of Commerce and changing the media and social media narrative in the region. Forum members considered it critical to promote a positive outlook and positive lifestyle opportunities in the region to encourage tourism and population growth, with “Buy Local” to be brought forward to front of mind.

Forum members asked the Chairs and Ministers to consider ways for government to reduce red and green tape, work with community and business to develop an export industry by incentivising investment opportunities, look at reducing service duplication in towns, consider alternative pathways through the justice system, look at cost of living reduction, and to work with industry to ensure that skills and training lines up with opportunities.

Office of Rural and Regional Queensland

The Office of Rural and Regional Queensland will support Forum members through their local regional officers.

The Office will also work with the regional and central offices of Queensland Government departments to progress the Queensland Regional Communities Program and to deliver a stronger focus on the North and North West Queensland region’s priorities identified at the Forum.

Forum members and government together are committed to building strong, sustainable regional communities through regionally responsive government programs informed by the community voices from the North and North West Queensland Community Forum.

Three more Forums are planned for the next year so members can discuss their work and the progress of government in addressing the priorities of the North and North West Queensland region.