

# REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR GROWTH AND SECURITY 2004-05

STATEMENT BY

THE HONOURABLE JOHN ANDERSON, MP  
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER  
MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND REGIONAL SERVICES  
LEADER OF THE NATIONALS

AND

SENATOR THE HONOURABLE IAN CAMPBELL  
MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT, TERRITORIES AND ROADS  
MANAGER OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS IN THE SENATE

AND

THE HONOURABLE DE-ANNE KELLY MP  
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE MINISTER FOR  
TRANSPORT AND REGIONAL SERVICES AND THE MINISTER FOR  
TRADE

11 MAY 2004

© Commonwealth of Australia 2004

ISBN 1 74149 175 4

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

<b>OVERVIEW .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Regional Partnerships for Growth and Security .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>REGIONAL BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>\$444.4 million package to help sugar industry .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>AusLink .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Regional Partnerships.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Sustainable Regions.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Regional Plans Lead the Way .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Schools' Country Areas Programme .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Schools' Capital Grants Programme .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Extra Funding for Regional Universities.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Strengthening Security at Australia's Regional Airports .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Stronger Families and Communities .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Boost for Regional Settlement.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Regional Migration Initiatives.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>National Crime Prevention .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Continuing to Support the Rural Health Strategy .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Improved Job Network.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Higher Bandwidth Incentive Scheme.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>BUDGET 2004-2005 .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Agriculture .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>\$444.4 million package to help sugar industry .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Changed focus for Farm Help.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>\$66.7 million to extend FarmBis.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Financial Counselling service funded for 4 more years .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Australian Government partners industry for growth .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Budget extends animal and plant disease response .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Budget Funding Attacks on Avian Influenza .....</b>	<b>21</b>

\$3 million to finalise Regional Development Proposals.....	21
Marine pest fight gets \$3.7 million.....	21
\$15 million for Western Australia’s timber industry .....	22
Another \$1 million for aquaculture.....	22
\$3.8 million to continue biotechnology Studies in Agriculture.....	22
National Landcare Programme .....	22
Drought Assistance .....	23
<b>Health and Ageing.....</b>	<b>23</b>
Rural Health Strategy.....	23
Rural Primary Health.....	24
Rural Specialist Support .....	24
Workforce Support for Rural General Practitioners .....	25
New General Practitioner Registrars .....	25
Rural Australian Medical Undergraduate Scholarships .....	25
Rural Clinical Schools .....	25
University Departments of Rural Health .....	26
HECS Reimbursement Scheme.....	26
Increasing Access to Private Health Services in Rural Areas programme .....	27
Adjustment grants for small rural aged care facilities.....	27
Communication Strategy .....	27
Other Rural Initiatives .....	27
Increased Medical Rebate for Other Medical Practitioners .....	28
Additional Medical School Places for Queensland.....	28
Small Residential Aged Care Facilities Accreditation Fees Subsidy .....	29
Viability funding for rural and remote aged care providers .....	29
Medical Indemnity – Additional Assistance for Rural Procedural General Practitioners.....	29
MedicarePlus.....	29

Royal Flying Doctor Service.....	30
Rural Women’s General Practitioner Service.....	31
Aged care workforce support .....	31
<b>Education and Training .....</b>	<b>31</b>
Country Areas Programme .....	31
Capital Grants Programme .....	32
Rural New Apprenticeship options .....	32
Living Away From Home Allowance.....	33
New Apprenticeships Incentives Programme.....	33
Rural and Regional Skills Shortage Special Commencement Incentive .....	33
Group Training .....	33
Group Training New Apprenticeships Targeted Initiatives Programme.....	34
New Apprenticeships Access Programme.....	34
Basic IT Enabling Skills for Older Workers Programme.....	34
Language, Literacy and Numeracy .....	34
Regional Loading – extra funding for regional universities .....	34
Commonwealth Learning Scholarships .....	35
Commonwealth University Scholarships.....	35
New Government-supported Higher Education Places.....	35
Australian Research Council.....	35
Vocational Education and Training Priority Places .....	36
<b>Legal System and Services .....</b>	<b>36</b>
2004–05 Budget measures.....	36
National Community Crime Prevention Programme .....	36
Juvenile Pre-Court Diversion Scheme and Aboriginal Interpreter Service .....	36
\$1.327 million funding for Australian Law Online for 2004-05.....	37
\$7.7 million Funding in 2004-05 for Commonwealth Community Legal Services Programme.....	37

\$2 million Funding for Regional Primary Dispute Resolution Services in 2004-05.....	37
\$4.2 million Funding for Children’s Contact Services.....	38
\$0.251 million in 2004-05 to Expand the Capacity of Crime Stoppers partnership.....	38
\$17.5 million in 2004-05 for native title resourcing.....	38
<b>Telecommunications.....</b>	<b>39</b>
\$8.8 million to support IT Training in Remote Communities.....	39
\$13.4 million in 2004-05 for the National Communications Fund.....	39
Mobile Phones on Highways Programme.....	39
Mobiles for Towns Over 500 Programme.....	39
Regional Mobile Phone Programme.....	40
Satellite Phone Handset Subsidy Scheme.....	40
Expansion of Terrestrial Mobile Phone Coverage Programme.....	40
Consumer Representation and Research Grants.....	40
Networking the Nation – The Local Government Fund.....	41
Networking the Nation – Building Australia’s Regional Networks Fund.....	41
National Broadband Strategy.....	41
\$3.104 million in 2004-05 for Telecommunications Action Plan for Remote Indigenous Communities.....	43
\$0.989 million in 2004-05 for Launceston Broadband Project.....	44
<b>Arts, Recreation and Entertainment.....</b>	<b>45</b>
Young and Emerging Artists Programme.....	45
National Collections Programme.....	45
Australian Museums and Galleries On line.....	45
Visions of Australia.....	45
Regional Arts Fund.....	46
Playing Australia.....	46
Festivals Australia.....	46

Contemporary Music Touring Programme .....	46
Federation Cultural and Heritage Projects.....	47
The Bundanon Trust.....	47
\$2.305 million funding in 2004-05 for National Archives regional offices.....	47
\$0.345 million funding in 2004-05 for National Archives digitisation on demand .....	48
National Gallery of Australia travelling exhibitions .....	48
Community Heritage Grants .....	48
Australian Sports Commission.....	49
Commercial Radio Black Spots Programme .....	50
Television Black Spots Programme.....	50
Television Black Spots – Alternative Technical Solutions Programme.....	50
Regional Equalisation Plan.....	50
ABC Regional and Local Programming .....	51
Regional Communications Partnership Fund .....	51
<b>Defence.....</b>	<b>51</b>
Defence and regional Australia .....	51
Capital Facilities.....	51
Joint Operations Command .....	52
Garrison Support and Maintenance Contracts.....	52
Army Indigenous Community Assistance Programme.....	52
Defence Community Organisation projects benefiting regional communities.....	52
Operation Safebase.....	53
Reserve Employer Support Payment Scheme .....	53
<b>Trade, Business and Investment.....</b>	<b>53</b>
TradeStart Programme.....	53
Export Market Development Grants Scheme .....	54
Australian Tourism Development Programme.....	54

New Opportunities for New Exporters .....	54
Funds to Strengthen Asian Trade Links .....	55
Biosecurity Standards .....	55
\$11.3 million to improve Livestock Trade .....	55
Australian Government Electronic Tender System .....	55
Funding for AusIndustry Regional Office Network.....	56
Wine Equalisation Tax .....	56
Tax treatment of irrigation infrastructure .....	57
Small business tax simplification.....	57
<b>Employment Services.....</b>	<b>58</b>
Job Placement, Employment and Training Programme.....	58
Improved Employment Services .....	58
Early access to Job Search Training.....	59
Establishment of an Employment Innovation Fund.....	60
Transition to Work .....	60
\$57.2 million in 2004-05 for Personal Support Programme best practice initiative .....	60
Increasing participation rates for mature age workers.....	61
<b>Indigenous Partnerships .....</b>	<b>62</b>
Longitudinal study of Indigenous Children.....	62
Indigenous Capital Assistance Scheme .....	62
Indigenous Youth Employment Consultants .....	62
\$0.3 million for 2004 – 05 for the Mining Industry/Indigenous Communities Regional Partnership Programme .....	63
Indigenous Whole of Government Trials.....	63
Major Infrastructure Programme .....	64
Community Development Employment Programme .....	64
Family Violence Prevention Legal Services .....	65
Regional Projects to Combat Family Violence.....	65

Indigenous Women’s Programme.....	65
Sporting Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people .....	65
Provision of Legal Services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.....	66
Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Programme .....	66
Support for Indigenous Students .....	67
Additional funding for Indigenous Higher Education .....	67
Indigenous Aged Care .....	67
<b>Regional Leadership and Representation.....</b>	<b>68</b>
Industry Leadership – Women and Young people in Rural Industries.....	68
Indigenous Leadership Scholarships .....	68
National Rural Women’s Secretariat.....	69
Sports Leadership Grants for Rural and Regional Women .....	69
<b>Migration to our Regions .....</b>	<b>69</b>
Boost for Regional Settlement.....	69
Regional Migration Initiatives .....	69
Skilled Independent Regional Visa .....	70
Long Stay Temporary Visa.....	71
Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme.....	71
State/Territory Nominated Independent Scheme .....	71
Skill Matching Visa.....	71
Skill Matching Database .....	72
General Skilled Migrants .....	72
Family – skilled-designated area sponsored category .....	72
Business – Regional Established Business in Australia .....	72
Two stage processing for Business skills applicants.....	72
<b>Transport .....</b>	<b>73</b>
AusLink.....	73
Record spending on Bass Strait Transport Schemes.....	74

Bass Strait Passenger Vehicle Equalisation Scheme.....	74
Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme.....	74
Remote Air Services Subsidy Scheme.....	75
Strengthening security at Australia’s regional airports .....	75
<b>Regional Services.....</b>	<b>76</b>
Sustainable Regions.....	76
Regional Partnerships .....	76
Area Consultative Committees.....	77
Commonwealth Regional Information Service .....	77
Weipa Electricity Generation Compensation Package .....	78
Regional Office Network .....	78
<b>Family Services and Centrelink.....</b>	<b>79</b>
Extension of Voluntary Work Initiative – Continuation of funding.....	79
Auslan Interpreting Services – enhanced access .....	79
Household Organisational Management Expenses (HOME) Advice Programme .....	79
Family Assistance – Additional Outside School Hours Care places .....	80
Family Assistance – Additional Family Day Care Places .....	80
Family Assistance – Increased Funding For The Child Care Support Programme.....	80
Family Assistance – Stronger Families and Communities Strategy – Continuation of Funding for A Refocused Early Childhood Strategy .....	81
Family and Community Networks Initiative .....	82
More Flexibility for Carers and Better Support for People in Care .....	82
Further Assistance for Regional, Rural and Remote Disability Employment Service Providers .....	83
A Better Deal for People with Disabilities.....	84
Reconnect programme.....	84
Jobs, Education and Training Programme Child Care .....	84
Flexible and innovative child care services.....	85

Disadvantaged Area Subsidy.....	85
Men and Family Relationships Programme .....	85
Family and Relationships Education Programme .....	85
Centrelink Services to Regional Australia.....	86
<b>Veterans' Affairs .....</b>	<b>86</b>
\$1.4 million funding in 2004-05 for Veteran and Community Grants.....	86
\$0.7 million funding to Maintain Rural and Remote Service Delivery Arrangements for 2004-05 .....	87
Review of Pricing Arrangements in Residential Aged Care .....	87
<b>Science and Research .....</b>	<b>87</b>
CSIRO National Research Flagships .....	87
Smart Moves Programme .....	88
Cooperative Research Centres Programme .....	89
Major National Research Facilities Programme .....	89
Regional Protection Fund .....	89
Meteorology .....	90
<b>Environment and Heritage.....</b>	<b>90</b>
Natural Resource Management – Land and Water Catchments.....	90
Natural Resource Management – Ocean and Coastal .....	91
Climate Change.....	92
Cultural Heritage.....	92
Green Corps – Young Australians for the Environment Programme .....	93

## OVERVIEW

### Regional Partnerships for Growth and Security

Since being elected to office in 1996, this Australian Government has focussed on building Australia's competitiveness and prosperity – and as a result, Australia has taken its place as one of the strongest growing economies in the world.

This success, which has benefited Australian industry, Australian families and Australian businesses, has been achieved through strategic economic management and positive forward thinking at a time when ensuring Australia's safety and security has come to the fore as a national priority.

Throughout its tenure, the Government has succeeded in creating a better economic foundation for regional, rural and remote Australia by giving these regions the power to lead and charter their own development and by recognising that they have special needs in times of prolonged drought and erratic commodity prices.

Whole - of - government initiatives such as Sustainable Regions and Regional Partnerships continue to provide local leaders and communities with the essential tools to secure the long-term economic future of the regions through decision making at the local level.

Now, and into the future, the Government believes that Australia needs strong and prosperous regions and the right foundations on which to build.

In the 2004-05 Budget the Government continues to build on its success with the introduction of major initiatives that will strengthen further Australia's ability to meet future challenges.

In the wider arena the threat of terrorism has grown immeasurably. By forging strategic alliances, the Government has continued to maintain a secure environment for all Australians.

Recent world events have highlighted the need to continue building on existing work to strengthen Australia's transport security systems. The Government recognises that transport security at smaller regional airports is high priority but that owners and operators are often providing their services with slim margins. Airports in regional Australia will receive an extra \$21 million in transport security funding which is in addition to the \$14 million announced in the Government's Enhanced Aviation Security Package in December 2003.

Economic stability has been no less important and has been buoyed by low interest rates and the Government's effective trade policy, including bilateral trade agreements with Singapore, Thailand and the United States Trade Agreement.

The Government is committed to continuously developing and improving infrastructure, particularly in regional and outer metropolitan Australia, as a means of encouraging new industries and creating a climate for investment.

The Budget reaffirms the landmark \$200 million for a Basin-wide strategic approach to water over-allocation in the Murray-Darling Basin agreed at COAG in August 2003.

In this current Budget, the Government has announced funding for its new land transport programme, AusLink. This funding is in addition to the \$2 billion funding boost for regional and rural Australia announced in January 2004. This comprised \$1.2 billion to extend the Roads to Recovery programme for a further four years and a decision to redirect funding from the Fuel Savings Grants Scheme to improve the National Network in regional and outer metropolitan areas. This will be of considerable benefit to regional communities and industries, and is on top of the already substantial funding provided to roads programmes in previous budgets.

Education has been and will remain a major priority. The Government will be introducing 9,100 new higher education places in 2005. These places will grow to 24,883 places by 2008. Regional areas will benefit from this allocation. All institutions eligible for a share of the new places have been invited to submit bids against a range of criteria that have been developed in consultation with state and territory governments. A particular criterion that may be relevant for institutions wishing to service regional areas is regional priorities.

The Regional Loading measure provides \$146 million over five years to support the provision of higher education at regional campuses which face higher costs as a result of such factors as location, size and history.

The Government is also strongly committed to encouraging more people to live and work in regional and rural Australia. Through concerted and cooperative efforts the Government is working with its state and territory counterparts to increase the number of migrants settling in regional Australia. These efforts, through such measures as the new Skilled Independent Regional Visa will help ensure that regional skill shortages are addressed and regional communities grow and prosper.

Substantial investments have also been made in health services and in particular to ongoing changes to Medicare. Building on the Australian Government's increase in rural and remote doctors of 15 per cent since 1996, the MedicarePlus initiative will help general practitioner (GP) proceduralists to develop and maintain their skills and provide an extra payment to rural and remote GPs.

MedicarePlus will also provide an additional 150 general practice vocational training places each year to assist in the provision of an adequate general practice workforce. The 150 additional training places are to be targeted to areas of workforce shortage, particularly outer metropolitan and rural areas.

The Australian Government is fully committed to supporting families at a local level. The Stronger Families and Communities Strategy launched in 2000, has funded a range of community based projects. The Government will provide \$365.8 million over four years to continue and expand the Government's commitment to early childhood initiatives which will include strategies for Communities for Children, Early Childhood – Invest to Grow, Local Answers, and Choice and Flexibility in Child Care.

These policies are working and under this Government, they will result in stronger regions and a secure and prosperous future for all Australians.

## **REGIONAL BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS**

### **\$444.4 million package to help sugar industry**

The Australian Government will provide up to \$444.4 million over five years for a comprehensive range of measures to help the nation's sugar industry. The Sugar Industry Reform Programme 2004 will have as its centrepiece a \$146.1 million sustainability grant and \$75 million for regional and community projects.

### **AusLink**

The Australian Government will spend \$11.4 billion on land transport over the next five years. This consists of almost \$11 billion in road and rail funding and a one-off \$450 million investment for new rail infrastructure projects in 2003-04.

### **Regional Partnerships**

The Government will spend a total of \$308.2 million over the four years from 2004-05 on the Regional Partnerships programme, which supports this approach to regional development. This includes new funding of \$78.2 million.

### **Sustainable Regions**

Funding of \$32.5 million for 2004-05 has been allocated for the Australian Government's successful Sustainable Regions programme with the aim of assisting selected regions undergoing major economic, social or technological change and supports community leadership in the development of local solutions.

### **Regional Plans Lead the Way**

In 2004-05, over \$300 million will be invested through regional organisations from the National Heritage Trust and the National Action Plan. In addition this Budget will provide an extra \$300 million to continue the Natural Heritage Trust into 2007-08. This Trust is the largest and most successful environmental rescue effort ever undertaken in Australia's history.

## **Schools' Country Areas Programme**

In 2004-05 the Australian Government will provide an estimated \$26 million under the Country Areas Programme which will benefit Australian schools in rural and remote communities. Of the \$26 million, an estimated \$22 million will be provided to state government schools and an estimated \$4 million to Catholic and independent schools.

## **Schools' Capital Grants Programme**

In 2004-05 the Australian Government will provide a record \$373.4 million as part of its school Capital Grants Programme. This represents an estimated increase of \$26 million or 7.5 per cent over 2003-04. The programme provides state and territory governments funding to assist them to build, maintain and upgrade state schools throughout Australia.

## **Extra Funding for Regional Universities**

This measure provides \$146 million over five years (commencing 2003-04) to support the provision of higher education at regional campuses which face higher costs as a result of such factors as location, size and history.

## **Strengthening Security at Australia's Regional Airports**

Airports in regional Australia will receive an extra \$21 million in transport security funding in 2004-05. This brings a total of \$35 million now available to help smaller airports implement security measures. The extra funding more than doubles the \$14 million announced in the Government's Enhanced Aviation Security Package in December 2003, reflecting the high priority of transport security in our regions.

## **Stronger Families and Communities**

The Government is building on the considerable investment in early childhood development and parenting made in the first four years of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy by providing \$365.8 million over the next four years. Funding will be available through four funding streams: Communities for Children, Early Childhood – Invest to Grow; Local Answers; and Choice and Flexibility in Child Care. This strategy will continue with a particular focus on rural and remote areas.

## Boost for Regional Settlement

The Government is committed to having regional Australia share the benefits brought by our Migration Programme through achieving a greater dispersal of our migrant and humanitarian intake to regional areas. The Government is committing \$13.4 million over four years from 2004-05 to ensure the long-term success of regional settlement. This funding is additional to that already provided for settlement services in regional Australia, such as English language provision in regional locations. The funding will assist the travel and associated costs of humanitarian settlement, identify and provide settlement support needed for dependants of skilled and family migrants and provide increased community grants to strengthen migrant communities in regional Australia.

## Regional Migration Initiatives

The Government will provide \$29.8 million (including \$1.8 million capital funding) over four years from 2004-05 for the implementation of key initiatives to attract people with much needed skills and resources to regional Australia and to smaller capital cities. This will help lower the levels of migration to larger capital cities, Sydney in particular.

## National Crime Prevention

Building on the achievements of the National Crime Prevention Programme, in the 2004-05 Budget, the Australian Government has committed a further \$20 million over four years to a new National Community Crime Prevention Programme. The centrepiece of the programme is a national community grants fund providing funding for grass roots projects designed to enhance community safety and crime prevention by preventing or reducing crime and anti-social behaviour, improving community safety and security, and reducing the fear of crime.

## Continuing to Support the Rural Health Strategy

This year's Budget demonstrates the Government's continued commitment to the health and well being of rural and remote Australians. Building on the Regional Health Strategy – More Doctors, Better Services, announced in the 2000-01 Budget, the 2004 Rural Health Strategy provides \$830.2 million over four years, for a flexible package of health and aged care services and workforce measures. An example of this strategy is the \$100 million provided to the Royal Flying Doctor Service in 2003.

## Improved Job Network

Regional Australia is benefiting from the 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. On 1 July 2003, the Government's third employment services contract (2003-06), incorporating the Active Participation Model, was introduced. The contract provides a number of improvements to services available to job seekers, including those living in regional Australia.

## Higher Bandwidth Incentive Scheme

The Higher Bandwidth Incentive Scheme (HiBIS 2003-07) is a \$107.8 million programme designed to provide regional Australians with access to higher bandwidth services at prices comparable to those available in metropolitan Australia.

The scheme operates in regional, rural and remote areas where broadband is unlikely to be provided commercially in the immediate future and targets residential users, small business and not-for-profit organisations. HiBIS customers benefit from improved access to more affordable and reliable higher bandwidth services.

# BUDGET 2004-2005

## Agriculture

### **\$444.4 MILLION PACKAGE TO HELP SUGAR INDUSTRY**

The Australian Government will provide up to \$444.4 million over five years for a comprehensive range of measures to help the nation's sugar industry. The Sugar Industry Reform Programme 2004, will have as its centrepiece a \$146.1 million sustainability grant and \$75 million for regional and community projects.

The programme follows extensive consultation with industry representatives and peak groups. The measures agreed by the Australian Government for the sugar industries in Queensland, New South Wales and Western Australia, directly respond to the concerns raised during the consultations.

The Australian Government will provide \$5 million over the next five years to crisis counselling services for families in the sugar cane industry. This will allow more than 9,000 people from the sugar cane industry to access valuable financial counselling and family support services operated under the auspices of the Government Financial Counselling Programme and the Family Relationships Services Programme.

As part of the Government's package of assistance to sugar cane farmers, older sugar cane farmers will be able to transfer their farm to the next generation without affecting their eligibility for social security Age Pension or Veteran Service Pension entitlements. The scheme (at a cost to the Australian Government of up to \$23.3 million) will provide sugar cane farmers who satisfy certain criteria with a window of opportunity to gift their farm to the next generation and apply for the age pension without attracting the gifting rules that apply to income support payments.

The package also includes:

- up to \$21 million in income support for eligible growers, harvesters and their families;
- up to \$13 million in business planning assistance for growers and harvesters and up to \$100,000 each for co-operative or single site mills;
- generous re-establishment grants of up to \$100,000 in 2004-05 for growers and \$50,000 for harvesters who want to leave the industry;

- retraining assistance for industry participants (growers, mill workers and other industry employees) displaced because of the reforms; and
- up to \$40.5 million in restructuring grants for growers who want to stay in the industry and undertake on-farm improvements.

## **CHANGED FOCUS FOR FARM HELP**

The Budget provides \$134.9 million to continue the Agriculture Advancing Australia programme Farm Help – Supporting Families through Change, over four years, commencing 2004-05, but with a renewed focus.

The new focus will be on supporting low-income farmers who are unable to borrow against their assets to make decisions to improve their long-term viability. The programme will continue to assist farm families in severe financial difficulty while they assess their future in farming.

## **\$66.7 MILLION TO EXTEND FARMBIS**

The successful Agriculture-Advancing Australia programme, FarmBis, has received a further \$66.7 million over four years commencing 2004-05.

Since 1997, about 150,000 primary producers across Australia have participated in FarmBis-subsidised training and education. Consistent with the existing FarmBis arrangements, this funding is contingent on matching funding from the States and the Northern Territory.

## **FINANCIAL COUNSELLING SERVICE FUNDED FOR 4 MORE YEARS**

The Budget has ensured continuation of the Rural Financial Counselling Service by providing \$23.3 million over four years, commencing 2004-05, for financial information, referrals and decision-support for farm families in financial difficulties.

A review in 2005 will assess the efficiency of current RFIS delivery arrangements.

## **AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT PARTNERS INDUSTRY FOR GROWTH**

The 2004-05 budget has provided \$4.7 million for a new, one-year Industry Partnerships trial in the Agriculture-Advancing Australia programme.

The trial will engage targeted industries in close, information-driven partnerships to identify future challenges, training and leadership needs, market opportunities and adjustment pathways.

### **BUDGET EXTENDS ANIMAL AND PLANT DISEASE RESPONSE**

A programme to ensure Australia is ready to respond to biosecurity threats and animal and plant disease emergencies has been extended by a further four years.

The Government has provided \$21.6 million in the 2004-05 Budget for the Building a National Approach to Animal and Plant Health – to strengthen Australia’s animal and plant health status.

### **BUDGET FUNDING ATTACKS ON AVIAN INFLUENZA**

Australia will be better protected against the threat of Avian Influenza thanks to \$2.1 million in 2003-04 and \$6.2 million in 2004-05.

The funding will be used to enhance border protection at airports and seaports and to strengthen protection against a viral epidemic such as Avian Influenza. It will also be used to employ extra staff and for a targeted awareness campaign.

### **\$3 MILLION TO FINALISE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS**

Current contractual arrangements under the Agricultural Development Partnership (ADP) programme will be met as a result of existing Budget funding of \$3 million for 2004-05. The ADP programme will end in June 2005.

The Government has completed funding agreements for Structural Adjustment in the Northern Adelaide Plains and the Kangaroo Island Project, and is continuing negotiation with remaining States. Two further projects with State funding support are at an advanced stage of negotiation.

### **MARINE PEST FIGHT GETS \$3.7 MILLION**

The Australian Government has provided \$3.7 million over three years commencing in 2004-05 to further develop a national system to manage introduced marine pests. The funds will go towards implementing the National System for the Prevention and Management of Marine Pest Incursions.

## **\$15 MILLION FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S TIMBER INDUSTRY**

Western Australia's forestry industry and communities have received \$15 million commencing 2004-05 to help offset the effects of the state government's decision to cease logging in old-growth forests.

This includes \$12.5 million over the next two years under the Forestry Assistance Programme for Western Australia, to promote investment and long-term job creation in the industry. An additional \$2.5 million will be allocated under the Grants for Forest Communities Programme for small businesses that create employment in the forest industry.

## **ANOTHER \$1 MILLION FOR AQUACULTURE**

Australia's fast growing aquaculture industry has received another \$1 million in 2004-05 to build on initiatives which commenced last financial year. The Government provided \$2.5 million in 2003-04 to begin implementing the Action Agenda for Aquaculture to realise the industry's vision of sales of \$2.5 billion by 2010.

## **\$3.8 MILLION TO CONTINUE BIOTECHNOLOGY STUDIES IN AGRICULTURE**

The Budget has provided another \$3.8 million over the next four years commencing 2004-05 to enable the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to pursue projects to assist the application of biotechnology in agriculture. The money is earmarked from a further \$20 million over four years provided in the Budget for the National Biotechnology Strategy, which is part of a broader Government initiative, Backing Australia's Ability.

## **NATIONAL LANDCARE PROGRAMME**

The Budget also extends the National Landcare Programme an additional two years by providing \$80 million (\$40 million in both 2006-07 and 2007-08). The Landcare programme is central to community involvement in natural resource management and the new funding will bring the Government's investment in this programme to \$159.5 million over the next four years.

## **DROUGHT ASSISTANCE**

The Australian Government has provided the most generous and comprehensive assistance ever for farmers who have been severely affected by the worst drought in memory. To date, \$432 million has been spent on drought assistance for farmers and rural communities. The Australian Government commitment to farming communities battling drought is forecast to reach \$1.1 billion by the end of 2005-06.

## **Health and Ageing**

### **RURAL HEALTH STRATEGY**

Since 1996, there have been a growing number of initiatives implemented to improve the health of rural Australians. The Regional Health Strategy: More Doctors, Better Services initiative in the 2000-01 Budget has provided more than \$550.0 million in additional funding over four years from 2000-01 to 2003-04. This has introduced many new, well-targeted services and maintained access to numerous existing services that might otherwise have had difficulty in remaining financially viable or physically appropriate.

The 2004-05 Budget demonstrates the Australian Government's continued commitment to the health and well being of rural and remote Australians. Building on the Regional Health Strategy, the Rural Health Strategy provides \$830.2 million over four years from 2004-05 to 2007-08 for a flexible package of health and aged care services and workforce measures.

This will continue funding for:

- existing rural primary health, allied health and medical specialist services;
- recruitment and retention initiatives for general practitioners in rural areas;
- long term rural workforce strategies; and
- sustainable rural private health and aged care services.

The new Rural Health Strategy includes an increased focus on preventative health measures and improving access to services by more remote communities. The package introduces measures to support existing specialists who are currently delivering

services in rural areas as well as continuing initiatives which has led to an expansion in outreach specialist services over the last four years.

This package of initiatives continues the important long-term rural workforce strategies and provides increased access to services for rural Australians. By focussing new initiatives on preventing ill health and injury, and increasing emphasis on addressing needs in more remote communities, the Rural Health Strategy will make an important contribution to addressing poorer health in rural and remote Australia.

## **RURAL PRIMARY HEALTH**

The Rural Primary Health programme will combine three programmes from the previous Regional Health Strategy. These are the Regional Health Services (RHS) Programme, the More Allied Health Services (MAHS) Programme, and the Rural Chronic Disease Initiative (RCDI).

The Rural Primary Health Programme will continue to fund current RHS and MAHS services, which are highly valued by their communities. There were 113 RHS providing access to primary health services in about 900 rural communities in March 2004. There are 65 rural Divisions of General Practice funded to provide additional allied health services, such as mental health workers, social workers, podiatrists, physiotherapists and dieticians.

The Government recognises that as well as improving access to services and contributing to the retention of the rural health workforce, it is necessary to take steps to address more directly the causes of health differences between metropolitan and rural and remote Australians. It is also necessary to make greater effort to extend allied and primary health services to more remote areas. Building on the successful Rural Chronic Disease Initiative, and with the addition of a further \$7.8 million over 2004-05 to 2007-08, these two new priorities will be addressed.

Some of the funding will be used for Primary Health Projects. Using the RCDI model, these projects will focus on issues particularly prevalent in rural and remote areas, such as obesity, low levels of physical activity, smoking and harmful alcohol consumption, and the high rates of injury.

## **RURAL SPECIALIST SUPPORT**

The Government will continue to fund specialist medical services in rural communities under the Rural Specialist Support component, which builds on the Medical Specialist Outreach Assistance Programme.

This commitment includes additional funding of \$6 million over 2004-05 to 2007-08 to support established rural specialists, who were not eligible for assistance under the previous Medical Specialist Outreach Assistance Programme.

## **WORKFORCE SUPPORT FOR RURAL GENERAL PRACTITIONERS**

Existing and newly arrived general practitioners will continue to be supported through the Rural Divisions of General Practice. This includes mentoring newly arrived GPs, helping them continue professional development, GP health support programmes and support for overseas trained doctors.

## **NEW GENERAL PRACTITIONER REGISTRARS**

The New General Practitioner Registrars Initiative increases the number of GP registrars in the general practice vocational training programme who are undertaking training in rural and remote areas.

Funding has been provided for an additional 50 rural training places and incentive payments to encourage general practice registrars to take up the rural training places.

This initiative immediately increases access to general practice services in rural and remote areas and aims to increase the number of general practitioners in these areas in the longer term.

## **RURAL AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS**

The Australian Government will continue to fund Rural Australian Medical Undergraduate Scholarships.

Each year 500 undergraduate students with a rural background and limited financial means are provided with a scholarship of \$10,000 to help support them to undertake medical training. It is very popular with medical students and the scheme has been fully subscribed since its inception.

The scheme encourages a rural medical focus through a rural GP mentoring programme.

## **RURAL CLINICAL SCHOOLS**

The Government is providing continued funding for the national network of Rural Clinical Schools.

The Rural Clinical Schools Programme encourages medical students to take up a career in rural practice by providing students with exposure to rural practice through long-term placements in rural areas during their clinical training years. From the commencement of the 2004 academic year, one-quarter of medical students will undertake half of their clinical training in a rural location.

Almost 150 students undertook long-term clinical placements in rural areas in 2003.

As well as providing education and training for medical students in a rural setting, the programme supports health professionals who are working in rural areas. Substantial funding is also injected into local rural economies through the development of infrastructure such as student education and accommodation facilities and the provision of recurrent funding for the operation of the Schools.

## **UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENTS OF RURAL HEALTH**

University Departments of Rural Health, which aim to increase the recruitment and retention of a wide range of health care professionals, including medical professionals, will continue to receive funding.

A significant infrastructure has now been established to support the development of academic, research and clinical activity with more than 100 academic staff appointed to rural and remote positions.

By providing support and making it easier for rural health professionals to maintain their training or upgrade their qualifications, health professionals will be encouraged to practise in the country.

Students and professionals from the city are also given a positive taste of rural life, and in particular, see the different health issues facing country people, all of which will lead to improved quality of care in rural communities.

## **HECS REIMBURSEMENT SCHEME**

The Australian Government will continue to fund the Higher Education Contributions Scheme (HECS) Reimbursement Scheme, which aims to encourage medical graduates to pursue a career in rural practice.

Under the scheme, eligible medical graduates who complete their medical degrees in 2000 or later, will have one fifth of their HECS debt reimbursed for each year of training undertaken or service provided in Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Area 3-7 locations. Reimbursements are made to eligible graduates following an initial 12 months service in a designated rural area.

## **INCREASING ACCESS TO PRIVATE HEALTH SERVICES IN RURAL AREAS PROGRAMME**

Formerly the Bush Nursing, Small Community and Regional Private Hospitals Programme, this programme will provide assistance to private health providers and aims to support and increase the range of private health services available in rural areas.

The range of private health services available in rural areas will include step-down and rehabilitation services, palliative care services, ancillary services such as podiatry and physiotherapy and medical and surgical services. People in rural areas will be able to use their private health insurance for these services.

## **ADJUSTMENT GRANTS FOR SMALL RURAL AGED CARE FACILITIES**

The Australian Government will continue to provide capital grants and viability funding for smaller rural and remote aged care facilities.

By keeping services open, older Australians and their families living in rural areas will have continued access to good quality, appropriate residential aged care in their own communities.

## **COMMUNICATION STRATEGY**

The Communication Strategy informs regional, rural and remote communities of current and future health service initiatives to be implemented in their area and will continue to receive funding.

The strategy also informs rural and metropolitan health professionals and students of rural health workforce recruitment and support opportunities.

## **OTHER RURAL INITIATIVES**

In addition to the above Rural Health Strategy measures, the health portfolio is also funding the following measures which are directed at improving the health and well-being of people living in regional, rural and remote areas of Australia and in increasing and supporting the health workforce.

## **INCREASED MEDICAL REBATE FOR OTHER MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS**

The Australian Government is reaffirming its commitment to rural Australians by continuing their access to higher Medicare rebates when visiting Rural Other Medical Practitioners (OMPs). Funding of \$118.4 million will be provided from 2004-05 to 2007-08.

The Rural OMPs Programme was introduced in the 2000-01 Budget, in recognition of the value of services provided by non-vocationally registered medical practitioners in rural areas (RRMA 4-7 locations). The programme provided substantial financial benefits for their patients.

Other Medical Practitioners are medical practitioners who are not vocationally registered and whose patients, as a consequence, had received the lower Medicare rebate.

A review in 2003 confirmed that the programme resulted in an increase in the number of medical practitioners providing these services.

## **ADDITIONAL MEDICAL SCHOOL PLACES FOR QUEENSLAND**

The Government will provide \$2.1 million from 2004-05 to 2007-08 for an additional 12 Medical school places a year at James Cook University in North Queensland from 2005, as part of the Bonded Medical Places Scheme.

The 12 additional bonded places at James Cook will provide it with a significant permanent increase in medical student numbers.

This initiative is in addition to the 234 bonded medical places made available in 2004.

The increase in medical school places, provided under Medicare Plus, is an important step in providing a long-term solution to medical workforce shortages.

A bonding period of six years will apply to students accepting one of the new medical places. Bonded doctors will be required to work in districts of workforce shortage, which include regional, rural and remote areas as well as many of the outer metropolitan areas of the capital cities.

In return, the Australian Government will contribute \$16,154 a year per student to the costs of their undergraduate education. The students will pay a contribution of up to \$7,854 (depending on their university's student contribution rates) through the Higher Education Contribution Scheme.

## **SMALL RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE FACILITIES ACCREDITATION FEES SUBSIDY**

Subsidisation of the accreditation fees for small residential aged care homes, most of which are in rural and remote Australia, will continue with funding of \$1.8 million from 2004-05 to 2007-08.

The measure will ensure that the cost of compulsory accreditation does not impose an inappropriate financial burden on facilities of 25 beds or less.

## **VIABILITY FUNDING FOR RURAL AND REMOTE AGED CARE PROVIDERS**

As part of its Investing in Australia's Aged Care-More Places, Better Care initiative, the Australian Government will provide an additional \$14.8 million from 2004-05 to 2007-08 to increase the amount of the viability supplement available to rural and remote providers, so they can continue to provide high quality care. This supplement recognises the lower income stream available to, and high costs faced by, many rural and remote providers.

## **MEDICAL INDEMNITY – ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR RURAL PROCEDURAL GENERAL PRACTITIONERS**

In December 2003 the Australian Government announced funding of, through medical indemnity insurers, 75 per cent of the difference between the medical indemnity insurance premiums of procedural general practitioners in rural areas and those for non-procedural general practitioners in similar circumstances. The estimated cost of this measure is \$13.4 million over the four years from 2003-04 and it will be absorbed within the Health and Ageing portfolio.

## **MEDICAREPLUS**

Building on the Australian Government's increase in rural and remote doctors of 15 per cent since 1996, the MedicarePlus initiative will help GP proceduralists to develop and maintain their skills and provide an extra payment to rural and remote GPs. Procedural GPs will be reimbursed up to \$10,000 for the cost of two weeks training each year. This funding will also reimburse the doctor for the costs of employing a locum as, in most cases, doctors would be required to leave their practice to attend training in capital cities. In addition, GPs in rural and remote areas performing procedural services that are 10 per cent or more of their total Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) workload will be eligible for a 10 per cent loading. Up to a maximum of a 30 per cent loading for 30 per cent procedural work. This loading will be available to practices registered in the Practice Incentives Programme. Increased

rural retention payments will be continued for another four years to recognise the commitment of GPs who provide services to rural and remote communities for extended periods of time.

Under MedicarePlus, the Australian Government has provided an additional 150 general practice vocational training places each year to assist in the provision of an adequate general practice workforce. The 150 additional training places are to be targeted to areas of workforce shortage, particularly outer metropolitan and rural areas. Incentives will be provided to encourage GP registrars to undertake their training in rural and remote locations. GP registrars will provide services while they are training, which will immediately increase access to general practice services. The additional training places commenced from the 2004 calendar year, bringing the total number of training places to 600 per year.

In addition, MedicarePlus provided for up to 280 short-term supervised general practitioner placements each year for pre-vocational doctors, equivalent to around 70 full-time placements each year. This new initiative will commence in July 2004 and it is expected that around one-third of placements will be in rural and remote areas.

As part of the MedicarePlus package announced on 10 March, 2004 the bulk-billing incentive has increased from \$5 to \$7.50 for services provided in areas classified as Rural, Remote, Metropolitan Areas (RRMAs) 3-7, and in the whole of Tasmania, where those services are bulk billed and delivered to concession card holders and children under 16 years.

The Government has committed \$131.2 million over four years from 2003-04 to 2006-07 for this initiative. Three new MBS items (10991, 64991 and 74991) have been created through a regulatory change to the *Health Insurance Act 1973*. These items mirror those already created as part of Medicare but with a rebate of \$7.50. These items can only be claimed by providers delivering the services in RRMAs 3-7, or in Tasmania.

For the purposes of this initiative, Hobart is treated as a RRMA 3-7 area due to its very low bulk-billing rate and the rural nature of many of its outer metropolitan areas.

## **ROYAL FLYING DOCTOR SERVICE**

The Australian Government continues to support the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) in providing primary health care services to people living, travelling or working in rural and remote communities. Services include emergency medical retrievals as well as clinics provided in remote locations. A new multi-party agreement was signed with the RFDS in June 2003 providing over \$100 million from 2002-03 to 2005-06.

## **RURAL WOMEN'S GENERAL PRACTITIONER SERVICE**

The Australian Government will continue to fund the Rural Women's General Practitioner Service, providing \$2.2 million in 2004-05.

The Service, administered by the Australian Council of the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS), aims to improve access to primary and secondary health care for women in rural Australia who currently have little or no access to a female GP. It gives women in rural and large remote communities the opportunity to seek health care of their choice, providing personalised care and advice for those women who prefer to discuss their needs with a female doctor.

## **AGED CARE WORKFORCE SUPPORT**

The Australian Government provided \$26.3 million in the 2002-03 Budget from 2002-03 to 2005-06 to encourage more people to enter or re-enter aged care nursing, especially in rural and regional areas. This initiative will offer up to 1000 scholarships over 4 years to people from rural and regional areas, funding these scholarships at up to \$10,000 per annum. In 2004, the Australian Government has offered an additional 200 undergraduate aged care nursing scholarships to rural and regional students wishing to enter the aged care workforce.

\$21.2 million from 2002-03 to 2005-06 was committed by the Australian Government in the 2002-03 Budget to fund training of care staff in smaller, less viable aged care homes, which tend to be in rural and regional areas. In 2004-05, about \$5.2m will be used to assist staff receive significant and diverse additional training to:

- upgrade the skills of personal care workers;
- increase the availability of skilled staff in aged care homes; and
- free registered nurses to concentrate on clinical care.

## **Education and Training**

### **COUNTRY AREAS PROGRAMME**

In 2004-05, the Australian Government will provide an estimated \$26 million under the Country Areas Programme (CAP) which will benefit Australian schools and students in rural and remote communities.

This represents an estimated increase of \$1.3 million or 5.2 per cent over the previous year to government and non-government education authorities. Of the \$26 million, an estimated \$22 million will be provided to State government schools and an estimated \$4 million will be provided to Catholic and independent schools. The Australian Government recognises that students attending primary and secondary schools in geographically isolated areas often have less access to educational opportunities than metropolitan students. Australian Government funds for CAP are provided to State and Northern Territory government schools for a wide range of activities that support the curricula, assist with transition to further education, training and work and support teacher professional development.

Activities typically funded through the Programme include provision of Languages Other Than English (LOTE), Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Schools and assistance with work experience expenses, excursions, music and sporting events – access to which is difficult for geographically isolated students.

## **CAPITAL GRANTS PROGRAMME**

In 2004–05 the Australian Government will provide a record \$373.4 million as part of its school Capital Grants Programme. This represents an estimated increase of \$26 million or 7.5 per cent over 2003–04.

The Programme provides State and Territory governments with funding to assist them to build, maintain and upgrade State schools throughout Australia. Australian Government funded projects typically include the construction of new schools, additional classrooms, libraries and other vital school facilities to improve educational opportunities for our children.

An estimated \$1.5 billion will be provided for State and Territory government schools over the period 2004–05 to 2007–08. This funding boost also includes \$17 million over the four years to provide specific capital grants funding for Catholic and independent schools in isolated areas and communities in the Northern Territory.

This funding will make a real difference to non-government school communities in remote and isolated regions who face substantially greater costs for capital construction and refurbishment than metropolitan and regional schools.

## **RURAL NEW APPRENTICESHIP OPTIONS**

The progressive implementation of the Rural Production and Horticulture National Training Packages across Australia has significantly expanded the range of rural production and horticulture New Apprenticeship options that are available for primary producers in all sectors, for production and other horticulturists, for gardeners and landscape gardeners, and for nursery operators and the like.

In most States and Territories, general agriculture and horticulture New Apprenticeships are now available at Certificate levels II, III and IV, in addition to a range of sector-specific New Apprenticeships for: pig production, goat production, sheep and wool poultry production, horse breeding, beef/cattle, milk, harvesting, dairy sugar, cane production, grain production, cotton rural merchandising production, horticulture, floriculture, landscape, nursery, parks and gardens, arboriculture and turf management.

## **LIVING AWAY FROM HOME ALLOWANCE**

New Apprentices may be eligible for Living Away From Home Allowance for the first 24 months of the New Apprenticeship if they have had to move away from the parental or guardian home to commence or remain in a New Apprenticeship (eligibility conditions apply).

## **NEW APPRENTICESHIPS INCENTIVES PROGRAMME**

The New Apprenticeships Incentives Programme provides financial incentives to employers who take on and train New Apprentices (apprentices and trainees). New Apprenticeships provide career opportunities in a broad range of industries and occupations. New Apprenticeships also provide added flexibility and options for employers and their New Apprentices to select the training provider of their choice. Training can be on-the-job, off-the-job or a combination of both.

## **RURAL AND REGIONAL SKILLS SHORTAGE SPECIAL COMMENCEMENT INCENTIVE**

The purpose of the Rural and Regional Skills Shortage Special Commencement Incentive is to boost training in rural and regional Australia by providing a special commencement incentive for a rural or regional employer who employs a New Apprentice in a vocation where there is a skills shortage.

## **GROUP TRAINING**

Group Training is an arrangement whereby an organisation employs apprentices and trainees under an Apprenticeship/Traineeship Training Contract and places them with host employers. The organisation provides for continuity of their employment, additional care and support and manages their training. There are Group Training Organisations located in most regional centres.

## **GROUP TRAINING NEW APPRENTICESHIPS TARGETED INITIATIVES PROGRAMME**

The programme is designed to increase New Apprenticeships in critical, challenging and under-serviced markets through group training arrangements.

## **NEW APPRENTICESHIPS ACCESS PROGRAMME**

New Apprenticeships Access Programme (NAAP) provides assistance to people who experience barriers to skilled employment to obtain and maintain a New Apprenticeship. Other successful outcomes are employment, further education and training. Participants receive nationally recognised vocational training that is linked to a New Apprenticeship pathway, job search assistance and general support.

## **BASIC IT ENABLING SKILLS FOR OLDER WORKERS PROGRAMME**

Basic IT Enabling Skills (BITES) provides 11,500 older workers per year with the opportunity to undergo nationally recognised training in information technology. It is designed to help low-income, mature age (45 and over) job seekers gain nationally recognised skills in information and communication technology, in order for them to operate personal computers effectively at a basic level in the workforce. BITES courses are advertised locally and through Centrelink.

## **LANGUAGE, LITERACY AND NUMERACY**

The Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme provides basic language, literacy and numeracy assistance to job seekers, particularly young job seekers. The programme has been designed to help remove a major barrier to employment and improve participants' daily lives. Clients can be referred to this programme either by Centrelink or the Job Network.

## **REGIONAL LOADING — EXTRA FUNDING FOR REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES**

The Australian Government will provide an additional \$146 million over five years from 2003-04 to incorporate a regional loading into the Commonwealth Grant Scheme (CGS) for students enrolled at regional campuses.

## **COMMONWEALTH LEARNING SCHOLARSHIPS**

The Australian Government will provide \$329 million over five years (from 2003-04) for 40,000 new scholarships, which will be provided through two new scholarship programmes (as below) to assist rural, regional and Indigenous students from low socio-economic backgrounds with costs associated with higher education.

## **COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIPS**

The Commonwealth Education Costs Scholarships will provide successful students with \$2,000 per year for four years to assist with their education costs. The Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarships (CAS) will provide successful students with \$4,000 per year for four years to assist with the costs of studying away from home. More than 22,500 CECS scholarships will be offered over the next five years and more than 17,000 CAS scholarships over the same period.

These scholarships will particularly benefit students from regional and rural areas by providing assistance with the costs associated with living away from home, such as accommodation.

## **NEW GOVERNMENT-SUPPORTED HIGHER EDUCATION PLACES**

The Australian Government will be introducing 9,100 new Government-supported higher education places to institutions in 2005. These places will grow to 24,883 places by 2008 as students continue in their courses. Regional areas will benefit from this allocation. All institutions eligible for a share of the new places have been invited to submit bids against a range of criteria that have been developed in consultation with State and Territory governments. One criterion is 'regional priorities'.

## **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.

## **VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING PRIORITY PLACES**

The Australian Government is establishing a new programme to directly purchase vocational education and training places for people with a disability, older workers and parents returning to the workforce.

## **Legal System and Services**

### **2004–05 BUDGET MEASURES**

#### **NATIONAL COMMUNITY CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAMME**

The National Crime Prevention (NCP) Programme was launched in 1997 by the Prime Minister, the Hon John Howard MP, to identify and promote innovative ways of reducing and preventing crime and the fear of crime. The Government committed \$38 million to the programme which ran from 1996-97 to 2003-04. The National Crime Prevention Programme initiated a wide range of policy, research and practical projects which delivered important improvements to the national capacity for crime prevention, particularly at the local level.

Building on the achievements of the NCP, in the 2004-05 Budget, the Australian Government has committed a further \$20.1 million over four years to a new National Community Crime Prevention Programme. The centrepiece of the programme is a national community grants fund providing funding for grass roots projects designed to enhance community safety and crime prevention by preventing or reducing crime and anti-social behaviour, improving community safety and security, and reducing the fear of crime.

#### **JUVENILE PRE-COURT DIVERSION SCHEME AND ABORIGINAL INTERPRETER SERVICE**

A juvenile pre-court diversion scheme and the jointly funded Aboriginal Interpreter Service in the Northern Territory has been extended until 30 June 2005. The initiatives were established under an agreement between the Australian and Northern Territory Governments, which commenced on 1 September 2000, with the Australian Government committing \$20 million over four years. The Agreement ends on 31 August 2004; however, a further \$3.9 million has been committed to the continuation of the measure to 30 June 2005.

The initiative recognises the high rate of Aboriginal incarceration and aims to address the specific needs and issues of the regional Aboriginal population. The initiative has developed new juvenile diversion programmes in rural and remote communities. The programmes offer activities such as education, sport, recreation, life skills and counselling.

### **\$1.327 MILLION FUNDING FOR AUSTRALIAN LAW ONLINE FOR 2004-05**

Australian Law Online includes the Family and Regional Law Hotlines and the Family Law Online portal. 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.

### **\$7.7 MILLION FUNDING IN 2004-05 FOR COMMONWEALTH COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAMME**

The Commonwealth Community Legal Services Programme administers funding to more than 120 organisations across Australia to provide generalist and specialist legal assistance to disadvantaged people in the community. Of these, 38 community legal services are located in regional or rural centres. In addition to these 38 regional centres, there are several organisations that, while located in metropolitan areas, receive government funding to provide targeted specialist assistance to regional or rural areas. The amount of funding shown above represents the total amount provided to the 38 organisations located in regional areas and to rural women's outreach projects and satellite women's projects.

### **\$2 MILLION FUNDING FOR REGIONAL PRIMARY DISPUTE RESOLUTION SERVICES IN 2004-05**

Primary dispute resolution services include counselling, mediation and conciliation. These services are aimed at helping separating families resolve their family law disputes themselves, rather than going to court. Funding is provided to 25 community-based organisations in 35 regional areas across Australia for the provision of primary dispute resolution services. In almost two thirds of the regions, organisations provide out-reach services in addition to services in the regional centres in which they are located.

## **\$4.2 MILLION FUNDING FOR CHILDREN'S CONTACT SERVICES**

Children's Contact Services plays a critical role in preserving and re-establishing parent-child contact for many non-resident parents following family separation. This 2004-05 Budget Measure provides on-going funding for 25 Children's Contact Services, twenty-one of which are in regional areas.

## **\$0.251 MILLION IN 2004-05 TO EXPAND THE CAPACITY OF CRIME STOPPERS PARTNERSHIP**

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 the coordination of fundraising for Crime Stoppers nationally. This will enable the setting of strategic direction, networking, information exchange and fundraising at the national level to occur.

## **\$17.5 MILLION IN 2004-05 FOR NATIVE TITLE RESOURCING**

The Government provided additional funding of \$86 million over four years from 2001-02 to the National Native Title Tribunal, the Federal Court, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services and the Attorney-General's Department to improve the delivery of Native Title services.

The additional funding was provided to enable quicker resolution of native title matters and establish instructive precedents through the Federal Court and National Native Title Tribunal. Funding was also provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services to undertake a capacity building programme aimed at improving the operational capacity of Native Title Representative Bodies and to enhance the administrative skills and practices of their staff. As part of the Government's commitment to ensuring all stakeholders in native title matters are able to participate effectively, additional funding was also provided to non-Indigenous parties to native title matters. 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.

## Telecommunications

### **\$8.8 MILLION TO SUPPORT IT TRAINING IN REMOTE COMMUNITIES**

The IT Training and Technical Support Program is a four year commencing 2004-05 \$8.8 million competitive funding program designed to provide people and organisations located in very remote areas of Australia with better access to basic information computer technology (ICT) training and technical support. In 2004-05 \$5.2 million will be allocated.

### **\$13.4 MILLION IN 2004-05 FOR THE NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FUND**

The National Communications Fund (NCF) is a three-year \$50 million programme (commencing 2002-03) 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 which are currently being implemented. 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.

### **MOBILE PHONES ON HIGHWAYS PROGRAMME**

The Mobile Phones on Highways Programme provided \$22.7 million to facilitate near continuous mobile phone coverage along almost 10,000 kms of 16 major highways. 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 was funded with \$21.8 million over three years from 2001-02 and is increasing mobile phone coverage for 132 towns with populations over 500. Under the programme, towns have been progressively receiving CDMA coverage with 40 of these towns also targeted to receive GSM coverage to supplement existing coverage.

## **REGIONAL MOBILE PHONE PROGRAMME**

The Regional Mobile Phone Programme is receiving \$49 million over two years from 2002-03.

The Programme is providing:

- \$18.8 million towards improving mobile phone coverage to 55 towns with populations of less than 500;
- \$19.1 million is being provided towards coverage of 62 lengths along 34 regional highways;
- \$7 million to improve mobile phone coverage in the south west of Western Australia under the Wireless West project, which is fully implemented; and
- \$3.9 million for the Satellite Phone Subsidy Scheme for people living or working in remote areas without mobile phone coverage. The remaining funds under this programme will be expended in 2004–05 and the expanded Scheme will continue (see Satellite Phone Handset Subsidy Scheme below).

## **SATELLITE PHONE HANDSET SUBSIDY SCHEME**

The Satellite Phone Handset Subsidy Scheme has been allocated additional funding of \$4 million over four years from 2003–04 towards a broader Scheme that subsidises maritime and aviation users as well as terrestrial users. The revised Scheme commenced in March 2004 and will continue until June 2007.

## **EXPANSION OF TERRESTRIAL MOBILE PHONE COVERAGE PROGRAMME**

The programme to extend mobile phone coverage will be funded with an additional \$15.9 million over four years from 2003-04 to increase and improve mobile phone coverage in regional Australia. The programme is being developed through a tender process involving the three major mobile carriers with networks in regional Australia.

## **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 \$0.8 million will be allocated in 2004-05.

The above programmes form part of the Australian 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 was established to provide \$45 million to support regional and rural local government authorities to use telecommunications to deliver improved services and benefits to their communities. In 2004-05, \$4 million will be allocated to finalise projects, and conclude the Fund.

### **NETWORKING THE NATION — BUILDING AUSTRALIA'S REGIONAL NETWORKS FUND**

The Building Australia's Regional Networks (BARN) Fund was established to support the development of new networks and new network services and products, with an emphasis on the adoption of innovative solutions to the delivery of telecommunications services in regional areas. In 2004-05, \$7.4 million will be allocated to finalise projects and conclude the programme.

### **NATIONAL BROADBAND STRATEGY**

The purpose of the National Broadband Strategy is to coordinate activities across government and to provide a holistic approach to broadband development in Australia with a view to achieving long-term strategic outcomes.

Three major funding programmes will form the Australian Government's commitment to the National Broadband Strategy. A major emphasis of these funding programmes will be to provide access to affordable broadband services in regional Australia.

The total value of the Government funding for the National Broadband Strategy is \$142.8 million over four years, commencing 2003–04 and ending 2006–07. This funding includes the Coordinated Communications Infrastructure Fund, Demand Aggregation Broker Programme, High Bandwidth Incentive Scheme and the cost of running the National Broadband Strategy Implementation Group.

### **Coordinated Communications Infrastructure Fund**

The Coordinated Communications Infrastructure Fund is providing \$23.7 million over four years with \$8.5 million provided for 2004–05 to fund broadband infrastructure

projects in regional, rural and remote areas. This infrastructure will support improvements in the delivery of health, education, government and other services that will lead to significant economic and social outcomes.

### **Demand Aggregation Broker Programme**

The \$3.2 million for 2004–05 for the Demand Aggregation Broker Programme will allow broadband development strategies to be developed at the national, state and community level.

The Demand Aggregation Broker Programme comprises three elements:

- National Strategic Advisers will focus on multi-jurisdictional broadband initiatives in the health and education sectors respectively. The Advisers will develop sectoral broadband strategies to improve broadband access and application in consultation with relevant agencies and institutions.
- State and Territory based brokers will work with governments and communities within a State or Territory to develop broadband demand aggregation projects, both across sectors and within particular geographic areas.
- Community Based Broadband Demand Aggregation Brokers will assist community organisations to aggregate demand in their region and to negotiate with telecommunications service providers to progress broadband rollout in their local area. Each broker will progress a specific project to provide improved access to broadband, greater choice of service providers and more affordable pricing for the local community.

### **Higher Bandwidth Incentive Scheme - \$42.371 million in 2004-05**

The Higher Bandwidth Incentive Scheme (HiBIS) is a \$107.8 million (2003-2007) programme designed to provide regional Australians with access to higher bandwidth services at prices comparable to those available in metropolitan Australia.

HiBIS has three objectives. The first of these, and the key objective, is to achieve prices for higher bandwidth services in regional Australia that are comparable to metropolitan services. In pursuit of this primary goal, the Scheme has two further supporting objectives: to promote competition among higher bandwidth service providers, and to ensure efficient use of public funds by effectively targeting support to areas of need in regional Australia.

The Scheme operates in regional, rural and remote areas where broadband is unlikely to be provided commercially in the immediate future and targets residential users, small business and not-for-profit organisations. HiBIS customers benefit from improved access to more affordable and reliable higher bandwidth services.

The Scheme is open to retail service providers regardless of their size or the technology they use. Providers register under HiBIS and receive a one-off incentive payment for each eligible customer to whom they supply a service of the required functionality and price. Providers use these incentive payments to reduce the price of existing broadband services or to roll out new broadband infrastructure like ADSL or wireless local loops, where consumer demand might otherwise have been insufficient to justify such investments.

### **\$3.104 MILLION IN 2004-05 FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACTION PLAN FOR REMOTE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES**

TAPRIC was established as a result of the Government's response to the Telecommunications Service Inquiry (TSI) report in 2000, which found that remote Indigenous communities warranted particular attention and support to improve telecommunication services. In 2002, the Government allocated \$8.3 million to the TAPRIC programme for the following initiatives:

- provision of 149 Internet connected computer packages to 135 remote Indigenous communities in extended zones. This includes help desk services and a manual User Guide;
- a report on the feasibility of establishing online access centres in remote Indigenous communities and the development and distribution of a 'toolkit' designed to help communities establish their own sustainable online access centres;
- a mobile telecommunications training and education service to visit eight regions of remote Australia and provide one-on-one and small group training;
- development of interactive language preservation and education software packages for three Indigenous communities. ATSI has recently committed funds to extend this project to ten Indigenous communities;
- a grants programme to fund the development of online content relevant to remote Indigenous communities; and
- the launch in March 2004 of the Community Phones Programme to develop improved and culturally appropriate telephone services for remote Indigenous communities.

Spending in 2003-04 was \$2.3 million. Spending in 2004-05 is estimated at \$3.104 million. The TAPRIC is programmed to end June 2005.

## **\$0.989 MILLION IN 2004-05 FOR LAUNCESTON BROADBAND PROJECT**

The Launceston Broadband Project (LBP) is a \$30 million joint initiative between the Australian Government and Telstra, funded as part of the Telstra Social Bonus Package with \$15 million from the Government and \$15 million from Telstra. The LBP has been operating since June 2000 and will conclude in June 2006.

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 and wireless technologies) for residential and business customers in Launceston; 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 Government.

The LBP is helping 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 Broadband eLab.

## **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. Under the scheme, SBS will pay communities:

- 50 per cent of the actual costs associated with a self-help group purchasing the equipment required to retransmit its television service;
- 100 per cent of the actual costs associated with a self-help group purchasing the equipment required to retransmit its radio service; and
- the maximum level of subsidy available for the establishment of an SBS radio or television service is \$25,000 per service. SBS has advised that at the completion of its last funding round in September 2003, 42 councils or community groups had received, or had been approved to receive, subsidies to establish 50 SBS radio or television self-help services.

## Arts, Recreation and Entertainment

### **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 2004-05, the programme will receive \$1.3 million.

### **NATIONAL COLLECTIONS PROGRAMME**

The Government will provide \$1.2 million for the National Collections Programme 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 2004-05.

### **AUSTRALIAN MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES ON LINE**

The Australian Museums and Galleries 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 Australian Government, State and Territory Governments in partnership with the Australian cultural sector. Over 2004, AMOL will be developed to focus on bringing the collections of small to medium sized archives, galleries, libraries and museums into the online environment in a modest and sustainable way. The Australian Government provides \$240,000 per annum to maintain AMOL to 2005-06 and is contributing \$394,200 of the costs of AMOL's redevelopment over 2003-04 and 2004-05.

### **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. Around \$1.9 million will be provided in 2004-05, with this funding continuing over the next three financial years.

## **REGIONAL ARTS FUND**

The Regional Arts Fund supports sustainable cultural development across regional Australia, building partnerships, providing skills development both for professional artists and communities, and assisting Indigenous and small or isolated communities. It enables communities in regional, rural and remote areas to participate in cultural projects, enhancing their quality of life and assisting to build community capacity. In addition to achieving cultural outcomes, the programme assists in achieving the Government's broader objectives for social and economic sustainability. The programme is being renewed in the 2004-05 Budget. A total of \$10.7 million will be allocated to the fund over four years from 2004-05.

## **PLAYING AUSTRALIA**

Playing Australia is the Australian 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 2004-05, approximately \$5.8 million (a \$2 million increase in the base funding) will be allocated for this programme.

## **FESTIVALS AUSTRALIA**

Festivals Australia is an Australian 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 2004-05.

## **CONTEMPORARY MUSIC TOURING PROGRAMME**

The Contemporary Music Touring Programme is an Australian 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 from 2002-03.

## **FEDERATION CULTURAL AND HERITAGE PROJECTS**

Under the Federation Cultural and Heritage Projects (FCHP) Programme, the Australian Government has provided \$70 million from the Federation Fund towards 60 medium sized projects throughout Australia, including 36 in regional areas. In 2004-05, \$577,000 will be provided to finalise an outstanding project 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 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.

In 2003, the Australian Government announced recurrent funding for the Bundanon Trust, to enable it to deliver its core programmes and activities. Together with draw-downs from the Investment Fund originally established by the Commonwealth, the Australian Government's recurrent financial support for Bundanon will be \$0.950 million per annum, indexed, to be phased in from 2003-04 with the full amount commencing from 2006-07.

## **\$2.305 MILLION FUNDING IN 2004-05 FOR NATIONAL ARCHIVES REGIONAL OFFICES**

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.

## **\$0.345 MILLION FUNDING IN 2004-05 FOR NATIONAL ARCHIVES DIGITISATION ON DEMAND**

One of the objectives of this service is to enable users in regional Australia to have access to the National Archives collections without needing to visit the reading rooms in Canberra and the State capitals.

Researchers can purchase copies of records or request that digital images of the collection material be placed on the National Archives website through the digitisation on demand service. An estimated 45 per cent of users of the service are from regional Australia.

## **NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA TRAVELLING EXHIBITIONS**

The National Gallery of Australia's (NGA) travelling exhibitions are a vital part of the NGA's strategy for providing access to national collections and enhancing enjoyment of the visual arts in regional and remote Australia.

In the period from the programme's inception in February 1988 to March 2004, almost six million people have taken the opportunity to visit 88 exhibitions at 454 locations in every State and Territory in Australia, as well as 14 international locations. In addition, three suitcase exhibitions have been to approximately 300 schools and community groups in remote and regional Australia.

In financial year 2004-05, \$0.5 million will be allocated to travelling exhibition programmes.

## **COMMUNITY HERITAGE GRANTS**

The Community Heritage Grants Programme provides grants of up to \$8,000 to support preservation projects undertaken by community organisations such as local historical societies, public libraries, Indigenous and migrant community groups, which hold documentary heritage collections of national significance. The programme is funded on an annual basis by the Australian Government through the National Library of Australia; the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts; the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs; the National Archives of Australia and the Australian Film Commission. The programme has operated for ten years and has distributed over one million dollars.

In 2003, fifty grants were awarded across all States and Territories to assist with preserving letters, diaries, books, manuscripts, photographs, archival records, maps, films, oral history recordings and electronic files. Successful organisations were also provided with preservation training through intensive workshops. In 2004-05, \$220,000 has been allocated.

## **AUSTRALIAN SPORTS COMMISSION**

The Australian Government's sport policy, Backing Australia's Sporting Ability – A More Active Australia (BASA), launched in April 2001, provides the parameters for the Australian Sports Commission's (ASC) programmes and initiatives. BASA provides a particular focus on continued achievement in high performance sport; greater grass roots participation in sport for all ages; excellence in sports management; and continuing to work towards a drug free sporting environment. Total funding in 2004-05 for the ASC is \$127.5 million.

The ASC provides funding to national sporting organisations in the form of annual grants. Funding amounts are approved by the ASC Board on an annual basis, following a review of the sport's performance over the past 12 months. Funding agreements between the ASC and NSOs are entered into at the commencement of each financial year.

Since the release of the BASA policy, the ASC has continued its work with key partners such as national sporting organisations (NSOs) and States and Territory authorities on issues impacting on regional sport in Australia. Current initiatives include:

- increasing club memberships through targeted sports participation growth programmes;
- provision of ASC consultancy services to improve the business practices and governance of sporting organisations to contribute to increased sustainability;
- major event partnerships to increase sports participation and the profile of grass roots sport in communities;
- developing junior sport partnerships with stakeholders to assist links between schools and clubs to expand junior participation;
- implementing sport programmes to provide Indigenous people with improved sports participation opportunities;
- initiatives to address women and sport issues;
- supporting NSOs to implement training programmes and conduct workshops to promote fair play, ethical and legal behaviour in their respective sports;
- improving sports participation and elite development opportunities for people with disabilities across Australia; and
- Disseminating disability education and awareness information to stakeholders.

## **COMMERCIAL RADIO BLACK SPOTS PROGRAMME**

The Commercial Radio Black Spots Programme is a \$5 million, three year programme (ends 2004-05) to deliver new or improved commercial radio services to regional and remote communities where it would not otherwise be commercially viable for licensees to provide coverage. Financial assistance is provided to commercial radio broadcasters to assist with costs related to equipment, installation, site establishment and licence fees. To date, funding has been provided for new or improved services to 104 communities.

## **TELEVISION BLACK SPOTS PROGRAMME**

The Australian Government's \$35 million Television Black Spots Programme (TVBSP) was established in 1999-2000 in recognition of the difficulties that some communities, particularly those outside capital cities, were having in getting access to free-to-air television services. As at April 2004, funding of over \$20.7 million has been approved for 799 new services in 236 black spots, assisting over 62,000 households across Australia. In addition, funding of over \$4.5 million has been approved under the programme to replace obsolete equipment at 182 retransmission sites. Funding has been provided progressively over the life of the programme.

## **TELEVISION BLACK SPOTS — ALTERNATIVE TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS PROGRAMME**

The Australian Government's \$13.3 million Television Black Spots – Alternative Technical Solutions Programme (TVBS-ATS) builds on the Television Black Spots Programme to assist communities which are already part of the TVBSP, but where an analog retransmission solution is not available. Under the TVBS-ATS programme, funding is provided for alternative technical solutions over three years from 2002-03, such as digital retransmission facilities or direct-to-home satellite.

## **REGIONAL EQUALISATION PLAN**

The Regional Equalisation Plan (REP), which began in 2000-01, assists regional and remote commercial broadcasters with the introduction of digital television broadcasting services. Up to \$260 million will be provided to broadcasters over 13 years representing 50 per cent of the estimated capital costs and eight year operating costs associated with digital conversion of existing commercial services – as determined by independent analysis. An estimated \$28.1 million in assistance has been identified under the plan for 2004-05.

## **ABC REGIONAL AND LOCAL PROGRAMMING**

The ABC will receive an additional \$54.4 million in funding over three years from July 2005 to continue to provide additional regional and local programming across all media – television, radio and on-line. The ABC received \$71.2 million over four years from 2001-02 to establish this initiative.

## **REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS PARTNERSHIP FUND**

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 2004, 61 councils or community groups providing 122 self-help services had taken advantage of the subsidies available under this scheme.

## **Defence**

### **DEFENCE AND REGIONAL AUSTRALIA**

With approximately 70 per cent of the 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 2004-05 the Department of Defence plans to invest \$448 million on facilities and bases. An estimated \$211 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.

## **JOINT OPERATIONS COMMAND**

Defence recently announced the formation of Joint Operations Command as the operational level headquarters of the Australian Defence Force. The Command will be located in a new headquarters facility to be constructed on the Kings Highway corridor near Bungendore NSW. Construction of the facility is expected to commence in 2005, and be completed in late 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. Industry estimates are that approximately 250 people will be employed during construction.

## **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, as well as often drawing 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 \$331 million.

## **ARMY INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME**

The Army Indigenous Community Assistance Programme (AICAP) is an on-going commitment that reinforces the strong association between Army and the Indigenous people of Northern Australia. Army provides soldiers and equipment to complete project management, construction, health care and training support to selected communities. The programme has seen essential housing, infrastructure and health and training support provided to remote communities across Australia.

## **DEFENCE COMMUNITY ORGANISATION PROJECTS BENEFITING REGIONAL COMMUNITIES**

Defence will continue to support members of the 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.

## **OPERATION SAFEBASE**

In 2004-05 the Department of Defence will spend approximately \$36 million 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. Operation SAFEBASE also includes the hire or purchase of security barricades, equipment and other measures to enhance security and protection of Defence assets and staff.

## **RESERVE EMPLOYER SUPPORT PAYMENT SCHEME**

As a means of recognising the efforts of employers who release employees for 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 \$28.194 million have been received by thousands of employers throughout Australia.

## **Trade, Business and Investment**

### **TRADESTART PROGRAMME**

In 2002-03 the Government committed \$21.5 million over four years to extend and expand the TradeStart network programme. In 2004-05 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 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**

The 2004-05 Budget provides \$160.4 million for the Export Market Development Grants scheme. This scheme encourages small and emerging exporters to enter into export opportunities and to develop sustainable export markets by providing a partial reimbursement for eligible export promotion expenses.

## **AUSTRALIAN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

Through the Australian Tourism Development Programme (ATDP) a total of \$24 million will be available over four years, commencing in 2004-05, to encourage the development of tourism across Australia. The ATDP will build on the achievements of the Regional Tourism Programme (RTP) by targeting innovative projects that enhance tourism prospects in regional and metropolitan destinations. It will also support integrated tourism development initiatives across regions. The RTP has subsumed into the ATDP.

## **NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW EXPORTERS**

The Government has decided to help Australian exporters to capitalise on the emerging trade opportunities arising from the conclusion of Free Trade Agreements with Singapore, Thailand and the United States, as well as China's accession to the World Trade Organisation. The funds will provide additional export advisors, an industry adjustment and awareness of exporters' campaign and additional in-market support for the United States and China.

In addition to the \$6.1 million over four years commencing 2004-05 this measure provides, Austrade is reallocating \$13.5 million over four years from within its current resourcing for this programme.

The measure reinforces the Government's trade policy agenda by delivering real outcomes to Australian business. Additional support is needed to make sure Australian business, including those based in rural and regional Australia, capture new opportunities to get maximum return on investment in the negotiation of improved market access.

The initiative would target those industry sectors where there is greatest Australian capability to match new opportunities. It would thereby contribute to the Government's goal of doubling the number of exporters by 2006.

## **FUNDS TO STRENGTHEN ASIAN TRADE LINKS**

A programme to strengthen Australia's bilateral agricultural trading arrangements with key trading partners, especially in Asia, has received \$6.4 million over four years commencing 2004–05.

The International Agricultural Cooperation Programme – which is part of the Agriculture Advancing Australia package – plays an important role in strengthening trading relationships, especially with China, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines.

## **BIOSECURITY STANDARDS**

Australia will be better placed to advance its agricultural trade interests while maintaining its high standard of biosecurity as a result of \$3.5 million in Budget funding this year.

The funding will allow the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to move faster in its import risk analysis (IRA) process and related activities without compromising the high standard of science and high level of transparency and consultation that characterise Australia's IRA system. It will also help defend Australia's interests against challenges to Australia's quarantine system.

## **\$11.3 MILLION TO IMPROVE LIVESTOCK TRADE**

The Budget has provided nearly \$11.3 million over the next four years commencing 2004–05 to implement recommendations in the Keniry Report into Australia's livestock export trade.

This includes stationing a veterinary counsellor in the Middle East, improving animal welfare practices in importing countries and introducing a new industry regulatory system.

## **AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT ELECTRONIC TENDER SYSTEM**

The Australian Government Electronic Tender System (AusTender) ([www.tenders.gov.au](http://www.tenders.gov.au)) was implemented in October 2003 as part of the Government's broader electronic procurement agenda. It was partly funded under the Government's Small Business Assistance Package. It is a secure website that enables Australian

Government agencies to advertise business opportunities online and make tender documentation available for downloading. It allows suppliers to submit tender responses electronically and also allows them to elect to receive automatic notification of business opportunities of particular interest. Registered suppliers will be notified via e-mail when business opportunities that match their selected profile are published.

AusTender 'levels the playing field' for small to medium enterprises and those in rural and regional areas. It is a geographically independent service and allows suppliers to access tender information and pursue business opportunities outside of traditional business hours in a simple, time efficient manner. By removing the need to wait for tender documentation to be sent to them, and by reducing the time required to lodge tender responses, suppliers are provided with increased time for bid development.

## **FUNDING FOR AUSINDUSTRY REGIONAL OFFICE NETWORK**

The Government has extended funding to the network of AusIndustry Customer Service Managers located in 14 regional centres across Australia. With funding of \$2.5 million in 2004-05, this network assists in raising awareness among regional businesses of the availability of Government business assistance in regional Australia, particularly those programmes providing support for innovation. The network also assists businesses to access that assistance, builds links between all levels of Government operating in the regions and facilitates referrals where appropriate.

## **WINE EQUALISATION TAX**

The Government will rebate \$290,000 of wine equalisation tax (WET) to every wine producer per annum. This measure will apply from 1 October 2004 and will be prorated for the 2004-05 financial year. The effect of this decision is to exempt \$1 million of each producer's domestic wholesale wine sales from the WET on an annual basis. It is expected that the rebate will be worth around \$300 million over the next four years.

The measure will provide each producer with relief from the WET of \$290,000 each year, compared with a maximum rebate of \$42,000 under the current Australian Government Cellar Door Rebate scheme and accelerated depreciation provisions for grapevine planting's.

The changes will reduce the compliance cost for all wine producers with around 90 per cent of wine producers receiving a rebate that will entirely offset their WET liability. The changes will provide significant benefits to the wine industry, with around 85 per cent of the benefits being received by small wine producers in rural and regional Australia.

## **TAX TREATMENT OF IRRIGATION INFRASTRUCTURE**

From 1 July 2004 irrigation water providers who are primarily in the business of providing water to primary producers will have access to water facilities taxation concessions and the landcare taxation concession. The measure provides equal treatment for income tax purposes between irrigation companies and primary producers, who already have access to these concessions.

The cost of the measure is forecast at \$5 million a year from 2005-06.

## **SMALL BUSINESS TAX SIMPLIFICATION**

The 2004-05 Budget made a number of changes to simplify the tax regime for small business. Measures of particular application to regional businesses include:

- Private companies will have until the due date for lodgement of their tax returns, rather than the end of the income year, to repay or put a loan on a commercial footing to avoid the operation of the non-commercial loan rules.
- Family trust elections and interposed entity elections will be able to be made in relation to a previous income year, subject to certain conditions.
- The mandatory “customary” rule in sub-section 58ZC(2) of the Fringe Benefits Tax Assessment Act will be removed to facilitate small business access to the remote area housing fringe benefits tax exemption.
- FBT exemptions for benefits to relocated employees will be extended to include employer benefits associated with the engagement of relocation consultants to settle relocated employees into a new location.
- Optional roll-over relief in the relation to simplified tax system (STS) depreciating asset pools will be extended to ensure that all roll-over relief available for partnerships under the uniform capital allowances regime is also available in relation to STS pools.

The measures will commence in the income or FBT year following the year in which the relevant legislative amendments receive Royal Assent.

## Employment Services

### **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 \$20.1 million has been provided for this programme in 2004–05.

### **IMPROVED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES**

Regional Australia is now benefiting from the improvements to Job Network announced in the 2002–03 Budget. For example, between 1 July 2003 and 31 March 2004, Job Network members and Job Placement Organisations recorded a total of 370,000 job placements, with over 168,000 of these for job seekers in regional Australia. Following the transitional or ‘establishment’ phase of the new contract, monthly job placement levels are the highest in the history of Job Network and in regional Australia have increased by up to 38 per cent compared to last year.

Job Network is a national network of private and community organisations assisting unemployed, particularly long-term unemployed, people to find jobs. On 1 July 2003, the Australian Government’s third employment services contract (2003–06), the Active Participation Model was introduced and provides 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 with over half of its sites located outside major metropolitan centres. Over the three-year contract period it is expected that more than \$1 billion will be available through the suite of Job Network activities for non-metropolitan areas.

The Active Participation Model provides the opportunity for Service Providers in rural and remote sites to tailor their service delivery arrangements more flexibly to suit local circumstances in recognition that labour markets and job seekers in rural and remote areas have their own particular characteristics.

From 1 July 2003, Fee for Service arrangements have been contracted in six Employment Service Areas to deliver a tailored employment service that reflects the unique needs of remote job seekers in these areas. The enhanced service is being delivered in the Top End in the Northern Territory, West Kimberley, East Kimberley, Karratha and East Pilbara in Western Australia, and Ceduna in South Australia. The Active Participation Model is the basis of the employment services being purchased in each of these Employment Service Areas, additional services have been tailored to suit local circumstances.

The Government also provides its Harvest Labour Services for rural industries with an improved coordination and marketing of these services.

The New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS) assists eligible unemployed people to establish and run viable new small businesses. NEIS services are provided across the whole of Australia, and NEIS providers in some regions will continue to be paid a higher fee in recognition of the higher cost of delivering services in these locations and the additional barriers faced by people in these areas.

Work for the Dole provides work experience opportunities for unemployed people in their local communities. In 2004-05 there will be 64,000 Work for the Dole places available. Work for the Dole provides job seekers in regional areas with an opportunity to develop work skills while supporting their local communities through participating in work experience activities, which are of benefit to those communities.

In December 2002, the Prime Minister announced an extension to the Work for the Dole Programme specifically aimed at assisting communities seriously affected by drought. Drought Force activities afford suitably skilled unemployed people from the local area the opportunity to volunteer to lend a hand on drought-affected properties or to work on community projects in drought affected communities. These activities encourage people to remain in their local community and support the local economy to deal with the impact of drought. Through more than 100 projects in regional areas across Australia, over 500 job seekers have participated in Drought Force activities.

## **EARLY ACCESS TO JOB SEARCH TRAINING**

As announced in the 2003-04 Budget, from July 2004, young job seekers aged 16-24 years will receive earlier access to Intensive Support job search training. Funding of \$12.5 million over four years has been allocated to this programme commencing 2004-05. Intensive Support job search training services 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.

## **ESTABLISHMENT OF AN EMPLOYMENT INNOVATION FUND**

The Employment Innovation Fund was announced in the 2003–04 Budget. It forms a part of Job Network and funds small projects which support initiatives that tackle employment or labour market related problems. The main objectives of the fund are 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. Introduced in July 2003, the fund provides up to \$100,000 per project out of a total funding pool of \$4 million over four years to 2006–07. The fund has been used for a diverse range of projects that are proposed by communities to address local community or specific demographic labour related issues. An example of this is the Yachad East Kimberley Regional Accelerated Learning for Workplace Readiness Project. This project aims to strengthen school to work transition by improving access to educational resources for the whole community, especially Indigenous students.

## **TRANSITION TO WORK**

Transition to Work offers practical help, such as training and funding, to help parents, carers and mature age people 50 years and over who are starting work for the first time or are returning to work after an absence of two years or more. The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations is piloting arrangements that provide better linkages between Transition to Work (TTW) and Job Network. The pilots are funded from current Department of Employment and Workplace Relations resources, and will allow TTW participants who have completed TTW planned activities without getting a job to take the next step and actively look for work under the guidance of a Job Network member.

TTW providers will seek out volunteer parents and carers to participate in TTW and engage early with Job Network where appropriate. TTW providers will organise a Vocational Profile interview for TTW participants as soon as it is appropriate. They will then provide support to job seekers during the phase from TTW participation to Job Network assistance. When job seekers exit TTW, they will be encouraged to continue looking for work and participating in Job Network.

## **\$57.2 MILLION IN 2004-05 FOR PERSONAL SUPPORT PROGRAMME BEST PRACTICE INITIATIVE**

The Department of Family and Community Services and Department of Employment and Workplace Relations have implemented a best practice initiative to increase the participation of Personal Support Programme (PSP) participants who have had their non-vocational barriers to employment addressed, in Intensive Support customised assistance (ISca).

A key aspect of the initiative is to improve the understanding of parallel servicing arrangements for referrals from PSP to Job Network by PSP providers and JNMs, improving PSP providers understanding of the services provided under the Active Participation Model and providing information to participants who have been referred from PSP to ISca.

Best practice pilot sites have been identified in 18 Employment Service Areas throughout New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania (10 rural locations). The pilots are funded from current Department of Employment and Workplace Relations resources.

### **INCREASING PARTICIPATION RATES FOR MATURE AGE WORKERS**

The Government will provide funding of \$12.1 million over four years, commencing in 2004–05 to facilitate and encourage workforce participation by the mature aged.

- Jobwise Outreach is an integrated strategy that aims to target information and assistance more effectively to encourage greater labour force participation by older Australians. Funding is provided for Labour Market Update Seminars for employment service providers and intermediaries and for Jobwise Mature Age Workshops and Jobwise Self Help Groups for mature age job seekers and workers. These will identify local job opportunities, positive case studies, effective job search strategies, and build strong local support networks.
- The Mature Age Industry Strategy will use research information to target specific industries where strong growth opportunities are available and will place mature age workers into these jobs. Around four projects per year will be developed in target industries demonstrating the greatest capacity to support the employment of mature age workers.
- The Mature Age Workplace Strategy is an action strategy for employers to slow early retirement rates of workers and promote the benefits of retaining and recruiting older workers in the face of impending labour supply constraints. Funding is provided for the development of the new Jobwise Workplace portal and the establishment of Business Learning Networks and Mature Age Workplace Guidelines to promote best practice in meeting the needs of, and benefiting from, mature age workers in the workplace.

## Indigenous Partnerships

### **LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF INDIGENOUS CHILDREN**

Funding of \$8.6 million was provided in the 2003–04 Budget 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.

Community consultations are being held across Australia 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.

### **INDIGENOUS CAPITAL ASSISTANCE SCHEME**

The Indigenous Capital Assistance Scheme (ICAS) is funded as part of the Indigenous Employment Policy with a budget of \$10.5 million over four years from 2003–04. The primary objective of ICAS is to increase the level of employment for Indigenous Australians by increasing access for Indigenous businesses to appropriate commercial finance and culturally appropriate professional services and mentoring support.

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations is currently working in partnership with Westpac Banking Corporation to deliver ICAS in the regions. Initially, the programme will be offered in Alice Springs, Darwin, Cairns, Townsville, Shepparton and their surrounding areas with a national roll-out of the programme in June 2004.

Features of ICAS include financial support for loans ranging from \$50,000 to \$500,000. A key feature will be the provision of interest rate subsidies for the first three years to ease debt servicing requirements during the business start up phase. Indigenous businesses seeking loans will also be supported by a subsidy for accredited professional services (for example, accountants, lawyers, tax advisers or training from a registered training organisation), as well as mentoring support.

### **INDIGENOUS YOUTH EMPLOYMENT CONSULTANTS**

The Government will provide \$13.1 million through the Indigenous Employment Programme over four years commencing in 2004–05, to fund up to 30 Indigenous Youth Employment Consultants to improve education and employment outcomes for young Indigenous people. The consultants will be linked to Job Network providers

and will work with young Indigenous people, their families, communities, local schools, vocational education and training providers, local businesses and training bodies to encourage better transition from school to work by providing linkages with work opportunities and further education and training.

The measure provides further support for the growing population of young Indigenous people who are in the 'transition from school to work' stage. It will also provide a supporting link to existing Australian Government programmes that focus on school retention and education.

### **\$0.3 MILLION FOR 2004—05 FOR THE MINING INDUSTRY/INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME**

The Mining industry/Indigenous Communities Regional Partnership Programme or the 'Working in Partnership Programme' as it is commonly known, aims to support and encourage the cultural change that is taking place in relations between Indigenous communities and the mining and exploration industry. A key aim is to promote long term partnerships between Indigenous communities and the mining industry.

Australia is one of the world's leading mining nations, and the mining industry is an important contributor to regional communities and the national economy. Much of our mining activity takes place in remote parts of the country, often close to Indigenous communities and on Indigenous land. Frequently the mining industry is one of the few industries providing employment and business opportunities in these areas. This programme aims to promote cases of good working in partnership practice through publishing cases studies via its website. It also encourages stakeholder liaison via regional workshops, thus promoting opportunities for the mining industry and indigenous communities to establish enduring and mutually beneficial partnerships.

### **INDIGENOUS WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT TRIALS**

In April 2002, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to trial a whole-of-government approach in up to ten 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 are able to be applied more broadly. This approach is flexible in order to reflect the needs of specific communities to build on existing work and improve the compatibility of different State, Territory and Australian Government programmes and services to achieve better outcomes.

There is one trial site in each State and Territory – Wadeye in the Northern Territory, Cape York in Queensland, Anangu Pitjantjatjara (AP) Lands in South Australia, Shepparton in Victoria, East Kimberley in Western Australia, Murdi Paaki in

New South Wales, North Eastern Tasmania and the ACT. In four of the trial sites – Wadeye, Shepparton, Murdi Paaki and the ACT – Shared Responsibility Agreements between the community and the Australian and State/Territory Governments have been signed setting out jointly agreed priorities, outcomes and benchmarks, working arrangements and each partner’s responsibilities.

The 2003–04 Budget provided \$6 million over two years to enable quick and flexible responses to needs that arise in Indigenous communities through their involvement in the COAG trials. These funds were contributed by Australian Government agencies involved in the COAG trials and support innovative, whole - of - government initiatives and activities enabling communities’ participation and engagement in the trials.

## **MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAMME**

The Australian Government is providing approximately \$16.2m over three years from 2004–05 for the third stage of the Torres Strait Major Infrastructure Programme (MIP), subject to matching funding from the Queensland Government. The programme has already delivered substantial improvements to the standard of living in the 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.

## **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME**

The Community Development Employment Programme (CDEP) is a national programme which is a regionally focused, targeted and tailored initiative aimed at improving and developing the economic, social and cultural status of Aboriginal persons and Torres Strait Islanders.

The Australian Government provided \$61.5 million over four years in 2003–04 to expand the CDEP by 1,000 places a year. This is aimed specifically at family violence and substance abuse in remote Indigenous communities. The funding covers the costs of allowances for participants, training, supervision, materials and administration. Participants undertake a range of activities including: night patrols to prevent family violence; substance abuse treatment, support, counselling and mentoring; training and support of new police aides and other workers within the legal and justice systems; community health and well-being activities; and pre-school and after-school care and aged care.

The Torres Strait Regional Authority will spend \$29.4 million in 2004–05 on CDEP that will offer positions to 1955 participants. Participants in the CDEP voluntarily forego

their government income support to work on a wide range of community projects. As well as providing training and employment, this programme will also provide social, economic and cultural benefits to communities in the region.

## **FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION LEGAL SERVICES**

The expanded Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Programme now funds twenty-six Family Violence Prevention Legal Services around Australia to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children who face family violence (including sexual abuse) or who are at immediate risk of such violence. A wide range of services are provided under the programme including legal assistance, information and referral, crisis counselling and court support. A number of these services are in regional, rural and remote locations. In 2004-05, the Australian Government will allocate \$8.1 million to the programme.

## **REGIONAL PROJECTS TO COMBAT FAMILY VIOLENCE**

Funding of \$1.1 million will be allocated to Regional Councils for local family violence projects in 2004-05. Key initiatives include: alcohol restriction trials; family violence prevention; outreach workers providing support and referral to women escaping violence; safe houses for women and children; youth and children's services; men's and women's counselling and support groups; night patrols; men's women's and youth conferences; service evaluation; and strategic planning. The initiative will assist many Indigenous people, families and communities in regional, rural and remote locations.

## **INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S PROGRAMME**

The Indigenous Women's Programme provides funding (\$2.4 million in 2004-05) to Regional Councils to promote and support Indigenous women's heritage, health and economic and social well-being. Key projects and activities include: women's forums and workshops; networking and referral services; health education programmes; elderly care; life-skill training programmes on nutrition, health and self-esteem; women's advisory committees; and support and promotion of women's lore and culture. A number of the projects funded under the programme benefit Indigenous women living in regional, rural and remote locations.

## **SPORTING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE**

The Australian Government's Sport and Recreation Programme promotes the active participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in sport and recreation

including through skills development, access to facilities and sports development and support. The programme provides funding to Regional Councils for local sport and recreation activities and financial assistance to individuals, teams, carnivals and other events. Funding is also available for projects carried out in more than one region. The Budget for the programme in 2004–05 is \$11.292 million. The Government also supports an outsourcing arrangement with the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) to improve sporting and recreational opportunities for Indigenous people. Indigenous people living in regional, rural and remote areas are assisted into sporting and recreational activities through these initiatives.

### **PROVISION OF LEGAL SERVICES TO ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE**

The Australian Government provides funding to a network of twenty-five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) in ninety-six service sites across Australia. The majority of these service sites are located in regional Australia. ATSILS aim to provide access to quality and culturally appropriate legal services to ensure that Indigenous peoples can exercise their legal rights free from discriminatory laws and practices.

In 2004–05, the Australian Government will spend a total of \$43.5 million on Indigenous Law and Justice programmes and services.

Programmes aim to minimise the amount of contact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have with the justice system. Programmes currently underway in regional Australia include night patrols, prisoner support services and youth initiatives.

### **INDIGENOUS FAMILY VIOLENCE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME**

The Australian Government will make available funding of \$37.3 million, over four years, commencing 2004–05 for new innovative joint initiatives to complement State and Territory funding for existing programmes and services. The initiative aims to achieve sustained measures that address family violence and improve individual and community safety for Indigenous people. Types of activities may include safe houses, family centres, coaching parents and their families to help others and training to help perpetrators repair the physical and emotional damage they have caused. The partnerships will enable Indigenous communities to be involved in, and share responsibility for, planning and implementation of local arrangements.

## **SUPPORT FOR INDIGENOUS STUDENTS**

The Government will improve its focus on students in remote areas through significant national initiatives and special projects funded under the Indigenous Education Strategic Programme to improve the education outcomes of Indigenous students.

The Australian Government will provide \$105.5 million over 2005-08 for targeted in-class tuition assistance for Indigenous students who do not meet Year 3, 5 and 7 literacy and numeracy national benchmarks, weighted to remote participants. Ongoing and enhanced support will be provided for the 'Scaffolding Literacy' project, which utilises a structured approach to teaching and has proven to be especially effective in assisting students in remote areas.

Also, \$41 million over 2005-08 will be made available for a tuition scheme targeting Year 10, 11 and 12 students, enabling 50 per cent of remote students and 10 per cent of non-remote students to access individual or small group assistance after school; and a \$62.5 million programme of support for school-parent partnerships to tackle entrenched problems, at least 50 per cent of which will be targeted at remote schools.

## **ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR INDIGENOUS HIGHER EDUCATION**

The Australian Government will provide \$3 million in additional funding in 2004 and 2005 to Charles Darwin University (CDU) and Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education for the enrichment of Indigenous higher education in the Northern Territory. This special funding is designed to encourage greater cooperation between CDU and Batchelor Institute to achieve Territory-wide benefits for Indigenous tertiary students.

## **INDIGENOUS AGED CARE**

The Australian Government funds aged care services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people under both the *Aged Care Act 1997* and the 1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Strategy. Under the Strategy, 27 flexible services have been approved, of which 29 are currently operational and will continue into 2004-05. These services provide aged care services specifically to small rural and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in areas of high need, as well as some urban locations.

Aged care services for indigenous Australians, funded through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Services will receive an additional \$10.3 million over four years, including the introduction of a viability supplement payment for rural and remote services.

## Regional Leadership and Representation

### **INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP — WOMEN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN RURAL INDUSTRIES**

The Australian 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 Research and Development Corporations and the 'Industry Partnerships — Building the Future Sharing the Work' initiative where the national rural women's NGOs are working with Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry 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.

### **INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP SCHOLARSHIPS**

In 2003-04, the Government provided funding of \$100,000 under the National Leadership Initiative, administered by the Office of the Status of Women, to assist

Indigenous women to undertake certificate and Diploma level studies at the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre in Canberra.

## **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 2004-05 the Government will provide \$150,000 to maintain this work.

## **SPORTS LEADERSHIP GRANTS FOR RURAL AND REGIONAL WOMEN**

In 2004-05, the Government will provide funding of approximately \$210,000 for a grant programme designed to provide leadership training to women in sport, specifically Indigenous and disabled women and women from rural and remote areas of Australia.

## **Migration to our Regions**

### **BOOST FOR REGIONAL SETTLEMENT**

The Government is committed to having regional Australia share the benefits brought by our Migration Programme through achieving a greater dispersal of our migrant and humanitarian intake to regional areas. The Government is committing \$13.4 million over four years from 2004-05 to ensure the long-term success of migrants settling in regional Australia. This funding is additional to that already provided for settlement services in regional Australia, such as English language provision in regional locations. The funding will assist the travel and associated costs of humanitarian settlement, identify and provide settlement support needed for dependants of skilled and family migrants and provide increased community grants to strengthen migrant communities in regional Australia.

### **REGIONAL MIGRATION INITIATIVES**

The Government will provide \$29.8 million (including \$1.8 million capital funding) over four years from 2004-05 for the implementation of key initiatives to attract people

with much needed skills and resources to regional Australia and to smaller capital cities. This will help lower the levels of migration to larger capital cities, in particular Sydney.

As part of this measure a two-stage skilled visa process for certain skilled independent migrants involving two years as a temporary visa holder in regional Australia before application for a permanent visa is allowed will be introduced. A temporary resident State government-sponsored retired investor category will also be introduced to replace the existing Retiree Visa. These initiatives also include higher minimum salary levels for employer sponsored temporary and permanent migrants where they are sponsored by employers in Sydney, and the introduction of a Sydney Skill Shortage list. Both of these are to be determined by the New South Wales Government in consultation with the Australian Government.

Promotional activity will be undertaken to raise the level of awareness of regional migration initiatives, particularly amongst employers in regional Australia.

Over the last eight years, the Australian 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.

The numbers of migrants approved through these programmes has increased steadily from 1,126 in 1996-97, to 7,941 in 2002-03. In the 2004-05 budget context, the Government has taken a further step forward on these issues by introducing the Skilled Independent Regional (SIR) visa.

## **SKILLED INDEPENDENT REGIONAL VISA**

The Skilled-Independent Regional (SIR) (Provisional) visa will be introduced on 1 July 2004. The SIR visa has been developed in close collaboration with State and Territory governments to assist regional areas attract, and retain skilled migrants so they are able to fill skill shortages, boost development in regional communities, and counter the population decline in rural areas.

Applicants for the SIR Provisional visa must be sponsored by a State/Territory Government. Applicants must meet the basic criteria for General Skilled Migration and obtain 110 points on the points test.

Successful applicants will be granted a three-year provisional visa. SIR visa holders will be eligible to apply for permanent residence after they have lived in regional Australia, for at least two years and worked for at least one year.

From 1 July 2004, overseas students who successfully complete a generalist undergraduate degree from a university in regional Australia will be able to apply for the Skilled-Independent Regional (SIR) visa without leaving Australia.

## **LONG STAY TEMPORARY VISA**

There are a range of temporary visas that allow employers in regional areas to fill temporary gaps in the workforce for stays of up to four years at a time. More flexible arrangements have been introduced that allow doctors, nurses and other skilled health care workers to come to Australia more quickly. This includes streamlined arrangements for doctors as part of the Medicare Plus initiatives.

## **REGIONAL SPONSORED MIGRATION SCHEME**

The Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme places skilled migrants into regional or low-population growth areas of Australia. It supports employers in rural and regional Australia and some capital cities in nominating 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), is designed to link skilled migrants with specific skilled vacancies through State/Territory Nominated Independent Scheme and Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme. It provides opportunities for skilled people who do not meet the current pass mark under the Skilled Independent category to be included on the Skill Matching Database.

## **SKILL MATCHING DATABASE**

Skilled-Independent category applicants and Skill Matching Visa 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. An abridged version of the database is 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 State/Territory Nominated Independent Scheme and Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme respectively. Numbers registered on the database have increased by over sixty per cent in the last 12 months with over 7,700 registered at the end of March 2004.

## **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.

## Transport

### **AUSLINK**

The 2004-05 Budget sets out the funding for the Government's new land transport plan, AusLink, which will incorporate the National Highway system, many Roads of National Importance and other freight links into a broader network of transport corridors.

It is an \$11.4 billion plan to transform the way Australia funds its roads and railways. It consists of almost \$11 billion in land transport funding over the next five years and a \$450 million grant in 2003-04 for investment in the interstate rail system.

The Government will release a detailed White Paper on AusLink next month, setting out the details of the AusLink National Network and a series of major new land transport projects that will start to give effect to the Government's strategic vision. The funding for the new projects is included in the Budget.

The Australian Government will invest almost \$11 billion in land transport infrastructure from 2004-05 to 2008-09, which includes:

- \$6,807.5 million for the AusLink National Network;
- \$1,453.1 million for the Roads to Recovery Programme, which the Government has extended to 2008-09. The programme helps local councils maintain and upgrade their local roads. From 1 July 2005, it will include a strategic component (\$100 million annually) to help councils to work together on constructing local transport projects of strategic regional importance. The Government intends to build on the substantial financial support it has already provided for local roads during the period 2000-01 to 2004-05 under the Roads to Recovery Programme;
- \$2,550.3 million in untied local road grants;

- \$90 million under the National Black Spot Programme – Australian Government will spend \$45 million for each of the next two years targeting crash sites and sections of road with a poor safety history.

In addition, \$872 million will be invested by the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) in the east coast rail links of the National Network over the next five years. The Australian and New South Wales Governments have agreed that the ARTC will lease the New South Wales interstate and Hunter Valley rail networks for 60 years. The ARTC is an Australian Government business enterprise. The \$450 million grant referred to above is in addition to this \$872 million investment programme.

The funding package incorporates \$810 million over three years, commencing in 2006-07, that will be saved through the Government's decision to wind up the Fuel Sales Grants Scheme (FSGS), and redirect funding to land transport infrastructure improvements in regional and outer metropolitan areas as announced in January 2004.

The Fuel Taxation Inquiry in 2002 noted that in practice it had been difficult to ensure the Scheme's benefits were actually passed on to consumers. The Government believes the best way to reduce transport costs in rural, regional and outer-metropolitan areas is to improve travel times by upgrading our roads and railways.

## **RECORD SPENDING ON BASS STRAIT TRANSPORT SCHEMES**

The Australian Government will spend a record \$127.1 million in 2004-05 on rebates for shipping passenger vehicles and freight across Bass Strait in recognition that Tasmanian residents, companies and tourism operators are disadvantaged due to the transport costs associated with Bass Strait.

## **BASS STRAIT PASSENGER VEHICLE EQUALISATION SCHEME**

The Government expects to spend \$43.2 million in 2004-05 on the Bass Strait Passenger Vehicle Equalisation Scheme reflecting the continuing success of the scheme.

The scheme provides a rebate of up to \$150 each way for ferry passengers travelling to or from Tasmania with passenger vehicles. The rebate varies for other accompanied vehicles: up to \$300 for motorhomes and cars with caravans, up to \$75 for motorbikes, and \$21 for bicycles. The rebate is paid directly to ferry operators and deducted from the total fare paid by passengers.

## **TASMANIAN FREIGHT EQUALISATION SCHEME**

The Government expects to spend \$83.9 million in 2004-05 on the Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme (TFES), which provides targeted freight assistance to about 1,350

shippers for products as diverse as newsprint, vegetables, and manufacturing and mining equipment. The scheme is demand driven and uncapped.

In addition, the Government will extend the TFES to cover containerised wheat shipments.

Bulk wheat shipments are currently subsidised under a scheme administered by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry portfolio, the Tasmanian Wheat Freight Scheme.

Accordingly, the level of Government freight assistance will increase from about \$22 per tonne of wheat to an average of \$34 per tonne. This is an increase of more than 57 per cent.

## **REMOTE AIR SERVICES SUBSIDY SCHEME**

The RASS scheme subsidises the costs of air operators contracted to deliver passenger and freight services (including essential medical, food, educational and other services) to 250 remote communities in the Northern Territory, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and Cape Barren Island in Bass Strait.

The Government will spend an additional \$7.7 million over the next four years to maintain RASS – \$1.5 million of that in 2004-05. The additional funding will ensure that remote and isolated communities, including indigenous communities, have reasonable access to essential services and supplies on a year-round basis. The increase in funding will be extended through to 2007-08.

A competitive tendering process, applying published selection criteria, will be undertaken to engage suitable air operators for RASS air services.

## **STRENGTHENING SECURITY AT AUSTRALIA'S REGIONAL AIRPORTS**

Recent world events have highlighted the need to continue building on existing work to strengthen Australia's transport security systems. The Government recognises that transport security at smaller regional airports is a high priority but that owners and operators are often providing their services with slim margins.

Airports in regional Australia will receive an extra \$21 million in transport security funding in 2003-04. This increases the assistance to \$35 million now available to help smaller airports implement security measures. The extra funding more than doubles the \$14 million announced in the Government's Enhanced Aviation Security Package in December 2003, reflecting the high priority of transport security in our regions.

One-off grants will be provided to each of the 140 airports soon to become regulated under the new Aviation Transport Security Act 2004. It will not now be necessary for airports to match the amounts provided by the Australian Government.

The funds will be provided to airport owners and operators to purchase capital items for security upgrades as part of their security plans. Eligible items will include fencing, lighting and alarm systems.

## Regional Services

### **SUSTAINABLE REGIONS**

The Sustainable Regions Programme (SRP) assists selected regions undergoing major economic, social or technological change and supports community leadership in the development of local solutions. The programme, with funding of \$32.5 million for 2004-05, assists the selected regions to plan for the future and build capacity for strategic and informed decision-making at the regional level. It contributes to the implementation of projects that will make a real difference to economic opportunity and quality of life. Priorities are determined by locally-based advisory committees comprising business, community and local government representatives, after consultation with communities. These locally-based committees examine projects against the region's priorities and make recommendations to the Minister for funding. SRP nurtures partnerships which foster the development of self-reliant regions and aims to give maximum ownership and independence to each region. Applicants for grants are actively encouraged to seek partners to ensure that there is broad and integrated consideration of the issues within the regions.

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

The SRP is well established in the eight regions with approved projects attracting \$3 in partner contributions for each \$1 awarded under the Sustainable Regions Programme.

### **REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS**

The Australian Government's approach to regional development set out in: Stronger Regions, A Stronger Australia is to work in partnership with communities, government and the private sector to foster the development of self-reliant communities and regions.

The Government will spend a total of \$308.2 million over the four years from 2004–05 on the Regional Partnerships Programme which supports this approach to regional development. This includes new funding of \$78.2 million.

Regional Partnerships focuses on projects which help communities:

- strengthen growth and opportunities;
- improve access to services;
- support planning; and
- assist structural adjustment where required.

Projects are assessed against the following criteria:

- clear outcomes that demonstrate a benefit for the region;
- partnerships and support, including financial contributions and support from the regional community; and
- the viability of the project and the applicant.

Regional Partnerships is designed to make it much easier for regional communities to access assistance. Applicants are encouraged to seek advice from the Area Consultative Committee in their region.

## **AREA CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES**

Fifty-six Area Consultative Committees (ACCs) operate throughout Australia and are funded through the Regional Partnerships Programme. They are the primary point of local promotion, project and application development and 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, and are the link between Government, business and the community. ACCs can 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.

## **COMMONWEALTH REGIONAL INFORMATION SERVICE**

The Commonwealth Regional Information Service brings together a number of practical ways for regional, rural and remote Australians to get information about the comprehensive range of programmes and services delivered by the Australian

Government. The service provides clients with start-up information on relevant services and programmes and also associated contact detail for the responsible agencies. The service aims to enable easy access to Australian Government information. The Government has committed \$4.92 million (\$3.3 million in 2004-05) for delivery of call centre services and to promote the service through regional Australia via a national marketing campaign.

The Commonwealth Regional Information Service comprises of:

- a freecall information line – available Australia wide 9am-6pm AEST;
- a website – The Regional Entry Point;
- the Commonwealth Regional Information Directory (previously known as The Rural Book);
- a mobile shopfront visiting key community members and development and industry conferences and seminars;
- community information stands; and
- the Commonwealth Regional Information Book, a quick reference guide to the Government's major services.

## **WEIPA ELECTRICITY GENERATION COMPENSATION PACKAGE**

The Government has provided for funding of \$6.6 million over three years from 2004-05 to the Weipa community to compensate it for the loss of access to the Diesel Fuel Rebate for electricity generation that was available to the previous electricity provider, Comalco Ltd. This structural adjustment package will commence following the necessary transfer of local government responsibility to Weipa as a new local government authority.

## **REGIONAL OFFICE NETWORK**

The Department of Transport and Regional Services has 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 ACCs in managing the delivery of Regional Partnerships and the Sustainable Regions Programme.

## Family Services and Centrelink

### **EXTENSION OF VOLUNTARY WORK INITIATIVE — CONTINUATION OF FUNDING**

The Government will provide \$7.2 million over four years from 1 July 2004 for the continuation of the Voluntary Work Initiative (VWI) to help people of working age on income support to take up voluntary work. This not only provides a potential pathway to employment but also gives people the opportunity to contribute positively to their community.

The VWI, delivered through Volunteer Resource Centres (VRCs), funds the provision of referral and placement services and training of organisations in volunteer management particularly in regional and remote areas. VRCs provide a valuable community resource that involves community education and development.

### **AUSLAN INTERPRETING SERVICES — ENHANCED ACCESS**

The Government will provide \$18.4 million over four years from 2004-05 to establish a national booking service to provide accredited Auslan interpreters free of charge to deaf people attending specified private medical and health consultations. The booking service will have a positive impact on deaf people nationally (estimated to be 6,500 people), including deaf people living in regional Australia.

### **HOUSEHOLD ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT EXPENSES (HOME) ADVICE PROGRAMME**

The Government will provide \$10.4 million over four years from 2004-05 for the Household Organisational Management Expenses (HOME) Advice Programme. The HOME Advice Programme identifies families at risk of homelessness and provides early assistance to prevent family homelessness occurring. The HOME Advice Programme will build on the success of the 2001-02 Budget measure — Family Homelessness Prevention and Early Intervention Pilot.

Community agencies and Centrelink will work in partnership to provide seamless service delivery to families at risk of homelessness in eight locations, one in each State and Territory. Almost 40 per cent of funding (approximately \$3.9 million) will be directed to regional communities.

## **FAMILY ASSISTANCE — ADDITIONAL OUTSIDE SCHOOL HOURS CARE PLACES**

The Government will provide \$125.6 million over five years from 2003-04 to increase the number of Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) places by a total of 40,000 in 2004. This increase includes 10,000 places that were allocated to existing services in January 2004. An additional 30,000 places will be allocated, primarily to new OSHC services, from 1 July 2004.

Places will be allocated through the child care planning process, which seeks to identify areas of Australia where the need for more outside school hours child care places is greatest. Independent Planning Advisory Committees in each State and Territory assess a range of data, including population, supply, utilisation and demand, in making recommendations about areas that need more places. While it is not possible to predetermine where places may be allocated, the needs of rural and regional areas will be given the same consideration as other areas.

## **FAMILY ASSISTANCE — ADDITIONAL FAMILY DAY CARE PLACES**

The Government will increase the number of family day care places by a total of 4,000 in 2004.

This increase includes 2,500 places that were announced by the Government in December 2003, and allocated from January 2004. These places were immediately allocated to areas with demonstrated need, as identified through the child care planning system. An additional 1,500 places will be allocated from July 2004. Total funding of \$94.3 million over five years from 2003-04 is provided for this measure.

Family day care offers flexible child care, particularly for families located in remote or rural areas of Australia. Family day care promotes early childhood development and learning in a safe and secure environment. Funding provided under this measure allows Child Care Benefit to be paid to eligible parents. Services that were given additional places also receive additional operational subsidies.

## **FAMILY ASSISTANCE — INCREASED FUNDING FOR THE CHILD CARE SUPPORT PROGRAMME**

The Government will provide additional funding of \$16.3 million over four years from 2004-05 to enhance services provided through the Child Care Support Programme (previously known as the Broadband). The funding will target two areas:

- establishment of child care services in high need rural, regional and indigenous communities; and

- inclusion of children with additional needs into quality child care.

The measure will assist families and children by addressing gaps in child care provision identified through the review of the Child Care Support Programme. The measure will increase access to quality child care for families including children with additional needs and those in rural and remote Australia.

## **FAMILY ASSISTANCE — STRONGER FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES STRATEGY — CONTINUATION OF FUNDING FOR A REFOCUSED EARLY CHILDHOOD STRATEGY**

The Government will provide \$365.8 million over four years from 1 July 2004 for the continuation of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy and the expansion of the Government's commitment to early childhood initiatives. The revised Strategy will comprise four components:

### **Communities for Children**

Communities for Children will address the needs of young children and families in disadvantaged communities, to give children the best possible start in life. The initiative provides funding of \$110 million over four years from 2004–05 and will target up to 35 communities. It will provide funding of up to \$4 million per community over four years.

### **Early Childhood — Invest to Grow**

Early Childhood – Invest to Grow provides \$70.5 million in funding over four years to support the expansion of successful and developing early childhood programmes to a greater number of locations. Funding will also support the development of resources or tools for use by parents, professionals, community groups and/or government organisations to support positive early child development.

### **Local Answers**

Local Answers complements other initiatives of the Strategy by providing funding of \$60 million over four years to community organisations, including rural and regional areas, for local, small-scale projects that help communities to build skills and capacity, identify opportunities and take action for the benefit of their members.

### **Choice and Flexibility in Child Care**

Funding of \$125.3 million over four years is available for flexible and innovative child care solutions.

Choice and Flexibility in Child Care will expand the In-home Care Programme for families with no other child care options. In-home care is a flexible form of child care where care is provided in the child's home by an approved carer. It is only available to families that have no other child care options, which includes:

- families in rural and remote Australia;
- families working non-standard hours such as police, firefighters, ambulance, nurses, doctors, and security personnel;
- families with multiple children under school age; and
- families where either the parent or child has a chronic or terminal illness

Choice and Flexibility in Child Care will also fund the Long Day Care Incentive Scheme to create more long-day care centres in rural and urban fringe areas of identified high unmet demand, each with places for young children under the age of three.

## **FAMILY AND COMMUNITY NETWORKS INITIATIVE**

The Family and Community Networks Initiative aims to enhance the capacity of communities and services to work together effectively to address the needs of families and communities. The programme is focussed on supporting Indigenous communities particularly those participating in the Council of Australian Governments' Indigenous Community Coordination Pilots around Australia. Funding is available (\$8.5 million over four years) from 2002-03.

## **MORE FLEXIBILITY FOR CARERS AND BETTER SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE IN CARE**

### **Carer Allowance – expand eligibility criteria**

From 1 April 2005, the Government will extend eligibility for Carer Allowance to carers who provide substantial levels of care but do not currently live with the person for whom they provide care. These carers provide personal care in a private home to people with a disability or a severe medical condition, or to people who are frail aged. The measure, costing \$106.9 million over four years (from 2004-05), is expected to assist an additional 13,270 private carers. The measure will retain the current eligibility rules for assessing the care receiver's needs, and require the carer to provide at least 20 hours personal care per week.

## **Carers – Increased access to respite care**

The government will commit \$72.5 million over four years (from 2004–05) to provide increased respite for ageing parents who care for a child with a disability. Under this measure from 1 January 2005 parents over 70 years of age who provide primary care for a child with a disability will be eligible for up to four weeks respite each year, while parents aged 65 to 69 who care for a child with a disability will be eligible for up to two weeks respite each year if they need to spend time in hospital. The government believes that parents who have provided a lifetime of care for their child with a disability deserve recognition and need appropriate support to continue their caring role. The Australian Government will be working with state and territory governments to jointly fund guaranteed respite and to improve transition planning for this group.

## **Carers – Respite and information services**

From 1 January 2005, the government will provide young carers at risk of prematurely leaving school, or the vocational equivalent, with additional respite, support and information services. Young carers will gain access to up to five hours in-home respite per week during the school term and will also have access to one fortnight of respite care each year to undertake activities such as studying for exams, training or recreation. In addition, young carers will be able to access age-appropriate information, advice and referral services including a telephone hotline, on-line advice and an information package.

The measure will cost \$26.6 million over four years (from 2004–05).

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

As part of the introduction of Case Based Funding for Disability Employment Assistance, from 1 January 2005, \$15.4 million in additional fees will be available over three years 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. This was part of a \$160.7 million dollar package to improve and extend the employment services available to people with disabilities and ensure a viable and sustainable sector.

On 21 April 2004, the Prime Minister and the Minister for Family and Community Services announced a \$99.1 million package over four years in flexible assistance for business services and their current employees. This builds on the \$160.7 million provided in the 2003–04 Budget.

One of the key components of the additional funding for business services is an assurance that no sole service in a town or region will close thus providing security and continuity for people with disabilities working and living in those communities.

## **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 and vocational rehabilitation places. This initiative will result in an additional 27,000 new job seekers receiving assistance – 16,000 through disability employment assistance places and 11,000 through vocational rehabilitation places 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 for disability employment assistance and \$43 million for vocational rehabilitation will be provided over three years from 2002-03.

## **RECONNECT PROGRAMME**

Reconnect is a youth homelessness early intervention programme, which began operating in December 1999. The Reconnect programme is fully implemented and, as at April 2004, 98 Reconnect services have been funded nationwide. Approximately 40 per cent of funding (around \$8 million each year) is being directed to regional, rural and remote communities, including 14 Indigenous communities.

Services are located in communities of high need, which were identified by State and Territory Governments. The objective of the programme is to reconnect young people, aged 12-18, with family, education, training, employment and their community. The Reconnect programme has been funded for a total of \$82.1 million over four years from 2003-04, including \$20.9 million in 2004-05.

## **JOBS, EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMME CHILD CARE**

Jobs, Education and Training Child Care (JETCC) helps people who receive certain Centrelink payments, including Parenting Payment, to enter or re-enter the workforce. JETCC assists parents to access child care places to enable them to participate in education, training and employment. Assistance can also be provided for the cost of child care for some families, which further reduces barriers to participating in approved activities. In more remote regions and in other areas where formal child care is not available, crèches have been established to care for children so that eligible parents can participate in education, training and employment opportunities. Funding of \$15.3 million has been provided for this programme in 2004-05, including \$2.8 million as part of the Australians Working Together package announced in the 2001-02 Budget.

## **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 \$11 million each year is provided to some 650 child care services in rural and regional Australia.

## **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, including in rural and remote Australia. This funding increases the capacity of rural and remote services to retain skilled staff and build on the community networks and knowledge developed since the projects commenced.

## **FAMILY AND RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION PROGRAMME**

Funding of \$5.5 million is being provided over four years from 2003-04 to maintain Family Relationships Education (FRE) services, including 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.

## **CENTRELINK SERVICES TO REGIONAL AUSTRALIA**

Centrelink continues to tailor its services to the particular needs of small rural and regional communities through its Customer Service Centre, Call Centre (including two dedicated Rural Call Centres in Port Augusta-South Australia and Maryborough-Queensland) and agent networks.

Centrelink currently has:

- more than 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 480 community - based Agents and Access Points who provide a daily contact and information service on Centrelink's behalf (165 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 farmers' 1800 number to handle enquiries from farmers on initiatives targeted at primary producers (excluding drought);
- a 13 number which provides assistance to farmers on drought related initiatives and access to personal support and counselling services to members of drought affected communities; and
- a service in approximately 70 of the Rural Transaction Centres opened to date.

## **Veterans' Affairs**

### **\$1.4 MILLION FUNDING IN 2004-05 FOR VETERAN AND COMMUNITY GRANTS**

The Veteran and Community Grants Programme provides funding to maintain and improve the independence and quality of life of veterans and war widows/widowers living in the community. The partnerships that develop between the veteran

community and local community services through projects funded by Veteran and Community Grants improve veterans' access to services and provide a cost effective way to offer community organisations minimal funds for locally based services which benefit the veteran community. Approximately 50 per cent of the total funds available 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.

### **\$0.7 MILLION FUNDING TO MAINTAIN RURAL AND REMOTE SERVICE DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2004-05**

In 2001-02 the Government acted to continue and increase funding for the Department of Veterans' Affairs programme of agency arrangements in rural and regional areas first announced in 1997-98. Agency arrangements use other Australian Government, State and local organisations to deliver information and assistance to the veteran community in regional areas where the Department of Veterans' Affairs is unable to maintain a permanent full-time presence.

### **REVIEW OF PRICING ARRANGEMENTS IN RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE**

Funding of \$14.8 million has been provided over three years commencing 2004-05 to increase funding for the viability supplement paid to rural and remote residential aged care service providers, given their lower capacity to generate income and capital. This is part of the Government's response to the Hogan report and forms part of investing in Australia's Aged Care - More Places, Better Care.

## **Science and Research**

### **CSIRO NATIONAL RESEARCH FLAGSHIPS**

In addition to its core research activities, the Government provided \$20 million to CSIRO in 2003-04 to establish six National Research Flagships. Additional funding for \$305 million over seven years was announced in the context of the 2004-05 Budget, as part of Backing Australia's Ability, Building our Future through Science and Innovation. Flagships are large-scale, multidisciplinary research partnerships designed to have national, fast-tracked impact in key areas of economic and community need. Their scale, longer timeframes and clear focus on delivery and adoption of research outputs are designed to maximise their impact.

CSIRO has developed Flagships in response to national needs and has worked to achieve quicker outcomes by reallocating significant internal resources to increase the

scale and viability of Flagships. This is necessary to achieve the required impacts, taking into account the relatively small scale of existing Australian research capacity within a global economy.

The Flagships are closely aligned to the National Research Priorities and will deliver solutions to advance national objectives. The six Flagships and their goals are:

- Preventative Health – to help reduce healthcare costs and increase total economic benefit by enabling Australians to achieve an extra ten years of productive and enjoyable life.
- Food Futures – to transform the international competitiveness and add \$3 billion of value to the Australian agrifood sector by applying frontier technologies to its largest industries.
- Energy Transformed – to double the efficiency of the nation’s new energy production, to halve energy losses and to make Australia a world leader in cutting greenhouse emissions.
- Water for a Healthy Country – to achieve a tenfold increase in the social, economic and environmental benefits from water use by 2025.
- Leading the Light Metal Age – to help generate significant new export income, industries and enterprises for Australia by the 2020s by leading the global revolution in light metals.
- Wealth from Australia Oceans – to build on Australia’s excellence in climate and ocean science to generate sustainable wealth from our marine resources.

Regional communities will benefit with approximately 20 per cent of CSIRO research infrastructure located in regional areas.

## **SMART MOVES PROGRAMME**

The Government will provide \$11.4 million over seven years commencing 2004-05 to continue and expand Qwestacon and Smart Moves Programme.

Qwestacon Smart Moves raise secondary school students’ awareness of science and innovation and encourages involvement in science, maths, engineering and technology, especially in regional and rural areas.

Funding will provide touring science outreach programmes to schools an annual Invention Convention and website material.

## **COOPERATIVE RESEARCH CENTRES PROGRAMME**

The Cooperative Research Centres Programme (CRC) was established to improve the effectiveness of Australia's research and development effort. It links researchers with industry to focus R&D efforts on progress towards utilisation and commercialisation. The close interaction between researchers and the users of research is a key feature of the programme. Another feature of the programme is industry contribution to CRC education programmes to produce industry-ready graduates.

Funding for the CRC Programme is estimated at \$193 million in 2004-05, \$206.4 million in 2005-06, and \$187.3 million in 2006-07. At present, twelve 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. Regional universities are active participants in many CRCs.

## **MAJOR NATIONAL RESEARCH FACILITIES PROGRAMME**

The Government is funding fifteen Major National Research Facilities. These facilities were selected in a competitive process and are funded over a period of five years. Funding under the MNRF Programme has been fully committed. The revised allocation of funding for 2004-05 is \$42.3 million.

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. Four of these facilities are based in, or will deliver benefits to, regional Australia - including: the National Tele-test Facility based at Edith Cowan University; the Australian Maritime Hydrodynamic Research Centre based at the University of Tasmania and the Australian Maritime College; the Arafura-Timor Research Facility based in Darwin; and Provisor Pty Ltd is located at the Wait Campus of the Australian Wine Research Institute in Urrbrae and has nodes at Merbein and Wagga Wagga.

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.

## **REGIONAL PROTECTION FUND**

The Regional Protection Fund was established in 2001 and will now be extended through to 2007-08. The budget over the four extra years (2004-08) will be \$12.4 million. Funding available under the programme will be limited to \$3 million

annually (adjusted for cost increases). The Government will announce the details of the allocation process in mid-2004.

The additional funding will maintain and build regional universities' research capabilities, ensuring that they can continue to conduct competitively funded research which is of benefit to regional Australia and more broadly.

## **METEOROLOGY**

The Government is committing \$214 million in 2004-05 to the Bureau of Meteorology, much of which will benefit rural and regional Australia through the Bureau's provision of essential weather, climate, hydrological and oceanographic services, and its research into environment-related issues such as climate change, water resources management, air quality and ozone depletion.

## **Environment and Heritage**

### **NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT — LAND AND WATER CATCHMENTS**

The Government has invested more resources than ever before into environmental programmes particularly those in rural and regional Australia. This budget builds on the unprecedented level of investment in our environment through the \$3 billion Natural Heritage Trust.

Working in close partnership with State and Territory Governments, regional bodies and local governments and communities, the Australian Government will invest in 2004-05 \$310 million from the Natural Heritage Trust and \$152.7 million from the National Action Plan. In 2004-05, over \$300 million will be invested through regional organisations from these two programmes. This Budget will provide an extra \$300 million to continue the Natural Heritage Trust into 2007-08. The Trust is the largest and most successful environmental rescue effort ever undertaken in Australia's history. The new funding will build on the unprecedented level of investment in our environment adding a twelfth year to the Trust and bringing total investment in the Trust to \$3 billion. Introduced by the Government in 1996-97, the Trust will continue to provide the foundation for a sustainable Australia with ongoing funding for practical, strategic and results oriented actions by the Australian people and all levels of government.

The Budget reaffirms the landmark \$200 million for a Basin-wide strategic approach to water over-allocation in the Murray-Darling Basin agreed at COAG in August 2003.

This contribution demonstrates the Australian Government's commitment to partnerships with the State and Territory Governments to improve the health of one of our biggest natural icons, the Murray River system. It is subject to satisfactory agreement between the partners on the introduction of the National Water Initiative.

The Murray-Darling Basin is the heartland and the economic powerhouse of rural Australia, extending across one-seventh of the continent and has a population of nearly two million people. Another million people outside the region depend heavily upon its resources.

The Australian Government is committing \$86 million over the next four years commencing 2004–05 to supporting the Murray Darling Basin Commission's work. Efforts will be concentrated on maintaining momentum with salinity management, and restoration of healthy floodplain forests and wetlands, expanding the geographic range of native fish and improving the habitat for migratory water birds.

At the local level, the Australian Government Envirofund enables community groups and individuals to apply for grants of up to \$30,000 to carry out on-ground and other actions to target local problems. The Government's commitment to Envirofund will continue with up to \$20 million allocated in 2004–2005.

## **NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT — OCEAN AND COASTAL**

In 2004, the Australian Government will launch the world's first-ever regional marine plan covering some 2 million square kilometres of Australia's southeast oceans. This plan will provide the framework for the sustainable development of the area, which employs over 75,000 Australians, has industries worth over \$19 billion per year and a rich abundance of biodiversity including some 600 distinct species of fish, 85 per cent of which are endemic.

In this year's Budget, \$9.3 million is being provided in 2004–05 to support this plan and to develop two more plans for northern and southwest Australia.

The Government supports a national network of about 750 natural resource management facilitators to underpin the delivery of the Natural Heritage Trust and the National Action Plan. The Government has funded up to an additional 35 facilitators to support grass-roots level volunteers involved in Coastcare, Waterwatch and Bushcare activities undertaking environmental work on dunes and headlands, removing weeds and replanting with native vegetation, and monitoring water quality. Their efforts extend into the marine environment, monitoring marine species and educating the community about reducing their impact on our oceans.

The Australian Government will commit an additional \$30.3 million over the next three years commencing 2004–05 towards the protection and rehabilitation of the Great

Barrier Reef through its new Zoning Plan, creating the largest network of protected marine areas in the world.

The rezoning includes a structural adjustment package for affected commercial fishers and their communities who may be adversely impacted by the implementation of the new zones.

The existing Regional Partnerships programme will be used to deliver assistance to affected communities.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE**

Climate change is an important global challenge that requires long-term effective action at the domestic and international level, and which may have significant implications for rural and regional Australia. Early and effective adaptation to potential climate change impacts can help minimise risks, generate economic benefits, and reduce the costs of the effects of climate change that are already occurring.

The Australian Government is committing \$14.2 million over four years through the 2004–05 Budget for its new National Climate Change Adaptation measure. Detailed assessments of the economic and social implications of climate change will be undertaken in six potentially vulnerable areas including water use and water infrastructure development, agriculture practices, and biodiversity.

The Government is committing \$20.5 million (including new funding of \$19.5 million) over four years from 2004–05 to work to reduce emissions and encourage new abatement technologies in regional areas. In addition to greenhouse benefits, the activities are likely to result in providing additional environmental and productivity benefits in areas for land management such as reducing salinity and improving natural resource management.

## **CULTURAL HERITAGE**

For the first time in Australia's history, we now have national legislation that provides the framework for the recognition and protection of our greatest national treasures. On 1 January 2004, the Australian Government commenced implementing ground breaking new Commonwealth heritage laws to help protect the nation's natural, Indigenous and historic heritage. In 2004–05, \$15.3 million will be allocated to assist the nomination process and engage all Australians in helping to protect our national heritage

The Australian Government has provided funding of more than \$52 million over four years, for the Distinctively Australian Heritage Programme, which commenced in

2003–2004 is working to identify and protect Australia's places of outstanding national heritage significance. The programme commenced in 2003–04.

The Cultural Heritage Projects Programme provides assistance to community groups, private owners and local governments to identify and conserve their heritage places. On 20 April 2004, 72 approved grants valued at \$3.5 million were announced. Funding in 2004–05 for cultural heritage projects will help to preserve significant historic and Aboriginal places including churches, homesteads and former missions, convict sites and important remnants of our industrial heritage.

### **GREEN CORPS — YOUNG AUSTRALIANS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME**

Green Corps – Young Australians for the Environment Programme is an Australian 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 ten young people taking part in a range of activities and experiences over a 26-week period. The young people receive a participant allowance and take part in projects mostly located in regional and remote areas of Australia. Green Corps participants gain improved career and employment prospects through accredited training and personal development opportunities in areas such as leadership and teamwork. Participants are also provided with an opportunity to develop improved connections with the community. In 2004–05 \$23.9 million will be allocated to the programme.