Chief Minister Adam Giles has told the Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia that investment in new roads, ports and pipelines holds the key to unlocking the Territory’s full potential.

"Developing Northern Australia will secure the Territory's economic prosperity, funding better schools and hospitals and creating jobs for our children," Mr Giles said.

"But Northern development is also a nation-building project that has the potential to drive the country’s economy long into the future.

"My message to Canberra at these hearings was clear: investing in the North is not just in the Territory’s interests but is in the national interest as well.

"As just one example, the Territory’s vast onshore gas reserves have the potential to power the country for almost two centuries. But we need a pipeline to get the gas south and for that we need support from the Commonwealth and the private sector.

"If the Federal Government is fair dinkum about Northern development then it must accept that it will take money, time and courage to turn this vision into a reality.

"The time for excuses is over. We need to plan for a future where Northern Australia is the country’s economic powerhouse.

"The Territory has the will and local knowledge to take full advantage of its natural assets but we can’t develop this vast landmass alone. We need backing from Canberra and the private sector to overcome a massive infrastructure deficit that has been holding the Territory back.

"Connecting the Territory through better transport links is critical to opening up our regions, creating jobs and letting us stand on our own two feet.

"Road development is an enabler of economic growth and a key to getting people off welfare and into work.

"Long overdue upgrades to the remote Tanami, Plenty and Sandover Highways would require substantial investment but would deliver significant economic dividends in the long term by opening up the Territory’s regions."

The Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia is travelling around the Territory this week to hear ideas and engage locals in a conversation about development.

The Committee sat in Alice Springs yesterday, the Committee heard about the financial challenges of building infrastructure in the bush. After sitting in Darwin today, the Committee moves to Nhulunbuy and Katherine to get a closer look the needs and potential of the Territory’s regional areas.

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