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## Mt Isa awaits lifeline

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The federal government is under renewed pressure to throw North Queensland the next lifeline, after a \$135m bail-out plan was announced for two smelters in South Australia and Tasmania.

Nyrstar’s struggling Port Pirie and Hobart zinc and lead operations will remain open after the federal government agreed to tip in \$57.5m, with the states to make up the rest.

Coupled with the company’s own investment, the money will go towards accelerating a pilot plant to test critical minerals production and give the company time to ensure its long-term viability as China distorts the metals market – which has already prompted a \$2.4bn bailout of SA’s Whyalla steelworks earlier this year.

In the wake of the latest government package, Townsville Enterprise chief executive Claudia Brumme said she hoped something similar would soon be put on the table to safeguard Glencore’s Mount Isa smelter and Townsville refinery, where 17,000 jobs are on the line.

“More than ever, we need a similar announcement in a very short period of time,” she said.