The nation-building benefits of investing in regional infrastructure were outlined by top transport industry and government representatives meeting in Alice Springs today.

“The importance of regional infrastructure to the country’s economic future cannot be overstated and it is great to see the transport industry, community groups and government representatives coming together in Central Australia to put these issues on the national agenda,” Chief Minister Adam Giles said.

The National Remote and Regional Transport Infrastructure and Services Forum was attended by Deputy Prime Minister Warren Truss, and hosted by Northern Territory Chief Minister Adam Giles and Transport Minister Peter Styles.

“The quality of transport infrastructure is a critical factor in the Territory’s efforts to develop Northern Australia. Roads are an enabler of regional economic growth and job creation and they must be a priority as we build the Australia of the future,” Mr Giles said.

“We lobbied hard to have this forum held in Alice Springs and it’s a real coup to have more than 100 industry, community and government stakeholders in one place talking about the transport issues that matter to remote and regional Australia.”

The Forum acknowledged the record $50 billion transport infrastructure investment announced as part of the Australian Government’s 2014 Budget, and reiterated the importance of priority being given to remote and regional infrastructure.

“The Giles Government has just delivered the biggest ever roads budget, committing $408.1 million towards Territory roads which are crucial to the development of Northern Australia,” Minister Styles said.

“This forum has been about the regions influencing how future road funding should be allocated. It has also given regional transport services a strong voice so that vital community services can be better planned and sustained into the future.”

It was agreed today that there should be a National Strategy for Regional and Remote Transport and the Territory has put its hand up to drive it.

“All Australians have benefited from the economic gains of regional Australia over the past ten years. It is now time that investment in regional transport infrastructure matches those economic rewards and future growth potential,” Mr Styles said.

Mr Styles will present the outcomes of today’s forum to the Transport and Infrastructure Ministerial Council which meets in Alice Springs tomorrow.

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