

**WOMEN'S BUDGET
STATEMENT
2003-04**

STATEMENT BY
SENATOR THE HONOURABLE AMANDA VANSTONE
MINISTER FOR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
AND MINISTER ASSISTING THE PRIME MINISTER
FOR THE STATUS OF WOMEN
13 MAY 2003

© Commonwealth of Australia 2003

ISBN 1741 18907 1

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

FOREWORD	1
INITIATIVES IN THE 2003-04 BUDGET	1
Higher Education	1
Our Universities - National Priority Funding for Additional Student Places and Courses	1
Our Universities - Disadvantaged Students Improved Participation	2
Health and Aged Care	2
Medical Indemnity Insurance Framework– rural obstetricians	2
A Fairer Medicare – more practice nurses and allied health workers for urban areas of workforce shortage	2
Aged Care Assessment Teams	3
Child Support	3
Support for Children Through Targeted Debt Collection	3
Employment	4
Establishment of an Employment Innovation Fund	4
Immigration	4
Immigration Detention Onshore – Review of Long Term Strategy	4
ONGOING FUNDING INITIATIVES 2003-04	5
Health and Aged Care	5
Voluntary annual health assessments for older Australians	5
Support services for women with breast cancer	5
Hepatitis C prevention and education – maintain funding	6
Rural Women’s GP Service	6
100 extra aged care beds in regional health services – maintain funding	6
Dementia and challenging behaviours initiative	7
National Breast Cancer Centre	7
Commonwealth Carelink	7
Support for Families	8
Special Needs Subsidy Scheme	8
Child Care Support	8

Women's Budget Statement 2003-04

Family Tax Benefit.....	9
Maternity Allowances	9
Legal Services	10
Federal Magistrates Service	10
Family Court of Western Australia	10
Family Law Pathways	10
Contact Orders Program	11
Children's Contact Services	11
Australian Law Online	12
Victorian Court Network	12
Indigenous	12
Expansion of the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) Programme.....	12
Australian Aid	13
Australian Aid Programme	13
CONTINUING MEASURES	14
Women's Programmes	14
Partnerships Against Domestic Violence	14
National Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault	15
Informed Choices for Women	16
National Leadership Initiative	16
Women's Development Programme	17
Other Women's Programmes.....	18
Health and Aged Care	19
Funding for Provision of Herceptin for Patients with Metastatic Breast Cancer	19
Residential Aged Care	19
Capital Assistance for Aged Care in Rural and Remote Australia	19
More Aged Care Nurses	20
Support for Aged Care Training	20
Support for Non-Residential Care Options for Older Australians	20
Care Packages in Retirement Villages	21

Carers of Older Australians.....	21
Productive Ageing Centre	21
Mental Health: More Options, Better Services (Better Outcomes in Mental Health Care).....	21
National Depression Initiative, Beyondblue	22
Cervical Screening Incentives for General Practitioners	22
After Hours Emergency Care.....	22
Health Services for Rural and Regional Women	23
Additional Practice Nurses for Rural and Regional Australia and Other Areas of Need.....	23
Rural Nursing Scholarships.....	24
National Child Nutrition Programme.....	24
Medical Specialist Outreach Assistance Program (MSOAP).....	25
Multipurpose Services (MPS) Program.....	25
Better Arthritis Care Initiative	26
Maternal and Child Health.....	26
Legal Services	27
Building Safer Communities.....	27
The Commonwealth Community Legal Services Program	27
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women’s Projects	27
Women’s Legal Services.....	28
Rural Women’s Outreach Project.....	28
Women’s Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination	28
Support for Families	29
Baby Bonus	29
Business and Employment	29
Participation of Women in Rural Industries.....	29
Small Business Enterprise Culture Program.....	30
Telstra Business Women’s Awards.....	31
Work and Family Unit publications.....	31
National Work and Family Awards.....	31

Women's Budget Statement 2003-04

The Office of the Employment Advocate	31
The Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency	32
Employment Services for Parents, Carers and Mature Age Job Seekers	32
Indigenous	32
Family Violence Prevention Program.....	32
Telecommunications	33
Telecommunications Action Plan for Remote Indigenous Communities	33
Widows	34
Index the Ceiling Rate of Income Support Supplement for War Widows	34
Widow Allowance	34

FOREWORD

The 2003-04 Budget builds on the Government's commitment to provide more choices and support for Australian women. This year, education and health are important areas of focus.

Education

- The Higher Education Equity Programme (HEEP) - additional funding of \$2.3 million per year from 2005 will increase the number of women students in non-traditional areas such as engineering.
- Nursing and Teacher Education - more funding per place will be given to training institutions for these two areas. An additional 210 nursing places in regional institutions will combat a pressing need for more nurses.

Health

- Medical Indemnity Premium Subsidy Scheme - an increase of the subsidy available to rural obstetricians from 50 per cent to 80 per cent on the difference between the cost of their premiums plus their Incurred But Not Reported (IBNR) contribution. This will encourage rural obstetricians to continue practising to the benefit of rural women.
- General Practice Incentive Payment - an incentive for GPs to employ practice nurses and allied health workers in urban areas.

The Commonwealth Government's continuing commitment to women is evident through a range of initiatives currently being successfully implemented and delivered to the women of Australia. Progress on these initiatives is also included in this Statement.

INITIATIVES IN THE 2003-04 BUDGET

Higher Education

In April 2002, the Commonwealth Government launched a review of Australia's higher education sector with the release of an overview paper titled 'Higher Education at the Crossroads'. This overview paper was followed by the release of six issues papers between June and August. Over 730 submissions were received in response to these papers including some from key women's groups such as the Women's Electoral Lobby, the Australian Federation of University Women and the Regional Women's Advisory Council.

Following from the review, the Government has decided to undertake significant reform of Australia's higher education sector. The reforms are underpinned by four key principles – sustainability, quality, equity and diversity. The reforms will ensure the sector's ongoing and significant contribution to our nation's economic and social prosperity. The reforms will establish a transparent and consistent policy framework in which universities are able to capitalise on their strengths and further engage regional communities. Around 54 per cent of higher education students are women. The reforms will benefit many students, providing them with increased opportunities and greater choice through more equitable financing arrangements and a renewed emphasis on teaching and learning outcomes.

OUR UNIVERSITIES - NATIONAL PRIORITY FUNDING FOR ADDITIONAL STUDENT PLACES AND COURSES

Through the National Review of Nursing Education and the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education, the Commonwealth Government has identified nursing and teacher education as areas of national priority. The Commonwealth will increase the amount of funding per place given to institutions for these two areas. This increased funding will be directed towards the cost of clinical practice in nursing and the teaching practicum. The Commonwealth will also provide an additional 210 nursing places in regional institutions to combat a pressing need for more nurses. This will rise to 574 places by 2007 as students progress through their courses.

OUR UNIVERSITIES - DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS IMPROVED PARTICIPATION

The Government will increase funding for the Higher Education Equity Programme (HEEP) by \$2.3 million per year from 2005. One of the equity groups currently identified is women in non-traditional areas, with the aim to raise the number of women who undertake study in historically male dominated courses such as engineering. All HEEP allocations will be performance based, ensuring that universities take an active role in improving the access of disadvantaged groups to higher education. A review of HEEP equity indicators is also planned to ensure that the programme remains focussed on groups experiencing significant educational disadvantage.

Health and Aged Care

MEDICAL INDEMNITY INSURANCE FRAMEWORK— RURAL OBSTETRICIANS

The Government will increase the subsidy available to rural obstetricians from 50 per cent to 80 per cent of the difference between the cost of their premiums plus their Incurred But Not Reported (IBNR) contribution (if applicable) and the corresponding cost for gynaecologists in the same income band in the relevant State and Territory. The medical indemnity premium subsidy scheme applies from 1 January 2003.

The increase will be provided for rural obstetricians in Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Area (RRMA) classifications 3-7.

This measure will involve funding of \$10.3 million over four years.

A FAIRER MEDICARE – MORE PRACTICE NURSES AND ALLIED HEALTH WORKERS FOR URBAN AREAS OF WORKFORCE SHORTAGE

The Government will provide \$64.2 million over four years to introduce a general practice incentive payment for practices participating in the GP Access Scheme to employ practice nurses and allied health workers in urban areas of workforce shortage. This measure builds on the success of an earlier measure, which provided similar funding to practices in rural and regional areas. This allows the GP to concentrate on patients who specifically require a GPs services, and allows practices to achieve a greater throughput of patients with the existing number of GPs.

In part this measure redirects a small proportion of funding from the 2002-03 Budget measure *More Doctors for Outer Metropolitan Areas*. This has been done at the request of GP groups, who support funding other health care professionals to see patients with health care needs better met by practice nurses or physiotherapists.

AGED CARE ASSESSMENT TEAMS

The Government will provide additional funding of \$2.5 million in 2003-04 to ensure that Aged Care Assessment Teams continue to provide timely and effective assessments of frail older people in the community. These arrangements ensure that clients who may need residential care are referred to services that best meet their needs. Continued funding of this programme will be considered in the 2004-05 Budget following the Residential Care Review.

Child Support

SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN THROUGH TARGETED DEBT COLLECTION

The Child Support Agency will increase its focus on collecting child support payments from long-term non-compliant payers. The measure will provide parents of children who are not currently receiving support with access to their child support entitlements. Over 105,000 children are expected to benefit as an additional \$130 million of child support is transferred from non-compliant payers through better-targeted collection.

Some parents have been assessed to pay child support but have been avoiding their responsibilities to their children. As a result, the non-compliant parent has accumulated a debt over time. The measure will ensure the Child Support Agency will increase the effort to discuss the debt with the payer, verify its accuracy, ascertain the payer's capacity to pay, and to negotiate an acceptable payment arrangement.

This is expected to result in a net saving for the Government of \$9.6 million.

Employment

ESTABLISHMENT OF AN EMPLOYMENT INNOVATION FUND

The Employment Innovation Fund will form part of Job Network and will provide funds to support initiatives that address employment or labour market related problems in innovative ways. Funding, generally up to \$100,000 will be provided per project out of a total funding pool of \$4 million over four years. Funds will be used for a diverse range of projects that are proposed at the community level to address local community or specific demographic labour related issues, which may involve requests for funding for women's projects.

Immigration

IMMIGRATION DETENTION ONSHORE – REVIEW OF LONG TERM STRATEGY

The migration legislation requires that all people without legal authority to be in Australia must be detained. The Government will provide additional resourcing of \$16 million, including \$14.1 million, of which \$1.6 million will be in capital, for alternative detention arrangements for women and children and \$1.9 million for foster care arrangements. The alternative detention facility will be modelled on the residential housing facility trialed over the past eighteen months, at Woomera.

ONGOING FUNDING INITIATIVES 2003-04

Health and Aged Care

VOLUNTARY ANNUAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS FOR OLDER AUSTRALIANS

The Government will provide continued funding of \$108.1 million over four years, through the Medicare Benefits Schedule, for voluntary annual health assessments in order to identify and prevent ill-health for those aged 75 and over and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 55 and over. This initiative is part of the Enhanced Primary Care (EPC) package first announced in the 1999-2000 Budget.

This preventative measure involves assessments which check a patient's health, physical, psychological and social functioning, and assess whether preventative health care and education should be offered to the patient to improve their health and well being. Annual health assessments provide a valuable means of early detection of problems associated with ageing.

This measure involves funding of \$24.1 million in 2003-04, \$26.2 million in 2004-05, \$28 million in 2005-06 and \$29.9 million in 2006-07.

SUPPORT SERVICES FOR WOMEN WITH BREAST CANCER

The Government will provide funding of \$4 million over four years for support services for women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer. It particularly assists women in rural and regional areas where geographic isolation and limited contact with specialist health care workers may impede access to the full range of treatment options and support services.

This measure involves funding of \$1 million per annum.

HEPATITIS C PREVENTION AND EDUCATION – MAINTAIN FUNDING

The Government will provide funding of \$15.9 million over four years to continue this programme which reduces the transmission of Hepatitis C in the Australian community by providing education, prevention and health maintenance initiatives for those currently infected and those at risk of becoming infected with Hepatitis C.

This measure will involve funding of \$3.8 million in 2003-04, \$3.9 million in 2004-05, \$4.0 million in 2005-06 and \$4.1 million in 2006-07.

RURAL WOMEN'S GP SERVICE

The Government will provide \$8.9 million over four years to continue the programme previously known as 'Fly-in-fly-out GP services to meet the needs of rural women'. The programme improves access to primary and secondary health care services for rural women who have little or no access to a female GP.

The programme funds the Royal Flying Doctor Service to fly female GPs to regular clinics for cervical cancer screening, breast and skin examination and other preventive health care. It provides necessary intervention for conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, psychosocial problems and conditions related to reproductive and sexual health. By the end of 2002, this programme had delivered services to 104 locations.

This measure involves funding of \$2.2 million in each of 2003-04 and 2004-05, \$2.3 million in each of 2005-06 and 2006-07.

100 EXTRA AGED CARE BEDS IN REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES – MAINTAIN FUNDING

The Government will provide funding of \$12 million in 2003-04 to continue to fund 100 additional residential aged care places for Regional Health Service Centres, building upon its commitment to provide flexible service alternative for older Australians living in rural areas. Continued funding beyond 2003-04 will be considered following the Residential Care Review.

DEMENTIA AND CHALLENGING BEHAVIOURS INITIATIVE

The Government will provide funding of \$90.7 million over four years to continue this programme (previously known as Enhanced Respite Care Services) in order to increase the provision of respite care for people with dementia and challenging behaviour. This programme allows carers of the target group to care longer for these people in their own homes. This in turn relieves the demand pressure on the higher cost residential aged care system.

This measure will involve funding of \$22 million in 2003-04, \$22.4 million in 2004-05, \$22.9 million in 2005-06 and \$23.4 million in 2006-07.

NATIONAL BREAST CANCER CENTRE

The Government will provide funding of \$8.4 million over four years for the National Breast Cancer Centre to maintain its leading role in improving outcomes for women with, or at risk of, breast cancer.

The National Breast Cancer Centre is the main organisation through which the Government delivers its breast cancer control programme. The Centre has successfully developed and implemented an evidence-based approach, worked in partnership with consumers, clinicians, cancer organisations and other levels of government and trialed and evaluated innovative approaches to improved health services. It has improved the management and treatment of breast cancer, monitoring outcomes and disseminating information to women and health professionals.

This measure involves funding of \$2.1 million per annum for four years.

COMMONWEALTH CARELINK

The Government will provide funding of \$65 million over four years for the Commonwealth Carelink service which provides a contact point for people seeking information about the wide range of community-based aged care, disability and other support services. This service supports people to remain in the community rather than access costly residential care. Currently the programme is utilised by over 11,000 clients a month.

This measure will involve funding of \$14.8 million in 2003-04, \$15.7 million in 2004-05, \$16.6 million in 2005-06 and \$17.9 million in 2006-07.

Support for Families

SPECIAL NEEDS SUBSIDY SCHEME

The Government will provide additional funding of \$25.8 million over four years from 2003-04 to enhance the Special Needs Subsidy Scheme, which supports children with high ongoing support needs.

The Scheme provides assistance to child care services to employ additional carers to support children with such needs. The Scheme has experienced high demand since its inception in 1997. The additional funding will provide assistance to around 1,250 additional children.

CHILD CARE SUPPORT

Child care support strengthens families by allowing parents to participate more fully, both economically and socially, in the community. Child care also benefits children by providing them with opportunities for learning in a social environment and providing quality educational experiences. A diverse range of child care services is supported by the Commonwealth including: centre-based long day care; family day care; flexible and innovative services; in-home care; outside school hours care and vacation care; occasional-care services; multifunctional services; and multifunctional Aboriginal children's services.

Over \$8.6 billion has been allocated for child care over four years from 2003-04 to 2006-07, including allocation for Child Care Benefit.

Child Care Benefit

Child Care Benefit (CCB) is a payment to assist families with the cost of child care.

The payment was introduced on 1 July 2000 and is administered by the Family Assistance Office. The amount of CCB to which a family is entitled depends upon family income, number of children in care, the number of hours of care and the type of care. Families on the lowest incomes receive the highest rate of assistance when using Commonwealth approved child care services. The CCB rate is gradually reduced as assessed family income increases, to the point where families receive the minimum rate. Families using registered care can receive minimum CCB.

The number of families using formal child care has increased steadily since the introduction of CCB. This number is expected to increase further with additional assistance provided by indexation of the rates of benefit over time.

As at September 2002, there were 759,100 children using approved care. Fifty six per cent of these children are in centre based long day care, 17 per cent are in family day care and 30 per cent are in outside school hours care. This is an increase of over 80,000 children from June 2001, driven mainly by large increases in use of outside school hours care.

From 1 July 2002 to 30 September 2002, 534,370 families received CCB. Of these, about 36 per cent received maximum rates of CCB and about 14 per cent received minimum rates of CCB.

The average amount of CCB received in 2001-02 (based on pre-reconciliation data) was \$1,980 per family, or \$1,350 per child.

FAMILY TAX BENEFIT

Family Tax Benefit Part A provides families with general assistance towards the costs of children. Over 1.8 million families with over 3.4 million children are receiving the payment on a fortnightly basis. Individuals have choices as to how they receive Family Tax Benefit: either through Centrelink as a fortnightly or a lump sum payment; or through the taxation system as a lump sum payment after the end of the income year; or as reduced taxation withholdings during the income year. The payment is income and asset tested.

Family Tax Benefit Part B provides extra assistance to families with only one main income earner (including sole parent families). There are over 1.2 million families receiving this payment on a fortnightly basis in respect of 2.3 million children. The payment is income tested only.

MATERNITY ALLOWANCES

Maternity Allowance and Maternity Immunisation Allowance are once only, lump sum payments. Maternity Allowance provides extra assistance with the costs of newborn children. Maternity Immunisation Allowance provides an additional payment for children fully immunised at age 18 months, or exempt from immunisation. The allowance is income tested only.

Legal Services

FEDERAL MAGISTRATES SERVICE

The Federal Magistrates Service began hearing cases in July 2000 and in the family law area handles less complex matters that are also within the jurisdiction of the Family Court. In the general law area, the Service enforces rights under anti-discrimination law.

Currently there are nineteen federal magistrates. Funding of \$4.4 million over four years will allow the appointment of two additional magistrates. The appointment of additional magistrates will enhance access to justice, including for people involved in family law disputes and those enforcing women's rights under anti-discrimination law.

FAMILY COURT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

In Western Australia federal family law jurisdiction is vested in the Family Court of Western Australia and its co-located Court of Petty Sessions in Perth.

Increased funding of \$4.1 million over four years is being provided for additional judicial resources to hear family law matters in Western Australia and to make provision for cost increases in the courts' existing operations.

This funding will help the courts to better meet their growing workload and improve access for Western Australians involved in family law matters.

FAMILY LAW PATHWAYS

In conjunction with the 2003-04 Budget, the Government is releasing its Response to the Report of the Family Law Pathways Advisory Group, *Out of the Maze - Pathways to the Future for Families Experiencing Separation* (the Pathways Report).

Work has already started to implement the directions outlined in the Pathways Report. A number of initiatives are being implemented by Commonwealth Government agencies, while others are being pursued by the legal and community sectors.

Many involve collaboration between government agencies and community-based service providers and are designed to achieve greater integration of service delivery across government and non-government agencies.

Consistent with the recommendations of the Family Law Pathways Advisory Group the Government has allocated \$27.8 million to the Attorney-General's portfolio in the 2003-04 Budget to further enhance services around Australia which support families experiencing separation.

The Government has committed resources in this Budget to continue Australian Law Online, Children's Contact Services and the family law services of the Victorian Court Network. The Government will also expand the innovative Contact Orders Program.

CONTACT ORDERS PROGRAM

Over recent years, the Government has funded pilot projects to help separated parents to resolve their conflicts and establish better contact with their children without the need to go to court. It is proposed that existing services be continued, that new services be established in south-east Queensland and Melbourne and that the Parramatta service in Sydney be expanded to provide services to a wider geographic area.

This measure involves funding of \$1.2 million in 2003-04, \$1.3 million in 2004-05, \$1.3 million in 2005-06 and \$1.4 million in 2006-07.

CHILDREN'S CONTACT SERVICES

Children's Contact Services provide another form of support designed to assist children to maintain contact with their parents. There are often flash points for separated families in conflict when children are handed from one parent to another. Children's Contact Services provide a safe, neutral environment for children to maintain contact with a parent who is no longer living with them.

The Commonwealth Government has established a total of 35 Children's Contact Services. Ten of those services already have ongoing funding and the Coalition made a commitment during the last election campaign that it would maintain the 25 children's contact services it had established.

This measure involves funding of \$4.1 million in 2003-04, \$4.2 million in 2004-05, \$4.3 million in 2005-06 and \$4.4 million in 2006-07.

AUSTRALIAN LAW ONLINE

The Government is continuing to develop Australian Law Online, including Family Law Online (www.familylaw.gov.au) and the Family Law Hotline (1800 050 321), as a national source of information about the family law system and where to get help.

Family Law Online already provides fact sheets on questions commonly asked by people experiencing family break-up as well as information about the services provided by a number of government and non-government organisations (NGOs) in the family law system. It will be enhanced to include up-to-date contact information about the availability of local services for families experiencing separation.

This measure involves funding of \$1.3 million in 2003-04, \$1.3 million in 2004-05, \$1.4 million in 2005-06 and \$1.4 million in 2006-07.

VICTORIAN COURT NETWORK

The Government provided funding in the 2002-03 Budget, under the Keeping People out of Courts initiative, to support the continuing coordination of this service for family law clients until 30 June 2003.

This measure involves funding of \$0.1 million in 2003-04, \$0.1 million in 2004-05, \$0.1 million in 2005-06 and \$0.1 million in 2006-07 which will now provide ongoing support for this important service.

Indigenous

EXPANSION OF THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT EMPLOYMENT PROJECTS (CDEP) PROGRAMME

The Government will provide an additional 1,000 participant places for the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) programme at a total cost of \$61.5 million over four years. These additional places will be targeted to remote communities to support projects that seek to prevent and/or respond to family or domestic violence and substance abuse. Work activities will include new women's shelters, health clinics, night patrols, justice system support, substance abuse programmes, diversionary and personal development initiatives, recreation, sport and wellbeing programmes.

Australian Aid

AUSTRALIAN AID PROGRAMME

The Australian aid programme integrates gender equity concerns into the analysis and formulation of all development policies, programmes and projects. In 2003-04, the Australian aid programme will provide an estimated \$55 million in direct expenditure to address gender equity in developing countries. Specific gender-related activities in 2003-04 include:

- support for Women's Centres in Fiji and Vanuatu – counselling services for women and children in the Pacific who are the survivors of domestic violence and sexual abuse; and
- grants to the South African Gender Violence Fund - supporting South African Non Government Organisations to combat gender violence using the expertise, experience and networks of relevant civil society organisations.

CONTINUING MEASURES

Women's Programmes

PARTNERSHIPS AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The Government will provide funding of \$5 million in 2003-04, \$2.5 million in 2004-05 and will extend the *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* (PADV) programme by one year to ensure the Government maintains its high level of commitment to this programme.

The \$50 million *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* initiative aims to gather knowledge and trial new ways of preventing and responding to domestic violence.

Through partnerships between Commonwealth departments and states and territories, the community, the service sector and the business sector, a national framework has been developed which aims to:

- promote policies and practices that address prevention, early intervention and crisis assistance;
- promote incorporation of demonstrated good practice at national, State, Territory and local levels;
- facilitate the development of appropriate and comprehensive community responses;
- raise community awareness to reduce tolerance of violent behaviours and to reduce the use of violence;
- implement complementary strategies for men and boys and women and girls, to prevent family violence and reduce the use of violence in the community; and
- promote programmes and policies which address the needs of women affected by violence, including recovery and wellbeing.

The \$25 million second phase of PADV focuses on an Indigenous Grants Programme to build the capacity of Indigenous communities to find and implement solutions to deal with domestic violence; working to reduce the effects on children of witnessing domestic violence; working with men who use violence to encourage acceptance of responsibility for violence; improving women's services; funding for the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse; and increasing community awareness of violence and its impacts on a national basis.

NATIONAL INITIATIVE TO COMBAT SEXUAL ASSAULT

The Government will provide funding of \$2.6 million in 2003-04 for the National Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault. The \$16.5 million programme was established to provide Commonwealth leadership in an area of growing concern. The key elements of the Initiative are to establish partnerships with other governments, key organisations and service providers to develop, test and implement strategies that address the incidence of sexual assault in the community. This will include campaigns to promote community awareness, ensuring the sharing of approaches to combat sexual assault and promote 'best practice' across jurisdictions and agencies and funding of time limited projects.

The initial focus of the Initiative has been the establishment of a sound evidence base to ensure that the most effective policy and service responses can be generated. Specific strategies include:

- creating a Sexual Assault Information Development Plan (IDP) which will identify existing sources of data on sexual assault, identify gaps in data currently available, and propose strategies to address these gaps; due for completion mid-2003;
- improving understanding of specific aspects of sexual assault through the funding of a full-time data analyst position at the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) to work solely on sexual assault. To date the data analyst has produced an international literature review on the non-reporting and hidden recording of sexual assault, and work is currently underway on a research paper examining sexual assault recidivist offenders;
- funding Australia's participation in the first International Violence Against Women Survey (IVAWS) run by the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and administered by the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC); and
- providing mechanisms to encourage sharing of information across jurisdictions, including through the funding of an Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault based at the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

The Initiative will also focus on raising awareness in the community on the impact of sexual assault, in an attempt to reduce its incidence. The Commonwealth is planning a number of awareness-raising projects prior to formal development and implementation of a National Community Awareness Campaign.

INFORMED CHOICES FOR WOMEN

In the 2001-02 Budget the Government provided funding of \$5.5 million over four years to develop a women's information strategy under the Informed Choices for Australian Women initiative.

The women's data warehouse, (www.windowonwomen.gov.au) was officially launched in February 2003. Window on Women is a unique single reference point designed to provide free web-based access to integrated statistical data about women's needs and circumstances through a data warehouse facility. It provides statistical information on key areas such as work, income, health, education and training. The data warehouse gives NGOs, students, government departments and the community easy access to information about women. It will also play an important role in policy development, implementation and evaluation.

The women's internet portal was launched 31 March 2003. The portal (www.women.gov.au) provides a single point of access to government information for and about women.

A series of papers exploring key issues affecting women is produced and distributed to a range of groups including NGOs, universities, schools and libraries on a regular basis.

The second biennial national women's conference - *Australian Women Speak* - was held in March/April 2003.

NATIONAL LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

In the 2001-02 Budget the Government provided funding of \$2.4 million over four years to develop a range of strategies to increase the participation of women in leadership positions and to promote women's leadership in other areas, including young women, rural, Indigenous, and disadvantaged women.

The key components that contribute to the initiative are:

- The Executive Search service that, through the AppointWomen database, assists government to appoint highly skilled women to Commonwealth Boards and advisory and decision making bodies;

- The Honouring Women initiative encourages the nomination of more women for awards and honours. The initiative is being encouraged through the leadership of a number of high profile Honouring Women Ambassadors, including the Hon Dame Margaret Guilfoyle DBE and the Hon Joan Kirner AO as Lead Ambassadors; and
- Projects for young women and Indigenous women to increase their participation in decision making activities including:
 - The Sports Leadership programme that saw funding provided to 45 community sporting projects around Australia. Grants have been made available in three key areas designed to encourage and support the full involvement of women and girls in all aspects of sport in categories including Indigenous women in sport; women working in disability sport; and general sports leadership.

WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

In the 2001-02 Budget the Government provided funding of \$5.6 million over four years to improve the optimal status and position of women through the Women's Development Programme.

Support for women's participation in government decision making is encouraged through funding to four secretariats, representing over 45 national women's organisations both from urban, and rural and remote areas. The role of the secretariats is to represent the diverse views of women from all over Australia to better inform debate and discussion on policy issues affecting women and to operate as a conduit for their members, relaying information about government programmes and policies.

In 2003-04, new contracts will be signed to provide funding to the four secretariats for two further years to ensure that Australian women have a channel through which to make their view heard by government.

The Programme provides funding for projects undertaken by national women's non-government organisations.

Project grants for capacity building projects are available for activities that contribute to public policy and that are relevant to current women's issues. Thirteen projects were funded during 2002-03.

The Women's Development Programme also funds training and mentoring projects to assist capacity building in the women's non-government sector.

OTHER WOMEN'S PROGRAMMES

The Government provides ongoing funding for the Other Women's Programmes (OWP) which aims to assist and advance the status of Australian women. The funding provided for 2003-04 is \$0.685 million.

The Other Women's Programmes funds a range of research activities including:

- A Women in Australia series, providing a comprehensive range of statistics about Australian women's lives and a theme paper on women;
- A series of time-use fellowships aimed at analysing Australian Bureau of Statistics time-use data from a gender perspective. The second fellowship is expected to commence in mid 2003;
- A study that will lead to a greater understanding of the reasons underlying the fertility decisions of men and women, both individuals and couples; and
- Analysis of housing services and housing support services that are required to facilitate successful transitions, or exit pathways, out of homelessness for women.

In 2002-03 OWP also funded specific activities to commemorate the Centenary of Women's Suffrage including:

- Commissioning of a commemorative artwork which will be officially unveiled on site in Federation Mall in late 2003;
- A series of publications to highlight historical milestones in the struggle to achieve the right to vote and stand in national elections; and
- A third edition of *Every Woman's Guide to Getting into Politics*, for distribution to schools and libraries in 2003.

A number of publications, events and awards are funded under this programme including:

- A regular women's newsletter;
- A publication outlining the Government's achievements for women;
- International Women's Day;
- International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women; and

- Sponsorship of the Migrant Women in Business Award, of the Australian Micro Business Network Awards. This award will raise the awareness and recognition of the important role that migrant women play in the Australian business community.

Health and Aged Care

FUNDING FOR PROVISION OF HERCEPTIN FOR PATIENTS WITH METASTATIC BREAST CANCER

The Federal Government will continue to enable women in late stages of breast cancer to receive Herceptin. Herceptin is a drug used to treat certain forms of metastatic breast cancer. Use of Herceptin can extend survival without significant side effects. Herceptin is available free of charge to eligible patients. The Health Insurance Commission administers the Herceptin programme that commenced on 1 December 2001.

Funding is \$14.2 million in 2002-03, \$18.8 million in 2003-04, \$20.7 million in 2004-05, \$22.7 million in 2005-06, and \$25 million in 2006-07.

RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE

Women comprise 72 per cent of residents in aged care homes. Since 1995-96, the Government has substantially increased funding for residential aged care to ensure that Australia has an aged care system that offers high care standards, has the confidence of the community and is responsive to community needs. The outlay in the 2003-04 financial year is expected to be \$4.5 billion. This is an increase of \$2.0 billion or 80 per cent over the 1995-96 expenditure of \$2.5 billion.

CAPITAL ASSISTANCE FOR AGED CARE IN RURAL AND REMOTE AUSTRALIA

Many smaller aged care homes in rural and remote areas have difficulty meeting accreditation standards and maintaining their financial viability. An additional \$25 million in capital funding per annum was provided in the 2002-03 Budget to assist these homes with the cost of building and upgrading. These funds are to be expended over a six-year period, with \$78.8 million to be expended by June 2006. Up to \$38 million is being made available for capital assistance in 2003-04.

MORE AGED CARE NURSES

The Government recognises the crucial role played by nurses, the majority of whom are women and who comprise around 96 per cent of the aged care workforce. Funding of \$26.3 million over four years was provided in the 2002-03 Budget for up to 1000 scholarships, valued at up to \$10,000 a year, for students to undertake undergraduate, post-graduate or re-entry nursing studies at rural and regional universities. During 2003-04 it is expected that 200 undergraduate scholarships will be provided as well as a significant number of post-graduate scholarships and continued re-entry support.

SUPPORT FOR AGED CARE TRAINING

The Commonwealth Government is supporting the upskilling of a largely female workforce in the aged care sector under a programme to assist staff in small aged care homes to upgrade and diversify their skills. Eleven pilots have been funded which facilitate access to relevant training in aged care. Work is being undertaken to develop an Aged Care Workforce Strategy, including a census of the industry workforce, to help deliver a workforce able to meet the pressures of change and continuous improvement.

SUPPORT FOR NON-RESIDENTIAL CARE OPTIONS FOR OLDER AUSTRALIANS

Women comprise the majority of older people living in their own homes in the community and those who provide care to older Australians or younger people with disabilities. Since 1995-96, there has been increasing emphasis on non-residential care options and the 2003-04 Budget provides funding to build on existing programmes that assist older Australians to remain in their own homes for as long as possible.

In the 2003-04 Budget, funding for Community Aged Care Packages (CACP) will increase by 6.3 per cent to approximately \$293 million. The Home and Community Care (HACC) programme, which provides help and support for older people and people with a disability who want to stay in their own home, will receive an increase in funding of 8.6 per cent to more than \$732 million. Expenditure on the Extended Aged Care in the Home (EACH) programme, funding nursing home type care for people in their own homes, will increase to \$17.7 million.

CARE PACKAGES IN RETIREMENT VILLAGES

To increase the range of care choices available to older Australians, the Government provided \$14.8 million over four years for care packages in retirement villages in the 2002-03 Budget. This will assist people who have chosen to buy or lease independent living units in retirement villages. The services are expected to be available from July 2003.

CARERS OF OLDER AUSTRALIANS

Support to carers is a key element in the Government's aged care policy. Women comprise 70 per cent of the 448 thousand primary carers in Australia. The Government will increase funding for the National Respite for Carers programme by 7.0 per cent in the 2003-04 Budget to support carers who provide for family members. The Government has also reaffirmed its commitment to the Enhanced Respite Care Services for Dementia and Challenging Behaviours initiative. This will continue to fund the provision of respite care, giving family carers the opportunity for a much needed break.

PRODUCTIVE AGEING CENTRE

In the 2002-03 Budget, the Government provided \$1 million over four years to establish the Productive Ageing Centre within the University of the Sunshine Coast. The Centre will operate as a corporate entity in its own right and have a formal and financial relationship with the National Seniors Association Limited and will develop the community's interest in all aspects of productive ageing.

MENTAL HEALTH: MORE OPTIONS, BETTER SERVICES (BETTER OUTCOMES IN MENTAL HEALTH CARE)

In the 2001-02 Budget the Government allocated \$120.4 million over 4 years to improve the quality of care provided through general practice to Australians with a mental illness. This measure will encourage better identification, care and review for mental health patients by general practitioners. It will also enable general practitioners to provide best practice mental health care through education and training, improved access to allied health professional support and psychiatric consultancy.

NATIONAL DEPRESSION INITIATIVE, BEYONDBLUE

On 14 March 2000, the Government announced \$17.5 million over five years for the National Depression initiative. This initiative aims to destigmatise depression and get professional help to sufferers more quickly. Depression is a leading cause of illness and disability. It is a major health issue for women in particular. More than 500,000 adult Australian women experience depressive illness each year, over 60 per cent of all sufferers. Around 7.4 per cent of Australian women experience depression. One in ten young women aged 18 to 24 years is significantly affected. Many will experience the stigma and discrimination caused by lack of understanding of their illness.

Beyondblue has developed a National Postnatal Depression Program. Postnatal depression affects about 14 per cent of women giving birth and recent evidence suggests that many women may in fact be depressed in pregnancy.

CERVICAL SCREENING INCENTIVES FOR GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

In the 2001-02 Budget the Government provided incentives totalling \$71.9 million over four years to general practitioners to increase the rates of participation in the National Cervical Screening Program. This initiative introduced a financial incentive paid directly to the general practitioner whenever the doctor screens a 'high risk' patient. There will also be a population based incentive paid through the Practice Incentives Program to general practices which meet certain targets for the proportion of women attending their practice who participate in cervical screening.

This initiative is of particular benefit to older women in rural and remote areas, and from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, who have a lower participation rate in the cervical screening programme, and who consequently have higher morbidity and mortality from cervical cancer.

AFTER HOURS EMERGENCY CARE

Research data indicates that women are high users of after hours emergency care services. Recognising this, the Government is funding four support measures worth \$43.4 million over four years from 2001-02. Funding will be made available to:

- improve after hours service by providing funding for wider implementation of successful models demonstrated under the after hours trials, seed funding for groups of general practitioners to explore better ways of organising and providing services, and service development grants to develop sustainable new after hours arrangements;
- facilitate the Commonwealth's work with State and Territory governments in the development of health call centres;

- develop and implement a quality incentives programme for deputising services based on accreditation to the National Association of Medical Deputising Services and Royal Australian College of General Practitioners approved standards for deputising services; and
- continue essential research into, and monitoring of, after hours primary medical care service provision.

HEALTH SERVICES FOR RURAL AND REGIONAL WOMEN

The Federal Government is committed to improving access to health and aged care services for Australians living in regional, rural and remote locations. Since 1996, the Government has introduced a broad range of initiatives to ensure the best health care is available to everyone no matter where they live, both through its own programmes and the substantial support it provides to the States and Territories. Successive budget packages have built on these initiatives culminating in the 2000-01 Budget's Regional Health Strategy: More Doctors, Better Services – an extensive and integrated package worth \$562.1 million over four years.

ADDITIONAL PRACTICE NURSES FOR RURAL AND REGIONAL AUSTRALIA AND OTHER AREAS OF NEED

The 2001-02 Budget provided \$104.3 million over four years to improve access to medical services for patients in rural areas and other areas of doctor shortage, by providing support for general practices to employ practice nurses. These arrangements allow general practitioners in these practices to focus on diagnosis and clinical care, while practice nurses assist in the management of chronic diseases such as diabetes and asthma, conduct health assessments, and provide clinical support.

The initiative targets those areas where patient access to medical services is limited due to an under supply of general practitioners, as in rural and remote Australia, and in provincial and outer metropolitan areas where there are doctor shortages. Funds are provided through the Practices Incentives Programme.

Under this measure \$5.2 million over four years is provided for re-entry training programmes for rural nurses. This is provided via a scholarship programme of up to 200 scholarships per annum, and provision of funding to support professional development of nurses.

RURAL NURSING SCHOLARSHIPS

In the 2001-02 Budget the Government provided \$13 million over four years to improve the access to undergraduate nursing education for rural and regional students.

Under this initiative \$10.9 million over four years allows greater access to undergraduate nursing degrees for students who are from rural and regional Australia. One hundred rural nursing scholarships of \$10,000 per annum each are available for rural students who nominate to study the majority or entirety of their degree at a rural campus. A further ten scholarships are available for Indigenous Australian nursing students or Aboriginal health workers who want to upgrade their qualifications.

The scholarships ensure that rural students have access to undergraduate nursing education in rural areas by removing some of the financial barriers associated with higher education.

In addition, \$2.1 million over four years is being provided for support measures associated with the scholarship with a particular emphasis on Indigenous nursing students. Funding is provided to facilitate greater access to mentor/preceptor programmes and financial assistance will be made available for scholarship holders in exceptional circumstance where students suffer financial hardship. Funding is also being provided for culturally appropriate training for rural nurses to assist them to better deal with Indigenous Australian clients.

NATIONAL CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMME

The National Child Nutrition Programme was announced in the 2000-01 Budget with funding of \$15 million. It provides grants to a number of community groups for up to three years duration to improve the nutrition and long term eating patterns of children aged 0-12 years. It will also help pregnant women, especially in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, rural and remote and socioeconomically disadvantaged communities. Women will benefit from better knowledge of nutrition and the right dietary choices to meet their needs and those of their unborn children. The programme will improve access to nutritious foods in local communities and encourage women to share their new skills and knowledge through community programmes about good nutrition.

REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES PROGRAM (RHS)

Funding of \$46.2 million over four years for the Regional Health Services Program focuses on working with small rural communities to identify local primary health priorities and develop and support services relating to these priorities. A total of 124 Regional Health Services will be operational in rural Australia in 2003-04. A range of services are supported under the Program, including women's health, illness and injury prevention, community nursing, palliative care, children's services, mental health, occupational therapy, nutrition and dietetics and health promotion.

MEDICAL SPECIALIST OUTREACH ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (MSOAP)

The Medical Specialist Outreach Assistance Program (MSOAP) is providing much needed medical specialist services closer to home for people living in rural and remote locations. The Program is expected to be fully operational in 2003-04, with around 50 rural regions of Australia having access to around 1,100 specialist outreach services which includes paediatrics, psychiatry and obstetric care.

Under MSOAP there are currently 46 operational obstetrics and gynaecology services nationally and another 11 expected to commence in 2002-03. Fifty-eight paediatric services are operational or due to commence in 2003. Positive results to date include more than 20,000 women in over 55 towns and communities in the Northern Territory having access to obstetrics and gynaecology outreach services.

MULTIPURPOSE SERVICES (MPS) PROGRAM

Many small rural communities cannot support separate aged care and health facilities. Through the Multipurpose Services (MPS) Program 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. In this way the best mix of services can be provided to each community. These include nursing home and hostel care, women's health, palliative care and community nursing, radiology, mental health, home care and meals on wheels and podiatry as well as integrated services for young children such as immunisation, infant welfare and parenting information.

The Program is continuing to expand and there are now 78 MPS operating. It is expected that around eight new MPS will be established in 2003-04 with further communities engaged in community consultation, service planning and development phases to establish new MPS.

BETTER ARTHRITIS CARE INITIATIVE

The prevalence of rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis is greater in women at nearly all ages, and the prevalence of osteoporosis among women has been estimated at more than four times that among men. In addition, the Australian Bureau of Statistics has estimated that overall, 7 per cent of non-indigenous women have arthritis compared to 18 per cent of Indigenous women.

In recognition of this prevalence in the Australian community, the 2002-03 Federal Budget provided \$11.5 million over four years to improve care for people with these conditions. In addition, in July 2002, all Australian Health Ministers agreed to establish arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions as the seventh national health priority area. The focus of the Budget initiative and new National Health Priority Area is on rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis and osteoporosis.

MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

Smoking during pregnancy is a significant threat to the health of both mother and child. In July 2001, the Government commissioned the University of Queensland to interpret the data available from the *Longitudinal Women's Health Survey* and provide advice on the implications of that data for tobacco control. The report was commissioned in order to develop a better understanding of smoking during pregnancy in the context of women's overall health development and to assist with the development of targeted measures for this group.

The report, released as *Cigarette Smoking among Women in Australia* in May 2002, confirms that while pregnancy is a key motivator for smoking cessation more can be done to encourage quit attempts and to prevent relapse. A number of Commonwealth initiatives will be used to help address this issue including the development and implementation of evidence-based cessation guidelines for use by health professionals, which identify the dangers of smoking during pregnancy and around children. These will also provide information to workers or women on effective quit techniques and referral to relevant smoking cessation programmes.

Legal Services

BUILDING SAFER COMMUNITIES

The Government will provide additional funding of \$4 million in 2003-04 to continue the National Crime Prevention (NCP) Program.

The NCP Program was launched in 1997 as part of the Commonwealth Government's response to community concerns about crime and violence, and the impact it has on people's lives. It is implemented in partnership with other Commonwealth agencies, the States and Territories, local government and the non-government sector.

The Program identifies and promotes innovative ways of reducing and preventing crime, and the fear of crime, in the community by supporting research and practical crime prevention initiatives such as national pilot projects, local prevention activities, and communication and training initiatives.

The Program has funded a number of projects focusing on the prevention of domestic violence, including research reports such as *Violence in Indigenous Communities and Young People and Domestic Violence*. It has also produced a range of information resources including *Crime Prevention for Seniors: A Guide to Personal and Financial Safety*.

THE COMMONWEALTH COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM

In 2003-04, the Commonwealth Community Legal Services Program will provide funding to 126 community legal services throughout Australia. As well as generalist community legal centres, specialised women's legal services, Indigenous women's projects, and rural women's outreach services will be provided.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER WOMEN'S PROJECTS

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Projects provide legal advice and referral services for women. They also undertake community legal education on the issues that are of particular concern to indigenous women, including family law matters, violence against women, discrimination, employment and other areas of law.

The funding allocation for these projects under the programme in 2003-04 will total \$1.02 million.

WOMEN'S LEGAL SERVICES

Women's legal services provide legal advice and referral services for women, including toll free telephone advice. They undertake community legal education on the issues that are of particular concern to women, including family law matters, violence against women, discrimination, employment and many other areas of law. They also play an advocacy role and have increased the availability of lawyers for women needing legal representation in courts and tribunals.

The funding allocation for these projects under the programme in 2003-04 will total \$2.9 million.

RURAL WOMEN'S OUTREACH PROJECT

The Government also funds community legal services around Australia to provide legal services to women in rural and remote areas and to those who are isolated due to factors such as disability, age or domestic violence. These specialist legal services most often deal with issues of domestic violence and family law; child support; child abuse; discrimination and harassment; financial matters; housing and tenancy; property; consumer credit; and relationships.

The funding allocation for these projects under the programme in 2003-04 will total \$0.6 million.

WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission is the independent statutory body responsible for implementing Commonwealth anti-discrimination legislation. The Commonwealth legislative framework for the prevention of discriminatory barriers to full participation in areas of public life is underpinned by the *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986 (HREOC Act)*, the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (SDA)*, the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*, and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. In particular, the SDA makes discrimination on the grounds of sex unlawful in a range of areas of public life, for example, employment, the provision of goods and services, education, accommodation and in the administration of Commonwealth laws and programmes. The Commission has the power to inquire into, and attempt to conciliate, complaints alleging a breach of the SDA, and alleged breaches of a 'human right' as defined under the HREOC Act. The Commission also has an important role in promoting an understanding and acceptance of, and compliance with, anti-discrimination laws including sex discrimination laws.

In 2003-04, the Government will continue to fund the Commission, and will provide \$11.8 million to fund the work of the Commission.

Support for Families

BABY BONUS

In the 2002-03 Budget, the Government reiterated its election commitment to provide further tax relief to families, through the introduction of the Baby Bonus. The Baby Bonus is a refundable tax offset that recognises that one of the hardest times for families financially is the birth of a first child, where one parent may give up or reduce paid employment to care for the child.

The Baby Bonus provides for a tax relief of up to \$2,500 annually for up to five years. To ensure that low-income mothers also benefit from the measure, a minimum annual payment of \$500 is available for those with incomes of \$25,000 or less.

Families have been claiming the Baby Bonus on their tax returns from 1 July 2002.

Business and Employment

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN RURAL INDUSTRIES

During 2002-03 women in rural industries continued to benefit from the Government's Agriculture Advancing Australia package which provided leadership training, support for women's non-government organisations and sponsorship for national and state women in rural industries conferences, including:

- Scholarships in partnership with rural Research and Development Corporations under the *Industry Partnerships: corporate governance for rural women* initiative to attend the Australian Institute of Company Directors' course, and receive coaching and mentoring from industry leaders;
- *Building the Future, Sharing the Work* initiative to assist national women's non-government organisations to strengthen their links with mainstream industry bodies;
- Funding and support for an Australian high level delegation to the *3rd International Congress for Rural Women* in Madrid which included the Presidents of the four national women's non-government organisations;
- Funding and support as co-hosts of the *Setting the Agenda for Rural Women: Research Directions* Conference with Charles Sturt University, in Wagga Wagga; and

- The Rural Industries Research & Development Corporation Rural Women's Award provided each of the seven State and Territory winners with a \$15,000 bursary and a place on the Australian Institute of Company Directors course. Each runner-up was provided with a \$5,000 bursary.

In 2003-04 women in rural industries will continue to benefit with \$93,000 to be spent on two continuing programmes. Scholarships will be offered to attend the Australian Institute of Company Directors' course, and to receive coaching and mentoring. Support will be given for the national women's non-government organisations through the *Building the Future, Sharing the Work* initiative by way of refining plans for partnerships, and reporting on progress.

SMALL BUSINESS ENTERPRISE CULTURE PROGRAM

Women currently account for 33 per cent of Australia's 1.6 million small business operators. The Small Business Enterprise Culture Program (SBCEP) supports skills development projects, including those tailored to the needs of women in business.

The SBCEP aims to develop and enhance the business skills of small business owner-managers and demonstrate the contribution that such skills can make to business viability and growth. It will achieve this by providing competitive grants for initiatives designed to enhance small business access to skills development and mentoring. This forms part of the Federal Government's broader \$60 million Small Business Assistance Program.

Funding is available to organisations for projects that deliver skills development and mentoring services to small business owners and managers including projects supporting women in small business.

Skills development projects must be practical, relevant, delivered in a flexible manner, and improvement oriented.

Mentoring projects involve the delivery of mentoring services to small business owner/managers. Eligible activities may involve one-to-one support, group mentoring or the use of novel approaches to applying mentoring techniques to assist small business managers.

TELSTRA BUSINESS WOMEN'S AWARDS

The Commonwealth Government supports women in business through its sponsorship of the Telstra Business Women's Awards. The Commonwealth has sponsored this annual programme since its inception in 1995.

The Awards recognise, reward and encourage outstanding achievements by Australian women of all industry sectors and levels of enterprise.

WORK AND FAMILY UNIT PUBLICATIONS

The Work and Family Unit of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations produces a range of publications to promote awareness and understanding of work and family issues including a newsletter, a postcard, a resource kit containing detailed guides on family-friendly working arrangements and booklets showcasing best practice workplaces/organisations. These publications are widely distributed to workplaces throughout Australia. Many are available on-line at the Work and Family website on the Government's Workplace portal.

NATIONAL WORK AND FAMILY AWARDS

The Government contributes around \$100,000 to the National Work and Family Awards, which promote the benefits of flexible work arrangements and showcase a wide range of work and family initiatives. There were a record number of applicants for the tenth anniversary 2002 Awards. In conjunction with the Awards presentation dinner, the Government hosted the work and family conference, Taking Stock, Looking Forward in September 2002 to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Awards.

THE OFFICE OF THE EMPLOYMENT ADVOCATE

The Office of the Employment Advocate (OEA) provides specific assistance to women and other employees that may be in disadvantaged bargaining positions through its Community Partners Programme. This programme uses Working Women's Centres and some Community Legal Centres throughout Australia to provide advice and assistance on employment related matters with priority given to Australian workplace agreements. The OEA expects to provide almost \$160 000 in funding to five Working Women's Centres across Australia during the 2003-04 financial year.

THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE AGENCY

The Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) works with employers to assist them to achieve equal opportunity for women employees. In 2002 employers reported for the second time under the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999. Under the terms of the Act, the Agency continues its focus on building business partnerships with employer groups and specific employers.

In 2003 EOWA will for the third time host its Business Achievement Awards to honour leaders in the field of equal employment opportunity. EOWA will also award Employer of Choice for Women citations to organisations that recognise the contribution of women in the workplace. Also, in 2002 EOWA released the inaugural Women in Leadership Census, conducted in partnership with a number of organisations including the Office of the Status of Women.

The Government will provide \$2.918 million in funding to EOWA during the 2003-04 financial year.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR PARENTS, CARERS AND MATURE AGE JOB SEEKERS

Transition to Work (TTW) assists people to return to the workforce by providing skills assistance, building confidence and increasing familiarity with current technology. Transition to Work eligible groups are parents, carers and mature age people over 50 who have been out of the workforce for 2 years.

\$39 million was reallocated in the 2001-02 Budget under the Australians Working Together initiatives. These initiatives commenced from July 2002 to fund 20,200 places for three years.

Indigenous

FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM

In 2003-04, ATSIC will allocate \$6 million to its Family Violence Prevention Program, which supports initiatives under two components:

Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS);

Family Violence Prevention Legal Services place highest priority on providing holistic assistance to Indigenous people who are victims, or at immediate risk of family violence, including sexual abuse. Most clients are women and children.

The range of services provided includes legal assistance, information, referral, crisis counselling, court support, outreach services, community education, group awareness raising and empowerment activities, community consultation and planning, service liaison and coordination, and ongoing support.

Other Family Violence Initiatives

Other Family Violence Initiatives are supported under this programme at the national and Regional Councils level which directly or indirectly assist Indigenous women.

Telecommunications

TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACTION PLAN FOR REMOTE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

The Government has provided funding of \$8.3 million over 3 years as part of the Telecommunications Action Plan for Remote Indigenous Communities (TAPRIC) to improve service levels in the most remote and disadvantaged areas of Australia. The programme commenced in the first quarter of 2003, and includes the following elements:

- A community phone programme to increase remote community members' access to reliable telephone services;
- An Internet access programme that will support community Internet access centres in remote communities;
- An online content development programme that will fund the development of appropriate cultural content for communities. Language retrieval and storage of Indigenous languages is an important aspect of content development;
- A feasibility study that will examine issues relating to sustainability of Internet Access Centres in remote communities; and
- A Mobile Education and Training Service that will travel to priority communities providing an education and Internet training development service. Both male and female trainers will be provided to ensure women have access to the new services.

Widows

INDEX THE CEILING RATE OF INCOME SUPPORT SUPPLEMENT FOR WAR WIDOWS

On 20 September 2002 the Government introduced twice yearly indexation of the Income Support Supplement (ISS) for war widows. ISS is now increased by the same percentage increase applied to service pensions. ISS provides income support in addition to the war widow's pension for Australian war widows with limited means.

WIDOW ALLOWANCE

Widow Allowance provides income support to mature aged women who no longer have a partner and who face obstacles to finding employment because of limited participation in the workforce. The number of recipients is increasing, reflecting the increase in the Age Pension qualifying age for women. The average number of Widow Allowance clients during March 2003 was 43,100 representing an increase of 2,100 over the previous year. The allowance is income and asset tested.