

**REGIONAL AUSTRALIA:
A PARTNERSHIP FOR
STRONGER REGIONS**

STATEMENT BY
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AND

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Overview

Regional Australia: A Partnership for Stronger Regions

The hallmark of this Government since it came to office in 1996 has been its determination to build a strong and vibrant nation that can face its future with confidence.

Our economic management and reform agenda has created an economy that has entrenched low inflation, seen interest rates reach an all-time low, opened up new export opportunities, encouraged investment and created hundreds of thousands of new jobs.

This has been achieved in an uncertain and volatile international environment that has been rocked by major shocks such as the Asian economic downturn and more recently, the unpredictable and extreme actions of those who seek to achieve their aims through terror.

This Government recognises that we owe much of our current economic success to the efforts of those who live in rural and regional Australia, and that our continued national prosperity will depend significantly on the strength of our regions.

We also recognise that regional Australia has borne much of the brunt of economic reform, and that while many areas are now seeing and experiencing the real benefits of the modernisation of our economy, others continue to struggle.

To help meet the unique challenges facing our remote, rural and regional communities, we have sought to develop a new partnership between government, regional communities and the private sector. A key philosophy of our approach is to support local ideas and aspirations, so that communities can lead their own development and realise their own future.

We have listened to what regional Australians have had to say through major forums such as the Regional Australia Summit, the Northern Australia Forum, and an extensive series of local consultations. We have responded by developing policies that, for the first time, recognise and reflect that different communities face different challenges and have different needs.

To meet those needs, we have delivered innovative and flexible new programmes such as Regional Solutions, Rural Transaction Centres, and measures to help specific communities overcome the difficulties posed by globalisation and structural change to their traditional industries.

We have also invested strongly in the building blocks of social and economic development through major initiatives in health (for example More Doctors: Better Services), education and training (New Apprenticeships), telecommunications

(Networking the Nation), and sustainable environmental management (National Heritage Trust and the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality).

This Government has taken a 'whole of government' approach to addressing the concerns of regional Australia, ensuring that Federal Government activity in our regions is well coordinated, as a crucial step in delivering what communities need.

In August last year, the Government reinforced its commitment to this 'quiet revolution' in our approach to regional development through the *Stronger Regions: A Stronger Australia* statement. The statement articulates the approach we will take over the decade, in partnership with regional communities, to:

- strengthen regional economic and social opportunities;
- sustain our productive natural resources and environment;
- deliver better regional services; and
- adjust to economic and technological change.

This regional Budget statement outlines Federal Government measures over the coming financial year to help meet these aims, building on our solid record of achievement in delivering practical initiatives that are making a real difference in regional Australia.

This Budget delivers on our election promises and continues the work that must be done to build strong and vibrant regions.

All measures that will have an impact in regional Australia are outlined in this statement, but the following provides a small sample of initiatives that will help address critical and immediate needs.

The Government will continue to invest heavily in transport infrastructure, recognising its importance to the future development of local and regional economies.

For example, in 2002-03 we will spend \$1.7 billion on the nation's roads. This includes a further instalment on the innovative Roads to Recovery Programme, major spending on untied local roads grants, and funding to extend the Black Spot Programme to reduce crashes at sites and sections of roads with a poor safety history.

We will help to address Tasmania's unique transport requirements by providing \$26.7 million in 2002-03 for the Bass Strait Passenger Vehicle Equalisation Scheme and \$71 million for the Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme.

The Government has increased funding for the passenger vehicle scheme, which helps to reduce the cost of transporting passenger vehicles to and from Tasmania, by \$8.3 million or a massive 45 per cent. Funding for the freight equalisation scheme will

help Tasmanian industries ship products across Bass Strait, recognising that they do not have the option of transporting goods to mainland Australia by road or rail.

We will continue our programme to repair and replenish Australia's natural environment through a \$1 billion, five-year extension of the Natural Heritage Trust.

The trust has been very successful in raising awareness and understanding within the Australian community of environmental issues. Since its inception in 1996, almost 400,000 Australians have been involved in more than 11,800 environmental and natural resource management projects.

This additional Budget funding reflects lessons that have been learnt over the last six years, with funding being directed towards activities under four key programmes ~ landcare, bushcare, rivercare and coastcare. It brings our total funding for the Natural Heritage Trust to \$2.5 billion and represents an 11-year commitment to the conservation of our unique and precious natural environment.

The provision of quality health care services in regional communities remains one of our highest priorities, particularly for those facing the most difficult of life circumstances.

To this end, we are providing nearly \$73 million over four years for better treatment for cancer patients, with a particular emphasis on regional communities. This funding will increase the availability of radiotherapy services for patients living in regional areas, provide for up to six new regional radiotherapy centres, and provide for measures to ensure there are sufficient staff to treat patients.

Australians living in rural and regional areas will also benefit significantly from other broader community health care measures outlined in this Budget, including a four-year \$55 million palliative care initiative to enable people to receive treatment in a dignified manner and in a setting of their choice.

The Government has boosted its spending on aged care to \$5.6 billion in 2002-03, an increase of half a billion dollars over the 2001-02 Budget allocation. More than 40 per cent of aged care places are located in remote, rural and regional areas of Australia ~ this is greater than the proportion of people aged 70 years and over who live in these areas.

Australia's food processing and horticulture industries are critical to many regional economies and to the overall health of this country. These industries are facing significant global change.

To ensure the Australian food industry becomes a major player in the global food production system, the Government is committing \$102.4 million over five years to implement a National Food Industry Strategy.

The main elements of this joint government-industry initiative are: the establishment of a National Food Industry Council; measures to encourage product and service

innovation; the development and implementation of an international food trade initiative; and measures to build more competitive supply chains and improve national food safety and quality systems.

More than 225,000 people are already employed within Australia's food industry. This strategy will stimulate investment, create export opportunities, and deliver economic growth and more jobs to rural and regional areas.

Many more important measures are described in the pages that follow. They demonstrate this Government's recognition of the important contribution our regions make to the economic and social wellbeing of this nation. They also demonstrate our continued commitment to ensuring a sustainable long-term future for the communities of regional Australia.

Regional Budget Highlights

Infrastructure

ROADS

The Federal Government will deliver \$1.7 billion for our nation's roads, including a \$200 million further instalment on the innovative Roads to Recovery Programme, a four-year \$180 million extension of the Black Spot Programme to help eliminate crash sites, and major spending on untied local roads grants.

The spending on Roads to Recovery is the largest funding injection into local roads by any Commonwealth Government, and is in addition to untied local roads funding provided to councils through the Financial Assistance Grants Scheme.

SUPPORT FOR REGIONAL AIR SERVICES

As part of its ongoing support for regional airlines, the Federal Government will provide \$13 million in 2002-03 to support regional air services and general aviation.

Regional airlines will continue to be exempted from enroute charges imposed by Airservices Australia, saving the industry \$6 million in 2002-03. In addition, the Government will spend \$7 million in 2002-03 to help Airservices Australia provide reasonably priced tower services at regional and general aviation airports.

TASMANIAN EQUALISATION

The Federal Government will provide \$26.6 million in 2002-03 for the Bass Strait Passenger Vehicle Equalisation Scheme, boosting funding by \$8.3 million or 45 per cent. This scheme helps reduce the cost of transporting passenger vehicles to and from Tasmania.

As Tasmanian industries do not have the option of transporting goods to the mainland by road or rail, the Government will provide funding of \$71 million for the Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme to help ship products across Bass Strait.

HISMELT TECHNOLOGY

A \$125 million investment under the Strategic Investment Coordination process will be paid to Rio Tinto to commercialise and develop Hismelt technology. The incentive, to be paid over three years from 2004-05, will be used to develop multi-user

infrastructure to secure the commercialisation and development of HIs melt technology at Kwinana in Western Australia.

This project will generate additional infrastructure investment in the Kwinana region, and may include a co-generation power plant, an industrial gas plant, waste water recycling infrastructure and raw material handling infrastructure.

Industry sector-specific initiatives

NATIONAL FOOD INDUSTRY STRATEGY

Assistance worth \$102.4 million over five years will develop and implement a National Food Industry Strategy. The strategy will help position Australia as a significant player in the global food production system, creating new investment, export opportunities and jobs, largely in regional areas.

The main elements of this joint government-industry initiative are: the establishment of a National Food Industry Council; measures to encourage product and service innovation; the development and implementation of an international food trade initiative; and measures to build more competitive supply chains and improve national food safety and quality systems.

Fostering business

TRADESTART

A \$21.5 million extension of the successful TradeStart programme will be committed over four years to ensure more small and medium-sized companies in regional Australia get the support they need to succeed in international markets. Ten new offices will be opened, bringing the total number of TradeStart offices in regional Australia to 34.

DIESEL FUEL REBATE SCHEME

To help reduce business costs in regional and remote areas of the country, eligibility for the Diesel Fuel Rebate Scheme will be extended to retail and hospitality businesses where there is no access to commercial supplies of electricity and the electricity generated is for their own use.

Environmental sustainability

NATURAL HERITAGE TRUST

The Natural Heritage Trust was established by the Federal Government in 1996 to repair and replenish Australia's natural capital infrastructure.

The Government will provide a further \$1 billion to extend the trust for a further five years from 2002-03, bringing total funding since 1996 to more than \$2.7 billion. This represents more than 11 years commitment to funding on-ground actions to conserve and repair Australia's unique environment.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

The Federal Government will provide funding of \$25 million over five years for the Incentives for Environmental Management Systems (EMS) in Agriculture programme, to support primary producers in adopting an environmental management system.

Fifty per cent of the costs of eligible EMS expenditure, up to a maximum of \$3,000 for each primary producer on taxable incomes up to \$35,000 per annum, will be reimbursed. The programme will be funded from within the Natural Heritage Trust.

Health and aged care

BETTER TREATMENT FOR CANCER PATIENTS – RADIATION ONCOLOGY

Funding of nearly \$72.7 million over four years will be provided under the Better Treatment for Cancer Patients – Radiation Oncology initiative. The initiative will place an emphasis on cancer patients in regional communities; funding will increase the availability of radiotherapy services, provide up to six new regional radiotherapy centres, and support measures that ensure there are sufficient staff to treat patients.

PALLIATIVE CARE IN THE COMMUNITY

Regional Australia will benefit significantly from \$55 million over four years towards palliative care. The funding will improve capacity in the primary care workforce; enhance, coordinate and support health and other support systems; develop better reporting and information systems; build evidence on funding and service delivery; improve access to medications and raise awareness in the wider community.

CAPITAL ASSISTANCE FOR AGED CARE

More than 40 per cent of aged care places are located in remote, rural and regional areas of Australia. \$5.6 billion will be spent on aged care, an increase of \$500 million over last year's budget allocation.

Regional programmes

The Federal Government will spend \$113.2 million on programmes to support regional communities, including Regional Solutions, Rural Transaction Centres, Sustainable Regions and Regional Assistance.

SUSTAINABLE REGIONS PROGRAMME

The Sustainable Regions Programme is assisting selected regions undergoing major economic, social or environmental change. Funding of \$36.2 million for 2002-03 will assist these regions to plan for the future, build capacity for strategic and informed decision making at the regional level and contribute to the implementation of projects that can make a real difference to economic opportunity and quality of life.

STRENGTHENING REGIONAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Regional infrastructure

HISMELT TECHNOLOGY

The Government will provide \$125 million over three years from 2004-05 to Rio Tinto under the Strategic Investment Coordination process to commercialise and develop HIs melt technology. The incentive will be used to develop multi-user infrastructure to secure the commercialisation and development of HIs melt technology at Kwinana, Western Australia.

The HIs melt project will generate additional industrial infrastructure investment in the Kwinana region. Such infrastructure may include a co-generation power plant, an industrial gas plant, waste water recycling infrastructure and raw material handling infrastructure. Phase one of the HIs melt project will provide direct employment for 325 people during the construction period and provide 60 positions during operation.

SYNGAS TECHNOLOGY

The Government will provide \$85 million over two years from 2002-03 to Methanex Corporation under the Strategic Investment Coordination process to develop multi-user infrastructure on the Burrup Peninsula in Western Australia, and to undertake research and development into advanced syngas technology in partnership with industry and Australian research bodies.

The Methanex syngas and methanol project will bring forward public and private sector infrastructure investment in the Pilbara region. Such infrastructure may include: offshore gas processing facilities; water supply; port infrastructure and facilities; de-salination facilities; electricity generation facilities; and a gas pipeline to the King Bay/Hearson Cove industrial estate.

The Methanex syngas and methanol project will provide direct employment for 1,000 people during the construction period and provide 150 full-time positions during operation with an ongoing requirement for contract maintenance labour. In 2005, the peak year of construction of the first syngas and methanol train, Access Economics estimates that overall employment in Australia would increase by 5,700. Much of the overall employment impact would occur in Western Australia, and to a lesser extent, the Pilbara region.

WODONGA RAIL BYPASS AND FREIGHT TRANSFER CENTRE

The Government will spend \$20 million over the next two years to build a rail bypass of Wodonga and an intermodal freight terminal serving the border region. The Government will contribute \$15 million in 2002-03 and \$5 million in 2003-04 towards the \$50 million cost of the project. The Victorian Government will contribute the remainder of the cost.

Construction of the Wodonga rail bypass is expected to begin later this year, with completion scheduled for late 2004.

The project involves relocating the existing railway line from Wodonga's central business district, eliminating 12 level crossings and reducing traffic congestion. This will increase the efficiency of interstate freight operations on the important Sydney-Melbourne rail corridor.

GOLD COAST LIGHT RAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY

The Federal Government will spend \$650,000 in 2002-03 on the feasibility study for the proposed Gold Coast light rail system, with the Queensland Government to contribute a similar amount.

Modern light rail systems have been the catalyst for new development and revitalisation in cities where they have been introduced. Light rail helps reclaim cities for the people, by reducing their dependence on cars. The study is expected to be completed by December 2003 and will be managed by the Gold Coast City Council and the Queensland Government. A consultant is expected to be appointed in late June 2002.

SUPPORT FOR REGIONAL AIR SERVICES

As part of its ongoing support for regional airlines, the Federal Government will provide \$13 million in 2002-03 to support regional air services and general aviation.

Regional airlines will continue to be exempted from the enroute charges imposed by Airservices Australia. This will save the industry \$6 million in 2002-03. The exemption applies to all regional airline aircraft and aeromedical aircraft with a maximum take-off weight of 15 tonnes or less. It came into effect on 1 January 2002.

In addition, the Government will spend \$7 million in 2002-03 to help Airservices Australia provide reasonably priced tower services at regional and general aviation airports. These airports handle 1.5 million passengers a year and are an essential part of the national air transport system.

Tower services will continue to be subsidised at Albury, Coffs Harbour, Launceston, Hobart, Mackay, Maroochydore, Rockhampton, Tamworth, Archerfield, Bankstown, Camden, Jandakot, Moorabbin, Parafield and Essendon. The tower charges at these airports will continue to be \$7.42 per landed tonne (including GST), even though the actual cost of running the towers is much higher.

Airservices Australia will continue to cap charges for general aviation users at Cairns, Coolangatta, and Canberra.

COMMONWEALTH ROADS PROGRAMME

The Federal Government will spend \$1.7 billion in 2002-03 across all categories of roads, with record sums in New South Wales and Victoria and boosted spending elsewhere due to the Roads to Recovery Programme and Black Spot Programme.

Most of the money is allocated to projects in non-urban areas.

The Government has stepped up its funding under Roads of National Importance category roads under which it shares the cost of the major road improvements. The Pacific Highway is one such route and includes the largest road project under way in rural Australia - the \$350 million Yelgun-Chinderah deviation south of Tweed Heads. It should open to traffic by September 2002.

Thousands of road projects are being funded on local roads under the Roads to Recovery Programme. Of the \$1.2 billion available over four calendar years, \$200.2 million will be paid to local councils in 2002-03. The 720 councils around Australia also share \$441.4 million in untied local road grants. Both programmes allow councils to spend this Commonwealth money according to local priorities they set themselves.

ROADS TO RECOVERY PROGRAMME

The Federal Government will deliver a total of \$1.2 billion for local roads under the Roads to Recovery Programme - a special assistance package to Australia's 720 local government areas to boost their roads spending above that provided through rate revenue or other sources. It is the largest funding injection into local roads by any Commonwealth Government, and is in addition to Commonwealth assistance for roads through the Financial Assistance Grants Scheme.

Originally, programme expenditure of \$300 million was planned in 2002-03. Yearly allocations will be re-profiled so that the Commonwealth will spend \$200 million on Roads to Recovery in 2002-03, and increase expenditure on the programme from \$150 million to \$250 million in 2004-05.

The commitment to spend a total of \$1.2 billion on the Roads to Recovery Programme by 2004-05 remains.

State or Territory	Previous estimate	Current estimate	Previous estimate	Current estimate
	2002-03	2002-03	2004-05	2004-05
	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m
New South Wales	85.0	56.7	42.5	70.8
Victoria	62.5	41.7	31.25	52.1
Queensland	62.5	41.7	31.25	52.1
Western Australia	45.0	30.0	22.5	37.5
South Australia	25.0	16.7	12.5	20.8
Tasmania	10.0	6.7	5.0	8.3
Northern Territory	5.0	3.3	2.5	4.2
Australian Capital Territory	5.0	3.3	2.5	4.2
Total	300.0	200.0	150.0	250.0

An additional sum of \$2.2 million has been allocated in 2002-03 for Roads to Recovery Programme expenditure on Indian Ocean Territories and unincorporated areas of States not under direct council administration.

BLACK SPOT PROGRAMME

The Federal Government has committed to extend the road safety Black Spot Programme by providing a further \$180 million over four years towards reducing crashes at sites and sections of road with a poor safety history. The National Black Spot Programme will now continue until 30 June 2006.

Black Spot Programme funding for 2002-03 will be \$45 million nationally – an increase on the average annual allocation of around \$38 million during the past six years. Each

State and Territory will receive an annual Black Spot allocation according to population and proportion of casualty crashes.

Half the programme funds will be reserved for reducing road trauma in rural areas.

The Black Spot Programme has been found to be instrumental in reducing road trauma, which costs the Australian community \$15 billion a year.

A STRONGER TASMANIA

The Government will provide \$3.2 million to contribute to the development of the Warner Creek Dam and the Northern Midlands Water Project in Tasmania.

When completed, the Warner Creek Dam, also known as the Meander River Dam, will provide a reliable irrigation supply to agricultural users of the region, providing opportunities for economic growth and potential benefits through environmental flows. The Federal Government will provide \$2.6 million towards construction of the dam, on a matching basis with Tasmania, to meet the shortfall in private investment, subject to a feasibility study into the viability of the dam.

The Commonwealth will provide a further \$0.6 million to the Northern Midlands Water Project, on the Macquarie River, which aims to provide a reliable source of irrigation water allowing landholders to diversify and increase productive value of agriculture in the region.

NORTHERN MALLEE PIPELINE – STAGE 7 SOUTH

The Government will provide \$4 million in 2002-03 to extend the Northern Mallee Pipeline to cover the Patchewollock and Cannie Ridge Districts of the existing pipeline project area in north-western Victoria. The extended pipeline will replace the existing open channel stock and domestic water supply system and aims to provide a more secure stock and domestic water supply to a further 100,000 hectares of farmland. The Commonwealth funding is subject to a matching contribution from the Victorian Government.

Water supply security will allow farm businesses to better plan and manage their operations. The water savings achieved as a result of the pipeline provide regional and community benefits in terms of improved river health, water quality and increased tourism opportunities.

This measure will be funded from within the resources of the Natural Heritage Trust.

IMPROVEMENT OF MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE TORRES STRAIT

The Federal Government is providing \$15.3 million over three years from 2001-02 for the second stage of the Torres Strait major infrastructure programme with \$5.1 million allocated in 2002-03. The programme has already produced substantial and permanent improvements to water supplies, sewerage, roads and other essential services throughout the region and this funding will allow it to be extended to other Torres Strait Islander communities.

SOCIAL BONUS INITIATIVES IN TELECOMMUNICATIONS

The Networking the Nation Board is responsible for allocating funding under several initiatives. The Social Bonus initiatives relate to funding from the second tranche of the sale of Telstra. The NTN – General Fund dates from the original T1 sale in 1997. This is a five-year competitive grants programme and funds are to be approved for projects by 2001-02. Funding is being provided for a range of projects which vary widely in scale and scope for activities that address a range of barriers to accessing telecommunications infrastructure and services. These include IT training, mobile phone towers, satellite phone programme, community networks and strategy development plans. Funding has been allocated to each State and Territory according to the populations residing outside the capital cities.

The Social Bonus initiatives, which are administered by the NTN Board include:

NTN – Local Government Fund

Since 1999-2000 the Local Government Fund is providing around \$45 million to support local governments in regional, rural and remote areas using telecommunications to deliver improved services and benefits to their communities. Funding was allocated on a State/Territory basis.

NTN – Remote and Isolated Island Fund

The Remote and Isolated Island Fund has been allocated \$20 million from 1999-2000 over five years. The fund is assisting to meet the telecommunications needs of people in remote and isolated island communities, such as the Torres Strait, the Cocos (Keeling) Group, Christmas, Norfolk, King, Flinders, Kangaroo and other islands.

NTN – Building Additional Rural Networks (BARN)

\$69.4 million is being provided over five years from 1999-2000 to support the development of new regional networks and new networks services and products, with an emphasis on adopting innovative solutions and leading-edge technologies. BARN is benefiting regional and rural communities by supporting improvements in the cost and quality of telecommunications services in those areas.

TELEVISION BLACK SPOTS – ALTERNATIVE TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS PROGRAMME

There will be \$3.9 million in funding in 2002-03 to meet the costs of improving television reception for 34 eligible applicant communities in regional Australia that cannot be assisted under the Television Black Spots Programme (TVBSP). This programme is to be called the Television Black Spots – Alternative Technical Solutions Programme (TVBS-ATS) – see the Communications and Information Technology section.

REGIONAL EQUALISATION PLAN

The Government introduced a Regional Equalisation Plan in 2000-01 to assist the rollout of digital television and datacasting services to Australians living in regional and remote Australia. Over 13 years, up to \$260 million in financial assistance will be provided to assist commercial television broadcasters with its introduction. An estimated \$26 million in assistance has been identified under the plan for 2002-03.

Commonwealth assistance under the plan represents 50 per cent of the estimated capital and operating costs to regional commercial broadcasters in converting to digital. This assistance will be made available predominantly in the form of rebates on annual licence fees paid by the broadcasters. To ensure the timely delivery of digital broadcasting and datacasting services in different parts of regional and rural Australia, these licence fee rebates will be supplemented by a small grants programme for broadcasters in some single-service licence areas.

DEFENCE INFRASTRUCTURE

In 2002-03, the Department of Defence plans to invest \$340 million on facilities and bases. An estimated \$230 million of the capital investment will be spent in regional areas including the Northern Territory, Townsville, Eden and the south-east Queensland and Hunter (New South Wales) regions.

Industry and science

NATIONAL INNOVATION AWARENESS STRATEGY

The National Innovation Awareness Strategy (\$35 million over five years from 2001-02) will increase science and innovation awareness, and encourage young entrepreneurs across Australia. Questacon's Smart Moves will specifically target science awareness in regional schools for 2002-03.

GEOSCIENCE AUSTRALIA

Geoscience Australia is Australia's national geoscience research and information agency. Geoscience Australia serves the Government and helps the community make appropriate and informed decisions about the use of resources, the management of the environment and the safety and wellbeing of its citizens. Its scientific activities cover three broad areas: onshore, offshore and spatial information.

Onshore activities enhance mineral exploration and environmental land-use planning through the production of geoscientific maps, databases and information systems and conducting regional geological and mineral systems research.

Offshore activities identify potential hydrocarbon areas and new prospective basins in Australia's offshore territories, mapping the outer limits of Australia's jurisdiction under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, studies of the marine environment and estuarine health studies.

Spatial information activities provide fundamental spatial data of Australia from national mapping, remote sensing and geodesy. The activity also includes the maintenance of fundamental gravity and seismic networks and the coordination of the implementation of the Commonwealth Policy on Spatial Data and Access and Pricing.

BIOTECHNOLOGY ONLINE EDUCATION RESOURCE

The Biotechnology Online Education Resource allows students and teachers, including those in regional areas, to access the latest information on biotechnology and also access resources to assist in teaching this topic. Professional development for teachers for the resource has been trialed throughout 2001-02. The resource will be updated in 2002-03 and professional development activities will continue. Funding for the resource for 2002-03 will be about \$100,000.

GENE TECHNOLOGY INFORMATION SERVICE

With funding of \$100,000 in 2002-03, the Gene Technology Information Service, in partnership with the University of Melbourne, includes a free call 1800 631 276 number that provides balanced and factual information on biotechnology and contact with Commonwealth Government officers and scientists. This service also provides fact sheets, conference exhibition set-up and coordinates speakers on gene technology for various council and community meetings and conferences.

RURAL AND REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAMME

The major focus in 2002-03 will be to improve networks between partner agencies. Approximate funding for the programme in 2002-03 is \$10,000.

BIOTECHNOLOGY AUSTRALIA WEBSITE

The major focus in 2002-03 will be to improve networks and coordination between partner agencies and develop best practice communications activities. Funding for 2002-03 will be \$0.9 million. It involves all government agencies involved in rural communications of biotechnology including Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Australia, Environment Australia, CSIRO (several divisions), Office of Gene Technology Regulator, National Health and Medical Research Council, State and Territory Governments' agricultural departments, rural R&D corporations, and Cooperative Research Centres. Approximate funding for the programme in 2002-03 is \$35,000.

BUREAU OF RURAL SCIENCES SOCIAL SCIENCES PROGRAMME

The Bureau of Rural Sciences, within the Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries portfolio, provides nationally focused scientific advice to the Federal Government as a foundation for evidence-based policy on agricultural food, fisheries and forestry industries and the natural resources they rely on. At the interface between science and policy, the bureau analyses, assesses and packages science for decision makers.

In 2002-03, the BRS social sciences programme will spend \$1.5 million and will revise the *Country Matters: Social atlas of rural and regional Australia*, based on the 2001 Census data; produce a toolkit for the Murray-Darling Basin Commission on best-practice community engagement with government; and deliver the second phase of *Servicing Regional Australia* with a methodology that identifies hot spots of communities particularly vulnerable to adverse effects of changes in structural arrangements.

NEW INDUSTRIES DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The New Industries Development Programme is part of the Federal Government's commitment to ensure that innovation continues to drive economic growth and Australia's capacity to commercialise new products and technologies. The programme focuses on commercialisation of new agribusiness products and technologies as well as strengthening commercial links to enhance the prospects for the economic and social revitalisation of regional Australia.

Industry sector-specific initiatives

NATIONAL FOOD INDUSTRY STRATEGY

The Federal Government is providing \$102.4 million over five years, including \$17.5 million for 2002-03 to implement a National Food Industry Strategy. In the face of significant global change in the food industry, the Government and industry have

agreed to a strategy to ensure the Australian food industry continues to provide a significant contribution to economic growth, exports, employment and investment with a particular focus on rural and regional areas.

The food processing and horticulture industries make a significant contribution to the economies of rural and regional areas through employment, business and service opportunities. These industries employ more than 225,000 people with more than half of the firms and 40 per cent of the employees located in rural and regional areas. It is often the case that a large manufacturing operation is located in a small town with less than 1,000 people.

The focus of the strategy is to ensure that by 2007, the Australian food industry will be a significant global player with a sustainable and profitable role in the global food product system. The key elements of the five-year, \$102.4 million, strategy commencing in July 2002 are:

- the establishment of a high-level industry council, the National Food Industry Council, to oversee the development of the industry and the implementation of the strategy;
- a product and service innovation strategy aimed at enabling superior innovation performance by Australian based firms which will build on research and development activities and infrastructure and establish a Food Innovation Grants Programme;
- a food trade initiative to develop and implement an international food market entry strategy with a focus on market access, trade development and promotion; and
- a strategy to build more competitive supply chains and improve national food safety and quality systems.

In developing the strategy, an extensive programme of regional meetings and forums was held. The strategy will provide significant benefits to rural and regional areas by stimulating new investment and exports, delivering growth and increased employment in the food industry, and by supply chain links back through to agriculture.

BEEF EXPO 2003

The Federal Government is providing \$2.2 million in funding in 2002-03 to go toward the staging and managing of Beef Expo 2003 in Rockhampton. The Expo's objective is to promote and market the achievements of the Australian beef cattle industry to national and international visitors at a world-class, professionally-staged event.

GRACEMERE EXHIBITION CENTRE

Commonwealth funding of \$3.5 million is to go toward the design and construction of a new exhibition centre at the Gracemere saleyards near Rockhampton. The funding will provide a state-of-the-art venue for the display and auction of stud cattle. The centre will be pivotal to the success of Beef Expo 2003 and will continue to provide economic benefits to the region during non-expo periods through livestock sales and the staging of cultural events, boosting rural tourism.

FARMBIS

FarmBis, part of the Agriculture – Advancing Australia (AAA) package, will receive funding of \$31.9 million in 2002-03. FarmBis promotes sustainability and self-reliance through using and developing the business management skills of the farm management team and communicating the benefits of continuous learning. The Federal Government and State Government component assists farmers to attend training activities in business and natural resource management.

REGIONAL TOURISM PROGRAMME

The Government has committed \$14 million to the Regional Tourism Programme over 2001-02 to 2005-06. The funding includes an additional \$8 million being provided in this Budget over the four years to 2005-06. The programme aims to improve the capability of organisations, businesses and individuals to deliver quality tourism products and services in regional Australia.

Funding is provided through the Regional Tourism Programme for the development of tourism attractions, facilities and services, including tourism projects that complement other regional industries and build on our natural and cultural heritage. Projects also funded include industry leadership initiatives, those that raise industry standards, and those developing regional niche markets and establishing websites for regional tourism organisations.

SEE AUSTRALIA

The domestic tourism initiative, See Australia, is a partnership between the Commonwealth, States and Territories and industry, to encourage stronger growth in domestic tourism, much of which occurs in regional Australia. The Federal Government provided \$8 million towards the initiative over the two years to 30 June 2002. State and industry contributions increased the total funds available under the initiative to approximately \$17 million. An additional \$8 million over the period 2002-03 to 2005-06 (\$1.5 million in 2002-03) will continue the work of *See Australia*. State and Territory governments and industry contributions to the initiative will again be sought.

HOLIDAY INCENTIVE PROGRAMME

During the 2001-02 year, the Government provided funds through the Holiday Incentive Programme, to help the tourism industry overcome the effects of the Ansett collapse and the September 2001 terrorist attacks in the USA. The programme formed part of a \$20 million assistance package to the tourism industry, announced by the Federal Government in October 2001. A rebate of \$150 was offered to people undertaking domestic holidays under certain prescribed conditions. A significant proportion of domestic tourism occurs in regional Australia. The programme provided more than 29,000 households with the rebate, giving a major boost to tourism throughout regional Australia at a time when the industry was experiencing some difficulties.

SHIPBUILDING INNOVATION SCHEME

The Shipbuilding Innovation Scheme provides assistance to shipbuilders registered under the *Bounty (Ships) Act 1989* with funding of \$10.8 million in 2002-03. The scheme provides up to 50 per cent of eligible research and development expenditure incurred, up to a total of 2 per cent of eligible costs of construction or modification of bountiable vessels. The eligible research and development activities must be carried on during the period 1 July 1999 to 30 June 2004.

The scheme affects the regional economies of North Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania. These regions benefit from innovative and internationally competitive shipbuilding industry.

SHIPBUILDING BOUNTY

Assistance from the shipbuilding bounty is an entitlement paid under the *Bounty (Ships) Act 1989* as a percentage of eligible construction costs incurred in the construction or modification of a bountiable vessel. The ships bounty ended on 31 December 2000 but phase-out arrangements will continue for three years to cover contracts in place at that date. This is consistent with the Government's commitment to provide transitional support to the Australian shipbuilding industry while international measures are being implemented to phase out subsidies to the industry. The bounty is available for vessels constructed in Australia at a rate of 3 per cent of eligible costs incurred in the construction or modification of a bountiable vessel. The Federal Government is providing \$11 million in the 2002-03 financial year and \$3 million in 2003-04.

The shipbuilding industry is concentrated in regional Western Australia, northern Queensland and Tasmania.

POST-2000 TEXTILES, CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR ASSISTANCE PACKAGE

This package represents continued Government support, particularly as a regional initiative, for textiles, clothing and footwear (TCF) industries. It has been designed to promote investment in innovation and research and development to improve the competitiveness of Australia's TCF industries in preparation for the more internationally competitive trade environment after 2005.

The most significant component is the TCF Strategic Investment Programme, with funding of \$678 million over five years from 2000-01, including \$130.4 million in 2002-03. The programme promotes an increase in investment by the TCF industries in capital plant and equipment; research and development, including innovative product development; and assistance for regional reconfiguration.

AUTOMOTIVE COMPETITIVENESS AND INVESTMENT SCHEME

The Automotive Competitiveness and Investment Scheme (ACIS) is designed to encourage investment and innovation in the Australian automotive industry. Commencing on 1 January 2001, the scheme provides approximately \$2.8 billion in benefits over five years, covering production and investment by vehicle producers and investment by component producers and other participants in the industry. The automotive industry in Australia is predominantly located in Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales, with many firms in regional areas. ACIS will assist these firms to become more internationally competitive in an increasingly liberalised trade environment.

Fostering business

REDUCTION IN AUSTRALIAN QUARANTINE INSPECTION SERVICE EXPORT PROGRAMME FEES AND CHARGES

The Government reduced Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service export fees and charges by 40 per cent from 1 November 2001. The fee reduction involved an additional Government contribution to AQIS' operations of \$29.8 million per annum.

The reduction in export fees and charges aims to increase the competitiveness of Australia's exporters and to benefit commodity industries through lower charges.

NEW EXPORTER PROGRAMME

The Government has committed itself to doubling the number of exporters by 2006. Exporters are more profitable, innovative and better employers than non exporters, and with more than 184,000 businesses in rural and regional areas, achieving the Government's goal of doubling the number of exporters could make an enormous economic contribution to regional Australia.

Austrade will take a leading role in achieving this goal, through the New Exporter Programme which will reach out to a diverse range of businesses at various stages of development. Austrade will assist companies to maximise their export capability.

TRADESTART

The Government's successful TradeStart programme ensures small and medium companies in regional Australia get the support they need to succeed in international markets. The Government will commit \$21.5 million over four years to extend and expand the TradeStart export assistance network.

Tradestart operates as a partnership between the Government's trade agency Austrade and local partners - including chambers of commerce, private sector organisations, and State and Territory Governments. By leveraging Austrade's knowledge of international markets with its partners' local expertise, TradeStart has proven a cost-effective and highly efficient way of helping companies into export.

Subject to negotiations with local partners, the new offices will be in Dubbo, Penrith, Sutherland (NSW), Emerald (Qld), Bunbury (WA), Geelong, Mildura (Vic.), Port Lincoln (SA) and the Adelaide-based Australian Wine Export Council, plus one other location.

The 10 new offices are in addition to the 24 TradeStart offices opened since 1996: Coffs Harbour, Wagga Wagga, Bathurst, Nowra, Tamworth, Gosford, Rockhampton, Cairns, Bundaberg, Toowoomba, Southport, Ballarat, Wangaratta, Bendigo, Berri, Mt Gambier, Whyalla, Geraldton, Carnarvon, Kununurra, Albany, Darwin, Alice Springs and Launceston.

As many regional and rural communities depend on small business for the strength of their economies, a greater export focus will bring real benefits to the regions. Regional exporters account for more than half of Australia's exports and in regional Australia, one in four jobs depends directly on exports.

REGIONAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS

The Federal Government is undertaking a Regional Business Development Analysis to identify impediments to growth and the effectiveness of current Commonwealth

Government assistance for regional businesses. The research and analysis will draw on the expertise of business, communities and governments and will develop options for achieving sustainable regional industries, businesses and jobs, and removing growth impediments.

The work will also examine the issues of encouraging new industries to regions; attracting and retaining skilled people, executives and professionals; attracting investment; improving access to finance for small and medium enterprises; and accelerating new business and investment proposals.

SMALL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

The Government is committed to introducing a new Small Business Assistance Programme, which will provide benefits for all small businesses including those in rural and regional Australia. The programme will provide resources for:

- the development of small business incubators;
- the promotion of an enterprise culture in the small business sector;
- referral and support services for small business on relevant government programmes and initiatives; and
- other activities that promote small business development.

A new Small Business Assistance Programme (SBAP) will be introduced to combine the Small Business Enterprise Culture Programme (SBECP) and small business incubator initiatives with funding of \$9 million in 2002-03. The SBAP will also expand referral and support services for small business.

The SBAP will provide funding for the development of small business incubators and the promotion of an enterprise culture in the small business sector, as well as other activities that promote small business development. Under the SBECP, priority was given to projects in regional areas and approximately 67 per cent of projects funded under the SBECP have been in regional areas. Approximately 60 per cent of funding for small business incubators was allocated in regional areas. Referral and support services for small business are also an important initiative for regional areas providing information on relevant government programmes and activities. These services provide a link between government departments and agencies at all levels, as well as links with local media, peak bodies, associations, advisers and experts in their region.

EXTENSION OF THE DIESEL FUEL REBATE SCHEME TO RETAIL AND HOSPITALITY BUSINESSES

This measure extends eligibility for the Diesel Fuel Rebate Scheme to retail and hospitality businesses, where there is no access to commercial supplies of electricity, and the electricity generated is for their own use. It is effective from 1 July 2002 and was announced by the Government on 30 October 2001.

It is expected that this measure will reduce the costs of these businesses in regional and remote areas. To reduce administrative complexity associated with confining the rebate to small retail/hospitality businesses, the extended scheme will include all such businesses with funding of \$12.8 million for 2002-03.

GIVING COOPERATIVES THE OPTION TO FRANK DIVIDEND PAYMENTS

On 27 August 2001, the Government announced that cooperatives would be provided with an option to frank dividend payments to members as an alternative to having these payments treated as deductions from assessable income, effective from 1 July 2002. Cooperatives that do not choose to frank dividends will continue to be able to treat dividend and rebate payments as deductions from the cooperative's assessable income.

With funding of \$5 million in 2002-03, this amendment will benefit those rural and regional Australians who are shareholders of cooperatives with franking credits. Cooperatives generally have franking credits where they have elected to retain profits to expand the cooperative's business.

BASS STRAIT PASSENGER VEHICLE EQUALISATION SCHEME

The Federal Government will spend \$26.6 million in 2002-03 on the Bass Strait Passenger Vehicle Equalisation Scheme, an increase of \$9.1 million, or 52 per cent from 2001-02 levels.

From 1 September 2002, the Government will:

- replace the existing seasonal rebate with a rebate of \$150 each way. The rebate will apply all year round;
- increase the rebate for motorhomes and vehicles towing a caravan to \$300 each way. At present, motorhomes and vehicles with caravans only receive the same rebate as a car. This initiative doubles the rebate for motorhomes and vehicles with caravans during the high season and triples their rebate during the low season; and

- enable eligible drivers with a disability who are unable to travel by sea to access the reduced passenger vehicle fare available under the scheme by shipping their vehicle and flying across Bass Strait.

The scheme has been an enormous success since its introduction in 1996. The number of passenger vehicles shipped across Bass Strait has more than doubled, from 63,000 vehicles in 1995-96 to more than 127,000 vehicles in 2000-01.

TASMANIAN FREIGHT EQUALISATION SCHEME

The Federal Government will spend \$71 million in 2002-03 helping Tasmanian industries ship products across Bass Strait. The funding, provided under the Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme, will help Tasmanian firms compete in mainland markets by reducing their cost disadvantage. The scheme recognises that Tasmanian industries do not have the option of transporting goods to mainland Australia by road or rail.

About 1,450 shippers, ranging from small businesses to large companies, benefit from the scheme.

The scheme covers northbound shipments of eligible goods produced in Tasmania for use or sale on the mainland, and southbound shipments of equipment and raw materials of Australian origin used as inputs to the Tasmanian mining, manufacturing, agricultural, fishing and forestry industries.

The Government's funding for both schemes is demand driven and the total cost is uncapped.

BUSINESS ENTRY POINT

The Business Entry Point (BEP) is developed and coordinated by the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources. BEP is the Federal Government portal for the business community. It provides free online government services and information for Australian businesses, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It is particularly convenient for business in regional Australia as it can save the necessity of travelling or reliance on postal services for obtaining and lodging information. This includes information on business start-up, available assistance, taxation, licensing and legislation. Transactions such as taxation compliance and licence applications can also be accessed through the BEP website. The site is continuously refined and progressively offers more online transactions in response to Australian business needs.

BEP's information is drawn from all levels of government. All State and Territory Governments actively support and participate in the BEP initiative.

Building capacity

PRIME MINISTER'S COMMUNITY BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP

The Government will continue the Prime Minister's Community Business Partnership for an additional three years from 2002-03. The partnership will contribute to a culture of corporate and individual social responsibility by providing leadership and support to business. Partnerships between business and communities will be encouraged across the whole of Australia to strengthen community cohesion and support innovative approaches to social issues.

AAA-FARM MANAGEMENT DEPOSITS SCHEME

The objective of the AAA-Farm Management Deposits Scheme is to encourage eligible primary producers to become financially self reliant by improving their financial risk and cash flow management practices. The scheme, which commenced operating in April 1999, provides a tax-linked financial risk management option to eligible primary producers to help deal with uneven income streams resulting from fluctuations in market and climatic conditions. The scheme allows taxable primary production income from profitable years to be set aside to improve cash flow management during more difficult years. It complements other risk management strategies available to primary producers such as developing fodder and water reserves, financial planning and diversifying the production system. As at 31 December 2001, more than 23,000 primary producers had more than \$1 billion invested in the scheme.

REGIONAL SOLUTIONS PROGRAMME

The Regional Solutions Programme is an innovative Commonwealth Government initiative helping regional, rural and remote communities find local solutions to local challenges. Some \$22.6 million has been allocated to the programme for 2002-03.

Regional Solutions is based on flexibility and the belief that the 'one size fits all' approach is not the answer for community capacity building in regional Australia. The programme provides grants to communities to plan and put into action development projects that will lead to stronger local economies and improved access to services.

Projects funded under the Regional Solutions Programme are run by the community for the community. The programme works with rural and regional communities that want to undertake projects to respond to economic challenges in their local community or region, or to build on their underlying strengths.

Grants of between \$1,000 and \$500,000 are available to not-for-profit community organisations or local governments (or local government agencies) based (or with a significant presence) in regional, rural or remote areas for:

- community planning;
- local project implementation;
- community adjustment initiatives;
- local industry development;
- resource people to work for a community or region; or
- regionally-based and community-oriented enterprise or infrastructure projects.

BACKING AUSTRALIA'S SPORTING ABILITY

In April 2001, the Government launched its new plan for sport, Backing Australia's Sporting Ability - a More Active Australia. The plan has four major policy objectives, one of which is to increase grassroots participation for sport at all ages. This will result in more sport being played, particularly by school children, in rural areas where sporting groups are often a vital factor in the cohesion of local communities.

To achieve these goals, the Government has budgeted record levels of financial support for the period 2001 to 2005, with an additional \$38.8 million allocated in 2002-03 for increasing grassroots participation. The Australian Sports Commission, as the Government's peak sports body, has primary responsibility for meeting these objectives.

PROMOTING SELF RELIANCE FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Employment outcomes and service delivery for Indigenous Australians will be improved through Indigenous-specific elements of the Australians Working Together Package announced in the 2001-02 Budget. These measures are:

- developing Community Participation Agreements negotiated between ATSIC and remote Indigenous communities;
- finding more jobs for Indigenous people by contracting certain Community Development Employment Project organisations to take the role of Indigenous Employment Centres;
- assisting Indigenous students to stay at school or undertake vocational training; and

- improving access to Centrelink services for remote Indigenous communities.

Some \$15.1 million has been allocated for these measures in 2002-03.

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES/MINING INDUSTRY REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAMME

Beginning in 2001-02, \$1.2 million over four years is being provided to promote mutually beneficial partnerships between the mining industry and Indigenous communities, and to encourage them to build on recent achievements in providing training, employment and business opportunities in remote areas.

REGIONAL WOMEN'S UNIT

The Federal Government has a Regional Women's Unit which aims to address the needs of regional, rural and remote communities, ensuring that women's perspectives are taken into account in the development of policies and programmes affecting regional Australia.

The unit also provides the secretariat for the Regional Women's Advisory Council, appointed by the Government to advise on key issues facing regional Australia and to ensure that the Government is aware of the views, aspirations and needs of regional and rural women.

The Regional Women's Advisory Council is now focusing on how existing Commonwealth Government programmes, such as the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy, can be used more effectively to address pressing social issues facing regional communities. The Council will report to the Government in August 2002.

NATIONAL RURAL WOMEN'S SECRETARIAT

The new National Rural Women's Secretariat, being established through the Office of the Status of Women, will provide the opportunity for rural women's organisations to work collaboratively to provide broad and representative advice on women's issues and circumstances to government. Being established under a coalition model, the new Secretariat will be a conduit for information exchange between government and the rural women's sector.

Promoting investment

REVAMPED INVEST AUSTRALIA

In December 2000 the Government decided to review the Commonwealth's inwards investment promotion and attraction efforts. Dr Ian Blackburne was appointed to conduct the review and presented his report to the Prime Minister in August 2001. In response, the Government decided that investment promotion and attraction will in the future be delivered through a revamped Invest Australia, which will become an autonomous agency within the Industry, Tourism and Resources portfolio. The new Invest Australia will also incorporate the investment promotion and attraction activities of other Commonwealth agencies. \$11 million has been allocated to the revamped Invest Australia for 2002-03.

The new arrangements will more actively involve the States and Territories. To formalise the increasingly close Commonwealth-State/Territory relationship, the Government intends to create a new National Investment Advisory Board. In addition, an immediate priority of the revamped Invest Australia will be to develop a whole-of-nation strategy for promoting and attracting foreign direct investment into Australia, and ensure that it is implemented effectively and efficiently. Developing the strategy will be done in partnership with the States and Territories.

The following projects are part of Invest Australia's programme.

Major Projects Facilitation

From July 2001 to April 2002 seven projects in regional areas were granted Major Project Facilitation (MPF) status. If all projects proceed as planned, they will generate additional capital expenditure of \$6.3 billion and some 960 full time jobs. A further project previously granted MPF status successfully completed the approvals processes necessary to proceed. If this project proceeds as planned, it will generate \$430 million in investment and create 80 full-time direct jobs.

Upon granting of MPF status by the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, Invest Australia provides the proponent of a major project with information, advice and support to achieve prompt decisions on necessary government approvals. It also identifies the sequence and timings for the key approvals and the relevant government programmes that may assist the project.

Feasibility Study Fund

Invest Australia administers the Feasibility Study Fund, which is designed to attract prospective investors to establish or expand business operations in Australia through new innovative projects. As at April 2002, there are two active studies in progress in

regional Australia, with the potential to generate \$158 million in investment and 170 new permanent jobs. In addition, four studies were completed between July 2001 and April 2002 for projects in regional Australia. Three of these projects are seeking investment and have the potential to generate more than \$98 million in investment and 125 new permanent jobs.

Investment Guide for Regional Australia (*Inside Intelligence*)

Invest Australia has prepared a guide, *Inside Intelligence: Building An Investors' Guide*, an innovative business tool designed especially to empower rural, remote and regional towns and areas to seek out and reach their potential. Using a step-by-step approach to identify investment opportunities and strengths, the guide recognises and builds on the knowledge that already exists within a community. The guide delivers a practical, low-cost process that regional communities can conduct with the assistance of existing resources and volunteers.

Strategic Investment Coordination

The Government acknowledges that in some circumstances there may be a need for specific incentives to be provided to secure strategic investments for Australia. The underlying rationale of the Strategic Investment Coordination process is to attract to Australia projects with significant net economic and employment benefits that would have otherwise located offshore. Proposals for incentives need to address in detail the Strategic Investment Coordination criteria.

EXPORT MARKET DEVELOPMENT GRANT EXTENSION

The Government will commit \$1.6 million over four years to double the minimum grant under the Export Market Development Grant scheme, which provides assistance to small and medium Australian-based companies trying to break into export markets. The minimum grant will be increased from \$2,500 to \$5,000.

SUPPLIER ACCESS TO MAJOR PROJECTS PROGRAMME

The Supplier Access to Major Projects (SAMP) Programme gives effect to the Government's commitment to the Australian Industry Participation Framework signed by Commonwealth, State and Territory Industry Ministers in April 2001. Funding for the programme was extended by another year with funding of \$3.1 million for 2002-03 provided in the Budget.

The SAMP Programme provides funding for technical specialists to work with the developers of major projects to identify and negotiate opportunities for Australian industry to participate in those projects. Since its commencement in 1997-98, the SAMP Programme has facilitated increased Australian industry participation in

49 major projects in which Australian industry has secured contracts worth \$678 million that might otherwise have gone to overseas suppliers.

ACTION AGENDAS

The Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources has policy responsibility for the development and implementation of action agendas. Action agendas provide a framework for industry and the Government to take a partnered approach to addressing impediments to industry growth and maximising opportunities for development.

Action agendas provide the opportunity to develop a coordinated approach that facilitates the upgrading of physical infrastructure and review planning and approval processes across State and local governments.

ENHANCED PROJECT BY-LAWS SCHEME

The Enhanced Project By-laws Scheme (EPBS) is an industry development tool that aims to lower costs for investment, encourage the adoption of innovative technology, assist industry to be more competitive and facilitate Australian industry participation in domestic and global supply chains. Project proponents importing capital equipment not made in Australia, or where the imported version is technologically superior, may be granted duty concessions under the scheme.

To be eligible for the EPBS, a project must have expenditure on eligible goods of \$10 million or more. The EPBS, which takes effect from 1 July 2002, applies to projects within the mining, resource processing, agriculture, food processing and packaging, manufacturing and gas supply sectors. The scheme is estimated to cost \$46 million in its first year.

While the EPBS is not exclusively targeted at regional areas, some regions which have significant manufacturing, resource processing and gas supply industries, will benefit from an increase in capital investment. Mining and agriculture sectors would also benefit from the broader definition of goods eligible for duty free entry.

AUSINDUSTRY

AusIndustry is the Federal Government's business unit within the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources. AusIndustry has been established to help Australian businesses become more innovative and internationally competitive. Many of the programmes delivered by AusIndustry are specifically designed to encourage innovation as a key growth strategy.

AusIndustry is committed to providing excellent, cost-effective and user friendly services. Through its State, Territory and 14 regional offices which commenced operations in December 2001, AusIndustry delivers around 30 programmes with a total value of about \$2 billion to some 8,000 customers annually.

Australia's non-self-governing territories

INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORIES FUNDING FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The isolated communities of Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands are wholly dependent on the Federal Government for funding of Government services. This includes services normally provided by State and local governments, such as education, health and housing.

In response to the recommendations of the Commonwealth Grants Commission Report on Indian Ocean Territories 1999, the Government has committed about \$52 million recurrent funding for 2002-03 to ensure that service delivery standards are, so far as practicable, the same as those of comparable communities on the mainland.

The Government has also committed capital funding of \$15.7 million in 2002-03 to upgrade infrastructure requirements for the delivery of mainland-equivalent services. This will help foster the social and economic capacity of these communities as well as facilitating and maintaining their links with the rest of Australia and the wider world economy.

NEW FREIGHT AND PASSENGER FACILITIES AT RUMAH BARU ON WEST ISLAND, COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS

A new all-weather freight and passenger facility will be built at Rumah Baru to replace the existing jetty, improving the safety, efficiency and reliability of freight and passenger transfers on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. Work on the new facilities will start in 2002-03 and is expected to take two years to complete.

SERVICE DELIVERY TO THE JERVIS BAY TERRITORY

The Federal Government provides most of the State and local government-type services to Jervis Bay Territory at a standard comparable with that of the adjoining Shoalhaven region of New South Wales. An annual expenditure in the order of \$4.4 million, with net outlays of \$3.5 million, ensures service delivery through arrangements primarily with the Australian Capital Territory, Shoalhaven City Council and the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council.

SUSTAINING OUR PRODUCTIVE NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

Prevention

The Commonwealth continues to provide national leadership, coordination and funding for the eradication of major plant pest, disease and weed incursions across a range of primary industry sectors, including agriculture and forestry, in conjunction with State Governments and industry. Eradication programme costs are currently shared with the Federal Government and State Governments, each funding 50 per cent of nationally agreed eradication programmes.

GOVERNMENT AND LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY COST SHARING DEED IN RESPECT OF EMERGENCY ANIMAL DISEASES

The new Government and Livestock Industry Cost Sharing Deed in Respect of Emergency Animal Diseases provides a certainty of funding for 63 emergency animal disease threats to Australia and facilitates a rapid and effective response. This will minimise the socio-economic consequences of the disease to Australia, in production losses, trade disruption, and public health or environmental consequences.

The deed provides for the sharing of eligible costs of an emergency animal disease response by governments and affected livestock industries. Eligible costs include the salaries and wages, operating costs and capital costs of the combat agencies above the cost of their normal level of animal health services. Costs eligible for cost sharing also include compensation to the owner of livestock or property that has been destroyed for the purpose of eradication or prevention of the spread of an emergency animal disease.

Emergency animal disease incidences cannot be forecast, so financial implications cannot be accurately determined. There are no immediate financial implications upon industry becoming a signatory to the new agreement. Financial implications are only incurred when, and if, cost sharing is invoked for an emergency animal disease in Category 2, 3 or 4 (Governments fully fund responses to emergency animal disease responses in Category 1). In recognising the need for a rapid response, the Federal Government has agreed to underwrite industry contributions in the event of a disease outbreak, preventing funding delays that could severely hamper a response.

BUILDING A NATIONAL APPROACH TO ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH

The Government is providing \$6.2 million in 2002-03 for the Building a National Approach to Animal and Plant Health initiative. This initiative helps to develop programmes to improve Australia's animal and plant health infrastructure and to improve pest and disease prevention and emergency response capacities. The

measures will minimise the impact of exotic pest and disease incursions on animal, aquatic animal and plant production and assist in maintaining and improving domestic and international markets.

ENHANCING ANIMAL HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE

Funding of \$10 million over four years from 2001-02 will enable the Federal Government to better prepare for a major national animal disease emergency and to better deploy its human and related resources for such events. A major foot and mouth disease outbreak in Australia would have a significant impact on the Australian economy, particularly in rural and regional areas. The overall economic cost in terms of lost trade is estimated to be more than \$10 billion and would cause significant job losses in livestock and associated industries. Exports of many animal and animal products would cease in the event of an outbreak and the trade aspect is particularly important to rural and regional Australia given its significant reliance on these exports.

While it is the responsibility of State and Territory Governments to combat the on-ground aspects of such a disease outbreak, the Federal Government has a major role to play in regaining trade and the national coordination of response strategies. The funding will be used to enhance the Federal Government's epidemiological resources and diagnostic capability as well as an associated higher level of emergency preparedness by way of improved communication, planning, training and information management systems.

RED IMPORTED FIRE ANT ERADICATION PROGRAMME

The Federal Government is contributing 50 per cent of the costs of the containment and eradication of the exotic, invasive pest, the red imported fire ant, with funding of \$15.5 million in 2002-03. This species - a significant pest of plant and animal industries, a potentially calamitous environmental threat, and a serious public nuisance - has been confined to two areas in south-east Queensland. It is the target of an intensive, nationally coordinated eradication and surveillance programme. If the ant were to have spread to rural and regional areas eradication would not have been possible and ongoing control costs would have become a local responsibility. The total cost to Australia of a widespread fire ant invasion has been estimated at around \$6.7 billion over 30 years.

NORTHERN AUSTRALIA QUARANTINE STRATEGY

The Government is providing \$16.9 million over four years to continue the Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy, which undertakes the identification of quarantine risks to northern Australia and provides early warning of quarantine risks and pest incursions.

This continues protection of Australia's animal, plant and human health, and the environment through a programme of monitoring, surveillance and public awareness across northern Australia and in neighbouring areas of Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and East Timor.

AUSTRALIA'S RESPONSE TO FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE AND OTHER QUARANTINE RISKS

The Government is providing \$592.8 million over five years from 2000-01 to provide additional resourcing and infrastructure to strengthen Australia's defence against the introduction of exotic pests and diseases, including foot and mouth disease.

The funding is being used to implement a heightened quarantine inspection regime to cover 100 per cent of all goods and mail entering Australia. It will also cover approximately 80 per cent of all passenger baggage entering Australia via airports except for some passengers arriving at peak times from certain low risk countries such as New Zealand. Monitoring of airline and ship waste disposal is also being increased.

CHEMCOLLECT

ChemCollect is a national programme providing farmers with the opportunity to safely dispose of unwanted agricultural and veterinary chemicals. The programme has a particular focus on hazardous farm chemicals that are no longer registered for use.

Collections have been completed in the Northern Territory, but will continue in the States until late in 2002.

The Federal Government is contributing approximately \$13.5 million to the programme, to be matched on a dollar for dollar basis by State and Northern Territory Governments. This one-off government funded collection scheme will be followed by ongoing chemicals collections funded by the agricultural chemicals industry.

Conservation

INCENTIVES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS IN AGRICULTURE

The Government will provide funding of \$25 million over five years for the Incentives for Environmental Management Systems (EMS) in Agriculture Programme, to support primary producers in adopting an environmental management system. Fifty per cent of the costs of eligible EMS expenditure, up to a maximum of \$3,000 per primary

producer on taxable incomes up to \$35,000 per annum, will be reimbursed. The programme will be funded from within the Natural Heritage Trust.

This measure will help rural-based industries address changing market expectations of food and fibre products and widespread adoption may assist rural regions to promote their sustainability.

CONSERVATION COVENANTS

This measure provides an incentive for landholders to maintain the value of the natural Australian environment. It allows deductions for those who enter into perpetual conservation covenants with a deductible gift recipient, without consideration. Eligible perpetual conservation covenants are those that restrict or prohibit activities that degrade the environmental value of the land and are approved by the Minister for the Environment and Heritage. The measure will apply from 1 July 2002.

CORPORATISATION OF THE SNOWY MOUNTAINS HYDRO-ELECTRIC AUTHORITY: COMMONWEALTH FUNDING FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL FLOWS

The Federal Government will provide \$75 million over 10 years to deliver a significant increase in environmental flows down the Snowy River.

The Federal Government and the New South Wales and Victorian Governments will provide a total of \$375 million to implement water efficiency projects and carry out riverine works. This will benefit the environmental condition of the River Murray and Snowy River and key alpine rivers. Significant environmental and economic benefits include:

- enhancement of water security arrangements in the Murray-Darling Basin;
- increased salinity dilution;
- water for environmental purposes;
- increased water security for irrigators;
- increased quality and volume of water for South Australia;
- improved environmental condition of the river;
- increased employment; and
- ecotourism in the area, especially in regard to recreational fishing and boating.

MANAGEMENT OF AUSTRALIA'S LAND AND INLAND WATER RESOURCES

Two of the most critical issues confronting Australia's environment, rural industries, and regional communities, are salinity and deteriorating water quality. The National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality is a \$1.4 billion joint investment from the Federal Government and the State and Territory Governments to address these water quality and salinity issues.

A core element of the National Action Plan is the development of integrated regional plans. Governments will support this approach through substantial funding for strategic actions specified in regional plans and through the provision of technical assistance, skills training, information and data. Support will also involve the development of pilot programmes for market-based instruments to encourage best practice management to ensure that actions have long-lasting benefits. In 2001-02, the Government expended \$2.2 million to implement regional plans.

NATURAL HERITAGE TRUST

The Natural Heritage Trust was established by the Federal Government in 1996 to repair and replenish Australia's natural capital infrastructure.

The Government will provide more than a further \$1 billion to extend the Natural Heritage Trust for a further five years from 2002-03, bringing total funding since 1996 to more than \$2.7 billion. This represents more than 11 years commitment to funding on-ground actions to conserve and repair Australia's unique environment.

Coupled with funds rolled over from previous years and income from interest, the \$1 billion new funding will bring budgeted spending to \$250 million per year in 2002-03 and 2003-04, rising to \$310 million per year in 2004-05 and 2005-06, and to \$300 million in 2006-07. *The Natural Heritage Trust of Australia Act (1997)* requires that a minimum balance of \$300 million remains in the Trust Reserve from 2001-02 onwards, with interest generated by this balance allocated towards the purposes of the trust.

From its inception in 1996-97, the trust was funded from the proceeds of the partial sale of Telstra. The \$1 billion extension of the trust will, however, be fully funded from consolidated revenue. The Commonwealth will seek matching funding from the States and Territories for investments it makes under the trust.

The trust has been instrumental in raising the awareness and understanding within the Australian community of environmental issues. More than \$1.4 billion of trust and related programme funding has already been approved for more than 11,800 projects around Australia since 1996, involving almost 400,000 Australians. Funding has been targeted at on-ground environmental and natural resource management projects.

The extension of the trust will be enhanced by the important lessons learnt during its first six years. The programme structure will be simplified, with future investment

made through four overarching programmes against 10 areas of activity. The programmes are:

Landcare – reversing land degradation and promoting sustainable agriculture;

Bushcare – conserving and restoring habitat for our unique native flora and fauna which underpin the health of our landscapes;

Rivercare – improving water quality and environmental condition in our river systems and wetlands; and

Coastcare – protecting our coastal catchments, ecosystems and the marine environment.

Under the extension of the trust, funding will be invested at three levels – national, regional and local.

At the local level, the trust will continue to fund individuals and small community groups through the Australian Government Envirofund. The Envirofund was launched in early April and applications close on World Environment Day – 5 June. Through grants of up to \$30,000 it will help groups to undertake important work at a local scale, as well as increase their capacity to participate more fully in regional natural resource management planning processes.

The main focus of investment under the trust will occur at the regional level. Investment in a wide range of conservation and sustainable resource use projects will continue, but will be guided by accredited regional natural resource management plans.

To help the community move towards regional natural resource management, the Commonwealth will ensure that funds are available in 2002-03 for at least 650 facilitator and coordinator positions. This will ensure that the investment in skills development over the first phase of the trust is not lost, and that the community is actively supported in using the Envirofund and in working with regional bodies to develop and implement regional plans. This network will complement the State and Territory Governments' natural resource management responsibilities.

With \$1 billion in new funding over the period 2002-03 to 2006-07, the trust will have the capacity to provide funding on a three year rolling basis to regional bodies to assist in implementing their natural resource management plans.

At the national level, the trust will continue to invest in activities that cross over regional boundaries, and in matters of direct Commonwealth responsibility such as Commonwealth waters.

The new arrangements for the trust will take effect from 1 July 2002.

GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK AUTHORITY

Care and development of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) is the Commonwealth Statutory Authority responsible for the care and development of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The Federal Government is providing \$31.2 million in funding during 2002-03 (excluding the measures below). The Authority works in partnership with Commonwealth Government and Queensland Government agencies to ensure that the conservation and world heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef are preserved for future generations.

Conservation of the Great Barrier Reef is the Authority's primary obligation. The challenge is to ensure that valuable regional tourist and commercial fishing industries worth directly and indirectly more than \$1 billion per annum and other important uses such as adjacent land use, shipping and recreational activities continue to operate on an ecologically sustainable basis.

Management of aquaculture impacts

The Government is providing \$1.8 million over four years from 2001-02 (nearly \$0.5 million in 2002-03), to the Authority to enhance management of aquaculture adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. Coastal aquaculture, particularly prawn farming, is a fast-growing industry on the Queensland coast. This measure will serve to ensure that aquaculture developments do not affect the environmental values of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Townsville Aquarium – Reef Headquarters

The Government is providing \$6.4 million over four years from 2001-02, (\$0.5 million in 2002-03) to support the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority during refurbishment of the Townsville Aquarium – Reef Headquarters. The funding will enable the development of a business plan and allow the Authority to meet operational expenses for this major regional tourism facility and education centre. This additional funding will enhance the facility for visitors and ensure that health and safety standards are maintained. Additional work generated by the measure will generate employment opportunities in the region.

Energy and greenhouse

LAUNCESTON WOODHEATER REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME

The Federal Government is providing \$2.1 million over two years to address severe air quality problems in Launceston. The Federal Government, in conjunction with State

and local governments, has implemented a package of actions to reduce air pollution from woodheaters, a major problem in the region. The core component of the programme is a Natural Heritage Trust-funded financial incentive scheme to encourage householders to switch to cleaner burning heating appliances.

The programme also aims to foster and complement action by State and local governments, and suppliers and installers of heating equipment; and to increase public awareness of woodsmoke, its health effects and the role the community can play in reducing woodheater emissions.

The programme is being administered by Environment Australia and the Launceston City Council, in collaboration with the Tasmanian State Department of Primary Industries, Water and the Environment.

It is expected that this programme will deliver significant long-term benefits as a result of improved regional air quality and associated health savings. Additional benefits include the development of a woodheater replacement model that can be replicated in other woodsmoke-affected regions.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY BEST PRACTICE PROGRAMME

Funding of \$2.2 million in 2002-03 for the Energy Efficiency Best Practice Programme will assist industry at a sectoral level to become sustainable and competitive through the stimulation of continuous and big-step improvements in the efficient use of energy through a range of information, advisory services and management tools. This will help to reduce business costs, increase competitiveness and contributes to the abatement of greenhouse gas emissions.

Commencing in 1998, it is an important element of the Australian Government's package of measures to address climate change and was allocated \$10.3 million over five years to support its development and implementation. These services are provided to industries engaged in the programme, irrespective of their location. Rural industries specifically engaged with the programme include the dairy processing, wine, resource processing and the pulp and paper sectors.

AUSTRALIA GREENHOUSE OFFICE

The Australian Greenhouse Office (AGO) is the world's only national agency dedicated to tackling greenhouse gas emissions. The AGO administers a broad range of programmes that are, in many instances, world-leading in supporting the broad uptake of cost-effective greenhouse gas abatement across industry and community, including the growth of the renewable energy industry. Programmes with a direct impact on regional Australia include:

Renewable Remote Power Generation Programme

For eligible projects, the Renewable Remote Power Generation Programme (RRPGP) provides rebates of up to 50 per cent of the cost of installing renewable energy generation equipment that reduces diesel use for off-grid electricity supply. The RRPGP is funded from excise paid on diesel used to generate electricity by public generators. States and Territories will be allocated funding on the basis of the relevant diesel fuel excise paid in that State or Territory. The Federal Government will provide \$17.7 million in 2002-03.

Greenhouse Gas Abatement Programme

The Government is providing \$400 million from 2000-01 under the Greenhouse Gas Abatement Programme (\$50.4 million in 2002-03) to reduce Australia's net greenhouse gas emissions. The programme supports activities that are likely to result in substantial emission reduction or substantial sink enhancement. To date, approximately \$150 million has been offered to successful proponents, to support projects with a total value of \$1.1 billion. These projects include Regional Partnership in the Douglas Shire on Renewable Energy and Greenhouse Gas Abatement; Energy Efficient Calcination in Queensland Alumina in Gladstone; Lignite Predrying using Mechanical Thermal Expression by Latrobe Valley generators; and CargoSprinter – a new concept in moving freight by rail in regional Victoria.

Diesel and Alternative Fuel Grant Scheme

This scheme maintains the price relativities between diesel and alternative transport fuels by allowing on-road transport operators, who are eligible for the diesel grant, to be eligible for alternative fuel grants. The maintenance of the price relativities between diesel and alternative fuels encourages wider use of alternative fuels, which may reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality. Eligible users of CNG, LPG, ethanol and canola oil qualify for alternative fuel grants. With some exceptions, the scheme generally applies to eligible operators of vehicles with a gross vehicle mass of more than 4.5 tonnes outside of metropolitan areas or 20 tonnes in metropolitan areas. The scheme is administered by the Australian Taxation Office and the Chief Executive of the Australian Greenhouse Office may certify additional alternative fuels.

Bush for Greenhouse

The Government has allocated a total of \$5.5 million to Bush for Greenhouse (\$1 million for 2002-03). The programme is encouraging investment in revegetation for environmental and greenhouse benefits, and is delivering valuable benefits to Australia by building our expertise and capacity in carbon sequestration. A series of tools has been developed relating to project scale carbon accounting and verification and legal and administrative arrangements, including tools for pool management and regional brokering.

Natural disasters

REGIONAL FLOOD MITIGATION PROGRAMME

In 2002-03 the Government will allocate \$10 million under the Regional Flood Mitigation Programme, designed to assist State and Territory Governments and local agencies to reduce the substantial economic and social costs of flooding in rural, regional and outer metropolitan areas of Australia.

Funding is directed to priority, cost effective flood mitigation works and measures. Eligible projects include flood control dams, retarding basins, levees, channel improvements, voluntary purchase of flood prone properties, house raising, community awareness programmes and flood warning systems. The Government meets one third of the cost of all approved projects.

Since the programme was established in 1999, a number of significant flood mitigation measures have been undertaken and more than \$20 million in Government funding has already been provided.

NATURAL DISASTER RELIEF ARRANGEMENTS

The Federal Government partly reimburses State and Territory expenditure for natural disaster relief payments and infrastructure restoration. Funding is provided once their expenditure exceeds a certain threshold.

Natural disasters covered by these arrangements include bushfires, cyclones, earthquakes, floods, storms/storm surge and landslides (consequential upon an eligible event). Budget allocation under this programme is notional due to the unpredictability of the incidence and severity of natural disasters.

NATURAL DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT STUDIES PROGRAMME

The Government provides up to \$3 million per annum toward the cost of the studies under this programme. State and Territory Governments and local governments meet at least two-thirds of the costs of the studies, with the State at least matching the Commonwealth's contribution.

Risk management studies identify risks and potential mitigation measures leading to the wider adoption of preventative measures. The studies also assist emergency management agencies to further develop strategies to minimise the impact of natural disaster and to enhance the response capacity of those agencies.

DELIVERING BETTER REGIONAL SERVICES

Service delivery

CENTRELINK SERVICE TO REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

Centrelink is the Commonwealth's primary service delivery agency, with responsibility for administering an extensive range of payments and services. This includes social security payments, childcare assistance, programmes targeted at primary producers, and other emergency-like assistance such as the Ansett Stranded Travellers Assistance Package, and the Volunteer Firefighters package.

Centrelink has completed a review of its National Rural and Regional Servicing Strategy, which was implemented in July 1998, and has subsequently introduced a second phase of this strategy. Centrelink is continuing to tailor its services to the particular needs of small rural and regional communities and, under phase two, has expanded its presence into many more communities with more than 80 new servicing arrangements.

It is important that remote Indigenous communities are able to access Centrelink services on the same basis as other Australians. Under the Australians Working Together Package, Centrelink is establishing 12 new remote area service centres in strategic locations to service surrounding Indigenous communities, including outstations. Centrelink will train and recruit local Indigenous staff to work in these centres.

Funding for these services was made available from within existing resources, with total expenditure under the National Rural and Regional Servicing Strategy for the years 1998-99 to 2002-03 expected to be between \$8 million and \$9 million.

Centrelink currently has:

- 312 Customer Service Centres across Australia, of which 167 are located in, or are responsible for delivering a service to, rural and regional Australia;
- a network of nearly 450 community-based agents and access points that provide a daily contact and information service on Centrelink's behalf (148 of these are targeted at assisting Indigenous customers);
- a range of visiting services to small rural towns, as well as many remote visiting teams servicing isolated Indigenous communities;
- two dedicated rural call centres in Maryborough, Queensland and Port Augusta, South Australia, tailored to meet the needs of people in rural and remote communities;

- a farmers' 1800 enquiry line on initiatives targeted at primary producers; and
- a presence in approximately 16 of the Rural Transaction Centres opened to date.

Centrelink has also established productive relationships with Commonwealth Government, State and local governments and the private sector to improve access to Centrelink services for rural customers. Some examples of successful collaborative efforts include the partnerships with the WA Telecentre Network, Service Tasmania and the Commonwealth Department of Transport and Regional Services' Rural Transaction Centres Programme.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE GRANTS

The Federal Government recognises the important role local government plays in delivering services and managing infrastructure for regional Australians. In 2002-03, local government will be paid approximately \$1.436 billion in financial assistance grants from the Federal Government, an increase of 3.6 per cent, or about \$50 million, over the amount paid in 2001-02*. About 30 per cent of these funds is notionally allocated to councils for spending on local roads. About \$965 million of the total funds will go to the 579 councils in rural and regional Australia. All of these funds are untied and councils can spend them according to the needs and priorities of the local community.

** In addition, \$11.4 million will be paid to councils in 2002-03 because of the adjustment applied to the 2001-02 grants. Adjustments to the previous year's grants occur each year.*

RURAL TRANSACTION CENTRES PROGRAMME

The Government has committed \$70 million over five years (1999-2004) for the Rural Transaction Centres (RTCs) Programme. Funding for 2002-03 is \$21.3 million.

The programme helps small, rural communities to establish centres that provide access to basic transaction services such as banking, post, phone, fax, the internet, Centrelink services and Medicare Easyclaim. Assistance may also be available to help provide access to an extended range of services unlikely to be provided commercially, such as Job Network, videoconferencing and rooms for visiting professionals and a broad range of community services. Local communities with populations under 3,000 benefit from the programme.

The Government has enhanced the RTC programme to extend eligibility to Licensed Post Offices, to provide more Commonwealth services through RTCs, to improve linkages with State services and programmes and through the operations of the Field Officer Network.

MORE ACCESSIBLE GOVERNMENT

Under More Accessible Government, Commonwealth Government departments are working collaboratively to improve access to grant programmes and to streamline grant administration, with a particular focus on regional, rural and remote communities.

Grantslink was the first product of the More Accessible Government initiative and can be visited at www.grantslink.gov.au. Information on a wide range of Commonwealth Government grants programmes is available. For those without internet access, however, an operator at a freecall number (1800 026 222) can guide them through information available on the website.

More Accessible Government has simplified the paperwork that goes with Commonwealth Government funding. For example, application forms will have a common registration page that collects standard information from applicants about their organisation.

Current work includes developing standard funding agreements for Commonwealth funding programmes used by the general community; improving consultation methods, and mapping Commonwealth networks Australia wide.

REMOTE COMMUNITIES LIAISON SERVICE

In October 1999, a Remote Communities Liaison Officer began working as an outposted whole-of-government officer, based in Longreach, Queensland. The officer is not tied to the promotion of a single programme, instead providing a whole-of-government response to communities.

The officer has been very effective in:

- improving access to and understanding of Commonwealth and Queensland programmes;
- tailoring responses from the community; and
- testing joint funding across programmes to meet community needs.

PETROLEUM PRODUCTS FREIGHT SUBSIDY SCHEME

The Petroleum Products Freight Subsidy Scheme reimburses costs that are incurred above a specified level by oil companies and other fuel distributors for transporting eligible petroleum products to customers in more than 100 remote communities. The aim of the scheme is to benefit these remote consumers by reducing the freight costs of petrol, diesel, aviation gasoline and aviation turbine fuel.

The estimated funding for the scheme in 2002-03 is \$3.5 million.

Employment

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT EMPLOYMENT PROJECTS

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the Torres Strait Regional Authority will spend \$511 million in 2002-03 on Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP). The projects offer meaningful work to 36,880 participants and provide social, economic and cultural benefits to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Participants of CDEP voluntarily forego their government income support entitlement to work on these projects.

REGIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

In 2002-03, \$24.5 million will be provided through the Department of Transport and Regional Services for the Regional Assistance Programme, including community-based projects, Area Consultative Committee operations and national projects.

The Regional Assistance Programme contributes to the achievement of national employment goals in regional Australia, by encouraging business and communities to take action, in partnership with government, to build business growth and to stimulate sustainable employment.

Assistance to regions is provided through seed funding to not-for-profit organisations, and funded projects are developed in the context of the relevant Area Consultative Committee regional strategic plan.

AREA CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES

There are 56 Area Consultative Committees (ACCs), which operate throughout Australia and are funded through the Regional Assistance Programme. Of these, 43 are located in regional, rural and remote areas. The ACCs comprise business and community representatives who work towards finding community-based solutions for jobs growth, skills development, regional growth and improved service delivery.

AUSTRALIANS WORKING TOGETHER

In the 2001-02 Federal Budget, the Government announced Australians Working Together. This is a substantial up-front investment to build a more active, participation-based, social safety net to substantially improve our welfare system. It is

a joint measure between Commonwealth Government departments, with the Department of Family and Community Services working as lead agency.

Under *Australians Working Together*, announced in last year's Budget, the Government will spend an additional \$324 million on employment services over four years to reduce welfare dependency and maximise the number of job seekers moving to paid employment.

About 40 per cent of the proposed expenditure for this measure will be spent on rural and regional Australia. About \$111 million will be spent on Training Credits and Training Accounts, so that eligible job seekers can gain work-related skills. Of this, approximately \$48 million will be spent in regional Australia. The Government is also improving employment assistance outcomes across urban, regional and remote areas by enhancing Work for the Dole, Job Search Training and Intensive Assistance Programmes. Of the additional 16,500 Work for the Dole places, approximately 7,800 will be in rural and regional Australia, and of the additional 30,000 Job Search Training places, approximately 12,000 will be in rural and regional Australia.

The first Indigenous Employment Centres, announced as part of *Australians Working Together* in the 2001-02 Federal Budget, have begun operation, with more beginning from 1 July 2002. Under this initiative, Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) organisations are contracted to take on the additional role of Indigenous Employment Centres, providing further help to Indigenous people to obtain work in areas where job opportunities usually exist, for example in urban and many regional centres. By 2004-05, Indigenous Employment Centres will be providing job search support, work experience, access to accredited training, and ongoing mentoring and support for up to 10,000 CDEP participants. By working with local employers and Job Network Members, the centres will encourage people to find work and help them retain it. This initiative, developed in consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, complements the successful Indigenous Employment Programme.

JOB NETWORK

Regional Australia will benefit from improvements to the Job Network announced in the 2002-03 Budget. Job Network is a national network of about 200 private, community and government organisations helping unemployed people to find work, particularly those who are long-term unemployed.

Current Job Network contracts will expire on 30 June 2003. The offer of new contracts at that time provides a major opportunity to build on *Australians Working Together* initiatives so that employment services are improved and more individualised service delivery to job seekers is secured.

The active participation model will be a major step forward. It will:

- simplify the current range of services available to job seekers;
- provide easier access to a wider range of job opportunities;
- provide better targeted and more timely services for those most in need;
- further strengthen the culture of active job search and participation for the unemployed; and
- provide more effective incentives for service providers to invest in assistance that will secure higher levels of outcomes for all job seekers, especially the most disadvantaged.

The new contracts will build on the improved access that was delivered as part of the last Job Network purchasing process, including in regional and remote Australia. The changes to Job Matching will mean access to more vacancies through an expanded network of Job Placement Agencies and more online vacancies. The new Job Seeker Account will provide better access to fares assistance for job interviews for long-term unemployed. Job seekers will be able to access a single Job Network member to provide them with support and help them find a job; they will not have to register with multiple Job Network members. In addition, there will be more Work for the Dole places in rural and regional areas where paid job opportunities are scarce.

The Government will also maintain its Harvest Labour Services as tangible evidence of its support for rural industries and improve the coordination and marketing of these services. Other Job Network changes announced in the Budget guarantee job seekers more personalised quality services. Job Network members will have the flexibility to provide tailored assistance to job seekers taking into account regional variations and issues related to location.

Family services

BABY BONUS

On 28 October 2001, the Government announced its intention to provide further tax relief to families through the introduction of the baby bonus. The baby bonus recognises that one of the hardest financial times for families is on the birth of their first child, when one parent often gives up or reduces his or her paid employment.

The baby bonus will be able to be claimed as a refundable tax offset for the 2001-02 financial year and subsequent years and will apply to first children born on or after 1 July 2001. As a transitional measure, it will also apply to children born on or after 1 July 2001 for families who already have children. Parents adopting or otherwise gaining legal custody of a first child will also be eligible.

The baby bonus will pay back to a parent who leaves the workforce after the birth of the child the tax payable on his or her income earned in the year prior to the birth of the child. Parents will be able to claim up to \$2,500 annually for up to five years, and a minimum annual benefit of \$500 will be available to parents with annual incomes of \$25,000 or less in the year they claim the bonus. Where the parent returns to work, the benefit will be reduced in proportion to the income earned. The benefit will also be transferable between spouses.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY NETWORK INITIATIVE

From 2002-03, the Federal Government will provide \$8.5 million over four years to continue the Family and Community Network Initiative. This programme provides funding for projects to build community strength and community networking in disadvantaged areas. It aims to improve coordination and collaboration between government jurisdictions and encourages the involvement of local business in community development. Approximately 70 per cent of projects will be in regional Australia.

Funding of \$1 million will be provided in 2002-03, with funding of \$7.5 million to be provided over the three years from 2003-04 to 2005-06.

STRONGER FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES STRATEGY

The Government will revise the amount of funding provided for the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy to reflect better the time needed for community capacity building processes. Funding will be reduced by \$10 million in 2002-03 and \$6.5 million in 2003-04 to allow more project development time. New projects will continue to be funded under the revised allocations.

Project development will continue during 2002-03, with an emphasis on disadvantaged communities requiring longer-term solutions.

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

The Government will provide \$5.3 million to maintain the Men and Family Relationships Programme and Family Relationships Education Programme. Both programmes have significant services in rural and regional areas and have been extended in response to the Family Law Pathways Report.

Men and Family Relationships Programme

In 2002-03, \$4 million will be provided to continue funding for 54 men's services through the Men and Family Relationships Programme.

In 1997, under the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Initiative, the Federal Government announced funding specifically for services to assist men with their family relationships. The programme was established because of the relative under use of existing counselling and relationship services by men. The first round of 18 services was supplemented in 1999 by the establishment of a further 36 services. The funding provided will allow the existing 54 services to be extended for a further year.

Twenty-five of the 54 Men and Family Relationships projects provide services in rural and regional areas. The services help men to deal with family relationships and to seek help both to reduce separation and to deal with the emotional consequences of separation. Importantly, the services aim to reduce incidence of male suicide and family violence as well as contributing to increased child support compliance. Service providers are encouraged to trial innovative service delivery methods to address the special needs of families in their areas.

Family Relationships Education Programme

The Government will provide \$1.3 million to maintain family relationships education services in rural, regional and remote Australia. This measure continues additional relationship education funding provided by the Government in 1997 through the Justice Statement and maintains current levels of rural relationship education services.

The Family Relationships Education Programme provides early intervention and prevention services through more than 160 outlets throughout Australia. These services include family relationships education, parenting, and pre-marriage education courses that provide skills-based education to couples to help them strengthen their relationships.

PARTNERSHIPS AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

One of the themes of the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence (PADV) initiative (\$50 million over seven years to 2004), has been helping people in rural and remote communities. The high priority of rural and remote issues reflects the isolation and lack of support services faced by many women in rural and remote areas experiencing domestic violence.

More than \$3.7 million in funding has been provided to a number of rural and remote projects aimed at expanding information and referral services to women and children escaping domestic violence, and to assist communities to address violence at the community level. In addition, \$8 million was provided to States and Territories, and, where projects in communities were funded, the majority of these were in regional, rural and remote areas.

The national Indigenous Family Violence Grants Programme has received \$6 million under PADV to assist grassroots organisations to develop culturally appropriate projects with innovative responses to family violence.

The initiative has also undertaken a study of good practice in facilitating the victims of domestic violence's access to the civil and criminal law systems. A focus of the study was to identify rural and remote good practice. The study has identified models which are capable of being replicated across Australia, and some models are being adapted and applied in other settings.

RECONNECT

Reconnect is a youth homelessness early intervention programme that began operating in December 1999, with 93 Reconnect services operational by April 2002. Services are located in communities of high need identified by the State and Territory Governments, with an objective of reconnecting young people with family, education, training, employment and their community.

When fully implemented, the programme will fund Reconnect services in about 100 communities nationwide. Approximately 50 per cent of funding (around \$10 million per annum) will provide services to regional, rural and remote communities.

FLEXIBLE AND INNOVATIVE CHILD CARE SERVICES

Since coming to office in 1996, the Government has acknowledged and responded to the unmet demand for child care and the special requirements of service delivery in rural and regional Australia, by providing flexible services which meet community needs. Ongoing recurrent funding of \$4 million per annum is available to support these services in rural and regional areas.

Flexible services are being established in small rural communities and regional areas with dispersed populations, where the need for formal child care has been identified but where the standard models of care, such as long day care, outside school hours care and family day care, are either inappropriate or unavailable.

Funding is also provided to assist with the child care needs of children with additional needs, including children and parents with disabilities, children from non-English-speaking backgrounds, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Funding in excess of \$20 million per annum is provided for multifunctional children's services, multifunctional Aboriginal children's services and playgroups, mobile services, and enrichment programmes targeted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

JOBS EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMME

During 2002-03, more than \$14 million will be allocated towards providing assistance for child care under the Jobs, Education and Training (JET) Programme. This programme helps certain groups of Centrelink customers overcome constraints to their participation in employment, education or training. In more remote regions where formal child care is not available, temporary creches can be established to care for children of JET customers while they participate in work-related activities.

Health and aged care

BETTER TREATMENT FOR CANCER PATIENTS – RADIATION ONCOLOGY

The Better Treatment for Cancer Patients – Radiation Oncology Budget initiative commits \$72.7 million over four years, with \$13.1 million in 2002-03 for a range of measures that will:

- increase the availability of radiotherapy services for patients living in regional areas;
- enhance the number of radiation therapy facilities in targeted areas of need. This measure provides funding for up to six new regional radiotherapy centres; and
- support the radiotherapy workforce to ensure there are sufficient staff to treat patients.

The precise details of funding for this measure will be determined by the findings of the Radiation Oncology Inquiry. The inquiry will report in mid 2002 and will provide recommendations on how best to increase patient access to radiotherapy services for people living in regional and rural Australia.

CROC FESTIVALS – SUPPORT FOR INDIGENOUS YOUTH

Croc Festivals enable young Indigenous people in remote communities to take part in festival performances and a range of education, health and lifestyle activities.

Participation by young Indigenous people in the festivals has led to improved attitudes to school, better teacher/student relations and an increased awareness about health. The festivals also provide links between community agencies and state and local governments.

As part of the Government's National Illicit Drug Strategy, \$1.2 million in additional funding is being provided to the Croc Festivals over the next four years.

The Government's commitment supports remote communities in their determination to see their young people attend school regularly and lead healthy lives without tobacco, alcohol and other drugs.

MEDICAL SPECIALIST OUTREACH ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

The Government will provide \$4 million in 2002-03 to fund a new support scheme for rural specialists, which will be provided to specialist medical colleges through an invited application programme. This is a new element of the Medical Specialist Outreach Assistance Programme. Applications will be invited from the nine specialist colleges with an existing substantial rural presence for projects or services to support:

- specialists already in rural areas; and
- specialists undertaking outreach into rural areas.

The new programme will complement the existing programme activities.

PALLIATIVE CARE IN THE COMMUNITY

This Palliative Care in the Community initiative will enable people to receive treatment in a dignified manner and in a setting of their choice, including their own homes and residential aged care homes.

The Government will provide \$55 million over four years to:

- improve capacity in the primary care workforce, through education and training for general practitioners, and initiatives to support the role of the nursing and allied health workers;
- enhance systems to ensure adequate specialist backup and improved coordination between hospital and community care to reduce inappropriate hospital admissions;
- coordinate health and other support systems in the community sector to ensure families and friends are able to access the support they need;
- develop better reporting and information systems to inform future planning and policy;
- build evidence on appropriate funding and service delivery models across settings;
- improve access to medications in the community; and

- raise awareness about palliative care in the wider community.

AGED CARE

More than 40 per cent of aged care places are located in regional, rural and remote areas of Australia. The Federal Government has substantially increased funding for aged care. Funding in 2002-03 will reach \$5.6 billion, an increase of half a billion dollars over the previous year. A substantial proportion of this funding is delivered in rural and regional areas.

CAPITAL ASSISTANCE FOR AGED CARE IN RURAL AND REMOTE AUSTRALIA

Smaller aged care homes in rural and remote areas can have difficulty in meeting accreditation standards and maintaining their financial viability. In particular, their capacity to generate capital funds through accommodation bonds and charges may be limited.

The Government will make \$25 million available in additional grants each year over the next four years to assist with building and upgrading capital costs of homes in rural and remote areas.

INCREASED RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE SUBSIDIES

Increased residential aged care subsidies will boost funding by \$211.1 million over four years to help ensure that the momentum associated with the Government's Aged Care Reform Agenda is maintained.

In the longer term, the distribution of funding will be subject to the outcome of a review of pricing arrangements for residential aged care.

REVIEW OF PRICING ARRANGEMENTS FOR RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE

As part of the process to examine long-term financing options for aged care, the Government will provide \$7.1 million over two years to conduct a review of the pricing arrangements for residential aged care.

The review will take into account the improved care requirements under accreditation; underlying cost pressures including movements in nurses' and other wages, and industry views.

MORE AGED CARE NURSES AND TRAINING FOR PERSONAL CARE WORKERS

The shortage of nurses is a worldwide concern. The under-supply of aged care nurses in rural and regional Australia is of particular concern and may jeopardise the momentum of reforms in the aged care sector.

Additional funding of \$26.3 million over four years will provide up to 250 scholarships, valued at up to \$10,000 a year, for students from regional areas to undertake undergraduate, postgraduate or re-entry nursing studies at rural and regional universities.

Additional funding of \$21.2 million over four years will also enable personal care staff in smaller, less viable aged care homes to take up a range of accredited courses related to geriatric care. Participating aged care homes will be assisted with course fees and other associated costs including travel, accommodation and replacement staff.

COMMUNITY AGED CARE PACKAGES

Aged care packages give older people the opportunity to stay in their own homes close to their communities for as long as possible, rather than going into residential care. The 2002-03 Federal Budget commits \$68.8 million to provide an extra 6,000 Community Aged Care Packages over four years.

CARERS OF OLDER AUSTRALIANS

Additional funding over four years of \$30 million will increase support to carers by:

- expanding Commonwealth-funded respite services, especially for carers in rural and remote areas; and
- subsidising the cost of specialised equipment (special beds, lifting devices), minor modifications within the home, and transport.

The funding will also improve emotional and psychological support for carers through counselling provided by Carer Resource Centres.

SUPPORT FOR CARERS OF PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA

Carers of people with dementia often face a difficult and stressful role in challenging situations. In addition, appropriate respite services often mean increased costs to ensure safe, secure accommodation for dementia-specific care, and access to permanent high-level residential care.

The Government will provide an additional \$20 million over four years to:

- enable Carer Respite Centres to pay a top up subsidy to providers of aged care homes to assist them to improve access to this specialised care; and
- expand the coverage of psychogeriatric units, which provide specialised management advice and assistance around dementia issues to carers in the community as well as to aged care homes and other mainstream programmes.

SUPPORT FOR AGEING CARERS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Of the 3.4 million Australians with a disability, many live in households with ageing carers. More than half require assistance with personal care and daily living activities. As carers grow older, increasing pressure is placed on their ability to provide ongoing care.

The Support for Ageing Carers of People with Disabilities initiative recognises that ageing carers of people with a disability need certainty around future care for their loved ones. It provides additional funding of \$30 million over four years for:

- a pilot programme of education and training for specialist volunteer carers to assist ageing carers and provide continuity of care;
- the purchase of care packages for ageing carers of people with disabilities; and
- assistance with the costs faced by carers, including respite, transport, equipment and other services.

HIGHER EDUCATION CONTRIBUTION SCHEME REIMBURSEMENT

The Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) reimbursement initiative aims to promote careers in rural medicine and, in the longer term, increase the number of doctors in rural and regional Australia.

Medical graduates who complete their medical degree in 2000 or later and who are willing to commit to rural practice will have one-fifth of their HECS debt reimbursed for each year of service they provide in a designated rural area.

WORKFORCE SUPPORT FOR RURAL GENERAL PRACTITIONERS PROGRAMME

The aim of the Workforce Support for Rural General Practitioners Programme is to increase the capacity of the Rural Divisions of General Practice to support the general practice (GP) workforce in rural and remote areas. The programme provides

opportunities to link with and coordinate workforce, education and training activities between divisions.

NEW GENERAL PRACTITIONER REGISTRARS

The New General Practitioner Registrars initiative aims to increase access to general practice services in regional Australia. The dedicated 200-place Rural Training Pathway for general practice registrars was established in 2001, providing an additional 50 registrar training places each year. The additional 50 places, plus 150 existing places, make up the Rural Training Pathway.

MEDICAL RURAL BONDED SCHOLARSHIPS

Under the Medical Rural Bonded Scholarships Scheme, 100 new scholarship places nationally will be provided every year through university medical schools. The scholarships are awarded on the condition that students agree to work in rural and remote areas for six years once they have completed their basic medical training and general practice or specialist fellowship.

MEDICAL SPECIALIST OUTREACH ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

More medical specialists are visiting rural Australia and providing services through the Medical Specialist Outreach Assistance Programme, with the added benefit of enhancing the skills of rural general practitioners. The programme should become fully operational in 2002-03 and it is expected that more than 300 outreach services will be providing services in about 50 rural regions of Australia.

RURAL RETENTION PROGRAMME

The Rural Retention Programme provides retention payments as an incentive to doctors to continue to practice in rural and remote areas where there is difficulty retaining doctors. Since the programme commenced in December 1999, more than 2,190 doctors have received retention payments.

PRACTICE INCENTIVE PROGRAMME RURAL INCENTIVES

Payments made through the Practice Incentives Programme (PIP) are in addition to general practitioners' incomes. Rural PIP practices receive a rural "loading", which is a percentage of the basic PIP payment.

RURAL WOMEN'S GENERAL PRACTITIONER SERVICE

The Rural Women's General Practitioner Service aims to improve access for women in rural and remote areas to female general practitioners for particular health services.

RURAL CLINICAL SCHOOLS

The Federal Government continues to fund the very successful Greater Murray Clinical School, the James Cook University Medical School and the development of a rural-focused national network of medical education and training. The locations of the new rural clinical schools include Coffs Harbour, Dubbo, Rockhampton, Toowoomba, Kalgoorlie, Bairnsdale, Shepparton, Burnie, Whyalla and the Riverland district of South Australia, with an expansion of the Northern Territory clinical school.

UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENTS OF RURAL HEALTH

The University Departments of Rural Health Programme was established in 1996 as a long-term strategy to increase the recruitment and retention of rural health professionals. Ten university departments of rural health have now been established in Geraldton, Broken Hill, Whyalla, Launceston, Shepparton, Alice Springs, Mount Isa, Warrnambool, Tamworth and Lismore.

RURAL AUSTRALIA MEDICAL UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME

The Rural Australia Medical Undergraduate Scholarship Scheme provides financial assistance towards the cost of accommodation, living and general expenses, to enable students with rural backgrounds to undertake tertiary medical training.

The number of scholarship holders has increased to a total of 500 per annum.

ROYAL FLYING DOCTOR SERVICE

The Royal Flying Doctor Service provides emergency retrieval and primary care services to people in rural and remote Australia living beyond the reach of the normal medical infrastructure. The Commonwealth has funded the service for more than 60 years.

RURAL AND REMOTE GENERAL PRACTICE PROGRAMME

The Rural and Remote General Practice Programme aims to improve the supply and distribution of general practitioners to rural and remote communities. Under this initiative, the Rural Locum Relief Programme has provided about 1,500 general practitioners over three years to rural areas with a workforce shortage.

DIVISIONS OF GENERAL PRACTICE PROGRAMME

The Divisions of General Practice Programme encourages general practitioners to work together and link with other health professionals to upgrade the quality of health service delivery at the local level.

RURAL UNDERGRADUATE SUPPORT AND COORDINATION PROGRAMME

The Rural Undergraduate Support and Coordination Programme aims to increase the number of medical graduates choosing a career in rural and remote practice. The programme includes selection of students for medical school from rural locations, increased exposure to rural medicine during the undergraduate course and enhanced support for students and rural educators.

JOHN FLYNN MEDICAL SCHOLARSHIPS

The John Flynn Scholarship Scheme supports undergraduate medical students in rural practice and enables medical students to form a long-term relationship with a rural community or regional centre.

ADVANCED SPECIALIST TRAINING POSTS IN RURAL AREAS

The Advanced Specialist Training Posts in Rural Areas programme aims to improve recruitment and retention of rural specialists in the longer term by providing opportunities for advanced trainees to practice in a rural/regional hospital setting.

SUPPORT FOR MEDICAL FAMILIES IN RURAL AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES

The Rural Medical Family Support Scheme and complementary research aims to improve current support strategies for rural general practitioners, registrars and their families. The scheme provides direct incentives to rural doctors and their families to remain in regional practice.

ADDITIONAL PRACTICE NURSES FOR RURAL AUSTRALIA

This initiative provides a financial incentive to general practices in rural and remote Australia to employ practice nurses.

The Nursing in General Practice Incentive includes funding for 400 nursing scholarships per annum worth up to \$3,000 to remove some of the barriers to re-entering the nursing workforce.

RURAL NURSING SCHOLARSHIPS

The Rural Nursing Scholarships initiative provides 110 annual undergraduate nursing scholarships to students from a rural background, ten of which are for Indigenous students or Aboriginal health workers who want to upgrade their qualifications.

NURSING AND MIDWIFERY EDUCATION INITIATIVES

The Government provides \$600,000 a year for postgraduate and conference scholarships for professional development and continuing education opportunities to rural nurses. Funding was also provided for rural midwives to update their skills.

EXTENDED COMMUNITY VISITORS SCHEME AND ADVOCACY

Additional funding for the Extended Community Visitors Scheme and Advocacy will provide for 1,000 more community visitors, including 400 in rural and remote areas.

AGED CARE ADJUSTMENT GRANTS FOR SMALL RURAL FACILITIES

The Aged Care Adjustment Grants for Small Rural Facilities include a recurrent and a capital component. Both components recognise the additional cost burdens faced by rural and remote residential aged care services.

SUBSIDISATION OF THE ACCREDITATION FEE FOR SMALL RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE FACILITIES

Subsidisation of the accreditation fee for small residential aged care facilities programme puts in place a fee structure that takes into account the different circumstances of aged care facilities. For small residential aged care facilities with 19 places or fewer, no fee is payable, while a tapered fee is applicable for homes with between 20 and 25 places.

MULTIPURPOSE SERVICES PROGRAMME

The Multipurpose Services Programme is a joint Commonwealth, State and Territory Government initiative that aims to provide a more flexible, coordinated and cost effective framework for service delivery of health and aged care services in rural areas. Commonwealth funding for aged care is pooled with State funds for health services, usually acute care.

TARGETED CAPITAL ASSISTANCE

The Government has established a Targeted Capital Assistance programme to assist homes for groups with special needs to carry out necessary capital improvements.

ENHANCED RURAL AND REMOTE PHARMACY PACKAGE

The Rural and Remote Pharmacy Package aims to strengthen and extend the rural pharmacy network, improving access to pharmaceutical services for communities in rural and remote areas of Australia.

The Rural and Remote Pharmacy Workforce Development Programme is a component of this package and supports activities to improve the recruitment and retention of pharmacists in rural and remote areas.

SERVICES AND SUPPORT TO INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly those in remote communities, continue to experience the lowest health status of any group in the Australian community.

In 2002-03 the Government will spend an estimated \$302.7 million on identified Indigenous health initiatives.

ACCESS TO MEDICARE

The Government has made a sizeable investment in making mainstream programmes more accessible and more responsive to the needs of Indigenous Australians. Initiatives include improved access to medicines for remote Indigenous Australians, the use of Medicare in Aboriginal community-controlled health services, and streamlined enrolment and billing arrangements.

THE PRIMARY HEALTH CARE ACCESS PROGRAMME

The Primary Health Care Access Programme has been developed based on the lessons of the Aboriginal coordinated care trials and will be the major focus over coming years for improving access to primary health care services. Over the next 18 months, new or enhanced services that increase access to comprehensive primary health care will be available to at least 40 communities.

NATIONAL STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HEALTH – FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION BY GOVERNMENTS

In 2002-03 the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Council will continue its important work in completing the National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health – Framework for Action by Governments. The framework will outline agreed principles and key result areas that all jurisdictions and the community sector can commit to and will work collaboratively to achieve over the next 10 years.

Aged care

There are currently 29 residential aged care services specifically targeting Indigenous people, auspiced by Indigenous organisations or with a majority of Indigenous residents. All of these services are now accredited.

PREVENTING SUBSTANCE ABUSE

The Commonwealth provides approximately \$20 million each year to support 65 Indigenous substance misuse services. Under the National Illicit Drug Strategy, about 19 Indigenous programmes have been funded through the Non-Government Organisation Treatment Grants Programme and about nine under the Community Partnerships Initiative.

The Government has also funded the establishment of the independent Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation. As well as its role in relation to alcohol abuse, the foundation is targeting petrol sniffing and other inhalant use, and is required to spend 20 per cent of total funding on projects targeting Indigenous Australians.

AFTER-HOURS PRIMARY MEDICAL CARE SERVICES

After hours primary medical care services aim to improve these after-hours services. Part of the investment will help to reduce the after hours workload on rural doctors

while ensuring that patients have good access to the advice and services that they need.

MORE ALLIED HEALTH SERVICES PROGRAMME

The More Allied Health Services Programme enables rural communities to access professional allied health services according to local needs. Funding is being managed by eligible rural Divisions of General Practice.

BUSH NURSING, SMALL COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL PRIVATE HOSPITALS

The bush nursing, small community and regional private hospitals programme provides funding for business and financial service planning assistance to 59 private hospitals throughout rural and regional Australia.

RURAL CHRONIC DISEASE INITIATIVE

The Rural Chronic Disease Initiative aims to assist people in rural Australia, particularly small rural communities, to prevent and manage chronic disease and injury better.

NATIONAL RADIOTHERAPY SINGLE MACHINE UNIT TRIAL

The National Radiotherapy Single Machine Unit Trial aims to increase the access to radiotherapy services in rural communities, to test the commercial and clinical viability of single machine units and to inform national policy.

REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES PROGRAMME

The Regional Health Services Programme aims to support community-identified health priorities relating to the prevention and treatment of illness in small rural towns. During 2002-03, up to 20 service delivery projects and seven planning projects will be undertaken, bringing the total number of service delivery projects in rural Australia up to 120.

EXPANDED MEDICARE EASYCLAIM FACILITIES

The expanded Medicare Easyclaim facilities programme aims to provide up to 600 additional facilities in rural and remote areas. Easyclaim facilities are to be

available in pharmacies, shire headquarters, Rural Transaction Centres and doctors' surgeries.

NATIONAL PALLIATIVE CARE STRATEGY

The projects currently funded under the National Palliative Care Strategy aim to improve regional services, encourage community capacity building and raise awareness of palliative care in the community and the medical profession.

MENTAL HEALTH: MORE OPTIONS, BETTER SERVICES

The Government assists general practitioners to develop their skills in mental health diagnosis, care planning and treatment. The Government also supports doctors in forming effective links with other mental health professionals, including psychologists and psychiatrists.

NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY: RURAL ACTIVITIES

Regional Australians have been identified as a priority population under the National Mental Health Strategy. The strategy's rural activities aim to support people living with a mental illness, and their carers, in regional Australia.

***JUST ASK*, LIFELINE'S RURAL MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION SERVICE**

Just Ask is a national call centre which provides information about mental health, mental illness, and available related services including community and peer support. The service is based in rural Australia, and is provided at the cost of a local call.

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION STRATEGY

The National Suicide Prevention Strategy supports a whole-of-government and whole-of-community approach to suicide. The strategy aims to support people at risk of suicide and self-harm and promote community, Indigenous and rural suicide prevention activities.

MENTAL HEALTH INTEGRATION PROJECTS

The purpose of the Mental Health Integration Projects is to create and test a more flexible integrated framework for mental health service delivery.

SUPPORT FOR COMMONWEALTH – STATE/TERRITORY DISABILITY AGREEMENT

The 2002-03 Federal Budget allocates funding of \$547.5 million over five years to support the third Commonwealth – State/Territory Disability Agreement. The agreement continues the Commonwealth's assistance to State and Territory Governments in addressing disability services, such as those of ageing carers in rural and remote areas.

This measure will enable the continuation of services as part of a new agreement under which total funds will amount to \$2.7 billion over the five years.

RECOGNISING AND IMPROVING THE CAPACITY OF PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

Over three years, the Government will spend \$258 million on services that will underpin changes to better recognise and improve the capacity of people claiming or receiving Disability Support Pension. This package of measures will focus on developing and improving work capacity and keeping those with substantial ability more engaged in the workforce.

To achieve this, the Government will build on additional places funded in last year's Budget as part of the Australians Working Together measure 'A Better Deal for People with Disabilities'.

This package will fund more than 73,000 extra places in rehabilitation, disability employment assistance, Job Network, Personal Support Programme and education and training to improve the work capacity of people with disabilities.

Some of these new places will be established in rural and remote locations. The changes will occur from 1 July 2003.

CONCESSIONS FOR COMMONWEALTH SENIORS HEALTH CARD HOLDERS

The Concessions for Commonwealth Seniors Health Card Holders provides assistance to States and Territories for the costs of extending pensioner concessions to card holders.

The Commonwealth has made offers to all States and Territories and has in-principle agreements with the South Australian and Western Australian Governments over the offers. Negotiations with other State and Territory Governments are currently in progress.

VETERANS' PROGRAMMES

The Government is continuing the Department of Veterans' Affairs programme of agency arrangements in rural and regional areas to deliver information and assistance to the veteran community in regional areas.

Education and training

BOOSTING RURAL VETERINARY SERVICES

The Federal Government will provide \$1.8 million over four years from 2002-03 to the Boosting Rural Veterinary Services programme.

Because veterinarians in rural areas play an important role in our post border systems, particularly in animal disease prevention, detection and response, a major review of rural veterinary practices will be conducted in 2002 to examine ways of encouraging veterinarians to enter rural practice. As a first step in opening new pathways for veterinarians into regional areas, five bonded scholarships per annum will be offered with the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS). This will not only serve to boost AQIS capability during the scholarship-holders' bond, but open a new pathway for veterinarians in regional areas.

REVIEW OF AUSTRALIA'S VETERINARY PROFESSION TO ADDRESS THE SHORTAGE OF RURAL-BASED LARGE LIVESTOCK VETERINARIANS

During 2002-03, \$100,000 will be provided towards a review of rural veterinarian services. The review is to examine issues relevant to the delivery of animal health services to livestock industries, with a particular focus on the supply and demand of veterinary training and expertise.

HIGHER EDUCATION PLACES FOR REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES AND CAMPUSES

In the 2001-02 Federal Budget, the Government provided an additional 670 Commonwealth-funded undergraduate student places for regional higher education institutions and campuses from 2002. In 2002-03, there will be funding of \$7.8 million, and places will rise to 1,832 each year as students continue through the system. The new places will increase access to higher education in regional areas and address increased demand due to demographic growth.

EXPAND THE GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE OF ENTERPRISE AND CAREER EDUCATION FOUNDATION WORK PLACEMENT COORDINATORS

As an initial response to the Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce Report *Footprints to the Future*, additional funding was provided in the 2001-02 Budget to the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation to extend its work placement coordinator arrangements into central and remote areas of Australia, ensuring national coverage. Funding for the measure for 2001-02 to 2004-05 is \$9.3 million.

Work placement coordinator activities involve industry and education partnerships at the local level, and foster greater involvement by local enterprises and industry bodies in vocational education and training in schools programmes. They also maintain important linkages between schools and the community.

AUSTRALIANS WORKING TOGETHER – INCREASED EDUCATION AND TRAINING ASSISTANCE FOR INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

In the 2001-02 Federal Budget, the Government announced funding support to increase education and training assistance for Indigenous people under the Australians Working Together package. Funding for 2002-03 will be \$3.5 million, provided under the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme.

There are two elements under this measure. The first will involve partnerships between communities, industry and education providers to assist 1,600 secondary students in Indigenous communities to complete year 12 and progress to further education and training. The second will assist 2,300 secondary school students to take up vocational learning opportunities supported by business.

INCREASED ASSISTANCE FOR ISOLATED CHILDREN

The Federal Government provides funding in the order of \$40.4 million per annum for the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme. The scheme helps the families of primary, secondary and tertiary students under 16 years old who do not have reasonable daily access to an appropriate government school, primarily because of geographic isolation. Centrelink assesses applications and makes payments on behalf of the Department of Education, Science and Training.

COUNTRY AREAS PROGRAMME

More than \$25.3 million per annum is provided for the Country Areas Programme. The programme provides additional funding to support or enhance educational activities and services for primary and secondary students who live in rural and

geographically isolated areas. This funding is paid to State and Territory Governments, and Catholic and independent education authorities, who determine the priorities and allocation of funds to best address local needs.

CONNECTING TASMANIAN SCHOOLS

Fifteen million dollars in Social Bonus funds were allocated to the Connecting Tasmanian programme schools in 1999-2000, to establish local area and wide area networks linking Tasmanian schools, and to provide additional computers and support resources for the State's government and non-government schools. Funding for the programme is being provided by the Federal Government, Telstra and the Tasmanian Government

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy is Australia's national policy on Indigenous education. The primary objective of the policy is to bring about equity in education for Indigenous Australians and the Federal Government, and State and Territory Governments endorse and promote 21 common and agreed national goals. The policy has an important impact on regional, rural and remote Australia, where many clients are located.

Assistance of approximately \$233 million nationally for 2002-03 will be provided under the Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness Programme, the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme, the Vocational and Educational Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme and the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme.

In addition, \$183.7 million will be provided under ABSTUDY for eligible Indigenous students undertaking secondary or tertiary education, many of whom live or study in regional, rural or remote areas.

CITIZENSHIP VISITS PROGRAMME

The Citizenship Visits Programme provides a per capita subsidy to final year primary and secondary school students travelling more than 1,000 kilometres to visit the Parliament and other national institutions in Canberra. To be eligible for the subsidy, students must participate in the Parliamentary Education Programme and other Parliamentary activities.

In 2002-03, the financial allocation for the programme is more than \$1 million.

Communications and information technology

TRIALS IN INNOVATIVE GOVERNMENT ELECTRONIC REGIONAL SERVICES

Trials in Innovative Government Electronic Regional Services (TIGERS) was launched in June 1999. Ten million dollars was committed (with \$4 million for 2002-03) to trial a range of innovative means of delivering government services over the internet, through call centres and over-the-counter facilities. The TIGERS programme is being undertaken in Tasmania.

UNTIMED LOCAL CALLS

The \$150 million untimed local calls programme provides for a substantial upgrade of the telecommunications services and networks for people living in remote areas of Australia to enable them to have access to untimed calls including untimed access to dial-up Internet services. Under this programme, people living in extended zones are being offered a two-way satellite Internet service. During the brief offer period the installation and satellite hardware are free. The Federal Government has allocated \$25 million to this programme for 2002-03.

MOBILE PHONES ON HIGHWAYS

The Mobile Phones on Highways initiative committed \$24.6 million (with \$16.6 million in 2002-03) to facilitate continuous mobile phone reception along 9,425 kilometres of designated highways covering areas within Tasmania, Victoria, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and Queensland. This will increase mobile coverage on some of the major road transport routes in regional Australia.

MOBILES FOR TOWNS OVER 500 PROGRAMME

The funding of \$23.9 million for the Mobiles for Towns Over 500 Programme will increase mobile phone coverage for 132 towns with populations of more than 500. Under the programme, all 132 towns will receive CDMA coverage with 40 of these towns also to receive GSM coverage to supplement existing coverage. The Federal Government has allocated \$13.3 million to this programme for 2002-03.

NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FUND

The \$52.2 million National Communications Fund will support significant telecommunications projects in the education and health sectors in regional Australia.

These programmes form part of the Federal Government's May 2001 \$163.1 million package of initiatives responding to the Telecommunications Service Inquiry to improve the level of telecommunications services to regional and rural Australia. The Federal Government has allocated \$23.4 million to this programme for 2002-03.

REGIONAL MOBILE PHONE PROGRAMME

The \$50.5 million Regional Mobile Phone Programme will provide:

- \$20.4 million towards improving mobile phone coverage to 55 towns with populations of fewer than 500, subject to community need and ongoing viability;
- \$20.4 million towards providing spot coverage along 35 regional highways, subject to ongoing viability;
- \$7 million to improve mobile phone coverage in the south west of Western Australia under the Wireless West project; and
- \$2.1 million for a satellite mobile phone handset subsidy scheme.

The Federal Government has allocated \$17.1 million to this programme for 2002-03.

INTERNET ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

The \$48 million Internet Assistance Programme (including up to \$10 million Commonwealth and \$38 million Telstra funding) will assist internet users to optimise internet speeds, including enabling an equivalent throughput of 19.2 kilobytes per second for web and email applications. The programme includes an online help service to provide advice to users and a technical support service to help users whose problems cannot be resolved by online advice. The Federal Government has allocated \$2.8 million to this programme for 2002-03.

THE UNIVERSAL SERVICE OBLIGATION AND THE DIGITAL DATA SERVICE OBLIGATION

The Universal Service Obligation (USO) and the Digital Data Service Obligation (DDSO) are part of the Government's ongoing commitment to improve access to communications for Australians living in rural and remote locations. The Federal Government has allocated \$58 million to this programme for 2002-03.

The USO ensures that Australians living in rural and remote locations have reasonable access on an equitable basis to the standard telephone service and payphones. The DDSO ensures that all Australians have access on demand to a higher speed data service. In rural and remote areas where people cannot access the Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN), the Special DDSO ensures that people have access to a digital data service of at least 64 kilobits per second, via satellite. Special DDSO customers may receive assistance with the cost of equipment and installation.

COMMERCIAL RADIO BLACKSPOTS PROGRAMME

The Commercial Radio Blackspots Programme will provide \$5 million over three years (with \$1 million allocated for 2002-03) and deliver new or improved commercial radio services to regional and remote communities where it has not been commercially viable for licensees to provide coverage.

SBS TELEVISION ROLLOUT

The Government allocated SBS \$73.7 million to finance the extension of SBS television to 1.2 million Australians in 36 regional transmission areas with a population of 10,000 people or more. All extensions were completed by the end of September 2001, along with another 10 that SBS had separately negotiated for inclusion at no additional cost to the Government.

EXTENSION OF SBS TELEVISION TO TRANSMISSION AREAS WITH 5,000 TO 10,000 PEOPLE

The Government will provide \$5.7 million over four years to enable SBS television to be extended to regional transmission areas with 5,000 to 10,000 people, where suitable spectrum is available. It is anticipated that all service extensions will be completed by 30 June 2004.

This initiative will see SBS television extended to a number of regional communities for the first time and in other areas, where SBS television self-help services already exist, it will relieve a council or local community group of their obligation to meet the costs associated with maintaining the service. In some areas, the initiative may lead to SBS' transmission service provider replacing an existing self-help service with one that affords greater audience reach, which will also result in improved access to SBS television.

ABC REGIONAL AND LOCAL PROGRAMMING

The Government will provide an additional \$71.2 million over four years to the ABC, with \$17.8 million allocated for 2002-03. It is anticipated that most of these funds will provide additional regional and local programming across all media.

TELEVISION BLACK SPOTS PROGRAMME

The Federal Government recognised the difficulties that some communities, particularly those outside capital cities, were having in getting access to free-to-air television services and established the \$35 million Television Black Spots Programme, which is one component of the \$120 million Television Fund. Some \$22.8 million has been allocated to this programme for 2002-03.

SECOND REMOTE COMMERCIAL TELEVISION SERVICE SUBSIDY

The Second Remote Commercial Television Service Subsidy provides a two-thirds subsidy for the purchase of a transmitter and decoder necessary to access a second commercial television signal by 'self-help' groups in remote broadcast licence areas. An information kit was sent to 412 identified remote self-help groups.

As of April 2002, 87 organisations have received funding, representing 149 sites.

REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS PARTNERSHIP

In December 2000, the Government and ntl Australia Pty Ltd (ntl) signed the Regional Communications Partnership Agreement. This established a \$10 million scheme to assist community-based self-help retransmission groups gain access to National Transmission Network (NTN) sites in regional and remote areas of Australia by subsidising the commercial fees payable. These self-help groups retransmit commercial and national television and radio services to communities that would not otherwise have had access to such services. The Government and ntl each contributed \$5 million to the scheme with the Government's contribution sourced from the Television Fund. By the end of March 2002, 25 councils or community groups providing 39 self-help services (involving five radio and 34 television services) had taken advantage of the subsidies available under this scheme.

ABC LOCAL RADIO SELF-HELP REBROADCASTING SUBSIDY SCHEME FOR CYCLONE-INCIDENT AREAS IN NORTHERN AUSTRALIA

In June 2000, the ABC was provided with a one-off capital injection of \$3.2 million to:

- uplink the Cairns-based Local Radio service on the satellite, which occurred in November 2000; and
- establish a self-help scheme, launched in December 2000, that will assist communities in northern Australia susceptible to cyclone activity to gain access to a locally relevant ABC Local Radio service. Eligible communities include those without access to terrestrial radio located north of the Tropic of Capricorn and within 250 kilometres from the coast.

Up to \$50,000 is available per service for site establishment and the purchase of equipment. Up to \$25,000 is available per service for the replacement of obsolete equipment on sites that existed prior to 1 January 2001. The ABC has advised that four councils or community groups have been approved to receive financial assistance under this scheme to establish or replace six ABC Local Radio self-help services.

ABC MINOR EXTENSIONS PROGRAMME

The ABC receives an annual appropriation from the Government for planning and minor analog service extensions. The ABC has used some of these funds to finance a Minor Extensions Programme to address some of its higher priorities in relation to radio and television service extensions or enhancements. To date, the programme has funded the uplinking of Kalgoorlie's Local Radio service to satellite and the extension of the Parliamentary and News Network to the Gold Coast, Classic FM and Triple J to Bathurst and Radio National to Cobar. The ABC anticipates that it will be in a position to progressively announce another 16 service extensions during 2002.

SBS SELF-HELP RETRANSMISSION SUBSIDY SCHEME

SBS has established its Self-Help Retransmission Subsidy Scheme from an annual appropriation of \$500,000 which it receives from the Government to assist the establishment of self-help SBS services. SBS provides communities with 50 per cent of the actual costs (up to a limit of \$25,000) associated with purchasing the equipment required to locally retransmit its television or radio services. SBS has advised that 37 councils or community groups have received, or have been approved to receive, subsidies to establish SBS radio or television self-help services in 44 communities in the first four funding rounds of this scheme.

REGIONAL EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

Communications that support vital regional public safety, emergency and educational services continue to be assisted through Government space weather reports. State emergency services, country fire authorities, School of the Air, Royal Flying Doctor Service, police and defence establishments, pastoral companies, transport, and geophysical exploration groups have communications enhanced by technical radio

advice. Similar advisory services are provided to support air and maritime transport to regions.

Tax

INSPECTOR-GENERAL OF TAXATION

In *Securing Australia's Prosperity*, the Government announced that it would create an office of the Inspector General of Taxation by the end of 2002 to provide advice to Government on tax administration and to act as an advocate for taxpayers. This will provide a new mechanism for addressing taxpayer concerns about tax administration, including those of taxpayers in regional and remote areas.

Weather

IMPROVED RURAL WEATHER SERVICES

The Bureau of Meteorology provides a broad range of on-going weather and climate related forecasting and information services to regional Australia. A special initiative commenced in 1996, is aimed at enhancing these services, in particular by enabling field office staff to respond more effectively to local needs for information and services. During 2001-02, the bureau's UV Index Forecast service was extended to rural and regional areas. In 2002-03, a further \$350,000 is expected to be directed towards upgrading services of particular interest to rural areas, including development of new forecast and information products and improved product coverage in regional Australia.

WEB ACCESS TO CURRENT WEATHER DATA

Free access to current weather information from automatic weather stations in regional areas as well as radar imagery from the Bureau of Meteorology's 50-odd radar sites is available via the web (www.bom.gov.au). In 2001-02, the radar imagery range was extended to a radius of 250km. Updated every ten minutes, it acts as an ideal adjunct to the bureau's routine public weather forecasts by showing currently-occurring rainfall. In 2002-03, the bureau will improve the format and presentation of current weather information and develop a national mosaic of the radar imagery.

UPGRADE OF THE WEATHER RADAR NETWORK

In 2002-03 the Bureau of Meteorology will replace the Mackay weather radar and enhance the national weather radar surveillance network with the completion of new

radars near Canberra and Bowen (Queensland). The capital cost of these installations is around \$3 million.

IMPROVED HISTORICAL CLIMATE RECORD

The recent completion of the CLIMARC (Climate Archive) project provides access to previously unavailable computerised historical climate data for about 50 locations across Australia. These data are valuable input to agricultural and pastoral simulation models. The project was supported by the Commonwealth, several State governments, as well as rural research and development corporations.

ONLINE METEOROLOGICAL INFORMATION FOR RURAL USERS

The SILO website (www.bom.gov.au/silo) provides a wealth of climate and weather information targeted for rural industry users. The website assists rural managers in managing climate variability, through using climate information effectively in their day-to-day management and planning. Development work in 2002-03 will include ongoing integration of weather and climate information and improvement in presentation of graphical information.

INTERACTING WITH THE REGIONAL AND RURAL AUSTRALIA ON CLIMATE ISSUES

The Bureau of Meteorology's contact and interaction with regional and rural Australians will be enhanced in 2002-03 through the Climate Outlook Fora. These fora will be used to gather information on how the Bureau's climate services can better satisfy the needs of rural communities. Other initiatives in 2002-03 include collaborative climate applications work with the Victorian Country Fire Authority to assist in bushfire management.

ACCESS TO FLOOD AND RAINFALL INFORMATION

Flood warning services provided by the Bureau of Meteorology are of particular benefit to rural and regional communities. These services are provided in cooperation with State and Local governments and allow farmers to take measures to minimise the adverse impacts of floods and people in rural communities to adequately prepare in order to protect their homes and property. These services are managed through consultative committees in each State and Territory and involve close cooperation with community groups.

Access to a range of map displays of flood, rainfall and river level information, at the Bureau's website (www.bom.gov.au) continues to be extended. This now includes more detailed map displays and more quantitative information on catchment data

prepared at one, three and 24-hour intervals. This information, provided on a continuous basis, complements the flood warning information prepared during flood periods.

Crime prevention

EXPANDING THE CAPACITY OF CRIME STOPPERS

The Crime Stoppers partnership between community, police and the media operates throughout Australia. This initiative (with funding of \$0.2 million for 2002-03) is administered by the Crime Prevention Branch of the Attorney-General's Department. It will provide a national coordination/fundraising point for Crime Stoppers which will enable the setting of strategic direction, networking, information exchange and fundraising at the national level to occur. Fundraising at a national level could be used to extend the Crime Stoppers network into regional and rural Australia.

NORTHERN TERRITORY JUVENILE DIVERSION SCHEME AND ABORIGINAL INTERPRETER SERVICE

This agreement between the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory Government is intended to prevent juveniles entering the criminal justice system. The agreement focuses on juveniles across the entire Territory, with a number of the participating organisations based in regional and rural areas. The initiative consists of a juvenile pre-court diversion scheme and funding costs associated with purchasing, maintaining and training for the jointly funded Aboriginal Interpreter Service. The Federal Government has allocated \$5 million to this programme for 2002-03.

NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAMME

The National Crime Prevention Programme (previously the National Campaign Against Violence and Crime) is a strategic initiative of the Federal Government to fund and promote policies and projects to prevent and reduce violence and crime and fear of crime in Australian communities. Administered by the Attorney General's Department, the Programme includes both research and practical initiatives including national pilot projects, local prevention activities, communication and crime prevention professionals training initiatives. The Federal Government has allocated \$6.2 million to this programme for 2002-03. Funding for the National Crime Prevention Programme will terminate on 30 June 2003.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCING FOR NATIVE TITLE

The Government provided additional funding of \$85.9 million over four years from 2001-02 to the National Native Title Tribunal, the Federal Court, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the Attorney-General's Department to improve delivery of native title services. The Federal Government has allocated \$24.9 million to this programme for 2002-03.

Arts

YOUNG AND EMERGING ARTISTS PROGRAMME

This initiative has been administered by the Australia Council since its introduction in 1996. It has successfully assisted Australian artists at the formative stage of their careers, including artists in rural and regional areas, with greater opportunities for career development and public exposure of their work. The Federal Government has allocated \$1.25 million to this programme for 2002-03.

NATIONAL MEDIA BASED YOUTH ARTS FESTIVAL

This festival is administered by the Australia Council and follows the success of the two previous youth arts festivals, *LOUD* (1998) and *noise* (2001). As a national media-based festival it is accessible to participants, regardless of location, to promote, nurture and celebrate the diversity of young people across the country. The Federal Government has allocated \$1 million to this programme for 2002-03.

CONTEMPORARY MUSIC TOURING PROGRAMME

The Contemporary Music Touring Programme, administered by the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, provides funding for individual Australian musicians and Australian groups to tour Australia, including rural and regional areas. It meets key Government arts objectives by providing wide access to a popular arts sector and reaching regional and rural audiences through touring. The Federal Government has allocated \$0.25 million to this programme for 2002-03.

HERITAGE COLLECTIONS

The Government will provide \$1.2 million over four years from 2002-03 to build on the work of the Heritage Collections Council to address the key needs of heritage collections, particularly those in regional Australia.

AUSTRALIAN MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES ONLINE

The Government will provide \$0.9 million over four years from 2002-03 to continue the Commonwealth's support for Australian Museums and Galleries Online, which delivers online services in the form of training, access to important conservation and collection management resources to small regional and remote museums.

OZECULTURE GRANT PROGRAMME

The objects of the OzeCulture Grant Programme are to provide assistance to extend the current range of cultural ebusiness activities throughout Australia that:

- encourage collaborative projects which aim to accelerate the adoption of ebusiness solutions across a range of cultural organisations or cultural industry sub-sectors; and
- foster the awareness and strategic take up of innovative ebusiness solutions within and across the cultural sector which deliver sustainable sector wide returns and contribute to increased business efficiency.

Of the five projects funded, two have national, including regional, benefits and three have specifically regional or remote benefits. The Federal Government has allocated \$0.2 million to this programme for 2002-03.

REGIONAL ARTS FUND

The objective of the Regional Arts Fund is to make a significant and sustainable contribution to regional arts and cultural development. The Federal Government has allocated \$2.5 million to this programme for 2002-03. Through this initiative the Government recognises the particular needs of artists and communities in rural, regional and remote Australia.

PLAYING AUSTRALIA

Playing Australia is the Federal Government's national performing arts touring programme, which is being funded \$3.6 million in 2002-03. It is designed to assist the touring of performing arts across State and Territory boundaries where this is currently not commercially viable and there is a demonstrated public demand. Most of the performances tour to rural or regional areas.

VISIONS OF AUSTRALIA

Visions of Australia is the Federal Government's national touring exhibitions grant programme which assists the touring of cultural exhibitions across State/Territory boundaries. Funding is provided principally to assist with exhibition touring costs, with some funding for project development. Most of the exhibitions tour to rural or regional areas. The Federal Government has allocated \$1.8 million to this programme for 2002-03.

FESTIVALS AUSTRALIA

This is a Commonwealth Government grant programme (funded to \$0.9 million in 2002-03) designed to assist the presentation of arts and cultural activities at Australian regional and community festivals. The emphasis is on supporting a project which adds to the quality and diversity of the arts and cultural programming of a festival.

NATIONAL ARTS AND MUSEUMS REGIONAL VOLUNTEER SKILLS PROJECT

The Government provided \$1.2 million over four years from 2000-01 to provide training and skills development in several key areas, for arts and museum volunteer workers in approximately 80 regional centres across Australia. The project (which is jointly funded by the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, and the Department of Family and Community Services), is currently in the curriculum development and planning stage. The Federal Government has allocated \$0.5 million to this programme for 2002-03 and training is planned to commence in regional centres in June 2002.

MAJOR FEDERATION FUND

In 2002-03, the Federal Government will spend more than \$27 million on Major Federation Fund projects in regional Australia. Projects make a significant ongoing economic, social and cultural contribution, providing increased employment opportunities, upgrading cultural and heritage facilities such as art galleries and museums, and encouraging the growth of tourism-related industry. Under the Major Federation Fund, the Federal Government has supported a total of 52 projects in regional Australia, with funds totalling \$81.7 million. In 2002-03, there will be two projects in regional areas:

- Victorian Regional Galleries
- Queensland Heritage Trails Network.

FEDERATION CULTURAL AND HERITAGE PROJECTS PROGRAMME

Under the Federation Cultural and Heritage Projects Programme, the Federal Government has provided some \$70 million from the Federation Fund towards medium-sized projects throughout regional Australia, including \$0.25 million in 2002-03. Projects provide economic benefits through increased employment during construction and on completion, and from tourism, and are conserving significant heritage and cultural assets and enhancing community facilities and quality of life. Thirty-six projects from the 60 funded were in regional Australia and three projects will continue into 2002-03.

ADJUSTING TO ECONOMIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

SUSTAINABLE REGIONS PROGRAMME

The \$100.5 million Sustainable Regions Programme assists selected regions undergoing major economic, social or environmental change and supports community leadership in the development of local solutions. The programme, with funding of \$36.2 million for 2002-03, assists the selected regions to plan for the future, build capacity for strategic and informed decision making at the regional level and contribute to the implementation of projects that can make a real difference to economic opportunity and quality of life. The programme also aims to work in partnership with other levels of government and the private sector to ensure that there is broad and integrated consideration of the issues within the regions.

The prototype regions selected for assistance under the programme are the Atherton Tablelands, Wide Bay Burnett, Far North-east New South Wales, Campbelltown-Camden, Gippsland, North-west and West Coast Tasmania, Playford-Salisbury and the Kimberley.

SOUTH-WEST FORESTS STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PACKAGE

The Government committed \$5 million in 2000-01 for a structural adjustment package to support long-term employment generation in the South-west Forests Region of Western Australia, which has been directly affected by changes to the timber industry. The aim of the package is to diversify the economic base of the region and build on its competitive advantage by supplementing private and other investment in employment-generating projects.

WIDE BAY BURNETT STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PACKAGE

The Wide Bay Burnett Structural Adjustment Package of \$4 million over one year from 2001-02 is designed to diversify the economic base of the region and build its competitive advantage, leading to more jobs.

EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES DROUGHT ASSISTANCE TO THE NORTHERN WHEATBELT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The Government will provide up to \$24 million over 3 years (\$10.3 million in 2002-03) as exceptional circumstances assistance in nominated shires within the northern wheatbelt of Western Australia. The Government declared exceptional circumstances

in this area on 7 March 2002. Funding for exceptional circumstances support is demand driven.

Exceptional circumstances assistance through interest rate subsidies is administered by the Western Australian Government on behalf the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth meets 90 per cent of the cost of interest rate subsidies approved with the remaining 10 per cent funded by the State Government.

Fortnightly income support for farm families in need of welfare assistance is provided through the Exceptional Circumstances Relief Payment, which is administered by Centrelink on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES DROUGHT ASSISTANCE TO WESTERN AUSTRALIA AND QUEENSLAND

The Government will provide funding over three years (including \$26.5 million in 2002-03) as Exceptional Circumstances assistance in nominated shires within the eastern Darling Downs area of south east Queensland and two areas in the south eastern wheatbelt of Western Australia. The Government declared Exceptional Circumstances in the Western Australian areas on 3 August 2001 and south east Queensland on 22 August 2001.

FARM HELP

\$29.8 million for 2002-03 is provided for Farm Help (formerly the Farm Family Restart Scheme). A part of the Government's Agriculture - Advancing Australia package, Farm Help provides assistance for farm families in severe financial difficulties who cannot borrow further against their assets. It can be tailored to suit individual needs and offers assistance up to \$51,500. Farm Help includes income support at the same rate as Newstart Allowance for up to 12 months, professional advice of up to \$3,000 per family (excluding GST), a re-establishment grant of up to \$45,000 for farmers who decide to leave farming and a re-training grant of up to \$3,500 for re-establishment grant recipients.

Applications for income support can be made until 30 November 2003 with income support available until November 2004. Applications for re-establishment grants can be made until 30 November 2003.

REGIONAL ASSISTANCE

Programmes including the Rural Partnership Programme, Farm Assistance Programme in South Australia and the WEST 2000 Plus programme in the western division of NSW will receive \$3.2 million in Commonwealth Government funding in 2002-03. All programmes are jointly funded by the Federal Government and

respective State Governments. They promote and encourage industry adjustment, aiming to achieve long-term change and to encourage profitable and self-reliant rural sectors, sustainable management of the resource base and more robust, equitable and prosperous rural communities.

RURAL FINANCIAL COUNSELLING SERVICE

The Rural Financial Counselling Service is part of the Government's Agriculture – Advancing Australia package, providing funding (up to 50 per cent) to help rural communities provide a free and confidential rural financial counselling service to agriculture, fishing and small rural enterprises. Enterprises that are in financial difficulty and unable to afford access to private sector advice, and need information and assistance to make decisions about their future business directions are assisted. With Commonwealth Government funding of \$5.4 million for 2002-03, the project funds both community-based rural financial counselling services and short-term industry adjustment projects where a community or industry group believes that rural financial counselling could help achieve industry adjustment within a specific industry or target group.

DAIRY REGIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

The Dairy Regional Assistance Programme (Dairy RAP) is part of the Federal Government's \$1.94 billion Dairy Industry Adjustment Package.

Dairy RAP is designed to assist communities that have been affected by the deregulation of the dairy industry. The programme commenced on 1 July 2000 with total funding of up to \$45 million. In June 2001, Government legislation was passed supplementing the assistance provided under the Dairy Industry Adjustment Package. As part of this package a further \$20 million was allocated to Dairy RAP, taking the total funding to up to \$65 million. The programme facilitates long-term employment by supplementing business investment and provides support for services that will lead to on-going economic and social benefits for regions affected by dairy deregulation.

Both community and commercial enterprises are eligible to apply for funds under the guidelines.

AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

The Government will provide \$20.4 million from 2002-03 to 2004-05 for the Agricultural Development Partnerships programme (\$4.9 million in 2002-03). The partnerships provide assistance for structural adjustment, which is targeted to specific agricultural industries and regions experiencing significant problems affecting profitability and sustainability.