

AUSTRALIA'S REGIONS: WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

2003-04

STATEMENT BY
THE HONOURABLE JOHN ANDERSON, MP
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND REGIONAL SERVICES

AND

THE HONOURABLE WILSON TUCKEY, MP
MINISTER FOR REGIONAL SERVICES, TERRITORIES
AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

13 MAY 2003

© Commonwealth of Australia 2003

ISBN 1741 18906 3

This work is copyright. Apart from any use as permitted under the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part may be reproduced by any process without prior written permission from the Commonwealth available from the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts. Requests and inquiries concerning reproduction and rights should be addressed to:

The Commonwealth Copyright Administration
Intellectual Property Branch
Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts
GPO Box 2154
CANBERRA ACT 2601
Or posted at:
<http://www.dcita.gov.au/cca>

Printed by Canprint Communications Pty Ltd

CONTENTS

OVERVIEW	1
Australia's Regions: Working in Partnership	1
REGIONAL BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS	5
Roads	5
Commonwealth Roads Programme	5
Roads to Recovery Programme	5
Rail	6
Australian Rail Track Corporation	6
Lease of NSW mainline track	6
Melbourne to Darwin inland railway	6
Drought	6
Exceptional Circumstances assistance	6
Drought Counselling.....	7
Education and training	7
Commonwealth Grant Scheme – regional loading	7
Higher Education places for regional universities and campuses	7
Health	7
Regional Health Strategy	7
Medicare	8
Environment	8
National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and Natural Heritage Trust	8
Employment	9
Improving Employment Services.....	9
Disabilities	10
Further assistance for Regional, Rural and Remote Disability Employment Service Providers	10
ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT	11
Regional infrastructure	11
Commonwealth Roads Programme	11
Roads to Recovery Programme	13
Black Spot Programme	13
Bass Strait Passenger Vehicle Equalisation Scheme	14
Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme.....	14
Tasmanian Wheat Freight Scheme.....	15
Australian Rail Track Corporation	15
Lease of NSW mainline track	15
Melbourne to Darwin inland railway	15
Supporting Australia's regional airports.....	15
Regional Airline Enroute Charge Subsidy	16
Remote Air Services Subsidy Scheme.....	16

Disaster Mitigation Australia Package.....	16
Federal Assistance for Local Government	16
Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands Aviation Security Upgrades	17
Enhanced Protective Security – Continued Funding (Operation SAFEBASE).....	17
Defence and Regional Australia.....	17
Improvement of major infrastructure in the Torres Strait.....	18
Immigration detention.....	18
Whole-of-Government initiatives.....	19
Regional Partnerships.....	19
Area Consultative Committees.....	19
Regional Office Network	19
Commonwealth Regional Information Service	20
Regional Women’s Advisory Council	20
Regional Development Council.....	21
Regional Whole-Of-Government Deputy Secretaries Group.....	21
More Accessible Government	21
Indigenous Whole-of-Government Trials.....	22
Agriculture	22
Exceptional Circumstances assistance.....	22
Envirofund Drought Recovery Round.....	24
Agriculture: Advancing Australia – Farm Management Deposits Scheme	24
Reduction in Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service export fees and charges	25
Earlier Access to Farm Management Deposits	25
Small Business Bushfire Relief Programme.....	25
Small Business Interest Rate Relief Programme	25
Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy	25
Australia’s response to foot and mouth disease and other quarantine risks	26
Continuation of the National Landcare Programme	26
Environmental Management Systems Incentives Programme.....	26
Environmental Management Systems National Pilot Programme.....	26
Government and Livestock Industry Cost Sharing Deed in Respect of Emergency Animal Diseases	27
Plant Disease and Eradication	27
Other Exotic Disease Preparedness Programme	27
Building a National Approach to Animal and Plant Health.....	28
Enhancing Animal Health Infrastructure.....	28
Boosting Rural Veterinary Services.....	28
Tuberculosis Freedom Assurance Programme	29
Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Programme	29
State specific and regional migration initiatives.....	29
Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme.....	29
State/Territory Nominated Independent Scheme	29
Skill Matching Visa	30
Skill Matching Database.....	30
General Skilled Migrants	30

Family - Skilled-Designated Area Sponsored Category	30
Business - Regional Established Business in Australia.....	30
Two stage processing for Business Skills Applicants.....	31
Fostering business and investment.....	31
Regional Business Development Analysis	31
National Food Industry Strategy.....	31
New Industries Development Programme.....	31
Regional Tourism Programme	32
AusIndustry Regional Office Network.....	32
Petroleum Products Freight Subsidy Scheme.....	32
Investment Guide for Regional Australia.....	32
Regional Minerals Programme.....	32
Extension and expansion of the TradeStart programme.....	33
Export Market Development Grants Scheme.....	33
Industry Leadership – Women and Young People in Rural Industries	33
National Competitive Grants Programme – additional funding for 2006-07	34
Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation Flagship Initiative	34
Cooperative Research Centres Programme	35
National research priorities	35
Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation.....	35
Major National Research Facilities Programme	35
Employment.....	36
Improving Employment Services.....	36
Early Access To Job Search Training	36
Establishment of an Employment Innovation Fund	36
Indigenous Capital Assistance Scheme	37
Community Development Employment Projects	37
Further assistance for Regional, Rural and Remote Disability Employment Service Providers.....	37
A Better Deal for People with Disabilities	38
Green Corps – Young Australians for the Environment Programme.....	38
Job Placement, Employment and Training programme	38
Jobs, Education and Training Programme Child Care	39
Reserve Employer Support Payment Scheme	39
Structural adjustment	39
Sustainable Regions	39
Forest Industry Structural Adjustment Package	39
Dairy Industry Adjustment Package	40
Regional Assistance.....	40
Agricultural Development Partnerships	40
Farm Help	40
Sugar Industry Reform Programme	41
Sugar Industry Reform Programme – Income support and administration costs	41
Sugar Industry Reform Programme – Exit assistance.....	41

Sugar Industry Reform Programme – Industry Guidance Group and Regional Guidance Groups	42
Sugar Industry Reform Programme – Regional Projects Assistance	42
Sugar Industry Reform Programme – Replanting interest rate subsidy	42
Sugar Industry Reform Programme – Viability tests and business plans	42
Environment - energy and greenhouse	43
Greenhouse Gas Abatement Programme	43
Bush for Greenhouse	43
Renewable Remote Power Generation Programme	43
Product Stewardship Arrangements for Waste Oil	43
Care and development of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park	44
Management of Aquaculture Impacts	44
Townsville Aquarium - Reef Headquarters	44
National Oceans Office	44
Cultural Heritage Projects Programme	45
Distinctively Australian	45
Natural Heritage Trust Extension	45
National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality	45
Deductions for certain conservation covenants	46
DELIVERING BETTER SERVICES	47
Health and aged care	47
Regional Health Strategy	47
More health and aged care services for rural communities	47
Improving recruitment and retention of the rural health workforce	48
Medicare	49
Home and Community Care Programme	49
Aged Care Assessment Teams	50
Community Aged Care Packages	50
Capital Assistance for Aged Care in Rural and Remote Australia	50
Implementation of the Wilkinson Report	50
Monitoring Medical Indemnity Insurance Premiums	51
Maintaining rural and remote service delivery arrangements for veterans	51
Community Care Grants Programme	51
Communications and Information Technology	51
Untimed Local Calls	51
Mobile Phones on Highways Programme	52
Mobiles for Towns Over 500 Programme	52
National Communications Fund	52
Regional Mobile Phone Programme	52
Internet Assistance Programme	52
Consumer Representation and Research Grants	53
Networking The Nation - the Local Government Fund	53
Launceston Broadband Project	53
Commercial Radio Blackspots Programme	54

Extension of SBS Television transmission	54
Television Black Spots Programme	54
Television Black Spots—Alternative Technical Solutions Programme	54
Regional Equalisation Plan	54
ABC Regional and Local Programming.....	55
Regional Communications Partnership	55
SBS television rollout (Television Fund).....	55
ABC local radio self-help rebroadcasting subsidy scheme for cyclone-incident areas in northern Australia.....	55
ABC minor extensions programme	56
SBS self-help retransmission subsidy scheme	56
Family services.....	56
Key indicators of Indigenous disadvantage.....	56
Men and Family Relationships Programme	57
Family and Relationships Education Programme	57
Flexible and innovative child care services	57
Disadvantaged Area Subsidy	58
Children’s Contact Services	58
Partnerships against domestic violence	58
Longitudinal study of Indigenous children	58
Reconnect programme.....	58
Drought Counselling.....	59
Country Women’s Association Emergency Aid Fund	59
Weather	59
Upgrade of the weather radar network.....	59
World class weather forecasting	60
Crime prevention and legal services	60
National Crime Prevention Program.....	60
Crime Stoppers	60
The Northern Territory Agreement	60
Commonwealth Community Legal Services Programme	61
Regional Primary Dispute Resolution Services	61
Australian Law Online	61
Native Title Services	61
Service delivery	62
Expansion of Centrelink Agents and Access Point Network	62
2003 Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement	62
Centrelink services to Australia.....	62
Centrelink Rural Call Centres.....	63
Indian Ocean Territories – funding for government services and infrastructure	63
Service to the Jervis Bay Territory	64
COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT.....	65
Education and training	65
National School Drug Education Strategy	65

Strategic assistance for improving student outcomes	65
Non-government schools – capital funding	65
Grants for National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and Projects Programme.....	65
Higher Education Reform.....	65
Regional Universities Loading.....	66
Mount Stromlo Observatory – reconstruction after the bushfires	66
New Apprenticeships Incentives Programme Review– redistribution of rural and regional skills shortage progression payment	67
Higher Education places for regional universities and campuses	67
Australians Working Together – increased education and training assistance for Indigenous students	67
Australian Research Council	67
Assistance for isolated children.....	67
Country Areas Programme	68
Indigenous Education Programmes	68
Higher Education Equity Programme	68
Building capacity.....	68
National Rural Women’s Secretariat	68
Sports Leadership Grants for Rural and Regional Women	69
Bureau of Rural Sciences social sciences programme	69
Mining industry/Indigenous communities regional partnership programme.....	69
Family and Community Network Initiative	69
Army-ATSIC Community Assistance Programme	69
Defence Community Organisation	70
Arts and sport.....	70
Young and Emerging Artists Programme	70
National Media Based Youth Arts Festival	70
Heritage Collections	70
Australian Museums On Line	71
National Arts and Museums Regional Volunteer Skills Project	71
Visions of Australia.....	71
Regional Arts Fund	71
Playing Australia	71
Festivals Australia.....	72
Contemporary Music Touring Programme	72
Major Federation Fund.....	72
Federation Cultural and Heritage Projects	72
The Bundanon Trust	72
National Archives of Australia - Touring exhibitions	73
National Archives of Australia - Regional Visits and Tours	73
National Archives of Australia - Archival Support Programme	73
National Archives Reference Service.....	74
National Gallery of Australia Travelling Exhibitions	74
Australian Sports Commission	74

OVERVIEW

Australia's Regions: Working in Partnership

Since coming to office in 1996, this Government has pursued policies that have made Australia one of the strongest advanced economies in the world. We are determined to continue the approaches we know are working, and to build on that very sound foundation to create an even stronger, more resilient and vibrant nation for all Australians.

The past year has been an extraordinary period. We have experienced a devastating drought, followed by bushfires on a scale not seen in many generations and, in other parts of the country – floods. The great tragedy of the current drought is that it has choked the recovery of regional Australia. It is so severe that farmers and their communities cannot be expected to manage on their own. Last year, we announced a comprehensive package of drought relief measures. The package includes income support and interest rate subsidies and is helping not only primary producers but also the towns that depend on them.

In an international climate racked by uncertainty and the threat of terror, the Government has steered a safe passage with its economic management, while taking decisive action on the world stage to diminish the threats posed by terror and weapons of mass destruction. In particular, our low interest rates are helping regional businesses and the farm sector through these troubled times.

The economic and cultural importance of our regions remains unquestionable. Regional, rural and remote Australia accounts for over a third of the population and two thirds of Australia's export income. Our national prosperity depends significantly on the strength of our regions into the future.

The Government in its forward agenda 'Strategic Leadership for Australia' has recognised the need to strengthen Australia's rural and regional areas by identifying rural and regional policy and transport policy as two of the nine key strategic policy directions to be pursued.

It is also clear that the impacts of economic reform have not always been even and while many areas are now seeing and experiencing the real benefits of those reforms, others continue to struggle.

'Partnership' is the key element in our approach to meeting the challenges facing many remote, rural, regional and coastal communities. We have listened to what people in the regions have been telling us and we are working hard to make real the clearly stated need of communities to lead their own development and realise their own

futures. We are working in partnership with them, because local leaders are best placed to drive this approach.

To meet those needs, we are delivering development programmes in a new, more accessible way, epitomised in both the new Regional Partnerships programme and a series of 'whole-of-government' approaches.

These programmes (with the exception of Sustainable Regions) will be integrated into a single Regional Partnerships package, effective from 1 July 2003. Regional Partnerships strengthens the role of the Government's network of Area Consultative Committees (ACCs), ensuring that projects funded under the package are well-developed and consistent with the local priorities set by each region. The new approach will allow the Federal Government to invest in projects that focus on strengthening economic and social growth, improving access to services in small communities, supporting regional planning, and helping specific regions adjust to structural change.

Regional communities have consistently told Government that they would like to see greater coordination and flexibility from Government. The More Accessible Government (MAG) initiative is an example of this approach, as is the Commonwealth Regional Information Service, providing a freecall referral and information service for all Commonwealth Government programmes and services for country Australians, and the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Indigenous Trials. These and many more initiatives are detailed under 'Whole-of-Government' on page 19.

Regionally-based businesses are a critical indicator for the prosperity of our regions. Through the Regional Business Development Analysis announced as part of the *Stronger Regions, A Stronger Australia* statement, the Federal Government is identifying impediments to growth and the effectiveness of current Commonwealth assistance for regional businesses. The Regional Business Development Analysis Independent Panel appointed in June 2002 travelled to 50 regional centres and heard the views of over 1000 regional business people and other regional stakeholders. It will report to the Government in mid-2003.

The drought this nation has endured and is still enduring in many areas has been on a scale comparable to the worst in living memory. The Government has responded in a substantial way to the drought. This Statement outlines not just the details of Exceptional Circumstances funding by region, but additional measures such as assistance for Small Business, up to \$2 million extra funding for personal counselling in drought affected areas and \$10 million in 2003-04 for the Envirofund Drought Recovery Fund.

This much-needed assistance complements the Government's wider approach and commitment to managing the environment. Both the Natural Heritage Trust and the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality have been extended through to 2006-07, with a funding package of \$700 million over seven years for the latter and \$1.2

billion for the Natural Heritage Trust. Both programmes are community-driven, and focus on the development of integrated catchment or regional natural resource management outcomes. Governments will support this regional approach through substantial funding for strategic actions specified in the catchment plans and through providing technical assistance, skills training, information and data.

This Government is also strongly committed to increasing investment security for the future through the development of stronger land and property rights. The importance of secure property rights has been demonstrated repeatedly throughout history – it is the very basis of wealth creation in a free-enterprise economy.

We know that a secure system of rights will encourage investment and innovation. We also know that investment security will lead to good environmental outcomes because it will enable landowners to plan sensibly for the long term.

The expansion and maintenance of transport infrastructure in regional Australia remains a high priority for the Government. Critical to the nation's wellbeing is the need for efficient road, rail, port and air links. In recognition of this high priority in 2003-04 the Government will invest some \$1282.7 million on roads in regional Australia. The Government is progressing its negotiations to secure access to the interstate freight mainline in New South Wales with an investment of \$870 million for this vital infrastructure. Complimenting these initiatives is the Government's new National Land Transport Plan, Auslink, designed to deliver the right infrastructure for our regional exporters and sound transport links between population centres. Together these initiatives will deliver improved investment and employment opportunities for regional Australia .

In the critical area of services, the Government has made substantial commitments in recent years to improving access to education and to health services. Education is receiving particular attention with \$40 million per year for the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme and \$20 million per year for the Country Areas Programme. This is in addition to almost \$28 million in 2003-04 to enable regional universities and campuses to meet the social and economic development needs of their communities by providing a loading for each student enrolled at a regional campus. Further, 670 Commonwealth-funded undergraduate student places in regional higher education institutions were made available from 2002. These places rise to 1,832 a year as students continue through the system. These and other strategic measures continue to improve the educational opportunities, participation, learning outcomes and personal development for rural students.

Further investment is being made through this Budget in health services, most notably in changes to Medicare. The \$917 million Medicare package strengthens our universal health care system by making GP services more available and more affordable, and addresses the shortage of doctors in certain areas, particularly rural and outer-metropolitan areas.

In all these policy areas, we are looking beyond the daily news cycle and making strong long-term decisions.

In our foreign policy, we are resolutely protecting Australia's national interest. Domestically, we are strengthening the economy and working in partnership with regional communities.

Our campaign to establish secure land and property rights is gaining momentum and will provide security for Australian farm businesses. The Government's work on natural resource management and investment security will prove to be one of our most important regional development initiatives, along with the regional effects of our broad economic reforms.

These policies are working and they will, under this Government, build a stronger regional Australia.

REGIONAL BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Roads

COMMONWEALTH ROADS PROGRAMME

Australia's roads spending per head of population is among the highest in the developed world. In a concerted effort to assist rural and regional Australia – the source of much of the nation's export generating goods – the Commonwealth Government will spend more than 75 per cent of its \$1.8 billion in roads spending in 2003-04 outside metropolitan areas.

The largest single expenditure item on any category of roads is \$764.9 million for local roads to supplement council, state and territory spending on the network providing community access to local services. This sum comprises \$462.7 million in untied local road grants to the states and territories and \$302.2 million provided directly to councils, to be spent on their priority projects.

A further \$704.6 million will be directed to the 18,500 kilometre interstate highway network connecting most regional cities with their state capital. Roads of National Importance – major regional freight roads connecting to the interstate highways – receive \$227.1 million in 2003-04. A significant proportion of this funding will be focused on improving major arterial roads on the outskirts of our major cities.

A \$43 million contribution from the Federation Fund will be used to build three new bridges across the Murray River and to upgrade a section of the Bruce Highway north of Brisbane.

ROADS TO RECOVERY PROGRAMME

The Commonwealth Government will spend \$302.2 million in 2003-04 on upgrading Australia's local roads through the Roads to Recovery programme. The programme will continue until 30 June 2005.

The Roads to Recovery programme is the largest commitment by any Commonwealth Government towards fixing Australia's local roads. The \$1.2 billion investment in the programme will help local councils reduce their road funding backlog. This timely investment has also assisted the economy of rural communities hard hit by the recent prolonged drought.

Australia's 720 councils receive a share of the overall programme funding, guaranteed by legislation, and are free to allocate funds according to local priorities. So far, councils have submitted almost 10,000 projects for funding and made real progress on renewing and upgrading their road networks.

In 2002-03, \$100 million of spending under the programme was deferred to meet overall budgetary requirements. Local authorities will receive their full annual Roads to Recovery allocation in 2003-04 and will receive an extra \$100 million in 2004-05 to make up for the deferral.

Inquiries about the programme and the projects being funded should be directed to councils in the first instance.

Rail

AUSTRALIAN RAIL TRACK CORPORATION

The Commonwealth Government has a comprehensive rail reform agenda. The Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) has been established to improve the long-term sustainability of the national transport network to enhance the competitiveness of rail by reducing costs to the operators and users. At present ARTC owns or manages the interstate rail network from Perth to Albury. Benefits from ARTC management demonstrate rail now carrying almost 80 per cent of all the freight travelling east-west between Melbourne and Perth.

LEASE OF NSW MAINLINE TRACK

The modal market share for freight on the north-south corridor between Brisbane and Melbourne is at 15 per cent. In response to this, the ARTC and the Government have jointly submitted a proposal for the ARTC to lease the NSW mainline track. The proposal includes funding of \$870 million over the next five years for the upgrading of the NSW track. Priorities for the lease proposal include regional employment and providing regional industry with efficient transport to improve access to markets.

MELBOURNE TO DARWIN INLAND RAILWAY

The Commonwealth Government continues to facilitate the development of a Melbourne to Darwin inland railway proposed by a private consortium. To date around \$1 million has been committed to funding pre-feasibility studies including the recent study of the proposal's final stage from Cloncurry Qld, to Tennant Creek, NT.

Drought

EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES ASSISTANCE

Exceptional Circumstances (EC) and Interim EC assistance are designed to support farmers whose futures are at risk because of an exceptional event that could not have been expected and is beyond farmers' normal risk management capabilities. EC assistance includes two key elements:

- Relief payments (ECRP) for income support for up to two years in EC-declared areas; and
- Interest rate subsidies (ECIRS) of up to \$100,000 per annum over two years on existing and additional commercial loans;
- Interim EC assistance comprises interim relief payments for income support for six months in an area deemed to be a prima facie case for EC

The Commonwealth Government meets 90 per cent of the cost of ECIRS approved to farmers with the remaining 10 per cent funded by the State Government. ECRP is administered by Centrelink on behalf of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry – Australia.

DROUGHT COUNSELLING

On 27 November 2002, the Prime Minister announced up to \$2 million extra funding for personal counselling in drought affected areas. This measure aims to improve access to personal counselling services at a time when need is greatest, families and individuals are under stress and local finances are diminished. All counselling services funded under this measure are free and confidential, and are available until 30 June 2003.

Education and training

COMMONWEALTH GRANT SCHEME – REGIONAL LOADING

With funding of \$27.9 million in 2003-04 and \$122.6 million in total over the next four years, this measure recognises the special needs of universities and campuses in meeting the social and economic development of their communities by providing a loading for each student enrolled at a regional campus.

HIGHER EDUCATION PLACES FOR REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES AND CAMPUSES

In the 2001-02 budget, the Government provided an additional 670 Commonwealth-funded undergraduate student places for regional higher education institutions and campuses from 2002. These places rise to 1,832 a 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. Funding for this programme is \$10.5 million in 2003-04, rising to \$12.6 million in 2004-05.

Health

REGIONAL HEALTH STRATEGY

Since 1996, the Government has spent around \$2 billion on targeted rural health and aged care to promote and support access to doctors, specialists, nurses and allied health professionals in rural areas. This is in addition to funding provided through national programmes such as Medicare and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and accessed by rural residents.

In this Budget, the Government continues its commitment to providing sustainable rural health services for the future. Included in the measures impacting on regional, rural and remote health are:

- Increased subsidy available to rural obstetricians and gynaecologists from 50 per cent to 80 per cent subsidy on the Incurred But Not Reported contribution of the medical

indemnity subsidy scheme that starts on 1 July and will be ongoing. Funding of \$10.3 million will be provided over four years.

- Improved access to treatment and referral for illicit drug users in rural and regional areas. Funding of \$4 million will be provided over four years.

The continuing support of a number of already successful programmes in the fields of women's health, rural medical schools, medical workforce, Regional Health Services, aged care, Medicare easyclaim and the Commonwealth Carelink Programme.

MEDICARE

The recently-announced A Fairer Medicare package of \$917 million over five years is aimed at strengthening Australia's universal health care system by making general practitioner services more available and more affordable.

A major objective of this package is to address the shortage of doctors in certain areas, particularly in rural and outer metropolitan areas. Many Australians living in these areas cannot easily find a doctor when they need one. In addition, the availability of bulkbilling in these areas is much lower than in the capital cities.

The package will benefit all Australians, regardless of where they live, and especially those who need Medicare most, such as people on low incomes and people whose illness requires them to seek frequent medical care. The features of A Fairer Medicare include the provision of more doctors where they are needed most by increasing the number of places in medical schools around Australia by 234 every year and by increasing the number of GP training places by 150 every year. The additional medical school placements will be bonded to areas of doctor shortage and the additional training places will be targeted to rural and outer metropolitan areas.

Environment

NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR SALINITY AND WATER QUALITY AND NATURAL HERITAGE TRUST

The National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality is a joint initiative of the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments. It involves a funding package of \$700 million over seven years from the Commonwealth from 2000-01, matched by States and Territories (\$113.8 million in 2003-04).

Key objectives of the National Action Plan are to:

- Prevent, stabilise and reverse trends in salinity, particularly dryland salinity affecting the sustainability of production, conservation of biological diversity and the viability of our infrastructure; and
- Improve water quality and secure reliable allocations for human uses, industry and the environment.

Implementation of the National Action Plan is governed by a multilateral Intergovernmental Agreement. The Natural Heritage Trust is governed by a national framework. The Commonwealth and each jurisdiction have established the basis for investments through Bilateral Agreements.

The centrepiece of both the extension of the Natural Heritage Trust and the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality is the development of integrated catchment or regional natural resource management plans by community-based regional bodies. Governments will support this regional approach through substantial funding for strategic actions specified in catchment plans and through the provision of technical assistance, skills training, information and data.

The Commonwealth is also investing in the development of pilots for market-based instruments to encourage best management practice, assistance for research and development, including new commercial opportunities in salt affected areas, and the introduction of the next steps in land and water resource policy reform.

The Trust is being rolled-out closely with the arrangements for the National Action Plan at the regional level. In recognition of this, the Commonwealth programme delivery arrangements for the two programmes have been amalgamated, with the formation of the Commonwealth Regional Natural Resource Management Team. Where Trust investment occurs in National Action Plan regions, integrated delivery processes and a single comprehensive regional plan will be used.

For further information on the Trust or the National Action Plan please visit www.napswq.gov.au or www.nht.gov.au, or contact the Natural Resource Management Communications Team on 02 6274 1184.

Employment

IMPROVING EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Regional Australia will benefit from improvements to Job Network announced in the 2002-03 Budget. Job Network is a national network of private and community organisations assisting unemployed, particularly long-term unemployed, people to find jobs. From 1 July 2003 the Commonwealth Government's third employment services contract (2003-06), the Active Participation Model will be introduced and will provide a number of improvements to services available to job seekers, including those living in regional Australia. Job Network has a strong presence in regional Australia. Over the three-year contract period it is expected that slightly more than \$1 billion will be available through the suite of Job Network activities for non-metropolitan areas.

The Active Participation Model will:

- Simplify the current range of services available to job seekers;
- Provide easier access for job seekers to a wider range of job opportunities;
- Better target and provide more timely services to 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 better outcomes for all job seekers, especially the most disadvantaged.

The Government will also maintain its Harvest Labour Services for rural industries and improve the coordination and marketing of these services.

Disabilities

FURTHER ASSISTANCE FOR REGIONAL, RURAL AND REMOTE DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PROVIDERS

As part of the introduction of Case Based Funding for Disability Employment Assistance, additional fees will be available for payment for services in regional, rural and remote areas to address issues associated with intermittent job seeker referrals, higher servicing costs and the need for a sustainable service delivery network. The additional fees to be paid include a set-up fee for new services, core funding in the form of base line fees, outlet locational loadings and job seeker locational loadings.

The additional fees will not only assist existing services but will attract new services to establish in regional, rural and remote areas. The additional fees will also support a sustainable, Australia-wide service network that will ultimately improve job seeker choice. The use of core funding ensures that a service receives monthly payments guaranteed at a minimum level.

The additional fees will be available with the implementation of Case Based Funding from 1 January 2005. The Commonwealth Government has allocated \$15.4m over three years.

This measure will assist over 200 services delivering the Reconnect and Job Placement, Employment and Training (JPET) youth programmes, to maintain existing service delivery levels and prevent reduction in services by:

- Extending funding of the Reconnect programme for an additional four years until 2006-07;
- Additional funding for the JPET programme to provide enhanced capacity to maintain the delivery of appropriate levels of service in regional Australia; and
- Providing Departmental funds to support training, peer mentoring, promotion of good practice and streamlining of administration for both the Reconnect and JPET programmes.

ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Regional infrastructure

COMMONWEALTH ROADS PROGRAMME

Australia's roads spending per head of population is among the highest in the developed world. In a concerted effort to assist rural and regional Australia – the source of much of the nation's export generating goods – the Commonwealth Government will spend more than 75 per cent of its \$1.8 billion in roads spending in 2003-04 outside metropolitan areas.

The largest single expenditure item on any category of roads is \$764.9 million for local roads to supplement council, state and territory spending on the network providing community access to local services. This sum is made up of \$462.7 million in untied local road grants to the states and territories and \$302.2 million provided directly to councils, to be spent on their priority projects.

A further \$704.6 million will be directed to the 18,500 km interstate highway network connecting most regional cities with their state capital. Roads of National Importance – major regional freight roads connecting to the interstate highways – receive \$227.1 million in 2003-04. A significant proportion of this funding will be focused on improving major arterial roads on the outskirts of our major cities.

A \$43 million contribution from the Federation Fund will be used to build three new bridges across the Murray River and to upgrade a section of the Bruce Highway north of Brisbane.

Spending highlights

The Commonwealth Government is working to devise a National Land Transport Plan to develop an integrated national land transport infrastructure network under its proposed new AusLink initiative. Consistent with achieving that objective, the Commonwealth will target its roads spending in 2003-04 on improving key freight corridors in all states and territories. It is also funding planning for future road projects serving the national economy.

In **New South Wales**, the Government will spend \$62.1 million to advance construction of a new 40 km ring road serving much of Sydney's West – the Western Sydney Orbital (WSO). Planning has started on a link road from the WSO to the F3 linking Sydney and Newcastle. A further \$43 million will be spent on widening the F3 to six lanes between the Hawkesbury River and Calga during 2003-04. The Pacific Highway will receive a further \$57.8 million in 2003-04 as part of a joint Commonwealth-State reconstruction programme costing \$2.2 billion in New South Wales over 10 years to 2006.

In **Victoria**, the Commonwealth has budgeted to meet its funding commitments as part of a \$445 million offer to the Victorian Government to build the Scoresby Freeway through Melbourne's eastern suburbs. The funding will be available when Victoria agrees not to impose tolls on the freeway. Victoria had agreed in a Memorandum of Understanding to construct a toll-free freeway by 2008. The Government will also continue to fund the \$306 million cost of the Craigieburn bypass – a new northern alignment for the Hume Highway into Melbourne. In the South-East, \$4.9 million will be provided to begin planning and pre-construction work on a Pakenham bypass. The 20 km project will cost the Commonwealth

and State Governments \$242 million. The Commonwealth contribution is capped at \$100 million. A further \$4.4 million will be spent on the Goulburn Valley Highway on the Melbourne-Brisbane interstate road link in 2003-04.

In **Queensland**, major Commonwealth objectives include construction of a continuous four-lane divided highway from Brisbane to Toowoomba and a six-lane freeway for the Bruce Highway north of the city to Caboolture. On the Sunshine Coast, the \$110 million Yandina-Cooroy four-lane highway will open in July 2003 to improve commercial links for this region, but also all Queensland coastal cities. Planning has begun on a possible highway realignment to Gympie. In 2003-04, the Commonwealth will spend \$20 million on the Gatton bypass duplication to meet its objective on the Brisbane-Toowoomba link. The Budget also includes \$19 million for widening works on the Caboolture Motorway. The Commonwealth will contribute \$17.1 million towards the cost of the jointly-funded Douglas Arterial serving Townsville's growing urban transport needs. The Barkly Highway west of Mount Isa will receive \$22.5 million.

In **Western Australia**, the Commonwealth will spend \$192.3 million in 2003-04 maintaining and improving the state road network. This includes \$15 million towards extending the Roe Highway to largely complete the development of a Perth ring road network and link to the local road network serving the ports at Fremantle and Kwinana. The Government will spend \$15.1 million on duplication and upgrading works on the Great Eastern Highway in 2003-04.

In **South Australia**, the Government will spend \$6.9 million in 2003-04 to complete the widening of Portrush Road through Adelaide's inner northern suburbs. It will also contribute \$7.5 million towards construction of the Port River Expressway serving the Port of Adelaide. The Government has committed to a programme of building 17 new overtaking lanes on the Sturt Highway along the Adelaide-Sydney interstate link. This programme receives \$4 million in 2003-04.

In **Tasmania**, the Commonwealth focus is on improving two major freight routes serving the State's North-East and Tasman Peninsula. Both are important to development of the state's agri-business and tourism. The Commonwealth will provide \$2 million for upgrading the Lilydale-Scottsdale Road as the first instalment of an ongoing improvement programme. The Arthur Highway to Port Arthur and the Tasman Peninsula will have \$1.6 million spent on safety works. In addition, the Commonwealth is meeting the cost of reconstructing the road between Hamilton in the Upper Derwent Valley and Bothwell in the Central Highlands. This road serves the timber and tourism industries. The Commonwealth fully funds the National Highway between Burnie and Hobart.

The **Northern Territory** receives \$46.5 million in Commonwealth roads spending in 2003-04. Bridges that reduce delays and inconvenience due to flooding are the main expenditure item.

Following construction of new high-level bridges over the Elizabeth, Hugh and Edith rivers on the Stuart Highway, the Commonwealth has committed to a \$6.3 million project to build a new bridge over the Finke River. This section of the Stuart Highway is the only road link between Alice Springs and South Australia and is critical for commercial, tourist and local traffic. It carries significant numbers of tourists via buses and independent vehicles. It also forms part of the primary, sealed, vehicular route from Alice Springs to Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park.

The Commonwealth will also fund the upgrading of 10 bridges on the Roper Highway over the next two years. This area is significant for cattle production. The highway also serves the community at Ngukurr.

For the **Australian Capital Territory** during 2003-04, Commonwealth roads expenditure is \$23 million.

The funding will be directed towards completing the upgrading of all entrance roads to Canberra, as well as crucial inter-regional roads that have assumed greater importance with further development of the Capital Region. While it is expenditure in New South Wales, a federal contribution for a Queanbeyan bypass will indirectly improve traffic flows to and from Canberra.

The 2003-04 Federal Budget allocates \$19.8 million to the ACT arterial and local road network, including planning funds for the Boboyan Road upgrade along the ACT section of the Canberra-Adaminaby Road. It is the main service road for tourists and others using the Namadgi National Park and for traffic between Canberra and Adaminaby.

Also earmarked for upgrading is Sutton Road in the ACT. This work will cost \$4.6 million and will concentrate initially on improvements at the northern end. Design work will get under way shortly, allowing work to be completed by 2005.

ROADS TO RECOVERY PROGRAMME

The Commonwealth will spend \$302.2 million in 2003-04 on upgrading Australia's local roads through the Roads to Recovery programme. The programme will continue until 30 June 2005.

The Roads to Recovery programme is the largest commitment by any Commonwealth Government towards fixing Australia's local roads. The \$1.2 billion investment in the programme will help local councils reduce their road funding backlog. This timely investment has also assisted the economy of rural communities hard hit by the recent prolonged drought.

Australia's 720 councils receive a share of the overall programme funding, guaranteed by legislation, and are free to allocate funds according to local priorities. So far, councils have submitted almost 10,000 projects for funding and made real progress on renewing and upgrading their road networks.

In 2002-03, \$100 million of spending under the programme was deferred to meet overall budgetary requirements. Local authorities will receive their full annual Roads to Recovery allocation in 2003-04 and will receive an extra \$100 million in 2004-05 to make up for the deferral.

Inquiries about the programme and the projects being funded should be directed to councils in the first instance.

BLACK SPOT PROGRAMME

The Commonwealth will spend \$45 million in 2003-04 through the National Black Spot Programme to eliminate crash sites and sections of road with a poor safety history. Approximately 50 per cent of Black Spot funds in each State (other than Tasmania, ACT and the NT) are reserved for projects in non-metropolitan areas.

The Government re-introduced the Black Spot Programme in July 1996. It was extended for four years in the 2002-03 Budget at a cost of \$180 million.

The programme is an integral part of the National Road Safety Strategy, endorsed by all Australian transport ministers. The strategy aims to reduce the national road fatality rate by 40 per cent by 2010. Safer roads are projected to contribute just under half of the targeted reduction in the national fatality rate, and the Black Spot Programme is expected to deliver over one-third of this reduction by improving some of the most dangerous locations on our roads.

Community groups, motorist organisations, industry organisations, councils and others are invited to nominate Black Spot sites around Australia to be considered for treatment.

A consultative panel has been established in each state and territory. It comprises representatives from community and road user groups, industry, Federal and local government and state road and transport agencies. The panels provide comment to the Parliamentary Secretary and to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services on nominations for Black Spot works.

BASS STRAIT PASSENGER VEHICLE EQUALISATION SCHEME

The Government expects to spend \$30.8 million on the Bass Strait Passenger Vehicle Equalisation Scheme in 2003-04, compared to an estimated \$26.6 million in 2002-03. The 15.8 percent increase reflects the continued success of the scheme since it was introduced in 1996 and record numbers of people are using the twin Bass Strait passenger ferry service.

The 2003-04 Budget reaffirms the Government's commitment to the scheme, which has more than tripled the number of passenger vehicles shipped across Bass Strait. The number of vehicles shipped across Bass Strait has increased from 63,000 a year before the scheme was introduced, to an estimated 200,000 in 2002-03.

The Government expanded the scheme last year to replace the seasonal rebate with a rebate of up to \$150 each way. The Government also increased the rebate for motorhomes and vehicles towing a caravan to up to \$300 each way. The initiative doubled the rebate for these vehicles during the high tourist season and tripled it during the low season. The rebate is paid directly to the ferry operator and deducted automatically from the total fare paid by passengers.

The cost of the scheme will remain uncapped. It will continue to be driven by demand, because the Government recognises the vital importance of tourism and cross-strait travel to the Tasmanian economy.

TASMANIAN FREIGHT EQUALISATION SCHEME

In 2003-04, the Commonwealth is budgeted to spend \$80.1 million to help Tasmanian industries ship products across Bass Strait under the Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme (TFES), compared with an estimated \$77.1 million in 2002-03.

The scheme assists Tasmanian firms to compete in mainland markets by reducing the freight cost disadvantage associated with the Bass Strait. The Government's subsidies under the TFES are uncapped.

The scheme assists about 1350 shippers a year to obtain assistance for the movement of products such as frozen vegetables, newsprint and confectionery. In 2002-03, about 5400 claims are expected to be paid under the scheme.

TASMANIAN WHEAT FREIGHT SCHEME

Funding of \$1.2 million in 2003-04 has been provided to continue the Tasmanian Wheat Freight Scheme (TWFS) with a further \$1.2 million for 2004-05.

Continuation of the TWFS will help Tasmanian wheat-using industries to offset the freight cost disadvantage associated with Bass Strait. The TWFS allows those industries to compete with imports of other grains and finished products from the mainland that receive assistance under the Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme.

AUSTRALIAN RAIL TRACK CORPORATION

The Federal Government has a comprehensive rail reform agenda. The Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) has been established to improve the long-term sustainability of the national transport network to enhance the competitiveness of rail by reducing costs to the operators and users. At present ARTC owns or manages the interstate rail network from Perth to Albury. Benefits from ARTC management demonstrate rail now carrying almost 80 per cent of all the freight travelling east-west between Melbourne and Perth.

LEASE OF NSW MAINLINE TRACK

The modal market share for freight on the north-south corridor between Brisbane and Melbourne is at 15 per cent. In response to this, the ARTC and the Government have jointly submitted a proposal for the ARTC to lease the NSW mainline track. The proposal includes funding of \$870 million over the next five years for the upgrading of the NSW track. Priorities for the lease proposal include regional employment and providing regional industry with efficient transport to improve access to markets.

MELBOURNE TO DARWIN INLAND RAILWAY

The Federal Government continues to facilitate the development of a Melbourne to Darwin inland railway proposed by a private consortium. To date around \$1 million has been committed to funding pre-feasibility studies including the recent study of the proposal's final stage from Cloncurry Qld, to Tennant Creek, NT.

SUPPORTING AUSTRALIA'S REGIONAL AIRPORTS

The Government will spend \$7 million in 2003-04 to continue the location-specific pricing subsidy, which was due to expire at the end of 2002-03. The subsidy enables Airservices Australia to provide affordable air traffic control services at 14 regional and general aviation airports.

These airports handle 1.9 million passengers a year and are an essential part of regional Australia's transport system. They support thousands of jobs in the industry's training, maintenance and charter sectors.

REGIONAL AIRLINE ENROUTE CHARGE SUBSIDY

The Commonwealth will save small regional airlines \$6 million in 2003-04 by continuing to subsidise them for the enroute air traffic control charges imposed by Airservices Australia. This is a 2001 Federal Election commitment.

All airlines operating regular public transport services using aircraft with a maximum take-off weight of 15 tonnes or less are eligible for the subsidy, as well as aeromedical operators such as the Royal Flying Doctor Service. About 40 small airlines receive the subsidy.

REMOTE AIR SERVICES SUBSIDY SCHEME

The Remote Air Services Subsidy (RASS) Scheme subsidises eight air operators to provide regular passenger and freight air services to around 240 remote communities in Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania, and the Northern Territory. Funding for 2003-04 is around \$3 million and the current level of RASS services will be maintained until 30 June 2004.

DISASTER MITIGATION AUSTRALIA PACKAGE

The Commonwealth will provide an additional \$68.5 million over five years from 2003-04 to help reduce the threat of natural disasters.

The new package - the Disaster Mitigation Australia Package - will fund mitigation measures to help reduce the threat posed by natural disasters such as bushfires, cyclones, floods and landslides.

The new package follows a review of Australia's approach to natural disasters by the Commonwealth, State, Territory and local governments. The review concluded that governments should increase their focus on preparedness measures to reduce the threat and impact of natural disasters.

This new approach aims to create safer communities and to reduce the damage caused by natural disasters, which are estimated to cost about \$1 billion a year in economic terms and infinitely more in personal suffering.

The Disaster Mitigation Australia Package will also include reforms to the Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements to provide communities with better support as they recover from natural disasters and improved statutory land-use planning, development and building controls.

FEDERAL ASSISTANCE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local government will receive more than \$1.5 billion in Local Government Financial Assistance Grants in the 2003-04 Budget.

This represents an increase of nearly 3.7 per cent, or \$53 million, compared with last year and an increase of \$340 million since the Commonwealth Government came to office.

Of the \$1.5 billion, \$1,042.7 million is for general purpose grants and \$462.7 million is for local roads grants.

Councils are responsible for the bulk of the nation's road network (by length) and these grants contribute significantly towards maintaining these roads and other services provided by councils.

An additional \$2.9 million will be paid to councils in 2003-04 because of adjustments applied to the 2002-03 grants due to CPI and population adjustments.

CHRISTMAS AND COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS AVIATION SECURITY UPGRADES

The Commonwealth will provide \$2.9 million over four years (\$1.8 million in 2003-04) to upgrade aviation security at the airports on the Indian Ocean Territories of Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

The funding was part of the Commonwealth commitment to increase aviation security since the world-changing events of September 2001.

The \$2.9 million will provide security equipment, training and screening personnel at both airports. The funding will also cover works to the Cocos (Keeling) Islands airport to separate screened and unscreened passengers.

The aviation industry is normally responsible for funding security screening in accordance with Commonwealth requirements. The Government is the owner of the Christmas and Cocos Island airports so it is appropriate that the Commonwealth meet the cost of these security upgrades.

The provision of this funding is a clear statement of our strong commitment to ensuring that the people of Cocos and Christmas Islands are provided with services in line with those on the mainland. The Commonwealth continues to work closely with the aviation industry to improve security and will keep our security requirements under continuous review as the threat environment changes

ENHANCED PROTECTIVE SECURITY – CONTINUED FUNDING (OPERATION SAFEBASE)

In 2003-2004 the Department of Defence will spend \$70.7 million over two years from 2003-04 (\$34.6 million in 2003-04) on Operation SAFEBASE across all regions and bases in Australia. The activity includes increased security patrols of Defence facilities and additional on-site guards engaged from local contractors. SAFEBASE also includes the hire or purchase of security barricades, equipment and other measures to enhance security and protection of Defence assets and staff.

DEFENCE AND REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

With approximately 70 per cent of the Australian Defence Force located in regional areas, Defence makes a material contribution to regional Australia through employment, industry contributions, community involvement and services, childcare facilities, housing, co-operation on heritage issues, Indigenous affairs and economic activity.

The following ongoing programmes have a direct or indirect positive impact on regional Australia:

Capital Facilities

In 2003-04 the Department of Defence plans to invest \$381 million on facilities and bases. An estimated \$250 million of this capital investment will be spent in regional areas including the Northern Territory, Townsville, New South Wales Central Coast and South East Queensland.

Headquarters Australian Theatre collocation

The Headquarters Australian Theatre Project involves the collocation of the various elements of Headquarters Australian Theatre (HQAAT). HQAAT is the operational level headquarters of the Australian Defence Force. The project involves the construction of a new headquarters facility on the Kings Highway corridor near Bungendore NSW. Construction of the facility is expected to commence in 2005 and be completed in 2007. When completed, there will be approximately 1,000 people employed in the facility (mostly Australian Defence Force personnel), all of whom will be new to the area. Detailed costing has not been completed but the project is expected to contribute significantly to the local economy. Industry estimates are that approximately 250 people will be employed during construction. After completion there will be a direct and indirect employment flow on to the community.

Garrison Support and Maintenance Contracts

Defence's regional bases, offices, depots and other establishments require a wide range of services, infrastructure and information systems support. Defence Corporate Services and Infrastructure draws heavily on business support from local communities and provides employment and economic activity through the use of Garrison Support and Comprehensive Maintenance Contracts. It also draws on local suppliers and the local workforce for maintenance services for information systems. Defence and its contractors typically engage local suppliers for catering, grounds maintenance, building maintenance, security services and patrols, range management, accommodation management, fire services, construction, non operational transport and other purchases.

Annual spending on support services, building maintenance and IT support by Defence's non-metropolitan bases and establishments is in the order of \$275 million.

IMPROVEMENT OF MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE TORRES STRAIT

The Commonwealth is providing approximately \$15.3 million over three years from 2001-02 for the second stage of the Torres Strait Major Infrastructure Programme (MIP), with funding of \$5 million for 2003-04. Stage 1 of this programme has delivered substantial improvements to the standard of living in many communities in the region with permanent improvements to water supply, sewerage, roads, drainage and other essential services. This funding is allowing the MIP to be extended to more communities in the region, generating employment and opportunities for local businesses, community councils and Indigenous people in the region.

IMMIGRATION DETENTION

In view of the success of the Government's policies to reduce unauthorised boat arrivals to Australia, the Government decided to rationalise detention facilities in Australia with the mothballing of the Woomera Immigration Reception and Processing Centre from March 2003. The detainees housed at Woomera were transferred to the facilities near Port Augusta

(Baxter) and in Port Hedland. Resulting ongoing savings to the Budget will total \$46.6 million over the first four years.

The Government will provide additional resourcing of \$14.1 million over four years to support an alternative detention facility near the Baxter facility. The alternative detention facility will be modelled on the residential housing facility trialed at Woomera over the past 18 months. The net impact of this measure is an ongoing saving totalling \$30.7 million over the first four years.

Whole-of-Government initiatives

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

The Federal Government is combining its key regional development programmes to better support local ideas and aspirations. The new Regional Partnerships programme brings together some of the key Government regional development programmes including Regional Solutions, Regional Assistance, Rural Transaction Centres and specifically targeted structural adjustment initiatives for Wide Bay-Burnett, Namoi Valley, Weipa and the South West Forests region of Western Australia. This will make it simpler for communities to gain access to funding for local projects with one programme, one set of guidelines and one application form. The Government will spend a total of \$277.2 million over the four years from 2003-04 on the programme, which includes new funding of \$61.8 million. (The Sustainable Regions programme is not included in the new Regional Partnerships programme.)

The new approach will allow the Government to invest in projects that focus on strengthening economic and social growth, improving access to services in small communities, supporting regional planning, and helping specific regions adjust to major structural change.

AREA CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES

There are 56 Area Consultative Committees (ACCs), which operate throughout Australia and are funded through the Regional Partnerships programme. Their role has been strengthened under Regional Partnerships. They are the primary point of local promotion, project and application development and the key providers of independent advice on Regional Partnerships' applications from their region. Under their Charter, ACCs also facilitate whole-of-government responses to opportunities in their communities, foster regional development in their region, and are the link between Government, business and the community. ACCs assist regional communities to manage change at the local level and lead their own development with the support of both the Government and the private sector.

REGIONAL OFFICE NETWORK

The Department of Transport and Regional Services has a network of regional programmes staff located in 12 offices across Australia (Darwin, Perth, Adelaide, Hobart, Melbourne, Bendigo, Wollongong, Orange, Newcastle, Brisbane, Townsville and Longreach). Regional offices work in partnership with the community in managing the delivery of Regional Partnerships and the Sustainable Regions programmes; and with communities to develop whole-of-government responses to community issues.

By working closely with the national network of 56 Area Consultative Committees and Commonwealth agencies in their state, regional offices assist in achieving the Government's outcome of greater recognition and development opportunities for communities.

COMMONWEALTH REGIONAL INFORMATION SERVICE

The Commonwealth Regional Information Service brings together a number of practical ways for country Australians to get useful information about the comprehensive range of programmes and services delivered by the Commonwealth Government.

The Commonwealth Regional Information Service (CRIS) is made up of:

- A freecall information line – 1800 026 222;
- A website – www.regionalaustralia.gov.au;
- The *Commonwealth Regional Information Directory* (previously known as *The Rural Book*);
- A mobile shopfront, bringing Commonwealth information face-to-face with country people;
- Community information stands; and
- The Commonwealth Regional Information Book, a quick reference guide to the Government's major services.

REGIONAL WOMEN'S ADVISORY COUNCIL

The 12-member Regional Women's Advisory Council is appointed by the Deputy Prime Minister to provide the Government with advice on issues impacting on regional, rural and remote communities. The Council has been appointed to serve from September 2002 to September 2004.

The advice provided by the Council is also taken into account in the development of policies and programmes for regional Australia.

During its current term, the Council is focusing on building stronger communities through its work in encouraging informed debate and influencing decision making in seven key areas:

- Encouraging lifelong learning;
- Ensuring appropriate and accessible health care;
- Reducing family violence and suicide;
- Promoting diversity and inclusion;
- Expanding women's representation;
- Encouraging community engagement in the water reform debate; and
- Promoting economic growth.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

The Regional Development Council (RDC) is a Ministerial Council announced by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in July 2001. It comprises Commonwealth, State and Territory ministers responsible for regional development in their jurisdiction, and the President of the Australian Local Government Association. It is chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister.

The RDC aims to facilitate more effective cooperation across all spheres of government in order to achieve sustainable economic, social and environmental outcomes for regional Australia.

The RDC is expected to hold its first meeting when work currently being developed by the Standing Committee on Regional Development (SCORD) is ready for consideration by ministers. SCORD is the committee of senior officials that supports the Council.

At its inaugural meeting in May 2002, SCORD agreed to set up working groups to examine issues including:

- Regional infrastructure;
- The attraction and retention of professional and other skilled people in regional Australia;
- Opportunities for the Commonwealth, States, Territories and Local governments to work together in the delivery of programmes and services to regional Australia; and
- An Indigenous Action Plan.

REGIONAL WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT DEPUTY SECRETARIES GROUP

A Regional Whole-of-Government Deputy Secretaries Group has been established to assist in achieving sustainable economic, social and environmental outcomes for regional Australians through enhanced cooperation across Commonwealth agencies. The Deputy Secretaries Group works collaboratively across Commonwealth agencies to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of government programmes and policies in the regions. It is also a forum for Commonwealth agencies to facilitate location-based approaches to sustainable regional development.

MORE ACCESSIBLE GOVERNMENT

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

The GrantsLINK website was the first product of the MAG initiative and can be visited at www.grantslink.gov.au. GrantsLINK contains information on a wide range of Commonwealth Government grants programmes which provide support for community projects. For those without internet access, assistance is available through CRIS - the Commonwealth Regional Information Service - on (freecall) 1800 026 222.

Other MAG initiatives include developing standardised funding agreements for Commonwealth funding programmes; improving consultation methods; and mapping Commonwealth networks Australia wide.

INDIGENOUS WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT TRIALS

In April 2002 the Council of Australian Governments agreed to trial a whole-of-government approach in up to 10 Indigenous communities or regions. The aim of the trials is to improve the way governments interact with each other and communities, to deliver more effective responses to the needs of Indigenous Australians. The lessons learnt from these cooperative approaches will be able to be applied more broadly. This approach will be flexible in order to reflect the needs of specific communities, build on existing work and improve the compatibility of different State, Territory and Commonwealth approaches to achieve better outcomes. One trial site from each State and Territory in Australia will be included in the trial.

Under this approach, a number of Commonwealth department secretaries have become sponsors of nominated trial sites. To date, the announced trials sites have been named as Wadeye in the Northern Territory, being sponsored by Department of Family and Community Services, and Cape York in Queensland, being sponsored by the Department of Workplace Relations.

Agriculture

EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES ASSISTANCE

Exceptional Circumstances (EC) and Interim EC assistance are designed to support farmers whose futures are at risk because of an exceptional event that could not have been expected and is beyond farmers' normal risk management capabilities. EC assistance includes two key elements:

- Relief payments (ECRP) for income support for up to two years in EC-declared areas; and
- Interest rate subsidies (ECIRS) of up to \$100 000 per annum over two years on existing and additional commercial loans;
- Interim EC assistance comprises interim relief payments for income support for six months in an area deemed to be a prima facie case for EC

The Commonwealth Government meets 90 per cent of the cost of ECIRS approved to farmers with the remaining 10 per cent funded by the State Government. ECRP is administered by Centrelink on behalf of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry – Australia.

EC and prima facie interim EC assistance granted since the last Federal Budget up until 31 March 2003 comprises:

EC drought assistance to	\$ (m) over 3 years 2002-03– 2004-05	Interim income support provided from	EC declaration
Bourke and Brewarrina Rural Lands Protection Boards (RLPBs) (NSW)	6.3	19 Sep 2002	13 Nov 2002
Western Division (NSW)	22.8	21 Nov 2002	23 Dec 2002
Walgett, Coonamble, Narrabri and Coonabarabran (NSW)	31.8	21 Nov 2002	4 Feb 2003
Casino RLPB (NSW)	16.1	9 Dec 2002	6 Feb 2003
Condobolin and Division A of Narrandera RLPBs (NSW)	32.1	9 Dec 2002	6 Feb 2003
Hay RLPB (NSW)	10.4	9 Dec 2002	6 Feb 2003
Kempsey and Grafton RLPBs (NSW)	63.4	21 Nov 2002	6 Feb 2003
Nyngan RLPB (NSW)	11.9	9 Dec 2002	6 Feb 2003
Northern New England (NSW)	5.4	26 Nov 2002	6 Feb 2003
North West (Central North) RLPB (NSW)	85.9	9 Dec 2002	6 Feb 2003
Riverina RLPB (NSW)	11.2	9 Dec 2002	19 Jan 2003 (dryland livestock) 6 Feb 2003 (dairy areas)
Eastern Riverina RLPB (NSW)	30.4	9 Dec 2003	21 Feb 2003 (dryland livestock) 28 Mar 2003 (irrigated dairy areas)
Peak Downs (Qld)	4.6	13 Nov 2002	19 Dec 2002
South West (Qld)	13.5	9 Dec 2002	5 Feb 2003
Sunshine and Hinterland Region (Qld)	17.4	24 Feb 2003	31 Mar 2003
Western Downs-Maranoa (Qld)	44.1	20 Mar 2003	17 Apr 2003
Goulburn Irrigated regions (Vic)	30.1	9 Dec 2002	6 Feb 2003
Eastern Victorian Mallee	20.0	15 Dec 2002	18 Mar 2003
Central North East (SA)	7.2	15 Dec 2002	5 Feb 2003
Central Victoria	8.0	4 Apr 2003	(pending)
North-East Victoria	10.9	4 Apr 2003	(pending)
Wimmera (Vic)	5.6	4 Apr 2003	(pending)
North-Western Mallee (Vic)	18.3	15 Dec 2002	(pending)

Stanthorpe and Inglewood (Qld)	3.8	31 Mar 2003	
Central Coast (Qld)	7.1	10 Apr 2003	
Southern South-Eastern (Qld)	7.7	10 Apr 2003	
South-East Sub-Murray Mallee (SA)	1.0	13 Dec 2002	
Wheatbelt (WA)	1.3	6 Apr 2003	
Southern Rangelands (WA)	1.9	10 Apr 2003	

In September 2002 the Commonwealth Government introduced a new measure to complement the existing Exceptional Circumstances (EC) programme. It allowed interim income support to be paid to eligible farmers for up to six months where an application had established a *prima facie* case for EC assistance. Where full EC is declared, ECRP is then provided. Total income support provided under *prima facie* and ECRP is limited to two years. Where EC is subsequently not declared, interim income support continues for six months only. It is estimated that cost of *prima facie* cases will amount to \$37.2 million in 2002-03 and \$30.5 million in 2003-04.

In December 2002, the Commonwealth announced a 'one-off' package of drought assistance measures, including the provision of interim income support for a period of six months from 9 December 2002, for areas that had suffered a one-in-20 year rainfall deficiency during the period March 2002 to November 2002. Further, farmers in EC areas or *prima facie* areas, as well as small businesses in EC areas or reliant on EC areas are also eligible to claim interest rate relief each year for two years on new and additional commercial loans up to \$100,000. Applications must be received by 8 June 2003.

These new measures are managed by Centrelink on behalf of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry – Australia and the Office of Small Business (for small business interest rate relief).

ENVIROFUND DROUGHT RECOVERY ROUND

In recognition of the effects of the drought across rural and regional Australia, the Commonwealth Government is making a further \$10 million available from the extension of the Natural Heritage Trust for a special round of funding from the Australian Government Envirofund. The round will target works and measures that can protect the land, water, vegetation and biodiversity resource base from the effects of the drought, to assist preparations for the recovery from the drought, and to prevent environmental damage when the drought ends.

AGRICULTURE: ADVANCING AUSTRALIA – FARM MANAGEMENT DEPOSITS SCHEME

The Agriculture: Advancing Australia (AAA)-Farm Management Deposits Scheme encourages eligible primary producers to become financially self-reliant by improving their financial risk and cash flow management practices. The scheme, which started 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, over 23 000 primary producers had over \$1 billion invested in the scheme.

REDUCTION IN AUSTRALIAN QUARANTINE AND INSPECTION SERVICE EXPORT FEES AND CHARGES

The Government has reduced Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service export fees and charges by 40 per cent from 1 November 2001. The fee reduction involves an additional Government contribution to AQIS' operations of \$30.5 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.

EARLIER ACCESS TO FARM MANAGEMENT DEPOSITS

The Government has amended the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1936* to allow farmers in Exceptional Circumstances declared areas to maintain the Farm Management Deposits tax concession where deposits are withdrawn within 12 months. The measure has effect from 1 July 2002.

SMALL BUSINESS BUSHFIRE RELIEF PROGRAMME

This programme aims to provide urgent financial assistance to small businesses which have been impacted on by the recent bushfires, such as those in New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory.

The programme supports small businesses, including farmers and tourism operators with fewer than 20 employees. The Small Business Bushfire Relief Programme funding is capped at \$2 million. Grant assistance will be provided to small businesses in most need of it. The payments will be made on a needs basis to eligible small businesses with a one-off cash grant of \$3,000. Grants of \$10,000 may be available in extreme cases.

SMALL BUSINESS INTEREST RATE RELIEF PROGRAMME

Announced on 9 December 2002, the Small Business Interest Rate Relief Programme provides financial assistance to small businesses significantly affected by the current drought. The interest rate relief is on existing or new commercial loans up to \$100,000 to solvent small business in, or reliant on, EC-declared areas at a rate of five percentage points on commercial loans or 50 per cent of the prevailing interest rate, whichever is the lower. The entitlement of each business will not exceed \$5,000 each financial year for two years. Centrelink is delivering the programme on behalf of the Office of Small Business.

NORTHERN AUSTRALIA QUARANTINE STRATEGY

The Government is providing \$16.9 million over four years to 2005-06 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 measure will provide continued 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 will provide \$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 will be 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. Increased monitoring of airline and ship waste disposal will also be undertaken.

CONTINUATION OF THE NATIONAL LANDCARE PROGRAMME

The Commonwealth Government will continue its commitment to the National Landcare Programme. Funding of \$122.2 million is being provided over three years to 2005-06 (\$38.3 million in 2003-04) which will be directed principally to rural and regional Australia. The programme's focus is on the 4000 or so community landcare groups around Australia.

Landcare strengthens linkages between landholders, industry groups and local and regional bodies. Business management, particularly on-farm, will be enhanced and regional and local communications improved. The programme will contribute to investment in sustainable management practices resulting in increased demand for goods and services at the local level. It will also contribute to employment across the full range of regional population centres and communities.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS INCENTIVES PROGRAMME

The Government will provide funding of up to \$25 million for up to five years from 2002-03 for the Environmental Management Systems (EMS) Incentives Programme, to support individual 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 under the programme. The programme will be funded from within the Natural Heritage Trust. The programme is under review to improve accessibility.

Support is being provided for the development of Environmental Management Systems in agriculture. This measure will assist rural based industries address changing market expectations of food and fibre products and natural resource management outcomes. Adoption of this measure may help rural regions promote their sustainability.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS NATIONAL PILOT PROGRAMME

The National Environmental Management Systems (EMS) Pilot Programme will provide funding to 15 regional EMS Pilots across Australia. Funding of \$8.5 million is being provided over four years from 2002-03 (\$2.55 million in 2003-04). The EMS pilots aim to assess the value of EMS as a management tool to help primary producers meet multiple demands for improved productivity, access to markets and improved environmental outcomes.

The 15 pilots cover every State and the Northern Territory and will be conducted in 25 regions. Pilot projects developed will be implemented primarily by regional groups and

communities and industry. They will have strong focus on linking on-farm actions with the achievement of regional natural resource management goals and objectives.

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. An immediate response will minimise the socio-economic consequences of the disease to Australia, and will work to limit or prevent 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 Cost Sharing 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 Commonwealth Government has agreed to underwrite industry contributions in the event of a disease outbreak, preventing funding delays that could severely hamper a response.

PLANT DISEASE AND ERADICATION

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 programmes are currently cost shared with the Commonwealth funding 50 per cent and State governments funding 50 per cent of costs of nationally agreed eradication. Examples of programmes include those for weeds such as branched broomrape and siam weed, diseases such as grapevine leaf rust and potato spindle tuber viroid and forest pests such as *Bursaphelenchus* nematode of pines.

OTHER EXOTIC DISEASE PREPAREDNESS PROGRAMME

This Programme provides funds to respond to animal disease emergencies within the national framework with States, Territories and livestock industries, with approximately \$1 million available in 2003-04. The Programme supports governments and industry to develop policies, strategies and awareness for emergency animal diseases under the Australian Veterinary Emergency Plan. Training of rural, private and government veterinarians is also provided.

In addition, as required, this Programme provides the Commonwealth contributions for the new Government and Livestock Industry Cost Sharing Deed in Respect of Emergency Animal Diseases. These contributions provide certainty of funding for the 63 emergency animal

disease threats to Australia and facilitates a rapid and effective response. Being prepared for immediate response to disease threats minimises the socio-economic consequences to Australia, limits production losses, trade disruption, and public health or environmental consequences. The provisions of the new Cost Sharing Deed were invoked for the Newcastle disease outbreaks at Meredith in Victoria and Horsley Park in NSW in May and October 2002 respectively. If requested by an affected industry, this Programme may also be used to underwrite the industry contributions under the cost sharing Deed.

BUILDING A NATIONAL APPROACH TO ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH

The Building a National Approach to Animal and Plant Health initiative is directed towards developing programmes that improve Australia's animal and plant health infrastructure, and pest and disease prevention and emergency response capacities. With funding of \$22.3 million over four years from 2000-01 (\$5.3 million in 2003-04), the measures benefit regional and rural Australia by maintaining our health status, providing a key competitive advantage for our agriculture industries in international markets.

ENHANCING ANIMAL HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE

The Commonwealth Government is providing \$10 million over four years from 2002-03 (\$2.5 million in 2003-04) 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 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. This potential loss of exports would have a severe impact on rural and regional Australia.

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

BOOSTING RURAL VETERINARY SERVICES

Veterinarians in rural areas have an important role in our post border systems, particularly in animal disease prevention, detection and response. A major review of rural veterinary practices was conducted in 2002 to examine ways to encourage veterinarians to enter rural practice. As a first step in opening new pathways for veterinarians into regional areas, \$2 million over five years from 2002-03 will fund five bonded scholarships each year with the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS). This will not only serve to boost AQIS' capability during the scholarship-holders' bond, but will also open a new pathway for veterinarians in regional areas.

TUBERCULOSIS FREEDOM ASSURANCE PROGRAMME

The Tuberculosis Freedom Assurance Programme (TFAP) was established in January 1998 to ensure that sporadic new cases of bovine tuberculosis (TB) were promptly eradicated and that international animal health standards for surveillance in a TB-free country were met. It was a joint industry, State/Territory and Commonwealth funded programme managed by Animal Health Australia on behalf of all stakeholders.

Tuberculosis Freedom Assurance Programme 2 continues the earlier programme with \$1.9 million over four years from 2003-04. It will provide for the progressive transition to a risk-based surveillance approach.

RED IMPORTED FIRE ANT ERADICATION PROGRAMME

The Commonwealth is contributing 50 per cent of the costs of the eradication of the exotic, invasive pest, the red imported fire ant. In recognition of the expansion of the target area the Commonwealth has increased its commitment by providing a further \$5.2 million in 2003-04, in addition to the \$15.3 million already committed.

This species (which is 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 left untreated, it has been estimated that the total cost to Australia of a widespread fire ant invasion would be in the order of \$6.7 billion over 30 years.

STATE SPECIFIC AND REGIONAL MIGRATION INITIATIVES

Over the last seven years, the Government, in consultation with State and Territory Governments, has introduced a number of initiatives designed to assist with the regional dispersal of the migrant intake by enabling State and Territory Governments and regional authorities to:

- Address skill shortages that may exist in their jurisdictions;
- Attract overseas business people to establish new or joint ventures; and
- Encourage a more balanced dispersal of Australia's skilled migrant intake.

REGIONAL SPONSORED MIGRATION SCHEME

The Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme places skilled migrants into regional or low-population growth areas of Australia. It allows employers in rural and regional Australia and some capital cities to nominate people from overseas for permanent entry to Australia when they have not been able to recruit suitably skilled people through the local labour market.

STATE/TERRITORY NOMINATED INDEPENDENT SCHEME

The State/Territory Nominated Independent Scheme (STNI) enables States and Territories to sponsor Skilled-Independent category and Skill Matching Visa applicants, who are willing to

settle in States and Territories where their skills are in demand. They can be identified through the Skill Matching Database. State and Territory Governments who choose to take part in the scheme carry out an audit to establish what skills are in short supply and where. Based on this audit, States and Territories aim to select applicants who have a sound chance of gaining employment in that State or Territory soon after their arrival. The South Australian, Victorian and Tasmanian Governments are currently using the STNI scheme.

SKILL MATCHING VISA

The Skill Matching Visa (SMV), introduced on 1 July 1999, is designed to link skilled migrants with specific skilled vacancies through STNI and RSMS. It provides opportunities for skilled people who do not meet the current passmark under the Skilled Independent category to be included on the Skill Matching Database.

SKILL MATCHING DATABASE

Skilled-Independent category applicants and SMV applicants are able to provide their educational, occupational and personal details for inclusion on the Skills Matching Database, which is distributed to all State and Territory Governments and a network of regional development authorities. A summarised version of the database is also available on the Internet through the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs' website. State and Territory Governments and employers can nominate applicants from the Skill Matching Database for the STNI scheme and RSMS respectively. Numbers registered on the database have tripled over the last 12 months with over 3700 registered at the end of February 2003.

GENERAL SKILLED MIGRANTS

General skilled migration applicants assessed after 1 July 2003 will gain an additional five points if they have recently completed their qualifications by studying and living nearby for a period of at least two years at the campus of an Australian university, TAFE or private education provider in regional Australia or a low population growth metropolitan centre. The objective is to encourage a greater proportion of students to consider studying in and eventually settling in regional Australia.

FAMILY - SKILLED-DESIGNATED AREA SPONSORED CATEGORY

The Skilled-Designated Area Sponsored (SDAS) category enables skilled relatives (brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, non-dependent children, working-age parents, first cousins and grandchildren) to be sponsored for migration to designated areas of Australia. Designated areas are identified by individual State and Territory Governments. Currently all parts of Australia except Sydney, Newcastle, Wollongong, Perth, and Brisbane are designated areas.

BUSINESS - REGIONAL ESTABLISHED BUSINESS IN AUSTRALIA

The Regional Established Business in Australia category, established in 1997, allows people temporarily in Australia on Business (Long Stay) visas to apply for permanent residence if they have successfully established a business venture in a designated area of Australia.

TWO STAGE PROCESSING FOR BUSINESS SKILLS APPLICANTS

On 1 March 2003 a new Business Skills Visa class was introduced. This visa class is made up of temporary and permanent visa subclasses. Permanent residence is granted once a business is fully established. A key objective of this new visa class is to achieve better dispersal of business migrants to regional areas of Australia through a much greater emphasis on State and Territory Government sponsorship at both stages. Applicants may receive considerable concessions where visa criteria are to be met, if they obtain sponsorship from a State or Territory Government. Immediate permanent residence is only available for high calibre business migrants who have State or Territory Government support.

Fostering business and investment

REGIONAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS

As part of *Stronger Regions—A Stronger Australia*, the Commonwealth Government is undertaking a Regional Business Development Analysis to identify impediments to growth and the effectiveness of current Commonwealth Government assistance for regional businesses. An Independent Panel was appointed in June 2002 and will report to the Government in mid 2003. The Panel has received 197 submissions, travelled to 50 regional centres and heard the views of over 1000 regional business people and other regional stakeholders. The main issues to emerge from the work relate to access to finance by regional business, the impact of government structures and processes, and of regulation on regional business, the outflow of people and skills from regional Australia, and the adequacy of regional infrastructure to support regional business growth and development.

NATIONAL FOOD INDUSTRY STRATEGY

The National Food Industry Strategy was introduced in July 2002 to ensure the Australian food industry continues to provide a significant contribution to economic growth, exports, employment and investment, in the face of significant global change in the food industry. Half of Australia's food industry firms are located in rural and regional areas. The Strategy is designed to provide significant benefits to Australia's regions by encouraging new investment and exports, delivering growth and increased employment in the food industry and by supply chain linkages back through to agriculture.

Funding of \$102.4 million over five years was provided from 2002-03. In the 2003-04 Federal Budget, amounts of \$2.8 million and \$1.2 million respectively were rephased from the 2002-03 Budget allocations for the Food Innovation Grants and Food Centres of Excellence programmes. These funds will be re-allocated to these programmes in 2003-04 and 2004-05.

NEW INDUSTRIES DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Government has committed \$21.7 million over five years from July 2001 to June 2006 (\$2.6 million in 2003-04) to the New Industries Development Programme. The programme helps to ensure that innovation continues to drive economic growth and Australia's capacity to commercialise new products and technologies.

REGIONAL TOURISM PROGRAMME

The Regional Tourism Programme (RTP) helps boost the capacity of businesses and organisations to deliver higher quality tourism attractions, products and services in regional Australia. Grants of \$25,000 to \$75,000 are available for projects. Examples of projects funded under RTP include further development of existing regional tourism businesses or expansion of existing businesses into tourism in regional areas. It includes development of regional niche markets such as Indigenous tourism, and regional tourism industry enhancement. The Government has provided \$8 million over four years from 2002-03, with \$1.5 million available in 2003-04.

The programme helps to attract tourists to regional areas, which promotes employment growth and injects money into the local economy.

AUSINDUSTRY REGIONAL OFFICE NETWORK

The Government has provided \$6 million over three years from 2001-02 to locate an AusIndustry Customer Service Manager in each of 14 regional centres across Australia. With funding of \$2 million in 2003-04, this network assists in raising awareness among regional businesses of the availability of Commonwealth business assistance in regional Australia. The network also assists businesses to access that assistance and builds links between all levels of Government operating in the regions, and facilitates referrals where appropriate.

PETROLEUM PRODUCTS FREIGHT SUBSIDY SCHEME

With funding of \$3.5 million in 2003-04, the Petroleum Products Freight Subsidy Scheme (PPFSS) reimburses costs incurred above a specified level for oil companies and other fuel distributors for transporting eligible petroleum products to customers in over 100 remote communities. The aim of the PPFSS is to benefit consumers in these locations by reducing the freight costs of petrol, diesel, aviation gasoline, and aviation turbine fuel.

INVESTMENT GUIDE FOR REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

Invest Australia has prepared *Inside Intelligence: Building An Investors' Guide*, an innovative business tool designed to enable rural, remote and regional towns and areas to identify and compile information on investment opportunities and strengths. The Guide delivers a practical, low-cost process that regional communities can conduct with the assistance of existing resources and volunteers. In October 2002 Invest Australia published *Making the Links: Attracting Investment to your Region*, which is designed to help a community or region identify and market specific investment-ready opportunities, based on data collected through the *Inside Intelligence* process or other asset mapping tools.

REGIONAL MINERALS PROGRAMME

The Regional Minerals Programme (RMP) was established by the Commonwealth Government in 1996. It encourages both a cooperative and coordinated approach by industry and governments to facilitate regional development of mining and mineral processing activities (including oil and gas) and promotes regional employment opportunities. The programme was extended in July 2000 for a further four years with annual funding of \$250,000, following a review by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource

Economics (ABARE), which found the programme to be a low cost policy initiative that has been effective in achieving its stated objective.

Another evaluation of the programme is planned before the RMP's funding period expires on 30 June 2004.

The RMP funds studies on a competitive basis, to identify infrastructure requirements and ways to remove impediments to the development of regional mining and mineral processing industries. The studies also identify and explore wider policy issues that warrant further attention, such as research and development needs, native title and environmental issues. In addition, the studies recommend ways to reduce costs to industry, encourage value-added processing and create employment in regional Australia. Information about current and completed studies can be found at: <http://www.industry.gov.au/regionalminerals>

EXTENSION AND EXPANSION OF THE TRADESTART PROGRAMME

In 2002-03 the Government committed \$21.5 million over four years to extend and expand the TradeStart network programme. In 2003-04 there will be 51 offices operating across all States and Territories, to ensure that small and medium sized companies have access to export assistance wherever they are located in Australia.

The TradeStart network also ensures companies in regional and metropolitan Australia have access to services under Austrade's New Exporter Development Programme. It provides one-on-one advice to new exporters to help them realise their export potential and to succeed in international markets.

TradeStart is delivered in partnership between 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 is an effective way of helping companies into export.

A greater export focus will bring real benefits to the regions. Regional exporters account for over half of Australia's exports and in regional Australia, one in four jobs depends directly on exports.

EXPORT MARKET DEVELOPMENT GRANTS SCHEME

In the 2002-03 Budget the Government committed \$1.6 million over four years to double the minimum grant from \$2,500 to \$5,000 under the Export Market Development Grant (EMDG) scheme. This is expected to benefit more than 250 small businesses each year. This funding is in addition to the existing \$150 million per annum already allocated to the scheme until 2005-06.

INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP – WOMEN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN RURAL INDUSTRIES

The Commonwealth Government is providing \$1.7 million over three years from 2001-02 for the Industry Leadership – Women and Young People in Rural Industries measure, which comprises two components – women in rural industries and young people in rural industries.

The Women in Rural Industries Programme has in the past provided operational funding to rural women's national non-government organisations (NGOs). In 2002-03 the programme was refocussed to build on and strengthen industry partnerships and mainstream rural women into industry decision-making and representative roles.

This encompasses the 'Industry Partnerships - corporate governance for rural women' initiative in partnership with 12 RDCs and the 'Industry Partnerships - Building the Future Sharing the Work' initiative where the national rural women's NGOs are working with Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry - Australia and industry to strengthen links to address their capacity to meet current and future challenges to Australian agricultural industries.

The Young People in Rural Industries Programme encompasses a number of initiatives: the Young Rural Leaders Course, Export Market Development Training Course, Mentoring Young Leaders, International Observers, Rural Network Grants, Study Awards and Bursaries for the Australian Institute of Company Directors Course. These activities are supported by an interactive networking website - YARN.

The programme enables participants to gain the skills and knowledge to:

- Lead in their industry and community;
- Represent their colleagues in decision-making forums;
- Develop sustainable, competitive and profitable industries and communities; and
- Contribute to government policy and programme development.

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE GRANTS PROGRAMME – ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR 2006-07

Additional funding of \$275 million in 2006-07 will be provided to the National Competitive Grants Programme administered by the Australian Research Council. Additional funding will provide certainty for multi-year grant processes commencing in 2003-04.

Research funded by the ARC advances the global knowledge and skills base leading to economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits for the Australian community. Funding is allocated through a competitive grant assessment process; some of this funding is directed towards objectives which benefit regional and rural Australia, eg agricultural production and technology.

COMMONWEALTH SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH ORGANISATION FLAGSHIP INITIATIVE

This measure will provide additional funding (\$20 million in 2003-04) to the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation to accelerate the implementation of its Flagship Initiative and to enable four additional Flagship programmes to commence during 2003-04.

COOPERATIVE RESEARCH CENTRES PROGRAMME

The Government funds 62 Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs). From July 2003 this will increase to 71 as a result of increased funding made available through the Government's *Backing Australia's Ability* strategy (an additional \$227 million is being provided for 2003-04 to 2005-06).

Ten CRCs are based in regional centres and many other CRCs undertake research and development programmes that deliver benefits or outcomes for rural and regional Australia.

New funding of \$62.5 million will be provided to the Cooperative Research Centres Programme in 2006-07. This will bring total Cooperative Research Centres funding to \$856.9 million over the four years 2003-04 to 2006-07. Additional funding will provide certainty for multi-year grant processes commencing from 2003-04.

NATIONAL RESEARCH PRIORITIES

In late 2002, the Prime Minister announced Australia's national research priorities. This initiative encourages additional research effort in areas of economic, social or environmental benefit, including research of particular significance to regional and rural Australians. Examples include research to reduce our water use in agriculture and other industries, the remediation of our soils and protecting Australia from invasive diseases and pests.

National research priorities will be implemented by Commonwealth research agencies and funding bodies. They will be supported by redirecting resources to the priority areas and through more effective cross-agency collaboration.

COMMONWEALTH SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH ORGANISATION

The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation's (CSIRO) central goal of positioning Australia as a world leader in critical areas of science, industry, social advancement and environmental sustainability directly supports the economic and social growth of rural and regional Australia. The needs of rural and regional communities are reflected in CSIRO's Flagships Initiative which focuses major scientific resources around areas of national priority which address issues such as improved profitability of Australia's agribusiness sector, more productive and sustainable use of water and development of Australia's light metal resources. The Government is providing \$568 million to the CSIRO in 2003-04.

MAJOR NATIONAL RESEARCH FACILITIES PROGRAMME

As part of the Government's *Backing Australia's Ability* five year strategy, the Major National Research Facilities (MNRF) Programme was provided with \$155 million in the 2001-02 Budget. The allocation for 2003-04 is \$38.5 million.

Fifteen facilities were selected in a competitive process. Four of these facilities are to be based in, or will deliver benefits to, regional Australia.

Major National Research Facilities are expensive, large equipment items or highly specialised laboratories that are vital for conducting leading-edge research in science, engineering and technology.

The MNRF Programme aims to enhance access for Australian researchers to world-class, specialised facilities not otherwise available, increase opportunities for scientific research and development, attract overseas researchers and firms to Australia, and retain local talent.

Employment

IMPROVING EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Regional Australia will benefit from improvements to Job Network announced in the 2002-03 Budget. Job Network is a national network of private and community organisations assisting unemployed, particularly long-term unemployed, people to find jobs. From 1 July 2003 the Commonwealth Government's third employment services contract (2003-06), the Active Participation Model will be introduced and will provide a number of improvements to services available to job seekers, including those living in regional Australia. Job Network has a strong presence in regional Australia. Over the three-year contract period it is expected that slightly more than \$1 billion will be available through the suite of Job Network activities for non-metropolitan areas.

The Active Participation Model will:

- Simplify the current range of services available to job seekers;
- Provide easier access for job seekers to a wider range of job opportunities;
- Better target and provide more timely services to 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 better outcomes for all job seekers, especially the most disadvantaged.

The Government will also maintain its Harvest Labour Services for rural industries and improve the coordination and marketing of these services.

EARLY ACCESS TO JOB SEARCH TRAINING

From July 2004, young job seekers aged 16-24 years will have earlier access to Intensive Support job search training. Current services will be extended to apply to job seekers as soon as they start receiving unemployment payments. These services will develop the job search skills of young job seekers earlier, helping to increase the number of people finding work within the first few months of unemployment. There will be an additional 21,000 places over three years at a cost of \$12.5 million.

ESTABLISHMENT OF AN EMPLOYMENT INNOVATION FUND

The Employment Innovation Fund will form part of Job Network and will fund small projects which support initiatives that tackle employment or labour market related problems. The main objectives of the fund will be to trial ideas that promote innovative, community based

action on employment; address specific employment and labour market problems; and alleviate the social consequences of unemployment. The fund will provide up to \$100,000 per project out of a total funding pool of \$4 million over four years from July 2003. The Fund will be used for a diverse range of projects that are proposed by communities to address local community or specific demographic labour related issues.

INDIGENOUS CAPITAL ASSISTANCE SCHEME

Indigenous Capital Assistance will be one of the elements available under the Indigenous Employment Policy to promote ongoing employment (including self-employment).

Funding of \$10.5 million over four years will be provided for Indigenous Capital Assistance, which is an incentive scheme that aims to promote economic independence for Indigenous people by encouraging the private financial sector to provide loans to, and support for, Indigenous businesses.

Flexible capital assistance packages will be developed in cooperation with the financial sector to help stimulate Indigenous business development at the grass roots level.

The incentives will help to stimulate economic activity in those regional and remote areas where employment prospects are less than those in larger urban centres.

The programme will provide opportunities for Indigenous people to participate in small to medium business enterprise activities, build their financial and business skills and encourage local economic development.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT EMPLOYMENT PROJECTS

The Torres Strait Regional Authority will spend \$28 million in 2003-04 on Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) that will offer work to 1,910 participants. The projects will also provide social, economic and cultural benefits to communities in the region. Participants in CDEP voluntarily forego their government income support to work on these projects.

An additional 1000 places to the existing participants, will be created nationally each year for CDEP projects over the next four years from 2003-04. They will be targeted to remote communities to support projects that seek to prevent and/or respond to family violence and substance abuse. Work activities will include new night patrols, justice system support, substance abuse programmes, diversionary and personal development initiatives, recreation, sport and wellbeing programmes.

The wages paid to the additional participants will be offset from savings made by the Department of Family and Community Services. Operational costs to administer the expanded programme will be absorbed by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.

FURTHER ASSISTANCE FOR REGIONAL, RURAL AND REMOTE DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PROVIDERS

As part of the introduction of Case Based Funding for Disability Employment Assistance, additional fees will be available for payment for services in regional, rural and remote areas

to address issues associated with intermittent job seeker referrals, higher servicing costs and the need for a sustainable service delivery network. The additional fees to be paid include a set-up fee for new services, core funding in the form of base line fees, outlet locational loadings and job seeker locational loadings.

The additional fees will not only assist existing services but will attract new services to establish in regional, rural and remote areas. The additional fees will also support a sustainable, Australia-wide service network that will ultimately improve job seeker choice. The use of core funding ensures that a service receives monthly payments guaranteed at a minimum level.

The additional fees will be available with the implementation of Case Based Funding from 1 January 2005. The Commonwealth has allocated \$15.4 million over three years.

A BETTER DEAL FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

In the *Australians Working Together* package announced in the 2001-02 Budget, additional allocations were provided for disability employment assistance places. This initiative will result in an additional 16,000 new job seekers receiving assistance nationally over three years, commencing in September 2002. Places are targeted to older workers and parents with a disability, areas of high demand and rural and regional locations. A total of \$102 million will be provided over four years from 2001-02, with \$36 million allocated for 2003-04.

GREEN CORPS – YOUNG AUSTRALIANS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

Green Corps - *Young Australians for the Environment* programme is a Commonwealth Government youth development and environmental training programme for young people aged 17- 20 years. Green Corps provides young people with the opportunity to volunteer their commitment to conserve, preserve and restore Australia's natural environment and cultural heritage. Each Green Corps project involves 10 young people taking part in a range of activities and experiences over a 26 week period, with 1700 places provided each year. Approximately \$23.5 million will be allocated for 2003-04.

JOB PLACEMENT, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMME

The Job Placement, Employment and Training (JPET) programme has a positive impact on young people in regional and rural Australia. The JPET programme assists young people aged 15-21 years who are homeless, at risk of becoming homeless, ex offenders, refugees or wards of the state, to overcome a range of personal barriers which prevent them from participating effectively in employment, education or training and having a sustainable future.

Through actively establishing and developing strong partnerships and linkages with local agencies, schools, TAFEs and business organisations, JPET providers contribute towards building community capacity. This is particularly important in rural and regional areas to best utilise community resources for the benefit of young Australians. Funding of 19.4 million has been provided for this programme in 2003-04. The programme will be reviewed in the 2004-05 Budget.

JOBS, EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMME CHILD CARE

Jobs, Education and Training Child Care (JETCC) is part of the broader JET Programme and is a voluntary scheme. It helps people who receive certain Centrelink payments, including Parenting Payment, to enter or re-enter the workforce. JETCC assist parents to access child care places to enable them to participate in education, training and employment. Assistance can also be provided with the cost of child care for some families, which further reduces barriers to participating in approved activities. In more remote regions where formal child care is not available, crèches have been established to care for children so that JET customers can participate in education, training and employment opportunities.

RESERVE EMPLOYER SUPPORT PAYMENT SCHEME

As a means of recognising the efforts of employers who release employees for Australian Defence Force Reserve service, an employer's support scheme was introduced in 2001 which provides direct financial benefits to most employers of Reservists. Since the Reserve Employer Support Payment Scheme commenced in June 2001, payments totalling \$16.9 million have been received by some 34,176 employers throughout Australia. A total of \$53.4 million will be spent over the next three years.

Structural adjustment

SUSTAINABLE REGIONS

The up to \$100 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 \$26.4 million for 2003-04, 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 will make a real difference to economic opportunity and quality of life. Priorities are determined by the local communities guided by a locally-based advisory committee comprising business, community and local government representatives. These locally based committees examine projects against the region's priorities and make recommendations to the Minister for funding. 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, Far North-East New South Wales, Campbelltown-Camden, Gippsland, North-West and West Coast Tasmania, Playford-Salisbury and the Kimberley.

FOREST INDUSTRY STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PACKAGE

The objective of the Forest Industry Structural Adjustment Package (FISAP) is to assist businesses and workers in the native timber industry to adjust to, and take advantage of, changes in the nature and availability of native timber resources as a result of Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs).

The Industry Development Assistance element of FISAP provides financial assistance to eligible forest industry businesses and organisations to enhance the continuing development of an efficient, competitive and sustainable native hardwood timber industry.

The Business Exit and Worker Assistance elements of FISAP provide assistance to businesses and workers adversely affected by the Regional Forest Agreement process.

FISAP was due to expire on 30 June 2003, but, because of the continuing demand for FISAP, the Commonwealth has extended the programme for a further two years. Funding of \$19.1 million will be provided in 2003-04 and \$12.7 million in 2004-05.

DAIRY INDUSTRY ADJUSTMENT PACKAGE

To assist dairy producers and regional communities adjust to the removal of State market milk pricing arrangements from 1 July 2000, the Commonwealth Government provided a major restructure package valued at \$1.8 billion over eight years. This package included the Dairy Structural Adjustment Programme (DSAP), the Dairy Exit Programme (DEP) and the Dairy Regional Assistance Programme (Dairy RAP). In 2001, a further \$159 million in Supplementary Dairy Assistance (SDA) measures was made available by the Government to assist farmers and regional communities most severely affected by the deregulation changes, bringing the total assistance to dairy farmers to \$1.9 billion. This assistance is funded by a consumer levy on drinking milk.

The DEP closed to applications on 30 June 2002. Recent changes to the Farm Help Re-establishment Grant Scheme (FHRG) allows DSAP and SDA entitlement holders to access exit assistance under the FHRG scheme.

REGIONAL ASSISTANCE

Regionally based rural assistance programmes include the Rural Partnership Programme, Farm Assistance Programme in South Australia and the WEST 2000 Plus programme in the Western Division of New South Wales. All programmes are jointly funded by the Commonwealth (\$2.1 million in 2003-04) and respective State governments. The programmes provide funding at a regional and enterprise level to meet the costs of activities that promote and encourage industry adjustment. They aim to achieve long-term change and to encourage profitable and self-reliant rural sectors, sustainable management of the resource base and more prosperous rural communities.

AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

The Government is providing \$20.4 million from 2002-03 to 2004-05 for the Agricultural Development Partnerships programme, which provides assistance for structural adjustment targeted to specific agricultural industries and regions experiencing significant problems affecting profitability and sustainability. In 2003-04 funding of \$7.4 million is available, with a further \$7.6 million in 2004-05.

FARM HELP

Farm Help (formerly the Farm Family Restart Scheme) is a part of the Government's Agriculture - Advancing Australia package providing assistance for farm families in severe

financial difficulties while they take the steps to improve their financial situation. Farm Help encourages farmers to work towards improving their farm's performance, obtaining income from alternative sources, or re-establishing themselves outside of farming while on the programme.

The programme offers assistance of up to \$51,500 and can be tailored to suit individual needs. Farm Help includes fortnightly 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 or their spouse.

Farm Help is delivered by Centrelink on behalf of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry – Australia. Applications for income support and the re-establishment grant were due to close on 30 November 2003 with income support available until 30 November 2004. However, the programme will be extended with applications for income support and the re-establishment grant to be accepted until 30 June 2004. Income support will be available to 30 June 2005 with the farm having to be sold by 30 June 2005. The Government will provide \$24.9 million in funding in 2003-04.

SUGAR INDUSTRY REFORM PROGRAMME

The Commonwealth Government has announced a comprehensive range of measures to assist the sugar industry and individual cane farmers in need. It will also provide important support to the industry as it undertakes reform. This funding is conditional on the industry undertaking reform. The Sugar Industry Reform Programme addresses the short-term and longer-term needs of the industry.

SUGAR INDUSTRY REFORM PROGRAMME – INCOME SUPPORT AND ADMINISTRATION COSTS

Funding of up to \$36 million over four years from 2002-03 (\$11.5 million in 2003-04) will provide income support over two years to eligible sugar cane growers and harvesters in Queensland, New South Wales and Western Australia. Income support will be available for 12 months, at a rate equivalent to the applicable Newstart allowance, and will be subject to an income and assets test – with farm assets excluded.

SUGAR INDUSTRY REFORM PROGRAMME – EXIT ASSISTANCE

The Government will provide up to \$30 million over four years (\$10 million in 2003-04) to assist eligible sugar cane growers wishing to leave the industry. The Government will provide eligible sugar cane growers a grant of up to \$45,000 to enable them to either leave agriculture altogether, or to remain on the farm and diversify to other agriculture commodities.

Individuals will be able to apply for an exit grant for a sugar industry enterprise if they are assessed as eligible to receive income support under the Sugar Industry Reform Programme.

SUGAR INDUSTRY REFORM PROGRAMME – INDUSTRY GUIDANCE GROUP AND REGIONAL GUIDANCE GROUPS

The Government will provide up to \$10 million over four years (\$3.3 million in 2003-04) to establish an Industry Guidance Group. The Industry Guidance Group will develop and implement an overarching sugar industry reform plan, establish Regional Guidance Groups and examine regional projects for funding under the Sugar Industry Reform Programme – Regional Projects Assistance.

Regional Guidance Groups will be established in each of the sugar producing areas of Queensland, New South Wales and Western Australia to develop and implement Regional Business Plans for the local industry.

SUGAR INDUSTRY REFORM PROGRAMME – REGIONAL PROJECTS ASSISTANCE

The Government will provide up to \$30 million over three years (\$10 million in 2003-04) for projects to be developed under Regional Business Plans to assist the sugar industry to restructure and ensure its long-term economic, social and environmental sustainability. Regional Projects Assistance aims to promote the adoption of 'whole-of-systems' solutions for the industry, to enhance revenue and cost efficiency, and to pursue options for diversification and alternative uses of sugar cane.

SUGAR INDUSTRY REFORM PROGRAMME – REPLANTING INTEREST RATE SUBSIDY

The Government will provide up to \$8 million over two years from 2002-03 (\$3.5 million in 2003-04) for interest rate subsidies to eligible cane growers who obtain new loans, or who have recently obtained loans, for the purpose of planting sugar cane or to replace diseased cane. Interest rate subsidies will be provided for two years to eligible cane growers on loans of up to \$50,000.

SUGAR INDUSTRY REFORM PROGRAMME – VIABILITY TESTS AND BUSINESS PLANS

The Government will provide up to \$6 million over four years from 2002-03 (\$2.5 million in 2003-04) to assist sugar cane growers and harvesters who access income support under the Sugar Industry Reform Programme measures to undertake an assessment of the financial viability of their sugar industry enterprise.

The Government will also provide, to eligible recipients, assistance to develop and implement a Sugar Enterprise Activity Plan to improve the viability of the enterprise or assist the recipient to adjust out of the industry.

This measure aims to ensure that sugar cane growers and harvesters examine the state of their enterprise and make sound plans for the future while receiving income support.

Environment - energy and greenhouse

GREENHOUSE GAS ABATEMENT PROGRAMME

The Greenhouse Gas Abatement Programme (GGAP) is a major Commonwealth Government initiative to assist Australia in meeting its Kyoto Protocol target. Its objective is to reduce Australia's net greenhouse gas emissions by supporting activities that are likely to result in substantial emission reductions or substantial sink enhancement, particularly in the first commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol (2008-2012). The programme has been allocated \$400 million, with \$79.5 million available in 2003-04.

To date, approximately \$165 million has been offered to successful proponents, to support seventeen projects with a total value of \$836 million. These projects include a Regional Renewable Energy Project in the Douglas Shire; Efficient Calcination in Alumina Refining 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.

BUSH FOR GREENHOUSE

The Commonwealth has allocated \$5.5 million to Bush for Greenhouse, with \$1.1 million available in 2003-2004, the final year of the programme. 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 as well as legal and administrative arrangements, including tools for pool management and regional brokering. The programme has commenced regional training, delivered in partnership with Natural Resource Management (NRM) groups, to build greenhouse capacity in key regions that have a strong interest in integrating greenhouse and NRM.

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 Commonwealth will provide \$16.7 million in 2003-04.

PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP ARRANGEMENTS FOR WASTE OIL

The Transitional Assistance element of the Commonwealth Government's Product Stewardship Arrangements for Waste Oil make funding available in the form of grants for projects that contribute to:

- A sustainable waste oil recycling industry;
- Accelerating the uptake of waste oil from urban and rural Australia;
- Facilitating the transition of the industry and the community into the PSO; and

- Addressing the special difficulties that remote Australia has in the recovery and management of waste oil for appropriate recycling.

Under this programme, \$5 million has already been provided to over 240 local governments throughout rural Australia for the installation or upgrade of waste oil collection facilities. \$6.4 million will be provided in 2003-04.

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 Commonwealth Government will spend \$29.7 million in 2003-04 (excluding the measures below) in managing the sustainable use of the Marine Park. The GBRMPA works in partnership with Commonwealth and Queensland Government agencies to ensure that the conservation and World Heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef are preserved for future generations. Field management of the Marine Park is implemented through day-to-day management programmes.

The GBRMPA is based in Townsville to ensure that it has technical resources close to the Reef. Ten Local Marine Advisory Committees (LMACs) operate in regional centres adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The LMACs advise the GBRMPA on issues which affect the local and regional marine and coastal communities.

MANAGEMENT OF AQUACULTURE IMPACTS

The Government is providing \$1.7 million over four years from 2001-02 (nearly \$0.4 million in 2003-04), to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park 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 help to ensure that aquaculture developments do not impact upon 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 2003-04), 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. The additional funding has enhanced the facility for visitors and ensured that health and safety standards are maintained. Additional work generated by the measure will provide employment opportunities in the region.

NATIONAL OCEANS OFFICE

The Government is providing \$18.2 million over two years from 2003-04 to 2004-05 to the Commonwealth National Oceans Policy. Australia is a world leader in the sustainable management of its oceans with the world's first nationally coordinated policy for its marine area of 16 million square kilometres. More than 80 per cent of the area's species are unique to the region, and marine industries generate more than \$30 billion annually.

The funding provided will be used to finalise and implement the first regional marine plan for the two million square kilometres of ocean that comprise the South-east Marine Region and support the development of a northern regional marine plan in the Torres Strait.

CULTURAL HERITAGE PROJECTS PROGRAMME

The Cultural Heritage Projects Programme (\$4.2 million in 2003-04) provides assistance for the conservation of Indigenous heritage places across Australia, targeting community organisations, local governments and private owners of heritage places. Of the 154 projects approved for funding under the programme to date, 110 (or over 70 per cent) have been for conservation of rural and regional heritage places, also providing socio-economic benefits to those communities.

DISTINCTIVELY AUSTRALIAN

The Government will invest an additional \$13.3 million over the four years from 2003-04 to 2006-07 in an important new heritage initiative, 'Distinctively Australian', which takes a new approach to the identification, management and promotion of our national heritage. The programme is based on the Government's new heritage legislation, currently before Parliament. It will establish the National Heritage List, comprising the places of Australia's greatest national significance.

NATURAL HERITAGE TRUST EXTENSION

Funding of \$250 million in 2003-04 to the Natural Heritage Trust will fund, through a variety of mechanisms, projects that will protect and restore the environment and support sustainable natural resource management.

The Trust, through the Australian Government Envirofund, will continue to fund individuals and small community groups to carry out local on-ground projects aimed at conserving biodiversity and sustainable resource use.

NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR SALINITY AND WATER QUALITY

The National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality is a joint initiative of the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments. It involves a funding package of \$700 million over seven years from the Commonwealth from 2000-01, matched by States and Territories (\$113.8 million in 2003-04).

Key objectives of the National Action Plan are to:

- Prevent, stabilise and reverse trends in salinity, particularly dryland salinity affecting the sustainability of production, conservation of biological diversity and the viability of our infrastructure; and
- Improve water quality and secure reliable allocations for human uses, industry and the environment.

Implementation of the National Action Plan is governed by a multilateral Intergovernmental Agreement. The Natural Heritage Trust is governed by a national framework. The

Commonwealth and each jurisdiction have established the basis for investments through Bilateral Agreements.

The centrepiece of both the extension of the Natural Heritage Trust and the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality is the development of integrated catchment or regional natural resource management plans by community-based regional bodies. Governments will support this regional approach through substantial funding for strategic actions specified in catchment plans and through the provision of technical assistance, skills training, information and data.

The Commonwealth is also investing in the development of pilots for market-based instruments to encourage best management practice, assistance for research and development, including into new commercial opportunities in salt affected areas, and the introduction of the next steps in land and water resource policy reform.

The Trust is being rolled-out closely with the arrangements for the National Action Plan at the regional level. In recognition of this, the Commonwealth programme delivery arrangements for the two programmes have been amalgamated, with the formation of the Commonwealth Regional Natural Resource Management Team. Where Trust investment occurs in National Action Plan regions, integrated delivery processes and a single comprehensive regional plan will be used.

For further information on the Trust or the National Action Plan please visit www.napswq.gov.au or www.nht.gov.au, or contact the Natural Resource Management Communications Team on 02 6274 1184.

DEDUCTIONS FOR CERTAIN CONSERVATION COVENANTS

The Government will make tax changes to allow income tax deductions for certain perpetual conservation covenants entered into without consideration between a landholder and a government agency. The measure will apply to covenants entered into on or after 1 July 2002.

The measure builds on the existing conservation covenant provision in tax law, which allows deductions for covenants entered into with deductible gift recipients. The conditions applying to this deduction will be consistent with the conditions applying under the existing provision.

The measure will provide an incentive for landholders to maintain the value of the Australian natural environment.

DELIVERING BETTER SERVICES

Health and aged care

REGIONAL HEALTH STRATEGY

Since 1996, the Government has spent around \$2 billion on targeted rural health and aged care to promote and support access to doctors, specialists, nurses and allied health professionals in rural areas. This is in addition to funding provided through national programmes such as Medicare, including the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and accessed by rural residents.

A major element of this strong commitment to rural health has been the introduction of the *Regional Health Strategy* in the 2000-01 Budget, which provided more than \$562 million in additional funding over four years. This was the largest ever single injection of funds for rural health.

Under the Strategy, a consolidated set of programmes has been put in place at the Commonwealth level in order to provide better access to health and aged care services for rural and remote communities and to strengthen the rural health workforce. These include short term, medium term and long term strategies.

In this Budget, the Government continues its commitment to providing sustainable rural health services for the future. Included in the measures impacting on regional, rural and remote health are:

- Increased subsidy available to rural obstetricians and gynaecologists from 50 per cent to 80 per cent subsidy on the Incurred But Not Reported contribution of the medical indemnity subsidy scheme that starts on 1 July and will be ongoing. Funding of \$10.3 million will be provided over four years.
- Improved access to treatment and referral for illicit drug users in rural and regional areas. Funding of \$4 million will be provided over four years.

The continuing support of a number of already successful programmes in the fields of women's health, rural medical schools, medical workforce, Regional Health Services, aged care, Medicare easyclaim and the Commonwealth Carelink Programme.

MORE HEALTH AND AGED CARE SERVICES FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

The Government has created specific programmes aimed at increasing health care services in rural and remote areas. Many of the rural health programmes reflect the Government's recognition of the important role that rural communities play in identifying local health care priorities.

The Bush Nursing, Small Community and Regional Private Hospitals Programme ensures continuity of health service delivery, choice of health service provider and new employment opportunities.

The programme is expected to be fully operational in 2003-04, with around 50 rural regions of Australia having access to around 1100 specialist outreach services such as paediatrics, psychiatry and obstetric care.

Under the Regional Health Strategy much is being done to help residential aged care services remain viable, and assist rural older people to stay in their local community. Recognising the particular difficulties facing aged care facilities in rural, remote and outer urban areas, up to \$38 million is being made available for capital assistance in 2003-04. Grants will be allocated for upgrading to meet quality and safety requirements or changing care needs, the reconfiguration of services to enhance long term viability, and construction of buildings to accommodate new residential aged care places.

Under the Multipurpose Services Programme, the Commonwealth combines its aged care funding (close to \$40 million in 2003-04) with State health service funding to provide flexible, cost effective aged care and health services to small rural communities, often within the one facility. There are 78 operational Multipurpose Services. The number of Multipurpose Services is expanding steadily and it is expected that around eight new Services will be established in 2003-04 with further communities engaged in community consultation, service planning and development phases to establish new Services.

IMPROVING RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF THE RURAL HEALTH WORKFORCE

Initiatives catering for rural health education have seen 10 University Departments of Rural Health (UDRH) and nine clinical schools established in regional locations. In 2003-04 the UDRH are expected to show increases in the numbers of students undertaking clinical rotations and all Rural Clinical Schools expect to be operating with long term placements.

In 2003-04 the Government will continue to provide opportunities and financial incentives for students and health professionals to undertake education through a number of rural health scholarship schemes in medicine, nursing, pharmacy and allied health.

The Government also has a range of programmes to attract and retain rural health professionals in rural areas by focusing on remuneration and workforce support.

In 2003-04 approximately 2,400 doctors are expected to receive rural retention payments.

The Workforce Support for Rural General Practitioners Programme provided \$10.2 million over four years from 2000-01 to 2003-04 to further support the general practice workforce in rural and remote areas. This funding is administered through 66 eligible rural Divisions of General Practice. The Programme has enabled Divisions to implement a range of activities including GP education, training and professional development, peer/family support, practice management, and support for newly arrived doctors including overseas-trained doctors, registrars and medical students.

Programmes have been established to support nurses, pharmacists, allied health professionals and specialists to work in rural communities. These professionals play a vital role in the provision of health services and health choices. Some of these broader workforce initiatives include:

- \$2 million in funding in 2003-04 for 32 specialist training posts in regional hospitals;
- \$2 million in 2003-04 for the support scheme for rural specialists;

- Additional support for rural specialist training through the rural advanced specialist training support programme; and
- Increasing the number of rural nurses, pharmacists and allied health professionals accessing continuing professional education and training.

The programmes under the *Regional Health Strategy* are designed to make a long term investment and many are still growing.

MEDICARE

The recently announced A Fairer Medicare package of \$917 million over five years is aimed at strengthening Australia's universal health care system by making general practitioner services more available and more affordable.

A major objective of this package is to address the shortage of doctors in certain areas, particularly in rural and outer metropolitan areas. Many Australians living in these areas cannot easily find a doctor when they need one. In addition, the availability of bulkbilling in these areas is much lower than in the capital cities.

The package will benefit all Australians, regardless of where they live, and especially those who need Medicare most, such as people on low incomes and people whose illness requires them to seek frequent medical care. The features of A Fairer Medicare include the provision of more doctors where they are needed most by increasing the number of places in medical schools around Australia by 234 every year and by increasing the number of GP training places by 150 every year. The additional medical school placements will be bonded to areas of doctor shortage and the additional training places will be targeted to rural and outer metropolitan areas.

From November 2003, the new General Practice Access Scheme will provide financial incentives to general practices which guarantee to provide medical care at no cost to patients covered by a Commonwealth concession card. GPs agreeing to bulkbill these patients will receive incentive payments on a sliding scale depending upon the degree of remoteness of their practice. For example, GPs in small rural towns and remote areas with an average concessional workload would receive an annual payment of \$22,050. Those practices with higher concessional workloads would receive higher annual payments. This arrangement will strengthen the availability of bulkbilling for many thousands of Australians on low incomes and provide greater regional fairness in access to bulkbilling by GPs.

HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE PROGRAMME

Home and Community Care (HACC) is a Commonwealth, State and Territory Government programme with the Commonwealth providing 60 per cent of funding.

Almost 600,000 Australians received HACC services in 2001-02 and the substantial continued expansion of HACC reflects the Government's commitment to provide care for people in their own homes.

In 2003-04 there will be a budget allocation of \$58.3 million or a 8.6 per cent funding increase to the HACC programme.

If the States match this Commonwealth funding this will mean:

- More than 400,000 extra Meals on Wheels services;
- More than 500,000 extra hours of respite care and social support;
- More than 280,000 extra hours of domestic help; and
- More than \$250,000 extra for home modifications.

AGED CARE ASSESSMENT TEAMS

Older Australians will have better access to aged care services with the 2003-04 Budget providing a 10.5 per cent funding boost to specialist assessment teams which refer people to care. This 10.5 per cent funding increase, including \$2.5 million in new funding is for Aged Care Assessment Teams who assess clients' care needs.

This funding boost means more older Australians will have their aged care needs assessed faster, allowing them to access the residential and community aged care services appropriate to their needs more quickly.

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 2003-04 Budget includes a \$17 million or 6.2 per cent funding boost to Community Aged Care Packages which provide personal care to people in their own homes.

CAPITAL ASSISTANCE FOR AGED CARE IN RURAL AND REMOTE AUSTRALIA

The Federal Government provides capital assistance to small homes in regional and rural areas to help them with viability issues. The capacity for these homes to generate funds through accommodation bonds and charges may be limited.

In 2002-03, the Commonwealth committed \$100 million over four years to assist with the building and upgrading costs of homes in rural and remote areas. In 2003-04, the Commonwealth will provide \$25 million for capital assistance for aged care in rural and remote Australia.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WILKINSON REPORT

The Government will provide additional funding of \$2.3 million to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission over three years from 2003-04 to 2005-06. This will be used to implement the Government's response to the findings and recommendations of the Wilkinson Report on the impact of the competition provisions of the Trade Practices Act 1974 on recruitment and retention of medical practitioners in rural and regional Australia.

Funding will cease in the calendar year 2005 to coincide with the review of the implementation of the recommendations of the Wilkinson Report.

MONITORING MEDICAL INDEMNITY INSURANCE PREMIUMS

The Government will provide funding of \$1 million over 2003-04 to 2004-05 to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) to allow the ACCC to monitor medical indemnity premiums to ensure that they are actuarially and commercially justified.

In October 2002, the Government announced a package of measures aimed at ensuring key private medical services, including in rural and regional areas, are maintained, and providing a new framework for the provision of medical indemnity insurance in Australia. The Government considers it important that the benefits of reforms are passed on to the practitioners, the patients and the community.

Funding of \$500,000 was provided in the 2002-03 Additional Estimates to enable the ACCC to commence monitoring of medical indemnity premiums in January 2003. The additional funding will allow the ACCC to continue in its monitoring role until June 2005.

MAINTAINING RURAL AND REMOTE SERVICE DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS FOR VETERANS

In 2001-02 the Government decided to continue and increase funding for the Department of Veterans' Affairs programme of agency arrangements in rural and regional areas first implemented in 1997-98. Agency arrangements use other Commonwealth, State and local organisations to deliver information and assistance to the veteran community in regional areas. These arrangements allow the veteran community to access information and services in areas where the Department of Veterans' Affairs is unable to directly provide the service. Funding will total \$2 million over the next four years.

COMMUNITY CARE GRANTS PROGRAMME

The Government will continue the Community Care Grants Programme which provides grant funding to maintain and improve the independence and quality of life of veterans and war widows or widowers. The partnerships that develop between the veteran community and local community services through the Community Care Grants programme projects improve veterans' access to services. They also provide a cost-effective way to offer community organisations support for locally based services which benefit the veteran community. Approximately 50 per cent of the funds are directed to projects in rural and remote areas as part of the Government's efforts to ensure that veterans and war widows in these areas do not miss out on services or assistance. Over the next four years, \$6.2 million will be provided for this programme, with \$1.5 million allocated for 2003-04.

Communications and Information Technology

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 the most remote areas of Australia to enable them to have access to untimed calls including untimed access to dial-up Internet services. In 2003-04, \$30 million will be allocated to this programme.

MOBILE PHONES ON HIGHWAYS PROGRAMME

The Mobile Phones on Highways Programme provides \$25 million to facilitate near continuous mobile phone coverage along almost 10,000 kms of 16 major highways covering areas within Tasmania, Victoria, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, South Australia and Queensland. This has increased GSM mobile coverage on some of the major road transport routes in regional Australia.

MOBILES FOR TOWNS OVER 500 PROGRAMME

The Mobiles for Towns Over 500 Programme will be funded with \$23.9 million over three years from 2001-02 and is increasing mobile phone coverage for 132 towns with populations over 500. Under the programme, towns are progressively receiving CDMA coverage with 40 of these towns also to receive GSM coverage to supplement existing coverage. The Programme will receive \$4.7 million in the year 2003-04.

NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FUND

The National Communications Fund (NCF) is a \$52.2 million programme which supports significant telecommunications projects in the education and health sectors in regional Australia. In 2002 the Prime Minister announced eight successful projects for NCF funding. These projects will improve the delivery of broadband education and health services (for example, the online delivery of educational courses and teleradiology) to regional Australia. Geographically, the projects cover regional areas in all States and Territories except the Australian Capital Territory.

REGIONAL MOBILE PHONE PROGRAMME

The Regional Mobile Phone Programme will receive \$40.6 million over three years from 2001-02, with \$21.6 million being spent during 2003-04. The Regional Mobile Phone Programme is providing \$15.8 million towards improving mobile phone coverage to 55 towns with populations of less than 500. Approximately \$16 million will be forwarded towards providing spot coverage along 34 regional highways; \$3.5 million to improve mobile phone coverage in the south west of Western Australia under the Wireless West project; \$3.3 million for a satellite mobile phone handset subsidy scheme for remote areas without mobile phone coverage.

INTERNET ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

The Internet Assistance Programme (IAP) provides residential and small business Internet users with access to a range of help services to help solve Internet problems. During 2003-04, \$2.8 million will be allocated to the programme, with a total of \$48 million being spent over three years from 2001-02 to 2003-04. The Programme includes an Online Help Service to provide advice to users and a Technical Support Service to assist users whose problems cannot be resolved by Online Help Service.

CONSUMER REPRESENTATION AND RESEARCH GRANTS

Funding of \$3.4 million over four years from 2002-03 will be provided for consumer representation and research in telecommunications. In accordance with the Government's response to the Telecommunications Services Inquiry, priority is being given to representation of people with disabilities in regional areas. A total of \$0.9 million will be allocated in 2003-04.

The above Programmes form part of the Commonwealth Government's \$147.3 million package of initiatives responding to the Telecommunications Service Inquiry to improve the level of telecommunications services to regional and rural Australia.

A range of Social Bonus initiatives, funded in 1999-2000, is continuing to provide benefits to Australians in regional, rural and remote areas.

NETWORKING THE NATION - THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUND

The Local Government Fund is providing \$45 million over six years from 1999-2000 to support local governments in regional, rural and remote areas to use telecommunications to deliver improved services and benefits to their communities. In 2003-04, \$11.4 million will be allocated to this fund.

LAUNCESTON BROADBAND PROJECT

The Launceston Broadband Project (LBP) is a \$30 million joint initiative between the Commonwealth Government and Telstra funded as part of the Telstra Social Bonus Package will \$15 million from the Commonwealth and \$15 million from Telstra.

The LBP comprises three elements:

- Establishment of a Telstra Multimedia Development Laboratory (named Broadband-eLab) for the commercialisation of Internet related products;
- Advanced Internet Access (through ADSL technology) for residential and business customers in Launceston. Access is subsidised to encourage the take up of advanced internet based services; and
- A \$5 million Business Development Fund (BDF) designed to stimulate new high-tech business opportunities in the Launceston region. The Tasmanian Electronic Commerce Centre (TECC) delivers the \$5 million Business Development Fund over three years. It is entirely funded by the Commonwealth.

The LBP is ensuring Tasmania is well positioned to participate in the commercial opportunities offered by the information economy. The wider Australian community benefits through the development of broadband applications which are developed and trialed in the B-eLab.

COMMERCIAL RADIO BLACKSPOTS PROGRAMME

The Commercial Radio Blackspots Programme will provide \$5 million over three years from 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.

EXTENSION OF SBS TELEVISION TRANSMISSION

With the extension of SBS Television to transmission areas with 5000 to 10,000 people, the Government will provide \$5.7 million over four years. A total of \$2 million per annum will be provided from 2006-07 to meet ongoing SBS transmission costs for these services. 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. 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 the transmission service provider for SBS to replace an existing self-help service with one that affords greater audience reach which will also result in improved access to SBS television.

TELEVISION BLACK SPOTS PROGRAMME

The Television Black Spots Programme (TVBSP) will be allocated \$35 million over five years from 1999-2000 from the Commonwealth Government. The Commonwealth Government recognised the difficulties that some communities, particularly those outside of capital cities, were having in getting access to free-to-air television services. It has therefore established the TVBSP, which is fixing between 200 and 250 blackspots.

TELEVISION BLACK SPOTS—ALTERNATIVE TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS PROGRAMME

The Television Black Spots—Alternative Technical Solutions Programme (TVBS—ATS), will receive \$13.3 million over three years from 2002-03 to further improve television reception in regional areas. Building on the Television Black Spots Programme, the funding will support the development of alternative technical solutions.

REGIONAL EQUALISATION PLAN

The Regional Equalisation Plan in 2000-01 has assisted the rollout of digital television to Australians living in regional and remote Australia. The financial assistance of around \$260 million over 13 years is to be provided to assist commercial television broadcasters with its introduction. An estimated \$26.1 million in assistance has been identified under the Plan for 2003-04.

ABC REGIONAL AND LOCAL PROGRAMMING

The ABC is receiving an additional \$71.2 million over four years from 2001-02. It is anticipated that most of these funds will provide additional regional and local programming across all media.

REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS PARTNERSHIP

In December 2000, the Government and ntl Australia Pty Ltd (now known as Broadcast Australia Pty Ltd) 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 Broadcast Australia each contributed \$5 million to the scheme with the Government's contribution sourced from the Television Fund. By the end of January 2003, 32 Councils or community groups providing 54 self-help services had taken advantage of the subsidies available under this scheme.

SBS TELEVISION ROLLOUT (TELEVISION FUND)

The Government allocated SBS \$73.7 million to finance the extension of the SBS analog television service to 1.2 million Australians residing in 36 regional transmission areas with a population of 10,000 people or more in December 1999. All 78 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.

On 20 August 2002, the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts announced that the following 21 extensions would be funded under this initiative to transmission areas with populations of 5,000 to 10,000 people:

Carnarvon (WA); Charters Towers (QLD); Cobar (NSW); Gisborne (VIC); Goondiwindi (QLD); Jindabyne (NSW); Katherine (NT); Katanning (WA); Kununurra (WA); Mandurah (WA); Manjimup (WA); Moranbah Town (QLD); Moranbah (QLD); Mudgee (NSW); Narrogin (WA); Newman (WA); Northam (WA); Roma (QLD); St George (QLD); Tumut (NSW); and Young (NSW).

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 to the satellite, which occurred in November 2000; and
- Establish a self-help scheme, launched in December 2000, to 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 that are located north of the Tropic of Capricorn and within 250 kilometres of 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 to mid April 2003, 18 Councils or community groups have been approved to receive financial assistance under this scheme to establish or replace 20 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. It is the ABC's intention to have completed the rollout of new or enhanced services under this Programme by 30 June 2003, by which time it will have extended or enhanced 3 television and 17 radio services across all six States. In addition, the ABC uplinked a second Local Radio satellite service in Western Australia with Kalgoorlie based programming and retuned several nearby transmitters to receive this more relevant local content.

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 at the completion of its last funding round in October 2002, 39 Councils or community groups had received, or had been approved to receive, subsidies to establish 47 SBS radio or television self-help services.

Family services

KEY INDICATORS OF INDIGENOUS DISADVANTAGE

The Government will provide the Productivity Commission with additional funding of \$2.4 million over four years to prepare an annual report on key indicators of Indigenous disadvantage.

As part of the Council of Australian Governments reconciliation agenda, the objective is to identify key indicators that are relevant to all Governments and Indigenous stakeholders and that can demonstrate the impact of programme and policy intervention on addressing indigenous disadvantage.

The funding will allow the Productivity Commission to undertake work in addition to the Commission's existing workload as Secretariat to the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Services.

MEN AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS PROGRAMME

The Men and Family Relationships programme is an innovative initiative working with men in the community. The programme assists men to deal with emotional issues around relationships, so that they can manage a range of relationship difficulties and enhance or re-establish positive relationships. Funding of \$19.6 million over four years from 2003-04 will be provided through the Men and Family Relationships programme to continue men's services in rural, remote and metropolitan Australia. This funding will increase the capacity of rural and remote services to retain skilled staff and continue to build on the community networks and knowledge developed since the projects commenced.

FAMILY AND RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Funding of \$5.5 million will be provided over four years from 2003-04 to maintain Family Relationships Education (FRE) services in rural, regional and remote Australia.

The FRE programme assists couples to improve their relationship skills and to maintain healthy relationships. Relationship education services offer early intervention and prevention services to assist couples and families to strengthen their family relationships through learning new skills for better relationships.

Research undertaken by the Australian Institute of Family Studies in 1999 found that one of the major issues leading to relationship breakdown was a communication problem. A survey undertaken as part of the recent FRE Review confirmed that in 2001-02, 82 per cent of clients who accessed FRE services reported:

- An improvement in their awareness of and capacity to access community resources;
- An improved understanding of themselves, and
- An enhanced capacity to apply these understandings and skills to current and future relationships.

Relationship education was also shown to be more cost effective than expensive legal and crisis options with more than 19,000 clients accessing FRE services in 2001-02 (*FaCSLink*). Developing skills in Australian families can assist families to be resilient and reduce relationship breakdown.

FLEXIBLE AND INNOVATIVE CHILD CARE SERVICES

Since coming to office in 1996, the Government has 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 annually 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.

Funding of more than \$20 million annually 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.

DISADVANTAGED AREA SUBSIDY

The Disadvantaged Area Subsidy (DAS) is a recurrent subsidy to assist with the operating costs of a service. Overall, DAS funding totalling \$10 million each year is provided to some 650 child care services in rural and regional Australia.

CHILDREN'S CONTACT SERVICES

Children's Contact Services play a critical role in preserving and re-establishing parent-child contact for many non-resident parents following family separation. This Budget measure provides on-going funding for 25 Children's Contact Services established by this Government in the last three years. Twenty-one of the 25 services are in regional areas. This measure ensures that all 35 Children's Contact Services established by the Commonwealth have ongoing funding. A total of \$17 million will be provided over the next four years from 2003-04.

PARTNERSHIPS AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Under this initiative, \$10 million has been allocated specifically to addressing Indigenous family violence. In 2002-03, \$902,000 was allocated for projects undertaken by and for Indigenous communities. In 2003-04, \$1.27 million has been allocated under this initiative.

LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF INDIGENOUS CHILDREN

Funding of \$8.6 million will be provided over four years for a longitudinal study of Indigenous children. The study will focus on the linkages between early childhood experiences and later life outcomes for Indigenous children. It will be the first national representative longitudinal study of Indigenous children living in remote, rural, regional and urban centres. Around one quarter of Indigenous children participating in the study will be selected from remote areas.

The study will be based on the current Longitudinal Study of Australian Children in its research objectives and broad design. Two separate age groups will be tracked comprising 2000 babies aged less than 12 months and 2000 four to five year olds. The study will be preceded by two years of consultations with Indigenous people, communities and organisations to ensure that the design of the study reflects their interests and is done in a way that benefits Indigenous children and their families.

RECONNECT PROGRAMME

Reconnect is a youth homelessness early intervention programme, which began operating in December 1999. As at April 2003, 96 Reconnect services had been funded. When fully implemented the programme will fund Reconnect services in about 100 communities nationwide. Approximately 40 per cent of funding (around \$8 million each year) is being directed to regional, rural and remote communities.

Services are located in communities of high need identified by State and Territory Governments. The objective of the programme is to reconnect young people with family, education, training employment and their community. A total of \$82.1 million will be provided over the next four years, from 2003-04 to 2006-07.

DROUGHT COUNSELLING

On 27 November 2002, the Prime Minister announced up to \$2 million extra funding for personal counselling in drought affected areas. This measure aims to improve access to personal counselling services at a time when need is greatest, families and individuals are under stress and local finances are diminished. All counselling services funded under this measure are free and confidential, and are available until 30 June 2003.

The Drought Counselling Measure is being delivered through the Family Relationship Services Programme (FRSP) and Centrelink. Centrelink acts as the initial point of contact through the Centrelink Drought Assistance Hotline (phone number 13 23 16) and referral for people seeking face to face counselling. The FRSP is providing face to face counselling and other support measures, Centrelink social workers are providing telephone counselling through the Drought Assistance Hotline and Centrelink Psychologists and social workers are providing face to face counselling through Centrelink's Customer Service Centres. Details of face to face counselling by location is available through www.facs.gov.au/droughtcounselling.

FRSP will initially fund 30 organisations to provide counselling services through approximately 90 outlets to drought affected rural communities throughout Australia. In addition any gaps will be addressed in a second phase of funding. These services are available in every State and Territory excluding Tasmania, which has not been declared drought affected.

COUNTRY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION EMERGENCY AID FUND

The Government announced on 27 November 2002 that it would provide \$1 million to the Country Women's Association (CWA) to help support farming families who may be reluctant to apply for assistance through other means, or whose immediate requirements are not covered by other assistance measures. Support will be provided through the CWA Emergency Drought Aid Fund, part of the CWA Emergency Aid Fund. Support to farming families, and families providing services to farmers who are also affected by the drought, will be provided in the form of vouchers for such emergency situations as groceries, car registrations, petrol, medical and dental expenses.

Weather

UPGRADE OF THE WEATHER RADAR NETWORK

The Government has committed \$62.2 million to the upgrade of the Bureau of Meteorology's vital weather radar network which is spread across regional Australia over five years from 2003-04. The funding will be used to replace fifteen radars in rural areas and six city sites. These new Doppler radars will vastly improve the Bureau of Meteorology's ability to detect and predict severe weather events such as large hailstorms, damaging wind gusts, tornadoes

and heavy rain. The radars will provide crucial early warning, helping to save lives and reduce preventable damage to property and livestock.

WORLD CLASS WEATHER FORECASTING

The Bureau of Meteorology will increase its weather services to rural areas, including services to meet the needs of rural communities through an additional \$31.2 million over four years from 2003-04. The additional funding will also be used to enhance climate monitoring, prediction and advisory services, including reliability of El Niño predictions and seasonal outlooks. It will also enable greater accuracy in drought monitoring and water resources assessments.

Crime prevention and legal services

NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAM

The National Crime Prevention Programme is a strategic initiative of the Commonwealth 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 Crime Prevention Branch of the Attorney General's Department, the Programme includes both research and practical initiatives including national pilot projects, local prevention activities, communication and crime prevention training initiatives. Funding for the National Crime Prevention Programme was due to terminate on 30 June 2003; however the Government will provide additional funding of \$4 million in 2003-04 to continue the work of the National Crime Prevention Programme for one further year.

CRIME STOPPERS

The Crime Stoppers partnership between community, police and the media operates throughout Australia. This initiative is administered by the Crime Prevention Branch of the Attorney-General's Department. The initiative will facilitate coordination/fundraising for Crime Stoppers nationally. This will enable the setting of strategic direction, networking, information exchange and fundraising at the national level to occur. A total of \$1 million over four years will be provided from 2002-03.

THE NORTHERN TERRITORY AGREEMENT

The Northern Territory Agreement between the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory government is designed to prevent juveniles entering the criminal justice system. The Agreement focuses on juveniles across the 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 funding allocation will include \$20 million over four years from September 2000-September 2004.

COMMONWEALTH COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAMME

The Commonwealth Community Legal Services Programme administers funding to 126 organisations across Australia to provide generalist and specialist legal assistance to disadvantaged people in the community. Of these, 37 community legal services are located in regional or rural centres. A number of these also provide outreach services to other outlying communities. In addition to these 37 regional centres, there are other organisations located in metropolitan areas that receive Commonwealth funding to provide targeted specialist assistance in both metropolitan and regional or rural areas. Services include women's legal services, rural women's outreach projects and indigenous women's legal service projects. The amount of funding represents the total amount provided to the 37 organisations located in regional areas. In 2003-04, a total of \$7.4 million will be provided for this programme.

REGIONAL PRIMARY DISPUTE RESOLUTION SERVICES

Regional Primary Dispute Resolution Services funding of \$2 million for each year over the next four years will be provided to 24 community-based organisations in 33 regional areas across Australia for the provision of primary dispute resolution services. These services include counselling, mediation and conciliation and are aimed at helping separating families resolve their family law disputes themselves, wherever possible, rather than going to court. In almost two thirds of the regions, organisations will be providing out-reach services in addition to services in the regional centres in which they are located.

AUSTRALIAN LAW ONLINE

Australian Law Online includes the Family Law Hotline, Regional Law Hotline and Family Law Online information and referral services. People in regional areas can access the Family Law Hotline and Family Law Online to obtain information about the family law system and services. The Regional Law Hotline is a free telephone service specifically for people in regional areas who require legal advice or information. Funding of \$800,000 per year over the next four years has been specifically budgeted for the Regional Law Hotline legal advice and information service.

NATIVE TITLE SERVICES

The Government provided additional funding of \$86 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 the delivery of native title services.

The additional funding was provided to enable speedier resolution of native title matters through the Federal Court and the National Native Title Tribunal, and provides additional resources to support participants in those processes. In addition, funding was provided to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission to undertake a capacity building programme aimed at improving the operational capacity of Native Title Representative Bodies and enhance the administrative skills and practices of their staff. The speedier resolution of native title matters will benefit all members of the community, both indigenous and non-indigenous, including those living in rural and regional areas.

Service delivery

EXPANSION OF CENTRELINK AGENTS AND ACCESS POINT NETWORK

The Government will provide \$8.2 million over four years from 2003-04 to extend the Centrelink Agent and Access Point Service Delivery Model in rural and remote communities. The funding supports expansion of the Centrelink network in remote communities to ensure that people living in 50 remote locations gain access to a trained Agent, supported by Centrelink. It is expected that the Centrelink Agents will assist Indigenous customers receive their correct entitlements and gain access to opportunities that will facilitate social and economic participation.

This measure improves equity and access rights for Indigenous customers by providing an agreed level of Centrelink service delivery in remote locations as well as increasing social and economic opportunities for customers.

2003 COMMONWEALTH-STATE HOUSING AGREEMENT

The Commonwealth will provide approximately \$4.8 billion over five years to assist State and Territory governments in their delivery of social housing services. Under the CSHA, State and Territory governments provide affordable and appropriate housing for disadvantaged groups, with a particular focus on aged and disability pensioners, Indigenous people and the homeless. The 2003 CSHA will provide State and Territory governments with base funding and tied programme assistance for the Aboriginal Rental Housing Programme, Crisis Accommodation Programme and the Community Housing Programme. The Aboriginal Rental Housing Programme specifically funds housing for Indigenous people in rural and remote areas where there is high need and where mainstream public housing and private housing are unavailable.

CENTRELINK SERVICES TO AUSTRALIA

Centrelink has responsibility for administering an extensive range of payments and services including social security payments, childcare assistance, programmes targeted at primary producers.

Centrelink has been continuing to tailor its services to the particular needs of small rural and regional communities, and has continued to expand its presence into many more communities. Centrelink continues to publish the *Rural News* magazine on a quarterly basis with news on payments, services and information of relevance to people in rural and regional areas.

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 2003-04 expected to exceed \$20 million.

Centrelink currently has:

- 320 Customer Service Centres across Australia, of which 185 are located in, or are responsible for, delivering a service to rural and regional Australia;

- A network of over 450 community-based Agents and Access Points who provide a daily contact and information service on Centrelink's behalf (148 of these are specifically targeted at assisting Indigenous customers);
- A range of visiting services to small rural towns, as well as remote visiting teams servicing isolated Indigenous communities;
- A 1800 number to handle enquiries from farmers on specific initiatives targeted at primary producers; and
- A service in approximately 50 of the Rural Transaction Centres opened to date.

Centrelink has also established productive relationships with Commonwealth, 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 Centre Programme.

CENTRELINK RURAL CALL CENTRES

The Government will extend funding of \$31.8 million over four years from 2003-04 to 2006-07 to enable Centrelink to continue the operations of its Rural Call Centres in Maryborough (Queensland) and Port Augusta (South Australia).

The measure forms part of the Government's whole-of-government approach to meeting the needs of rural and regional Australia. It also addresses a key recommendation of the Special Rural Task Force relating to farm family awareness of social security entitlements.

The ongoing funding for the call centres in Maryborough and Port Augusta will enable Centrelink to continue servicing the needs of Centrelink's rural and regional customers. This programme will provide continuity of assistance to regional customers at a time of increasing demand for access to services and information.

The call centres are also important to their regions as employers providing long-term, stable employment opportunities in the Maryborough and Port Augusta regions and also as purchasers of local services.

INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORIES – FUNDING FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The Non Self-Governing Territories of Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands are wholly dependent on the Commonwealth for the funding for government services at all levels. This funding includes the provision of services normally provided by State or Territory governments such as education health and essential utilities.

In 2003-04 the Commonwealth will provide around \$56 million towards the provision of 'state' equivalent services through the Department of Transport and Regional Services. In addition, the Commonwealth, through the Department, will be investing around \$10 million in capital replacement and improvement over 2003-04.

The Commonwealth will also provide its normal range of services through other portfolios such as customs, immigration and defence.

SERVICE TO THE JERVIS BAY TERRITORY

The Commonwealth Government provides most of the State and local government-type services, such as sewerage, primary school education and electricity, to the 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.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

Education and training

NATIONAL SCHOOL DRUG EDUCATION STRATEGY

This measure confirms funding of \$3.5 million for 2003-04 to build on the progress achieved in enhancing school drug education programmes and foster the capacity of school communities to provide safe and supportive school environments for all Australian school students.

Additional funding of \$1.8 million in 2003-04 will fund the development of Student at Risk and Parent Initiatives under the National School Drug Education Strategy.

STRATEGIC ASSISTANCE FOR IMPROVING STUDENT OUTCOMES

This measure will continue to provide funding for this programme to improve the learning outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Funding of \$39.3 million in 2003-04 will be provided and will bring total funding to \$384.1 million in 2003-04.

NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS – CAPITAL FUNDING

This measure will continue to provide funding for this programme at existing levels for construction and refurbishment work on non-government school facilities, particularly for schools serving the most educationally disadvantaged students. Funding of \$11.4 million in 2003-04 will be provided and will bring total funding to \$98 million in 2003-04..

GRANTS FOR NATIONAL LITERACY AND NUMERACY STRATEGIES AND PROJECTS PROGRAMME

This measure will maintain funding for national initiatives and projects to continue to support improved learning outcomes for educationally disadvantaged students. The Government is providing \$8.1 million in 2003-04, and will bring total funding in 2003-04 to \$8.8 million for this programme.

HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM

National Priorities

This measure provides funding of \$161 million (\$11.9 million in 2003-04) to support additional higher education places and an increased Commonwealth contribution to course costs in national priority areas. Initially this funding will be used to address Indigenous education and national priority areas of the labour market, such as teaching and nursing.

Scholarships

This measure includes the Commonwealth Education Costs Scholarships and the Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarships which will provide a total of 2000 new four-year scholarships valued at \$4000 (indexed) per annum over four years to assist rural and regional students with accommodation expenses. Both scholarship programmes will be merit-based and will offer financial support to students from low income backgrounds.

The Government will also provide funding for the Indigenous Staff Scholarships programme to further develop Indigenous leadership in the higher education sector by offering professional development opportunities to those Indigenous staff who have demonstrated their commitment to assisting students in higher education. Five national scholarships providing a HECS exemption or fee waiver of up to \$10,000, plus a non-taxable stipend of \$20,000 will be allocated each year.

Disadvantaged students – improved participation

This measure provides increased funding of more than \$21 million over four years (\$300,000 in 2003-04) to assist disadvantaged groups to participate in higher education. It includes funding to increase the Indigenous Support Fund to improve Indigenous participation in higher education. An Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council will be established with funding to enable consultation with Indigenous people on issues affecting higher education.

Collaboration and Structural Reform Fund

This measure funds the establishment of a Collaborative and Structural Reform Fund to make grants to universities. Grants will be provided as an incentive to foster institutional specialisation, rationalisation and effective collaboration between universities and other education providers in course provision and related areas as well as structural reform (for example, rationalisation of course offerings between institutions). Funding of \$20 million will be available for this measure from 2004-05 to 2006-07.

REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES LOADING

With funding of \$27.9 million in 2003-04 and \$122.6 million in total over the next four years, this measure will provide a new loading for regional campuses within the Commonwealth Grants Scheme, as a contribution to the greater costs of delivering education on regional campuses.

MOUNT STROMLO OBSERVATORY – RECONSTRUCTION AFTER THE BUSHFIRES

This measure will provide \$7.3 million to the Australian National University in 2003-04 to assist with the restoration of the research and teaching capacity of the Mount Stromlo Observatory and the Research School of Astronomy and Astrophysics. The facility was damaged by bushfires on 18 January 2003.

NEW APPRENTICESHIPS INCENTIVES PROGRAMME REVIEW– REDISTRIBUTION OF RURAL AND REGIONAL SKILLS SHORTAGE PROGRESSION PAYMENT

The Government decided to redistribute the special incentive paid at the point of progression from Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) level 2 to AQF level 3 for 4 for employers of apprentices in areas of rural and regional skills shortages. The Government has provided \$8.2 million in 2003-04 to enable the special incentive of \$1,100 (GST inclusive) to now be paid at commencement of AQF level 3 or 4 New Apprenticeships.

HIGHER EDUCATION PLACES FOR REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES AND CAMPUSES

In the 2001-02 budget, the Government provided an additional 670 Commonwealth-funded undergraduate student places for regional higher education institutions and campuses from 2002. These places rise to 1,832 a 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. Funding for this programme is \$10.5 million in 2003-04, rising to \$12.6 million in 2004-05.

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

In the 2001-02 budget the Government announced funding support to increase education and training assistance for Indigenous people under the *Australians Working Together* package.

This 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 Government will provide \$4.3 million in 2003-04.

AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL

Research funded by the Australian Research Council advances the global knowledge and skills base leading to economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits for the Australian community.

Funding is allocated through a competitive grant assessment process with some of this funding directed towards objectives which benefit regional and rural Australia, agricultural production and technology.

ASSISTANCE FOR ISOLATED CHILDREN

The Government will provide funding of \$40.9 million in 2003-04 for the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme. The Scheme provides funding to help rural families meet the costs associated with boarding arrangements, setting up a second family home or studying via distance education

COUNTRY AREAS PROGRAMME

The Government will provide \$24.6 million in 2003-04 for the Country Areas Programme. The programme is continuing to improve the educational opportunities, participation, learning outcomes and personal development of rural and isolated primary and secondary students.

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP) is Australia's national policy on Indigenous education. The primary objective of the AEP is to bring about equity in education for Indigenous Australians. The Commonwealth, along with all State and Territory Governments, endorses and promotes 21 common and agreed national goals. The policy has a significant impact on Indigenous people in regional, rural and remote Australia.

Assistance of approximately \$240.5 million nationally for 2003-04 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, \$197.6 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. Tertiary institutions will receive \$24.9 million in Indigenous Support Funding to meet the special needs of Indigenous students undertaking tertiary studies. The Government will provide \$4 million for the provision of Indigenous Infrastructure for vocational education and training, with many of the tertiary and VET institutions which will benefit from this funding operating in regional, rural or remote areas.

HIGHER EDUCATION EQUITY PROGRAMME

This programme provides funds to Higher Education Institutions for measures to assist the successful participation in higher education of people from designated equity groups. Funds are provided for initiatives directed at students from rural and isolated areas. In 2003-04, \$9.4 million is available under the Higher Education Equity Programme.

Building capacity

NATIONAL RURAL WOMEN'S SECRETARIAT

The National Rural Women's Coalition established the National Rural Women's Secretariat in 2002 to support input from rural women into Federal Government policy. A key objective is to ensure better social and economic outcomes for women in rural areas.

Coalition members include the Country Women's Association of Australia, Australian Women in Agriculture, the National Rural Health Alliance and others. In 2003-04 the Government will provide \$150,000 to maintain this work.

SPORTS LEADERSHIP GRANTS FOR RURAL AND REGIONAL WOMEN

The Government will provide \$193,480 in 2003-04 for this grant programme, which is designed to provide leadership training to women in sport, specifically Indigenous and disabled women.

BUREAU OF RURAL SCIENCES SOCIAL SCIENCES PROGRAMME

The Bureau of Rural Sciences, within the Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries portfolio, provides nationally focussed scientific advice to the Commonwealth government as a foundation for evidence-based policy on agricultural food, fisheries and forestry industries and the natural resources they rely on.

In 2003-2004 the BRS Social Sciences programme will spend \$1.5 million. It will publish the revised *Country Matters: Social atlas of rural and regional Australia*, based on the 2001 Census data. It will also produce reports on the social data needs of selected regional catchment groups in NSW, Queensland and Victoria in relation to activities under the Natural Heritage Trust.

MINING INDUSTRY/INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME

The Government will spend \$300,000 in the Mining industry/Indigenous communities regional partnership programme (known as the Working in Partnership Programme). This is part of the Government's \$1.2 million commitment over four years from 2001-02. The programme aims to support and encourage the cultural change that is taking place in relations between Indigenous communities and the mining and exploration industry, and to promote long term partnerships between them.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY NETWORK INITIATIVE

The Government provided \$8.5 million over four years from 2002-03 to continue the Family and Community Network Initiative. The 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. Most projects will be in regional or remote Australia, with funding of \$2 million in 2003-04.

ARMY-ATSIC COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

The Army-ATSIC Community Assistance Programme (AACAP) is an ongoing commitment that reinforces the strong association between Army and the Indigenous people of Northern Australia. It is a joint initiative between ATSIC (lead agency), Army and the Department of Health and Ageing that has been improving health and living standards in Indigenous communities since 1997. The Army provides soldiers and equipment to complete project management, construction, health care and training support to the communities selected by ATSIC. The programme has seen essential housing, infrastructure and health and training support provided to remote communities across Australia.

Current AACAP projects include: Dampier Peninsula (AACAP 2002), Palm Island (AACAP 2003), Bamaga region (AACAP 2004).

DEFENCE COMMUNITY ORGANISATION

Defence will continue to support members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and their families through a number of projects conducted by the Defence Community Organisation (DCO). Services which particularly benefit the regions include:

- Support for Defence community groups;
- Regional information projects and services such as the Family Information Network and DCO website;
- An extensive network of child care support;
- A programme of grants for Defence community groups to foster self-help and community spirit; a spouse employment assistance programme;
- Support for posted families with special needs; and
- Education services to ease transition and minimise the disruption of education due to mobility for ADF families.

Arts and sport

YOUNG AND EMERGING ARTISTS PROGRAMME

The Young and Emerging Artists Programme initiative has been administered by the Australia Council since its introduction in 1996 and has been allocated \$5 million over four years from 2002-03. 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. In 2003-04, the programme will receive \$1.3 million.

NATIONAL MEDIA BASED YOUTH ARTS FESTIVAL

The National Media Based Youth Arts 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 Festival has been funded \$2 million over two years from 2002-03 with \$1 million allocated for 2003-04.

HERITAGE COLLECTIONS

The Government will provide \$1.2 million for the Heritage Collections over four years from 2002-03 to support collaborative initiatives with State and Territory governments aimed at

addressing the needs of collecting institutions, many of which are located in regional Australia. A total of \$300,000 will be provided for 2003-04.

AUSTRALIAN MUSEUMS ON LINE

The Australian Museums On Line (AMOL) is a comprehensive Internet site designed to help Australian museums and galleries make information about their collections available to a world-wide audience. AMOL is a Cultural Ministers Council (CMC) project, a joint initiative of the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments in partnership with the Australian cultural sector. The initiative has a particular focus on local, regional and specialist museums and provides support and funding to enable these museums to become involved in the website. It also encourages the continued participation of Australia's major museums. In 2003-04, AMOL will be provided with \$240,000 and will continue to receive this amount over the next three years.

NATIONAL ARTS AND MUSEUMS REGIONAL VOLUNTEER SKILLS PROJECT

The Government committed \$1.2 million over four years from 2000-01 to the Creative Volunteering Project - National Arts and Museums Regional Volunteer Skills Project. The project has been jointly administered by the Department of Family and Community Services and the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts and aims to deliver training to up to 15,000 volunteers in up to 100 regional communities. Six one day workshops have been developed to encompass business planning, networking, marketing, planning and programming events, funding and sponsorship and collections management. Training commenced in March 2003.

VISIONS OF AUSTRALIA

Visions of Australia is a national touring exhibition grant programme which assists touring exhibitions of cultural material across Australia. Funding is available for museums, art galleries, science centres, cultural and community organisations to assist with exhibition touring costs and for project development. The programme aims to make cultural material accessible to Australians in regional and remote communities as well as those in metropolitan and capital city venues. A total of \$1.9 million will be provided in 2003-04, with around \$1.9 million being allocated over the next two financial years.

REGIONAL ARTS FUND

The Regional Arts Fund makes a significant and sustainable contribution to regional arts and community cultural development. Through this initiative the Government recognises the particular needs of artists and communities in rural, regional and remote Australia and the potential social as well as cultural impact of cultural projects eg. in building community capacity. A total of \$7.6 million will be allocated to the fund over three years from 2001-02 (\$2.6 million in 2003-04).

PLAYING AUSTRALIA

Playing Australia is the Commonwealth Government's national performing arts touring programme. 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 productions include regional or remote venues in their tours. In 2003-04, approximately \$3.7 million will be allocated for this programme.

FESTIVALS AUSTRALIA

Festivals Australia is a Commonwealth Government grant programme designed to assist the presentation of arts and cultural activities at Australian regional and community festivals. The emphasis is on supporting projects, which add to the quality and diversity of the arts and cultural programming of festivals. The Government will provide \$1 million in 2003-04.

CONTEMPORARY MUSIC TOURING PROGRAMME

The Contemporary Music Touring Programme is a Commonwealth Government grant programme designed to assist individual Australian musicians and groups to tour Australia, including rural and regional areas. It provides wide access to the popular arts sector and reaches regional and rural audiences through touring. It also provides opportunities for emerging artists to gain performance experience and broader exposure. The programme will receive \$1 million over four years, commencing in 2002-03.

MAJOR FEDERATION FUND

In 2003-04, the Commonwealth Government will spend \$6 million on the finalisation of two outstanding Major Federation Fund projects in regional Australia. Federation Fund projects make a significant economic, social and cultural contribution, through 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 Commonwealth Government has supported a total of 52 projects in regional Australia, with funds totalling \$81.8 million.

FEDERATION CULTURAL AND HERITAGE PROJECTS

Under the Federation Cultural and Heritage Projects (FCHP) Programme, the Commonwealth Government has provided \$70 million from the Federation Fund towards 60 medium sized projects throughout Australia, including 36 in regional areas. In 2003-04, \$0.6 million will be provided to finalise outstanding projects in regional Australia. FCHP projects provide economic benefits through increased employment during construction and on completion. The programme is also conserving significant heritage and cultural assets and enhancing community facilities and quality of life.

THE BUNDANON TRUST

In 1993, Arthur and Yvonne Boyd donated their art collection and historic properties, situated on the Shoalhaven River near Nowra in New South Wales, to the nation for the cultural enrichment and enjoyment of the Australian people. The Bundanon Trust is responsible for developing and managing the properties, and has developed programmes and facilities to create the 'living arts centre' envisaged by Arthur Boyd.

The Commonwealth will assist the Trust in delivering its core programmes and activities through funding of \$2.3 million over four years from 2003-04. For the first three years the Trust will also draw down on the Investment Fund originally provided by the Commonwealth.

The Bundanon Trust is the only national cultural institution that is located in a regional area, with the vast majority being located in either Canberra or Sydney. The Bundanon Trust's national status enables it to attract visitors and artists from across Australia and internationally, thus enriching the regional area.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA - TOURING EXHIBITIONS

The National Archives continues its programme of touring exhibitions in 2003-04, with exhibitions based on archival records touring to venues around the country. Exhibitions to tour include:

- *Wine! An Australian social history* (a history of the wine industry in Australia);
- *Beacons by the Sea* (a history of lighthouses on the Australian coast);
- *Caught in the Rearview Mirror* (photos from the 1950s and 1960s captioned by well-known comedians 'Rampaging' Roy Slaven and HG Nelson); and
- *Unexpected Archives* (an eclectic collection of records selected by Robyn Archer).

The exhibitions will reach a number of regional venues including Beechworth, Albury, Mildura and Yackandandah in Victoria, Albany, Geraldton, and Fremantle in Western Australia, Bundaberg in Queensland, and Wagga Wagga, Hay and Huskisson in New South Wales. The total budget for touring exhibitions is \$76,000 (with \$30,000 provided by the Visions of Australia grant programme).

Education Programmes are developed to accompany touring exhibitions. They are accessible through the National Archives website to touring venues and schools in the localities visited by the touring exhibition.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA - REGIONAL VISITS AND TOURS

Periodic tours to rural towns are arranged from Archives offices in each State to explain and promote the Archives' services. Tours to the Laura district and the south-east district in South Australia (estimated cost of \$2000); the Kimberley region and the south-west of Western Australia (estimated cost of \$4000); the Midlands communities and Devonport/Burnie in Tasmania (estimated cost of \$2000); Alice Springs in the Northern Territory (estimated cost of \$3000); Mulawa and other regions in Victoria (estimated cost of \$5000); two tours through regional Queensland (estimated cost \$4000); and one tour through regional New South Wales (estimated cost \$1000) are planned for 2003-04.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA - ARCHIVAL SUPPORT PROGRAMME

In 2003-04 the National Archives will contribute to the Australian Society of Archivists' Archival Support Programme by presenting conservation workshops in four regional districts in Victoria (estimated cost \$1000). The aim of the workshops is to provide archivists,

librarians and museum curators in regional archives, libraries and museums with the skills to manage their collections within a limited budget.

The Archives is aware that, although it has offices in each State and Territory, it is difficult for regional Australians to access the Archives' collection. To facilitate access for those in regional areas, the Archives has implemented a number of strategies. These include maintaining a comprehensive website, operating a reference service that responds to inquiries received by mail, phone, fax and email, offering a digitisation on demand service and providing an education programme.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES REFERENCE SERVICE

The National Archives of Australia's collection (approximately 250 shelf kilometres) is located in repositories in all capital cities. The *Archives Act 1983* grants all Australians a right of access to this collection. Reading rooms in each capital city staffed by experience reference officers are available to those wishing to use the collection. Researchers can purchase photocopies of records or request that digital copies of selected collection material be placed on the National Archives of Australia website through the digitisation on demand service. A recent survey of researchers who contacted the Archives by mail, phone, fax or email found that 45 per cent of respondents were from regional areas.

NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA TRAVELLING EXHIBITIONS

The National Gallery of Australia's (NGA) travelling exhibitions operate with an average annual budget of approximately \$500,000. The travelling exhibitions are a vital part of the National Gallery's strategy for providing access to national collections and enhancing enjoyment of the visual arts in regional and remote Australia.

Since the programme's formal launch in February 1988 until 31 March 2003, over four million people have taken the opportunity to visit 72 exhibitions at 433 locations in every State and Territory in Australia as well as eight international locations. In addition, two suitcase exhibitions have been to approximately 300 schools and community groups in remote and regional Australia.

AUSTRALIAN SPORTS COMMISSION

Backing Australia's Sporting Ability - A More Active Australia, assists our best athletes to reach new peaks of excellence and increases the pool of talent from which our future world champions will emerge. The Government launched this new plan for sport in April 2001. In order to achieve these goals the Government has budgeted record levels of financial support for the period 2001 to 2005, which includes \$500 million over the next four years. The Australian Sports Commission, as the Government's peak sports body, is responsible for meeting these objectives.

Since the release of the new policy the Australian Sports Commission has begun work on developing sustainable sporting structures in regional Australia focusing on infrastructure, coach and official education and competition development. Current initiatives include:

- Education, ethics and harassment free sport seminars;
- Coaching courses via the expansion of the National Sport Education Agency network;

- Junior sports programmes;
- Volunteer education packages; and
- Joint Australian sports commission and National Sporting Organisation seminars.