

BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES 2005-06

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

AND

THE HONOURABLE JIM LLOYD MP
MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT, TERRITORIES AND ROADS

AND

THE HONOURABLE JOHN COBB MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE MINISTER FOR
TRANSPORT AND REGIONAL SERVICES

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INTRODUCTION

The 2005-06 Budget delivers on what the Australian Government took to the people at the 2004 election – to build stronger communities and provide a secure Australia.

Providing families with the security they need to plan their futures with confidence is this Government's commitment to all Australians. To do this, the Australian Government is investing in those things today that are necessary to guarantee Australia's future growth and prosperity in the years ahead. It is investing in the physical and social infrastructure necessary to ensure we meet the needs of tomorrow.

Significant long-term investments in Australia's transport infrastructure, our defence capabilities, and our young people will help us meet the challenges we will inevitably face over the coming decades.

The 2005-06 Budget continues our investment in building stronger Australian communities through good economic management. Through this Budget, the Australian Government will continue to provide practical outcomes to people in rural, regional and remote Australia in areas such as health, education, training, security, transport, trade and natural resource management.

It is only through continuing effective management of our economy that we will be able to provide these necessary resources. And the people of regional and rural Australian communities play an important role in achieving this outcome.

Strong and stable economic growth, low inflation, productivity gains, and a decline in unemployment have contributed to a significant increase in the living standards of Australians, and helped create the longest run of uninterrupted economic growth in Australia's post-war history. While these strong economic conditions have opened up greater opportunities for regional Australia, we need to do more.

The events of recent years have culminated in a feeling of uncertainty for many people. The Australian Government acknowledges this uncertainty, and the problems associated with living in an unpredictable world. As a Government we will continue to combat the threat of international terrorism, and commit the funds necessary to maintain a secure environment for all Australians for this generation and for generations to come. The investment is a significant one, but it is one that we cannot afford to neglect.

Domestically, many rural and regional Australians continue to battle the effects of the prolonged and severe drought, however, the Australian Government has been able to offer specific assistance to those in need.

Maintaining Australia's economic prosperity is crucial to our nation's continued economic growth. This has meant making some tough decisions, but also some bold

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choices. These bold choices are focused on continuing economic growth into tomorrow's world.

Some of the major initiatives included in this Budget are:

- AusLink – a \$12.5 billion investment in our transport infrastructure by the Australian Government.
- The Australian Water Fund – \$2 billion investment in better managing our most precious resource.
- Regional Partnerships – \$41 million to fund local community project commitments
- The Rural Medical Infrastructure Fund – helping small rural councils recruit or retain more general practitioners.
- Australian Technical Colleges – helping more young people get into trades which will bring major benefits to people living in rural and regional Australia.

The Australian Government will continue its commitment to work in partnership with rural and regional communities in providing funds for on-the-ground projects.

The Australian Government's regional funding programmes not only help communities turn their dreams into reality, they are fostering the development of self-reliance and empowering the people who live in these areas to take control of their own futures.

Regional Partnerships is helping rural and regional people help themselves. These partnerships are helping to build stronger rural and regional communities.

Regional Australia is not only the source of our national identity, but it is a significant contributor to Australia's export income. Australia's future success is heavily reliant upon our regions continuing to deliver goods and services to the domestic and international market place.

The Australian Government's management of our \$800 billion economy, its strategic investments and making the tough decisions, has enabled more funding to be allocated to those things which really matter for the one-third of Australians living outside major cities, such as safer roads, upgrading our rail network, a better environment, improved health services and addressing skills shortages in rural and regional areas.

The 2005-06 Budget has the Australian Government continuing its investment in Australia's regions and as such providing for future growth and prosperity.

REGIONAL BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Australian Water Fund

The Australian Government will provide \$2 billion over six years to contribute to on-the-ground water solutions. The Australian Water Fund represents a major investment by the Australian Government in water infrastructure, improved knowledge and water management, and better practices in the stewardship of Australia's scarce water resources.

AusLink

In 2005-06, the Australian Government will continue the biggest and most sustained investment in transport infrastructure the nation has ever seen. Funding for rail and road infrastructure next financial year is \$2.2 billion – a figure that will grow even higher in future years as the Australian Government continues to implement AusLink, the National Transport Plan. Through AusLink, the Australian Government is investing \$12.5 billion in essential land transport infrastructure over five years to 30 June 2009.

Australian Technical Colleges

The Australian Government is investing \$351 million over the five years to 2008-09 to assist more young Australians into traditional trades through Australian Technical Colleges. In 2005-06, the Australian Government is providing \$65.4 million to assist with the establishment of the first of the Australian Technical Colleges, to start in the 2006 school year.

Investing In Our Schools Programme

The \$1 billion Investing in Our Schools Programme will directly assist schools throughout Australia over the five years to 2008-09. \$700 million in new funding will be injected into state and territory schools throughout Australia to help repair, replace or install new items critical to the schools' overall infrastructure needs. A total of \$300 million in new funding will be provided over the same period to Catholic and independent schools through the Block Grant Authorities.

Improving access to health services

The Australian Government through the Rural Medical Infrastructure Fund (RMIF) will provide \$15 million over three years to help rural councils establish 'walk-in walk-out' community medical facilities in small communities, making it easier to recruit or retain general practitioners. The RMIF will provide grants of up to \$200,000 to help rural councils set up these medical centres in smaller communities. Such centres will make it easier to attract and retain doctors to these areas.

Major Defence capital facilities projects

The Australian Government will invest an estimated \$240 million in 2005-06 to construct new facilities and enhance existing facilities at a number of Australian Defence Force locations across Australia. In 2005-06, the Australian Government will also build upon an increased program of maintenance on the national Defence estate commenced during 2004-05 and will meet its promise of an extra \$300 million over three years from 2005-06 to cover increasing costs of maintaining the Defence estate.

Indigenous housing, infrastructure and essential municipal services

The Australian Government will provide \$284.6 million in 2005-06 to deliver Indigenous housing, infrastructure and essential municipal services programmes through arrangements with state and territory governments and regional and local Indigenous community housing providers. A total of \$93.3 million will also be provided for the Aboriginal Rental Housing Programme.

Commonwealth Environment Research Facilities (CERF)

The 2005-06 Budget provides \$100 million from 2005-06 to 2009-10 inclusive to improve Australia's capacity to understand and respond to priority environment concerns. The CERF Programme will support environmental research that demonstrates strong public good outcomes in a range of critical areas, and draw on multiple disciplines, professional partnerships and existing research efforts.

Metropolitan Broadband Blackspots Programme

The Metropolitan Broadband Blackspots Programme is a three-year \$50 million initiative, with \$10 million allocated in 2005-06, which will provide access to equitably

priced broadband services in metropolitan areas where such services are not available. These areas are in each state and territory capital city and Wollongong, the Central Coast of New South Wales, Newcastle, Geelong, Palmerston and the Gold Coast, including Tweed Heads.

Regional election commitments delivered

The Budget includes funding to deliver commitments made during the 2004 election for projects identified and supported by local communities. Six significant regional icon projects will receive \$27.8 million, 15 Tasmanian projects share \$2.8 million and 14 other projects will benefit from \$10.8 million in grants.

Sustainable Regions

The Australian Government will spend \$48.3 million in 2005-06 as part of the successful Sustainable Regions Programme to assist regions that are undergoing major economic, social or technological change, and to support community leadership in the development of local solutions to address local needs.

Migration to our regions

The Australian Government is committed to having regional Australia share the benefits brought by our Migration Programme to achieve a greater dispersal of our migrant and humanitarian intake to regional areas. The Australian Government has approved an increase of 20,000 places to the Skill Stream of the Migration programme in 2005-06 (which will take the total skill stream to 97,500 places). Within the Skill Stream, at least 18,000 visas will be granted under State Specific and Regional Migration categories. The actual number achieved will be largely contingent on the extent to which state and territory governments utilise the State Specific and Regional mechanisms available to them. The Australian Government will work with the state and territory governments to identify skills shortages and to create opportunities to fill this shortage through a number of new initiatives.

Australia's hosting of APEC in 2007

The Australian Government will provide \$216.3 million over three years in the 2005-06 Budget to a range of departments and agencies for Australia's hosting of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in 2007. The Australian Government is committed to having regional Australia share the benefits of hosting the APEC

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forum. While venues are still to be determined, some APEC meetings may be held in regional areas; regional products and capabilities will be showcased; and some of the estimated 10,000 visitors for APEC will participate in regional study tours and tourism.

Strengthening security at Australia's regional airports

In August 2004, the Australian Government announced the \$48 million Securing Our Regional Skies package to help regional airports and airlines respond quickly to a change in aviation threat levels. In 2005-06, the Australian Government will continue to work with aviation operators and law enforcement bodies to develop response capacity, capability and deterrence at regional aviation facilities.

BUDGET 2005-2006

AGRICULTURE

BOLSTERING QUARANTINE DEFENCES

Australia's strict quarantine regime will be maintained with more than \$560.9 million over four years provided in the 2005-06 Budget.

The money will be spread across the agencies involved in quarantine – the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS), Australian Customs Service and Biosecurity Australia. AQIS will receive \$266.1 million to maintain the Quarantine Border Security Programme, and Customs will receive \$250 million for its role in quarantine border protection. Biosecurity Australia will receive \$39.2 million to provide it with the financial platform needed for its work as a prescribed agency.

\$5.6 million will also be provided to AQIS in 2005-06 to continue the enhanced measures to prevent the entry of the Avian Influenza (bird flu) into Australia.

In addition to the \$560.9 million being provided to strengthen border security, the Australian Government will contribute \$144 million to AQIS over four years to pay the Australian Government's 40 per cent contribution to the cost of export certification and inspection charges.

INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS

The Industry Partnership Programme will receive funding of \$15 million over the next three years commencing in 2005-06, building on the success of the Australian Government's one-year, \$4.7 million pilot programme.

The initiative is part of the Australian Government's \$1 billion Agriculture – Advancing Australia package, which includes highly successful programmes, such as FarmBis, Farm Help and Farm Management Deposits.

The Industry Partnership Programme will enable industries to form a partnership with the Australian Government to analyse their strengths and weaknesses and to identify and address threats and opportunities over a five to 10-year period.

AUSTRALIAN HOMEGROWN CAMPAIGN

Shoppers looking for 100 per cent Australian-produced food and food products should have their task made easier as a result of a new campaign.

The Budget has provided \$3 million to be matched by industry to fund a national rollout of the Australian HomeGrown campaign over the next two years.

This is in addition to Australian Government funding of \$500,000 for the successful pilot campaign for HomeGrown run in Coles stores across Victoria between January and March this year. Another \$500,000 is also available to support the pilot campaign in 2004-05.

NATIONAL LIVESTOCK IDENTIFICATION SCHEME

From 1 July 2005, all states will have commenced roll-out of the National Livestock Identification Scheme (NLIS) for cattle and will have also progressed work on the design of the NLIS mechanism for sheep.

Although the NLIS is essentially a state and territory responsibility, the Australian Government has allocated \$20 million over four years to assist at a national level.

DROUGHT ASSISTANCE

With many parts of the country still gripped by drought, the Australian Government continues to make a major commitment to both drought preparedness and support to farmers. We continue to press the states and territories to also make reforms to drought assistance so as to ensure help is available when and where it is needed.

During the present drought, the Australian Government has been providing direct welfare assistance and business support to farmers. Before this drought is over, it is expected that the Australian Government will have contributed approximately \$1 billion in drought assistance measures for farmers.

The Australian Government is delivering hundreds of millions of dollars in tax concessions to assist farmers in drought preparedness, especially through the successful Farm Management Deposits Scheme.

Also at the April 2005 Agriculture ministers meeting in Darwin important progress was made on the further development of a computerised National Monitoring System to streamline the EC application and assessment process. The Australian Government has allocated \$600,000 to bring this important drought assessment tool online.

INDUSTRY ADJUSTMENT

Where industries have faced severe problems, the Australian Government has responded with targeted assistance packages to help in the adjustment process.

An unprecedented \$1.9 billion is being provided over eight years to assist the dairy industry adjust to changes made by state governments to the milk marketing arrangements.

The Australian Government delivered assistance to the sugar industry with a package worth up to \$444 million over five years.

And Citrus growers and nurseries throughout Queensland affected by the discovery last year of citrus canker on two farms in the Emerald area and the subsequent control and eradication program now have access to an Australian Government assistance package worth up to \$1.5 million.

BOOSTING FOOD PROCESSING IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

Another election commitment honoured as part of the Australian Government's Investing in our Farming Future initiative is the provision of \$12 million over four years, starting in 2004-05 to boost food processing in regional Australia.

The programme will help stimulate economic growth through value-adding to food produce before it leaves rural and regional areas. It will also strengthen the associated infrastructure and support network.

Under the programme, individuals, groups of primary producers, or small to medium sized agribusinesses can apply for project funding.

RECREATIONAL FISHING COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAMME

The important contribution recreational fishing makes to local economies is recognised in the 2005-06 Budget, with \$15 million being provided over three years for a Community Grants Programme.

The Recreational Fishing Community Grants Programme will provide grants up to \$100,000 to community groups for a range of purposes, including improvements to infrastructure, such as artificial reefs to attract fish, and tracks and paths to fishing spots.

More than three million people in Australia go fishing at least once a year, and 24 per cent of Australian households fish regularly.

SOUTHERN BLUE FIN TUNA FISHERY

Australia will continue to support international scientific research to secure the long-term future of the valuable southern bluefin tuna fishery.

The 2005-06 Budget provides \$3 million over three years to continue Australia's support for the Scientific Research Programme of the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna.

The Australian southern bluefin tuna fishery has an annual gross production value of around \$300 million, and statutory fishing rights valued at up to \$1 billion.

The industry provides 3,000 jobs in regional South Australia.

ILLEGAL FISHING

The Budget provides \$181.3 million over four years from 2006-07 to continue patrols and to work with other nations to apprehend and monitor illegal fishers, particularly in the Southern Ocean.

The new programme continues Australia's fight against illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing, and will strengthen our ability to protect the Southern Ocean fisheries and ensure the survival of the Patagonian toothfish fishery.

The Australian Government has also provided \$91.4 million over five years from 2005 in the fight against illegal fishing in the Northern Ocean .

INTERNATIONAL TRADE SERVICE

Funding in the 2005-06 Budget will help open up new opportunities in key markets for Australian exporters.

The Budget provides \$9.7 million over four years to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry for a new International Food and Agriculture Service to build on the achievements of Australia's existing bilateral and technical market access efforts.

The service will enable Australia to follow up on the signing of free trade agreements with the United States, Singapore and Thailand with 'on-the-ground' action.

Initially, the new service will post two agricultural counsellors overseas to high priority and emerging markets in Asia.

KEEPING THE SNOWY AND RIVER MURRAY FLOWING

A programme to improve environmental water flows in the River Murray and Snowy River has been assured for a further four years by funding in the 2005-06 Budget.

The Budget provides \$30 million under the terms of the 2002 Snowy Waters Inquiry Outcomes Implementation Deed, agreed with New South Wales and Victoria, to deliver water for environmental flows into the two rivers.

The Australian Government has committed \$7.5 million annually through the Joint Government Enterprise for Murray Environmental Flows (trading as Water for Rivers) for 10 years until 2012. New South Wales and Victoria have each agreed to commit \$15 million annually in the same period.

The Budget funding for Water for Rivers is part of the Australian Government's ambitious water reform agenda, which includes the National Water Initiative and a \$200 million commitment to the Living Murray initiative. Water reform is fundamental to future sustainability of our river ecosystems and communities.

LOCAL ACTION AGAINST SALINITY

Research by the Bureau of Rural Sciences indicates that salt deposits in the Murray-Darling Basin that are likely to be moved into rivers by groundwater can be identified and immobilised.

The 2005-06 Budget meets an election commitment of \$20 million over two years under the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality to support Landcare and Waterwatch volunteer groups undertaking a basin-wide monitoring programme to identify where salt enters rivers and streams.

The funds will enable community groups to participate in monitoring and mapping of salinity hotspots in the basin so management options can be delivered for effective local action.

HEALTHY SOILS FOR SUSTAINABLE FARMS

The 2005 Budget meets an election commitment of \$5 million over four years for the Healthy Soils for Sustainable Farms Programme from the Natural Heritage Trust to further aid in the transition from high impact European-style agricultural practices.

The programme will build on our successful industry partnership programme under Landcare and the community-based regional groups established under the Natural Heritage Trust and the National Action Plan.

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WEED CONTROL

The 2005-06 Budget honours the commitment to provide \$40 million over four years to the Defeating the Weed Menace Programme.

The programme will target the most threatening and invasive weeds and fund research, biological control and community awareness and action.

The initiative will be largely implemented through the regional groups established under the Natural Heritage Trust and the National Landcare Programme.

IMPROVING ANIMAL WELFARE

Today's Budget provides \$6 million over five years to help implement the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy, endorsed by the Primary Industries Ministerial Council in May 2004.

The Strategy builds on the current framework in Australia to achieve sustainable animal welfare improvements.

ARTS AND SPORT

EXPANSION OF REGIONAL ARTS FUND INCLUDING CREATIVE VOLUNTEERING — NO LIMITS

The Regional Arts Fund has been expanded with additional funding of \$5.4 million over four years from 2004-05, bringing the total programme funding to \$16.1 million over the period. This is supporting a larger number of creative arts projects, addressing unmet demand, assisting the professional development of more regional artists and extending the programme into remote and isolated communities around Australia. The additional funding has also enabled Creative Volunteering — No Limits, the national arts and museums regional volunteer skills programme, to be continued as an element of the Regional Arts Fund. Creative Volunteering provides accredited training to upgrade the skills of volunteers working in the arts and collections sectors.

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 in 2005-06 will receive

\$1.25 million. It has successfully assisted Australian artists, in all art forms, at the formative stage of their careers including artists in rural and regional areas. With the initiative's current funding ending in 2005-06, additional funding of \$2.5 million will be provided to continue the programme through to 2007-08.

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 2005-06, approximately \$5.8 million 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 Australian Government will provide \$1.5 million for the Festivals Australia programme in 2005-06, including an additional \$500,000 provided in the 2005-06 Budget to extend the programme to support artists' residencies in regional areas. The additional funding will be used to enable performing and visual artists and writers to assist communities to tell their own stories in a culturally relevant way and to present these stories in a community celebration or festival. This initiative will enable more communities in regional Australia to access funding for cultural projects associated with a broader range of festivals or significant community events.

BIG SCREEN

The Australian Government will provide additional funding of \$6.9 million over three years from 2005-06 to the Screen Culture Initiative with Big Screen being a component of this.

Big Screen is a touring film festival showcasing new and iconic Australian films in regional Australia. Big Screen is a major part of the Australian Film Commission's screen culture programme, which provides opportunities for Australian audiences to access screen content throughout Australia, with a particular focus on regional Australia.

BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Since its inception Big Screen has attracted audiences in regional Australia in excess of 80,000 people. An average of 18 venues are visited each year, some for a second or third time, with a large proportion of new centres added each year.

REFUNDABLE FILM TAX OFFSET

The refundable film tax offset (the offset) is an incentive for large budget film productions to locate in Australia. In establishing the offset, the Australian Government recognises the economic, employment and skills development opportunities that large scale productions bring to Australia – and to Australians working in the film industry. The key criterion to access the offset is a minimum level of qualifying Australian expenditure of \$15 million on the production.

Since it was introduced in 2002, the offset has encouraged many large budget productions to locate in Australia.

A number of these productions have based location shooting in rural and regional Australia, providing considerable economic and employment opportunities. The latest Superman film, Superman Returns, for example, is providing a major economic boost to both Gunnedah and Tamworth in NSW.

LIBRARIES AUSTRALIA

Libraries Australia is a new online service provided by the National Library of Australia. It is currently available to the public through most libraries but will be freely available directly to the public anywhere that they can access the Internet from January 2006. It provides access to about 38 million books, pictures, music, maps, and personal papers that are held by over 1,000 Australian libraries. This service also provides a range of options to allow users to obtain a copy of the items that they find through Libraries Australia.

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 \$250,000 in 2005-06.

SLIM DUSTY HERITAGE CENTRE

Funding of \$500,000 will be provided in 2005-06 (as part of a total Australian Government funding of \$1.5 million) towards the construction of the Slim Dusty Heritage Centre in Kempsey, NSW. The Centre will house a museum relating to the life and music of Slim Dusty. It will also include a gallery, concert facility and exhibition space, conference and seminar facilities and a recording studio.

COMMUNITY SPORT AND RECREATION FACILITIES

The Australian Government has supported many community sporting initiatives in urban and regional areas across the nation. 2005-06 will see the continuation of the three-year \$37.9 million commitment announced in last year's budget.

These funds are part of the Australian Government's commitment to building active, healthy Australian communities.

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 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.

On 29th June 2004 the Prime Minister announced the Building a Healthy, Active Australia initiative – a \$116 million package over four years to tackle the problem of childhood obesity. Of this package some \$90 million will go towards the Active After-School Communities Programme over a four year period from 1 July 2004.

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.

BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES

The Australian Government provides ongoing financial support for Bundanon of approximately \$1 million per annum. In 2005-06 this includes a draw-down from the Investment Fund originally established by the Australian Government.

COLLECTIONS AUSTRALIA NETWORK (CAN)

In 2005-06 the Australian Government will contribute \$240,000 to CAN with state and territory governments contributing a further \$130,000.

Collections Australia Network, formerly Australian Museums and Galleries On-line (AMOL), is a website that provides access to cultural heritage held in museums, galleries, libraries and archives all over Australia. The website is aimed at improving online services for small to medium and regional collecting organisations enabling them to expand into the online environment in a more effective manner. The site also allows participating institutions to remotely upload, add, delete and modify their webpages, news items, exhibitions, events and collections. CAN is a Cultural Ministers Council project, a joint initiative of the Australian Government and state and territory governments in partnership with the Australian cultural sector.

COMMUNITY HERITAGE GRANTS PROGRAMME

The Community Heritage Grants Programme provides grants of up to \$10,000 to support preservation projects undertaken by community organisations such as local historical societies, public libraries, Indigenous and migrant community groups, which hold cultural heritage collections of national significance. The Australian Government is providing an additional \$800,000 over four years from 2005-06 for the programme. The programme is funded on an annual basis by the Australian Government through the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts; the National Library of Australia; the National Archives of Australia; the National Museum of Australia and the Australian Film Commission. The programme has operated for ten years and has distributed over \$1 million.

VISIONS OF AUSTRALIA

In 2005-06 the Australian Government will contribute \$1.9 million to the Visions of Australia touring exhibitions programme.

Visions of Australia is a national touring exhibition grant programme which assists touring exhibitions of cultural material across Australia. It provides assistance to 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.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES TOURING EXHIBITIONS

The National Archives develops exhibitions utilising records from the collection for exhibition throughout Australia. It's A Dog's Life! Animals in the Public Service, Beacons by the Sea: Stories of Australian Lighthouses, Unexpected Archives and Just Add Water: Schemes and Dreams of a Sunburnt Country will travel throughout regional Australia in 2005-06.

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 2005, 6,244,165 people have taken the opportunity to visit 92 exhibitions at 481 locations in every state and territory in Australia, as well as 15 international locations. In addition, three suitcase exhibitions have been to approximately 348 schools and community groups in remote and regional Australia.

In 2005-06, \$500,000 will be allocated to travelling exhibition programmes.

BROADCASTING

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.

COMMERCIAL RADIO BLACK SPOTS PROGRAMME

The Commercial Radio Blackspots Programme is a \$5 million programme 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. Funding for new or improved services for 129 communities has been approved in the three years since the programme commenced in 2002-03, with the last of these projects to be completed in 2005-06.

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 (TVBSP) to assist communities which are already part of the TVBSP but where an analogue retransmission solution is not available. Under the TVBS-ATS programme, funding is provided for alternative technical solutions over four years from 2002-03, such as digital retransmission facilities or direct-to-home satellite.

As at April 2005, funding of over \$2.4 million has been approved for 29 new services in 11 black spot areas in 2004-05, assisting over 3,700 households across Australia.

REGIONAL EQUALISATION PLAN

The Australian Government has allocated \$25 million in assistance in 2005-06 as part of the Regional Equalisation Plan, under which it is currently estimated up to \$245 million will be provided over 13 years commencing in 2000-01. REP assists regional and remote commercial broadcasters with the introduction of digital television broadcasting services.

REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS PARTNERSHIP

In December 2000, the Australian 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 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 Australian Government and Broadcast Australia each contributed \$5 million to the scheme with the Australian Government's contribution sourced from the Television Fund. By the end of February 2005, 61 councils or community groups providing 144 self-help services had taken advantage of the subsidies available under this scheme. This includes renewal of services at the end of the contractual period.

SBS SELF-HELP RETRANSMISSION SUBSIDY SCHEME

SBS has established its Self-Help Retransmission Subsidy Scheme from an ongoing annual appropriation of \$500,000 which it receives from the Australian 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.

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 April 2005, 45 Councils or community groups had received, or had been approved to receive, subsidies to establish 53 SBS radio or television self-help services.

ABC RADIO SELF-HELP RETRANSMISSION SUBSIDY SCHEME

On 25 February 2005, the Australian Government launched the ABC Radio Self-Help Retransmission Subsidy Scheme which will provide \$1.5 million to enable up to 50 communities in rural and regional Australia to set up their own self-help retransmission facilities to access any of the ABC's five radio services – Local Radio, Radio National, Classic FM, Triple J and NewsRadio. The ABC will administer this Scheme which will provide local Councils or community groups with:

- Up to \$30,000 to establish an ABC radio self-help service; or
- Up to \$15,000 to replace obsolete equipment required to retransmit a self-help service.

Eligible groups can apply for the subsidy for more than one ABC radio service. The ABC will collate all eligible applications and consider them collectively from 30 June 2005.

DEFENCE

DEFENCE AND REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

With approximately 70 per cent of the Defence force located in regional areas, Defence makes a significant contribution to regional Australia through employment, industry, community involvement and services, childcare facilities, housing, co-operation on heritage issues, Indigenous affairs and economic activity. The following new measures and ongoing activities positively impact on regional Australia.

SECURING AUSTRALIA'S NORTH WEST SHELF

The Australian Government outlined a new measure for 2005-06 estimated at \$139.3 million over four years to enhance the security of Australia's North West Shelf, of which the Department of Defence will spend \$11.9 million in 2005-06.

As part of this package, two additional Armidale-Class Patrol Boats will be purchased to undertake North West Shelf surveillance and will work out of either Dampier or Port Hedland. The additional patrol boats will be built in Western Australia. The acquisition and operation of the boats are expected to have positive implications for the Western Australian economy.

OPERATION SAFEBASE

In 2005-06 the Department of Defence will spend \$37 million to continue Operation SAFEBASE across all regions and bases in Australia. This funding for the SAFEBASE security alert system will enable Defence to maintain the current control arrangements in relation to the protection of personnel and infrastructure and other Defence assets that have been established in response to the post-September 11 international security environment, and enable Defence to respond to further heightened security threat environments should they emerge.

SKILLING AUSTRALIA'S DEFENCE INDUSTRY

In 2005-06 the Australian Government outlined a new initiative estimated to be worth \$215 million over ten years to recognise its commitment to addressing the current skills shortage facing Australia's defence industry. This package will improve the quality and quantity of specialist skills available to the defence industry, including the provision of engineers, specialist technicians, key trades people and project managers.

MAJOR CAPITAL FACILITIES PROJECTS

The Australian Government has approved an investment programme estimated to be worth \$240 million for Defence capital facilities projects for 2005-06 to increase and support Australian Defence Force capabilities. The major projects in this programme include:

- The construction of specialised ranges and training facilities to support Special Forces units based at Holsworthy, Sydney.
- New facilities for the 1st Aviation Regiment at Robertson Barracks, Darwin including purpose-built working, training and domestic accommodation facilities.

- A range of new and redeveloped facilities and infrastructure at RAAF Williamtown near Newcastle, including construction of a Squadron hangar, pavement and airfield works and engineering services.
- The construction of enhanced research and laboratory facilities at Fishermans Bend.
- New working facilities for Army units at Lavarack Barracks in Townsville.

In 2005-06, the Australian Government will also build upon an increased program of maintenance on the national Defence estate commenced during 2004-05 and will meet its promise of an extra \$300 million over three years from 2005-06 to cover increasing costs of maintaining the Defence estate. This funding will be spent on maintaining Defence's extensive base infrastructure, including airfields, naval bases, barracks, training ranges, cadet facilities and fuel farms, as well as community environmental and occupational health and safety regulatory requirements.

RESERVE EMPLOYER SUPPORT PAYMENT SCHEME

In 2000 the Australian Government provided a commitment to show the way as a major employer of Reservists by providing leave policies and employment practices that support the release of Reservists for peacetime training and deployment. Consistent with this commitment, agreements are now in place to provide Reservists with access to leave for training and deployment and, in addition, revised arrangements authorised under Defence Determination 2002 (Employer Support Payments) commenced on 1 July 2003. These arrangements have enhanced the operation and effectiveness of the Employer Support Payment Scheme, which has seen payments in excess of \$20 million made to thousands of employers throughout Australia.

CADET ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME

In 2001 the Australian Government provided a commitment to reinvigorate the Australian Defence Force (ADF) Cadets experience and organisation, in recognition of the importance of enhancing opportunities for young people to develop leadership and team building skills in an adventurous and military-like setting, as well as developing strategies to better encourage ADF Cadet organisations to be a source of potential recruits for the ADF. In support of the \$30 million per annum provided by the Department of Defence the Australian Government announced additional funding of \$6 million per annum for the Cadet Enhancement Programme. This programme provides ongoing funding for a range of initiatives designed to improve the quality of the Cadet experience.

ARMY INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES

The Army Indigenous Community Assistance Programme 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.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

AUSTRALIAN TECHNICAL COLLEGES

The Australian Government is investing \$351 million over the five years to 2008-09 to assist more young Australians into traditional trades through Australian Technical Colleges. In 2005-06, the Australian Government is providing \$65.4 million to assist with the establishment of the first of the Australian Technical Colleges to start in the 2006 school year.

The Australian Technical Colleges will assist up to 7200 Australians a year into traditional trades by providing them with the opportunity to commence their training in a traditional trade through a School-based New Apprenticeship while at the same time completing academic subjects leading to a year 12 certificate.

The Australian Technical Colleges will be established in 24 identified regional and metropolitan locations and will provide these local communities with the opportunity to develop local solutions to address skill shortages while at the same time providing an alternative education opportunity for young people in each region.

INVESTING IN OUR SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

The \$1 billion Investing in Our Schools Programme, announced by the Prime Minister in 2004, will directly assist schools throughout Australia over the five years to 2008-09.

Over the five years to 2008-09, \$700 million in new funding will be injected into state schools throughout Australia to help repair, replace or install new items critical to the school's overall infrastructure needs.

A total of \$300 million in new funding will be provided over the same period to Catholic and independent schools through the Block Grant Authorities (BGAs).

The focus will be on delivering projects which improve the infrastructure of schools in accordance with priorities identified by school communities – that is, the people who

know best – parents, friends, the teaching profession and students associated with the school.

The Investing in Our Schools Programme commences in 2005 and will continue until the end of 2008.

CAPITAL GRANTS PROGRAMME

In 2005-06 the Australian Government will provide a record \$392.2 million as part of its school Capital Grants Programme. This represents an estimated increase of \$30.3 million or eight per cent over 2004-05.

The programme provides state and territory governments with an estimated \$1.6 billion over four years 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.

The Australian Government will provide \$193.8 million in capital funding to non-government schools, and a total of \$699.2 million over four years from 2005-06 to 2008-09. These funds include \$17 million over four years to provide capital grants 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.

NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOL TERM HOSTELS PROGRAMME

The Non-Government School Term Hostels Programme is a new Australian Government initiative that commenced in January 2005. The programme is targeted at not-for-profit non-government school term hostels that operate principally to accommodate primary and secondary students from rural and remote areas of Australia. Under this four year initiative eligible hostels will attract a grant of \$2,500 per eligible student per year. The programme also supports rural communities by providing an affordable alternative to boarding school or distance education for rural and remote families.

COUNTRY AREAS PROGRAMME

In 2005-06, the Australian Government will provide an estimated \$28.4 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 \$6.6 million or 24 per cent over the previous year to government and non-government education authorities. Of the \$28.4 million, an estimated \$23.9 million will be provided to state government schools and an estimated \$4.5 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 more limited access to educational opportunities than metropolitan students. Australian Government funds for CAP are provided to state and Northern Territory government and non-government schools.

Funds can be used to support projects which:

- Enhance the curriculum through excursions and visits, attendance at cultural and sporting events.
- Assist with the transition to further education, training or work.
- Provide access to professional development for teachers.

ASSISTANCE FOR ISOLATED CHILDREN SCHEME

From 2005, the Australian Government has significantly increased assistance under the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme (AIC). The AIC Scheme helps the families of primary, secondary and under 16 year old tertiary students who are unable to attend an appropriate government school on a daily basis primarily because of geographic isolation.

The Basic Boarding Allowance and the Distance Education Allowance both received a significant boost from 1 January 2005. The Basic Boarding Allowance increased from \$4,446 to \$6,000 per year from 1 January 2005 and will help around 7,500 students who have no choice other than to board away from home at a school, hostel or private home. This results in an estimated increase in funding of \$39.6 million over the four years to 2008-09. The Distance Education Allowance increased to \$3,000 per year for students who study at home through distance education. The increase – some \$1,759 for a primary school student and \$1,140 for a secondary school student in 2005 – reflects the increased costs of new computer technology and communications infrastructure required by students. This results in an estimated increase in funding of \$21.3 million over the four years to 2008-09. The Second Home Allowance and Additional Boarding Allowance increased by the CPI from the beginning of 2005.

LITERACY, NUMERACY AND SPECIAL LEARNING NEEDS PROGRAMME

In 2005-06, the Australian Government will provide almost \$500 million for the Literacy, Numeracy and Special Learning Needs (LNSLN) Programme. From 2005, the LNSLN is the Australian Government's key targeted programme to provide additional assistance for educationally disadvantaged students, including students from rural areas or who are geographically isolated.

Around \$2.2 billion will be provided under the LNSLN Programme between 2005-06 and 2008-09 as follows:

- The Schools Grants element will contribute an estimated \$1.97 billion to government and non-government education authorities to provide additional assistance in schools for the most educationally disadvantaged students.
- Non-government Centres Support element will contribute an estimated \$154 million to improve the educational opportunities and learning outcomes of children with disabilities.
- The National Projects element will provide an estimated \$44.3 million funding for national projects and initiatives to improve the learning outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students, including improved literacy and numeracy outcomes.

NATIONAL SKILLS SHORTAGES STRATEGY

Under the National Skills Shortages Strategy, the Australian Government is funding a number of regional skills pilots to identify and develop practical strategies to address a region's current and future skills needs. In each pilot, the Australian Government will work with regional stakeholders such as industry, education providers and the broader community to:

- Profile existing and potential industries in a region.
- Identify common factors and solutions to skills issues.
- Engage relevant national, state and local industry and training bodies.
- Identify skills and training needs.
- Pilot practical strategies that could be used in other regions.

Pilots are already underway in Townsville, Illawarra and the Hunter. Recently, submissions were called for under this strategy to broaden the number of projects and approaches. New regional projects are expected to begin by the end of June 2005.

RURAL AND REGIONAL SKILLS SHORTAGE SPECIAL COMMENCEMENT INCENTIVE

Under the Rural and Regional Skills Shortage Special Commencement Incentive the Australian Government boosts training in rural and regional Australia by providing a special commencement incentive for rural or regional employers who employ New Apprentices in occupations where there are skills shortages.

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 IN THE TRADES PROGRAMME

The Group Training in the Trades Programme aims to address current critical skill shortages in traditional trades through group training arrangements. The Australian Government is providing an additional \$45.9 million to assist 11,500 people nationally over the next four years to undertake a New Apprenticeship in the trades, either through a School-Based New Apprenticeship or by undertaking pre-vocational training.

TOOLS FOR YOUR TRADE PROGRAMME

The Australian Government will provide funding of \$120.2 million over five years, including \$400,000 in 2004-05, to assist New Apprentices to acquire tools up to \$800 in value that are associated with their trade. This initiative will apply to eligible New Apprentices starting out in skill shortage trades from 1 July 2005. This will help alleviate the financial burden on the New Apprentice when they enter an apprenticeship in the identified skill shortage trades.

Employers of eligible New Apprentices will receive a toolkit after the New Apprentice has completed the initial three months of their training, and they will make it available to the apprentice to use. The New Apprentice will be entitled to keep the kit upon completion of a further six months of training.

The Australian Government will continue to address skill shortages and provide skills training through existing programmes and initiatives.

COMMONWEALTH TRADE LEARNING SCHOLARSHIPS

The Australian Government will provide around \$106.3 million over the five years 2004-05 to 2008-09 for Commonwealth Trade Learning Scholarships. Under this initiative eligible New Apprentices employed in small and medium businesses in skills shortages trades may apply for a \$500 incentive payment on successful completion of their first and second years.

NEW APPRENTICESHIPS ACCESS PROGRAMME

The Australian Government will provide \$51.7 million over five years for an extra 5,000 places in the New Apprenticeships Access Programme targeted at industries and regions experiencing skills shortages. This is in addition to the 4,500 places already available annually through the programme. Under the programme, participants receive pre-vocational training, support and assistance to obtain and maintain a New Apprenticeship. Eligible client groups include the long term unemployed, Indigenous Australians, early school leavers and people aged 45 and over. Priority for the additional places is to be given to job seekers who have successfully participated in the Work for the Dole programme or are receiving intensive support from the Job Network, thus supporting the Australian Government's aim of moving people from welfare into sustainable employment outcomes.

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.

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, wool and 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 three years 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.

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, for them to operate personal computers effectively at a basic level in the workforce. BITES courses are advertised locally and through Centrelink.

REGIONAL DISABILITY LIAISON OFFICER INITIATIVE AND DISABILITY COORDINATION OFFICER PROGRAMME

The national network of Regional Disability Liaison Officers and Disability Coordination Officers assist those people with a disability who are interested in post-school options to move between school, vocational education and training, higher education and employment by providing information, co-ordination and referral services.

REGIONAL LOADING — EXTRA FUNDING FOR REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES

The Australian Government committed to an additional \$146 million over five years from 2004 to incorporate a regional loading into the Commonwealth Grant Scheme (CGS) for students enrolled at regional campuses. This measure supports the provision of higher education at regional campuses which face higher costs as a result of such factors as location, size and history.

NEW COMMONWEALTH — SUPPORTED HIGHER EDUCATION PLACES

The Australian Government will fund 9,100 new Commonwealth-supported higher education places in institutions in 2005. These places will grow to 24,883 places by 2008 as students continue in their courses. Institutions submitted bids for the new places against a range of criteria that were developed in consultation with state and territory governments. The bids were assessed on a competitive basis against these criteria, which included institutional capacity, regional priorities, workforce demand, student demand and an ability to sustain growth in national priority areas. More than 45 per cent of the new places were allocated to regional universities or regional campuses of metropolitan universities.

The Australian Government also introduced 440 new university places in nursing with a focus on aged care. These places commenced in 2005 and will grow to more than 1,200 by 2008. Regional universities and regional campuses of metropolitan universities received half of these new places.

ADDITIONAL UNDERGRADUATE PLACES FOR JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY

The Australian Government will provide \$14 million over four years to James Cook University for 100 new undergraduate places for veterinary science and tropical agriculture in 2006, rising to 274 places by 2009. This is part of the election commitment to help James Cook University establish a Marine and Tropical Sciences Precinct. The Precinct will be located in Townsville and will include a new veterinary school, to which the Australian Government will provide \$12 million towards infrastructure costs.

The new undergraduate places will provide opportunities in North Queensland for students to study veterinary science. The new school will produce veterinarians with expertise in tropical animal diseases, and with skills in the prevention and early detection of diseases in livestock. This will help James Cook University position itself as a leader in the teaching and research of veterinary science and tropical agriculture. The new undergraduate course in tropical agriculture will not only produce tropical plant experts in the region, but will stimulate vital agricultural research.

EXTRA FUNDING FOR INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE AT CHARLES DARWIN UNIVERSITY

The Australian Government will provide \$2 million over three years to Charles Darwin University for the upgrade of its information technology infrastructure. The new funding is part of the Australian Government's election commitments supporting the Northern Territory.

The project will improve the University's administration systems, its online education and flexible delivery mechanisms, strengthen its communication services and upgrade information technology services. It will provide better access for regional students to vocational and higher education in the Northern Territory.

COMMONWEALTH LEARNING SCHOLARSHIPS

The Australian Government has provided \$426.1 million over five years from 2004-05 for almost 40,000 new scholarships, which will assist rural, regional and Indigenous students from low socio-economic backgrounds with costs associated with higher education.

The Commonwealth Education Costs Scholarships (CECS) will provide successful students with approximately \$2,000 per year for up to four years to assist with their education costs. The Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarships (CAS) will provide successful students with approximately \$4,000 per year for up to four years to assist

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with the costs of studying away from home. More than 22,500 CECS are being offered over five years from 2004 and more than 17,000 CAS over the same period.

The CAS will particularly benefit students from regional and rural areas by providing assistance with the costs of living away from home, such as accommodation.

AUSTRALIAN NETWORK OF INDUSTRY CAREERS ADVISERS

The Australian Network of Industry Careers Advisers (ANICA) election commitment of \$143.2 million over the four years 2005-06 to 2008-09 will support young people between 13-19 years of age to access professional career advice to achieve a successful transition through school and from school to further education, training and work.

The ANICA will provide significant new support in regional and rural Australia for improved career and transition services. This will lead to better career choices by young people, more effective transition planning and better matching of young people's interests with opportunities.

An Australian Government network of Local Community Partnerships (LCPs) will partner with industry and professional career advisers to facilitate access to quality career and transition support for all young people and better prepare them for post-school options. LCPs will also link schools with local business and industry representatives to ensure schools have a better understanding of local labour market and economic development opportunities. The network of LCPs will continue to deliver Structured Workplace Learning and through its management of projects across the country, increase access to the successful Adopt a School model.

In addition to the support provided through the LCP network young people will also have access to professional career advice from industry experts. A network of regional industry career advisers will be on-the-ground industry champions and knowledge brokers with a comprehensive understanding of regional industry skill needs and local opportunities and sensitivities. Industry career advisers will have an understanding of employability skills and be supported by industry relevant careers resources.

EXTENSION OF YOUTH ALLOWANCE, AUSTUDY AND ABSTUDY PAYMENTS TO NEW APPRENTICES

From 1 July 2005, the Australian Government will extend eligibility for Youth Allowance, Austudy and ABSTUDY payments to eligible full-time New Apprentices, who will be able to apply for the same payments that are currently available to full-time students. This will assist them in the early years of their New Apprenticeship when their wages are generally at their lowest.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

WELFARE TO WORK – EMPLOYER DEMAND AND WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY STRATEGY

Commencing in 2005-06 the Employer Demand and Workplace Flexibility Strategy aims to increase workforce participation for priority groups in key industry sectors through a range of measures including improving employer awareness of the benefits of hiring people with disabilities, parents, mature age job seekers and very long term unemployed and of the flexibility of workplace arrangements which are available to them.

The strategy will increase employment opportunities for priority groups and assist business in regional areas to meet labour and skill shortages and the challenges of current and future demographic changes, such as an ageing population, and improving productivity through the implementation of flexible working arrangements.

JOB NETWORK

Job Network is a national network of private and community organisations assisting the unemployed, particularly long-term unemployed people, to find jobs.

Job Network has a strong presence in regional Australia with 600 sites located outside major metropolitan centres. In the last 12 months, the Job Network has placed almost 290,000 people in jobs in regional Australia, an increase of 40 per cent over the previous year.

Job Network servicing arrangements have been adapted to suit regional and remote locations and different labour market conditions. The Active Participation Model remains the basis of these services, with additional tailored services being made available to suit local circumstances. These arrangements are available to assist job seekers in areas such as the Kimberley in Western Australia, the Top End in the Northern Territory and Ceduna in South Australia.

The Australian Government also provides Harvest Labour Services to assist rural industries to find labour to harvest crops, including the recruitment and placement of workers in harvest jobs such as fruit picking.

The New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS) assists eligible unemployed people to establish and manage viable new small businesses. NEIS providers in some regions are paid higher fees recognising the additional barriers faced by people in these areas and ensuring a high quality NEIS service for participants in regional Australia.

WORK FOR THE DOLE

Work for the Dole provides work experience opportunities for unemployed people in their local communities. In 2005-06 there will be 64,000 Work for the Dole places available.

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 allow local unemployed people to volunteer on drought-affected properties. These activities encourage people to remain in their community and support the local economy. Through more than 300 projects in regional areas across Australia, over 700 job seekers have participated in Drought Force activities.

EMPLOYMENT INNOVATION FUND

The Employment Innovation Fund, announced in the 2003-04 Budget, 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 to address local community or specific demographic labour-related issues. Examples of these are:

- Yachad East Kimberley Regional Accelerated Learning for Workplace Readiness Project – which aims to introduce the Accelerated Learning concept to remote communities in the East Kimberley region.
- Indigenous Agriculture and Horticulture Project – which will develop a model for Indigenous job seekers in the Goulburn Valley region's orchard industry.
- Special Support Programme – which will establish an outreach service in the Broken Hill region for Indigenous ex-offenders.

JOB PLACEMENT, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMME

The Job Placement, Employment and Training (JPET) Programme is an employment preparatory programme which assists young people across Australia, particularly those in regional and rural Australia.

Funding of \$19.9 million will be provided for this programme in 2005-06, assisting around 14,000 young people.

The JPET programme assists young people aged 15–21 years to overcome multiple personal and social barriers that severely limit their capacity to:

- Take up education, study or vocational training.
- Find and keep work.
- Benefit from employment assistance.
- Participate socially in the life of their communities.

JPET focuses primarily on assisting young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The programme also assists young offenders, refugees, wards of the state, or those who are particularly disadvantaged because of geographic isolation, and those who face multiple personal and social barriers that severely limit their participation in employment and the community.

JPET is delivered by a network of service providers with experience in assisting disadvantaged young people who can draw on, and work collaboratively with, existing support services and networks within their local community.

TRANSITION TO WORK

Transition to Work (TTW) aims to help parents who have been out of the labour force for over two years improve their confidence and skills in order to return to work. TTW assistance includes practical help such as skills assessment, help with training, job applications and résumé creation and career counselling.

To be eligible for TTW, job seekers must be searching for work and have not worked in paid employment for more than 15 hours a week for more than 13 weeks during each of the past two years. Job seekers do not have to be on income support to be eligible.

GREEN CORPS — YOUNG AUSTRALIANS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

Green Corps is an Australian Government youth development and environmental training programme for people aged 17–20 years. Green Corps allows young people to volunteer their commitment to conserve, preserve and restore Australia's natural environment and cultural heritage.

In 2005–06, \$24.5 million will be allocated to the programme.

BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Each Green Corps project involves ten young people taking part in a range of activities and experiences over a 26-week period. Participants receive an 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.

DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Department of Employment and Workplace Relations administers a range of services to assist people with a disability to gain and maintain employment.

Disability open employment services assist job seekers with disabilities who have significant and ongoing support needs by providing training, job placement and on-the-job support. In 2003-04, open employment services helped nearly 50,000 people with moderate to severe disabilities find and keep work in the open employment market or in self-employment. Nationally there are 229 organisations providing open employment services from 326 outlets.

From 1 July 2005, disability open employment services will move to 100 per cent implementation of a new case-based funding model. The changes are designed to improve employment outcomes for job seekers and to ensure that people with a disability receive services that best meet their needs. The new model will include a number of elements to ensure that customers with disabilities in rural and remote locations are effectively assisted.

SMALL BUSINESS OHS ADVISERS' NETWORK

The Australian Government will spend \$7 million over the next two years delivering a programme to provide advice to small business employers on improving safety and meeting their legal obligations in the workplace.

The small business advisers will provide both educative and advisory services and will operate nationally across all industry sectors and in urban, rural and regional areas.

ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

AUSTRALIAN WATER FUND

The Australian Government will provide \$2 billion over six years to assist with the funding of practical, on-the-ground water solutions. The Australian Government Water Fund (AWF) represents a major investment by the Australian Government in water infrastructure, improved knowledge and water management, and better practices in the stewardship of Australia's scarce water resources. The fund will benefit all Australians, including those in rural and regional areas. Investment under the fund will be made on the basis that it is consistent with, and helps to achieve, the objectives, outcomes and actions of the National Water Initiative.

There are three programmes under the Australian Water Fund:

- Water Smart Australia.
- Raising National Water Standards.
- Community Water Grants.

WATER SMART AUSTRALIA

A total of \$1.6 billion will be provided to implement the Water Smart Australia programme. The programme will invest to accelerate the development and uptake of smart technologies and practices in water use across Australia. To gain greatest effect from these investments, competitive bidding will be the primary mechanism for allocating grants. Examples of the type of projects that could be eligible are outlined in the policy statement; *Securing Australia's Water Future*, which was released by the Prime Minister in 2004. They include:

- Improving river flows.
- On-farm water use efficiency improvements.
- Desalination of water for use in cities and towns.
- Recycling and reuse of stormwater and 'grey' water.
- More efficient storage facilities.
- Alternatives to ocean outfalls and better management of sewage.
- Improvements in irrigation infrastructure.

BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES

- Developing water efficient housing design.

This component of the AWF is administered by the National Water Commission.

RAISING NATIONAL WATER STANDARDS

The Raising National Water Standards programme will invest \$200 million over six years in Australia's national capacity to measure, monitor and manage its water resources. These investments will be designed to help achieve National Water Initiative outcomes. Projects that could be eligible are outlined in the policy statement; Securing Australia's Water Future. They include the following areas:

- Facilitating a nationally consistent system for collecting and processing water data.
- Strategic assessment of groundwater resources.
- Working with local communities to improve the conservation of water systems with high environmental values through measures such as planning, voluntary conservation agreements and improved knowledge.
- Establishing and promoting the Water Efficiency Labelling Scheme for household appliances, and implementation of the Smart Water Mark regime for household gardens.

This component of the AWF is administered by the National Water Commission.

COMMUNITY WATER GRANTS

The Australian Water Fund (AWF) also provides Community Water Grants to promote the wise use of water. A total of \$200 million will be available over the next five years commencing in 2004-05 for grants of up to \$50,000 each to save and protect water resources. In some instances the grants can be combined to provide grants of a larger scale to community-based non-government organisations. Funded projects will be community oriented, have public benefits, and involve practical on-ground works to save or protect water resources. This component of the AWF is administered by the Department of Environment and Heritage and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

WATER EFFICIENCY LABELLING STANDARDS SCHEME

Through the 2005-06 Budget the Australian Government has implemented a cost recovery arrangement for the Water Efficiency Labelling Standards (WELS) Scheme. A

five-yearly registration fee will be collected to provide a viable long-term funding platform for the regulatory oversight and administration of the WELS Scheme.

Consumers are expected to reap cost savings of approximately \$600 million by 2021 due to the energy and water savings delivered through the WELS Scheme. Water consumption could be reduced by around 87 million litres (ML) per annum by 2021, with water savings over the interim period totalling about 610,000 ML, greater than the volume of Sydney Harbour.

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

The Australian Government's \$3 billion Natural Heritage Trust, in parallel with the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (a joint commitment of \$1.4 billion with the states and territories), provides a long-term, coordinated approach to tackling the major environmental challenges facing our nation. This year the Australian Government will finish accrediting integrated natural resource management plans under the Trust and National Action Plan, and increase its focus on implementing regional investment plans.

COMMONWEALTH ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH FACILITIES (CERF)

The 2005-06 Budget provides \$100 million from 2005-06 to 2009-10 inclusive to improve Australia's capacity to understand and respond to priority environment concerns. The CERF programme will support environmental research that demonstrates public good outcomes in a range of critical areas, and draw on multiple disciplines, professional partnerships and existing research efforts.

Under this programme, \$40 million will be dedicated to specific regional support in North Queensland for a Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility for research relating to the Great Barrier Reef, tropical rainforests and coastal issues. A total of \$60 million will be allocated through national funding rounds from July 2006.

IMPROVING LAUNCESTON'S AIR QUALITY

As indicated in its election statement: *Strengthening Tasmania's Economy and Building a Better Community*, the Australian Government will provide \$1 million over three years from 2005-06 to improve air quality in Launceston. Air quality in the Tamar Valley region of Tasmania continues to fail the national air quality standard for particles by a substantial margin, and there is strong epidemiological evidence that links exposure to wood-smoke particles with serious health effects, including increased mortality and respiratory illnesses.

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The measure will aim for industry agreement to invest in cleaner technologies, maintaining the momentum of the highly successful Launceston Wood-Heater Replacement programme.

NATIONAL RECYCLING HOTLINE

In its 2004 election statement: *A Sustainable Australia – Recycling Rewards*, the Australian Government committed to fund the development of a national recycling telephone hotline to enable the public to find information on the types of waste that can be recycled in their local areas. In the 2005-06 Budget the Australian Government will provide \$300,000 over three years commencing in 2005-06 to deliver this commitment by working with Planet Ark (building on their *Recycling Near You* web based service), local government and recyclers. The hotline will complement a range of national programmes concerning the recovery and recycling of consumer goods and packaging, such as the National Packaging Covenant and proposed schemes to recycle tyres and televisions.

REGIONAL MARINE PLANNING

Australia's marine jurisdiction has been estimated to contribute more than \$70 billion per year to the economy and support more than 900,000 direct and indirect jobs. The development of regional marine plans helps improve our understanding of the biodiversity of the marine environment and the economic potential of Australia's oceans. Marine planning has already made great contributions to science and vastly increased our knowledge of the marine environment.

In 2005-06, the Australian Government will provide annual funding of \$9.4 million for the implementation of regional marine planning, with the extension of the programme to be considered in the 2006-07 Budget. This will enable the Department of the Environment and Heritage to progress regional marine plans for Northern, North-Western and South-Western Australia and to continue the implementation of the South-East regional marine plan.

GREAT BARRIER REEF STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PACKAGE

On 1 July 2004, rezoning in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park increased the area of 'no take' zones in the Park from 4.5 per cent to 33.3 per cent, creating the largest network of protected marine areas in the world. In 2005-06, the Australian Government will provide further funding towards the structural adjustment package available to affected commercial fishers. This package will assist fishers, related businesses and communities adversely affected by the implementation of the new zoning.

KAKADU NATIONAL PARK

Following the abolition of entry fees to Kakadu National Park, the Australian Government has committed additional funding of \$16.4 million towards the management of Kakadu to provide traditional owners with foregone income resulting from the abolition of the fees. The management of the Park will incorporate outcomes arising from a new tourism strategy for Kakadu.

In February 2005, the Kakadu Board of Management supported by the Australian and Northern Territory governments launched a strategic vision for tourism in Kakadu National Park. A shared vision for tourism in Kakadu National Park has been developed in cooperation with the Aboriginal traditional owners, to build a sustainable tourism industry and enhance economic opportunities for the parks traditional owners.

WIND FORECASTING

The wind is a greenhouse-friendly, alternative energy source. The Australian Government has provided \$14 million over five years from 2004-05 to support the development of a wind forecasting system for Australian conditions. This funding will be used to develop and install systems to provide accurate long-range forecasts for wind output, facilitating greater penetration of wind in energy markets and allowing for more strategic planning of new wind farms across Australia.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES AND CENTRELINK

SUPPORTING FAMILIES AT A LOCAL LEVEL

The Australian Government is fully committed to supporting families at a local level. The renewed Stronger Families and Communities Strategy announced on 7 April 2004, has funded a range of community-based projects. The Australian Government has committed \$490 million over five years (2004-2009) to continue and expand the Australian 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.

FAMILY ASSISTANCE — STRONGER FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES STRATEGY

The renewed Stronger Families and Communities Strategy focuses on early childhood (0-5 years) through early intervention, prevention and capacity building initiatives which support and strengthen Australian families and communities by working with them to identify solutions to their local issues. The renewed Strategy comprises four main components:

Communities for Children

Communities for Children provides funding of \$142.4 million over five years (2004-09) to 45 disadvantaged communities across Australia to address the needs of young children and families. Funding of up to \$4 million per community is being provided to local non-government organisations that will be engaged to work with local stakeholders to deliver early childhood development programmes and services.

Early Childhood — Invest to Grow

Early Childhood — Invest to Grow provides funding of \$70.5 million over four years (2004-2008) to expand established and developing early intervention and prevention programmes to a greater number of locations. Funding will also support the development of resources or tools for parents, community groups, professionals and government organisations to support positive early childhood development. Early Childhood — Invest to Grow continues to position Australia as one of the world leaders in best practice in early childhood development.

Local Answers

Local Answers complements other initiatives of the Strategy by providing funding of \$151.6 million over five years (2004-2009) to local community organisations including those in rural and regional areas. Funding is available for local, small-scale, time-limited projects that help communities build skills and capacity, identify opportunities and take action for the benefit of their members in partnership with community organisations, business and local government. Local Answers funds a diverse range of projects including parenting and relationship skills, community strengthening and participation for young parents, volunteering, mentoring and leadership.

The Local Answers funding includes \$14.6 million over five years (2004-2009) for Volunteer Small Equipment Grants of up to \$3,000, which is available to local community organisations for the purchase of equipment.

Choice and Flexibility in Child Care

Choice and Flexibility in Child Care provides funding of \$125.3 million over four years (2004-2008) to continue the groundbreaking work of the first Strategy. It provides Australian parents with flexible and innovative child care solutions by funding the expansion of the In-Home Care programme. 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 available to families that have no other formal child care options including:

- 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.
- Families where either the parent or child has a chronic or terminal illness.

Choice and Flexibility in Child Care also funds the Long Day Care Incentive Scheme which provides incentives for long day care providers to set up more long-day care centres in rural and urban fringe areas of identified high unmet demand.

FAMILY ASSISTANCE — PLAYGROUPS

The Australian Government is contributing approximately \$19 million over four years (2004-2008) to resource and expand playgroup programmes across the country.

There are three types of Playgroup Programmes:

- Mainstream Playgroups – are self-managed by the parents/carers who use these playgroups.
- Supported Playgroups – are those assisted by a facilitator and target linguistically and culturally diverse families, Indigenous families, families with mental health issues, and teenage-parent families.
- Intensive Support Playgroups – target particularly disadvantaged families and children at risk. The focus is community development, offering a wide range of services to support families with children. A facilitator, social worker or other support worker provides extensive support to these playgroups.

The additional funding provides for the establishment of 4000 new mainstream playgroups, as well as around 200 supported, and eight Intensive Support Playgroups over the next three years (2004-2007).

FAMILY ASSISTANCE — RESPONDING EARLY ASSISTING CHILDREN (REACH)

REACH funds services that provide early intervention support for children and families at risk of child abuse and neglect. The programme has a focus on prevention, developing resilience in families and children, and promoting successful transitions for children in vulnerable families. The programme funds child centred, family focussed and community connected programmes such as parenting education, home visits by counsellors, family support, playgroups, mentoring and community development. REACH is partly funded from both the Child Abuse Prevention appropriation and the Services for Families with Children appropriation.

RECONNECT PROGRAMME

Reconnect is a youth homelessness early intervention programme, which began operating in December 1999. The Reconnect Programme is almost fully implemented and as at March 2005, 96 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.

FAMILY ASSISTANCE — INCREASED FUNDING FOR THE CHILD CARE SUPPORT PROGRAMME

The Australian 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 and sustainability of child care services in high need rural, regional and Indigenous communities.
- 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 previous Child Care Support Broadband. The measure will increase access to quality child care for families including children with additional needs and those in rural and remote Australia.

JOBS, EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMME CHILD CARE

Jobs, Education and Training (JET) Child Care helps people who receive certain Centrelink payments, including Parenting Payment, to enter or re-enter the workforce. JET Child Care 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. In 2005-06 JET Child Care will provide more than \$15.7 million to assist low income parents who undertake training and education with affordable child care.

LONG DAY CARE INCENTIVE SCHEME

The Long Day Care Incentive Scheme is a \$12.8 million (over four years to 2007-08) programme designed to encourage the establishment of viable long day care centres in areas of high, unmet demand. Short term incentive funding ensures service provider viability while they build their client base and utilisation rates to sustainable levels.

The target is the creation of at least 25 new long day care centres offering at least 1000 places. Community and private providers are able to apply for assistance to establish new long day care centres in rural, remote and urban fringe areas of high, unmet demand for child care.

IN-HOME CARE

In-Home Care is a flexible form of child care where an approved carer provides care in the child's home. It may be available for families who do not have access to an existing child care service, or where an existing service cannot meet their needs. Families eligible for in-home care include families where the parent/s or child has an illness/disability, families in rural or remote areas and parents working shift work or non-standard hours or for families with multiple births (more than two).

DISADVANTAGED AREA SUBSIDY

Disadvantaged Area Subsidy is paid to community-based child care services operating in rural and regional areas where lower demand and utilisation rates may mean services are not always commercially viable. Disadvantaged Area Subsidy payments will cease on 30 June 2005.

From 1 July 2005 Sustainability Assistance will be introduced. This payment is better targeted and will benefit services in greatest need. Small services in areas of need

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(often rural and remote) will attract greater support than large services so that families in these areas will continue to have access to child care.

AUSLAN INTERPRETING SERVICES — ENHANCED ACCESS

The Australian Government has provided \$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 Auslan people nationally (estimated to be 6,500 people), including deaf people living in regional Australia.

CARERS — INCREASED ACCESS TO RESPITE CARE

The Australian Government has committed \$72.5 million over four years (from 2004-05) to provide increased respite for ageing parents who care for a son or daughter with a disability. Under this measure parents over 70 years of age who care for a son or daughter with a disability will be eligible for up to four weeks respite each year, while parents aged 65 to 69 who care for a son or daughter with a disability and themselves need to spend time in hospital, will be eligible for up to two weeks respite each year. This funding is contingent on state and territory governments matching the offer. The Australian Government believes that parents who have provided a lifetime of care for their sons or daughters with a disability deserve recognition and need appropriate support to continue their caring role.

CARERS — YOUNG CARER RESPITE AND INFORMATION SERVICES

Under this measure, the Australian 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 for 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), and will be implemented in 2005.

SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

The Supported Accommodation Assistance Programme is a jointly funded programme between the Australian and state and territory governments, providing crisis

accommodation and support to those who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness. The Australian Government is expected to provide around \$931 million for the SAAP V Agreement from 2005-06 to 2009-10. States and territories will also make a commitment to SAAP V. SAAP services operate throughout Australia, with around 40 per cent located in regional Australia.

TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENT LIVING ALLOWANCE

The Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA) helps young people between 15 and 25 years to make the transition from care to independent living. TILA was announced in the 2001-02 Budget and implementation began in 2003. TILA is administered through non-government organisations in each state and territory to assist young people who are exiting care, who as a group, are at high risk of disengaging from education, employment and/or the community. Up to \$1,000 in goods or services can be accessed on behalf of these young people.

The Australian Government has expanded the eligibility criteria to now include young people who are exiting juvenile justice, Indigenous kinship care or out of home care and are moving to independent living. This expansion will further the take-up of TILA, which helps young people leaving care to achieve stability and improved participation in community and economic life. The Australian Government has provided funding of \$10.6 million over four years from 2005-06, including \$2.6 million in 2005-06.

MENTOR MARKETPLACE PROGRAMME

The Australian Government will provide \$12 million over four years from 1 July 2005 to fund up to twelve existing Mentor Marketplace projects and fifteen new projects from 1 January 2006.

Several of the current projects are located in regional and remote areas such as Wiluna in WA; Alice Springs in the Northern Territory; Dubbo and Deniliquin in NSW; and Cairns and Tewantin in Queensland.

Continuing the Mentor Marketplace Programme will provide further mentoring opportunities for a wide range of young people including: Indigenous young people; those from disadvantaged groups and localities; those in foster care; young carers and young people with disabilities.

WOMEN'S SAFETY AGENDA

The Women's Safety Agenda delivers on the Australian Government's election commitment to eliminate domestic violence and sexual assault. It reflects recent

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research and evidence that there are strong policy grounds to continue the Australian Government's agenda in this area.

The Australian Government will provide \$75.7 million in the 2005-06 Budget over four years for the Women's Safety Agenda to address four broad themes – prevention, health, justice and services. Together they aim to reduce the incidence and decrease the impact of domestic violence and sexual assault upon the community by building on the achievements of previous initiatives. A specific element of the initiative is training for nurses in regional and rural areas. Women in rural and regional communities are often afraid to come forward for fear of being identified. The Australian Government will provide funding to train practice nurses in regional and rural areas to assist them to identify and respond to domestic violence. Doctors will also receive assistance to release the nurses for this training. This will give people in regional areas access to a personal, confidential referral service.

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 Centres, Call Centres (including two dedicated Rural Call Centres in Port Augusta-South Australia and Maryborough – Queensland) and the Agent network.

In addition to these traditional channels, Centrelink now offers a range of self service options via telephone and Internet that allows many customers to undertake Centrelink business at a time and place that suits them. All Centrelink Agents offer access and assistance for customers to utilise Centrelink Self Services.

Centrelink currently has:

- More than 321 Customer Service Centres across Australia, of which 185 are located in or are responsible for delivering a service to rural and regional Australia.
- 27 call centres (including the two dedicated Rural Call Centres).
- A network of over 520 community – based Agents and Access Points who provide a daily contact and information service on Centrelink's behalf (161 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.
- A service in approximately 87 of the Rural Transaction Centres opened to date with a further 13 pending establishment.

Centrelink has a nationwide network of Farm Help Contact Officers who work closely with farming families facing financial difficulties. There are approximately 50 specialist officers actively involved in servicing rural communities through their ongoing outreach work, such as seminars for farmers and close liaison with the financial and agriculture sectors.

Centrelink has also established relationships with the Australian, state and local governments and the private sector to improve access to Centrelink services for rural customers. These relationships have been strengthened and broadened as Centrelink continues to work closely with a wide range of service providers in assisting rural and regional Australians manage the impacts of the drought.

Centrelink continues to operate its Rural Call Centres in Maryborough – Queensland and Port Augusta – South Australia. These rural-specific call centres provide access to services to rural Australia regardless of distance, isolation and other disadvantages. The centres form part of the Australian Government’s whole-of-government approach to meeting the needs of rural and regional Australia, particularly in assisting rural communities access drought support programmes and services.

CONCESSIONS ON GREAT SOUTHERN RAIL SERVICES

The Australian Government will make available \$30.2 million over four years to continue the reimbursement of concessional fares on Great Southern Rail services. The measure enables the provision of concessions for pensioners, certain veterans and Commonwealth Seniors Health Card holders travelling on the Indian Pacific, the Ghan and the Overland rail services.

HEALTH AND AGEING

RURAL MEDICAL INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

The Rural Medical Infrastructure Fund (RMIF) will provide \$15 million over three years in small communities to help establish ‘walk-in walk-out’ community medical facilities, making it easier to recruit or retain general practitioners.

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The RMIF will provide grants of up to \$200,000 to help rural councils set up these medical centres in smaller communities. In some rural areas, the cost of establishing and maintaining suitable premises and facilities has a heavy impact on the viability of general practice. The high cost is a deterrent for doctors to establish private practices in these areas. An increasingly mobile general practitioner workforce also means some doctors are reluctant to make such a significant and long-term investment.

In response, some councils have established community medical clinics that doctors can use for a reasonable charge, but many small councils simply do not have the resources. The Fund can contribute to the costs incurred by councils that purchase and fit-out facilities, providing continuity of practice management regardless of doctor turnover. This means that families in rural Australia can continue to receive care from a general practitioner with access to their medical records and history.

ROUND THE CLOCK MEDICARE: INVESTING IN MORE AFTER-HOURS GP SERVICES

After-hours care by doctors is being increased for patients – as a priority of the Australian Government.

The new Round the Clock Medicare initiatives will extend the reach of general practice around the clock. New funding of \$555.8 million over the five years from 2004-05 for Round the Clock Medicare will cover:

- \$449.6 million over five years for higher Medicare rebates for after-hours GP services. This began on 1 January this year.
- \$106.2 million over five years for three new grants programmes to support after-hours general practice infrastructure;
 - \$20.6 million over four years for operating subsidies, to a maximum of \$200,000 a year for new and recently established after hours GP services,
 - \$66.5 million over five years for start-up grants of up to \$200,000 over two years and for the Medicare costs for new after-hours GP services, with up to five to be funded this financial year, and
 - \$19.1 million over four years for supplementary assistance to after-hours services in outer suburban and regional areas to ensure their viability.

The Australian Government will provide recurrent operating subsidies, to a maximum of \$200,000 a year for new and recently established after-hours GP clinics and medical deputising services.

These subsidies will be open to 'standard hour clinics' that want to extend their operation, deputising services, or new dedicated after-hours services.

These services will be located in local communities or close to hospitals and health care facilities – at well-located sites, where local communities gain benefit from them.

The Australian Government will also provide one-off start-up grants of up to \$200,000 over two years to assist existing general practices, dedicated after-hours clinics and medical deputising services to remain open after hours. Funding for up to 30 services a year over the next four years will be provided.

The Round the Clock Medicare election commitment also included funding in 2004-05 for clinics run by local GPs in five regions: Kallangur (Queensland); Tweed Heads and Ryde (New South Wales); Glenside (South Australia); and Williamstown (Victoria).

In addition, the Australian Government will provide up to 100 competitive grants of up to \$50,000 per year to: local practices; medical deputising services and cooperatives of local GPs that are operating a rostered after hours surgery-based or call-out service.

ROUND THE CLOCK MEDICARE: CONTINUING THE AFTER HOURS PRIMARY MEDICAL CARE PROGRAMME

This Budget also supports continuation of the existing After Hours Primary Medical Care Programme at a cost of \$58.2 million over four years from 2005-06.

Under the programme, the Australian Government has funded:

- Four major trials.
- 54 seeding grants.
- 12 infrastructure or IT grants.
- 19 project grants.
- 12 quality improvement projects (medical deputising services).

Services currently funded under the After Hours Primary Medical Care Programme's Service Development Grants and Trials components – including GP Assist in Tasmania and GP Access After Hours in the Hunter urban region of NSW – have had their contracts extended to June 2006. Existing services are currently undergoing a thorough evaluation.

DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING TRAINING COURSES FOR CANCER NURSES

The Australian Government will provide \$4.1 million in new funding over the four years from 2005-06 to develop and implement a training package for nurses to become specialised in cancer care. This initiative will be managed by the Peter McCallum Cancer Institute, in association with other Australian cancer care institutions and professional colleges and associations.

CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR RURAL AND REMOTE NURSING WORKFORCE

The Australian Government has re-affirmed its support for the rural and remote nursing workforce by providing funding of \$20.6 million over three years from 2005-06 to continue the existing Rural and Remote Nurse Scholarship Programme.

The programme provides scholarships and support to nurses, former nurses and nursing students in rural and remote Australia.

The assistance provided allows them to study nursing, update their skills or qualifications, attend conferences, or re-enter the nursing workforce.

This programme contains several initiatives that support, educate or train the rural and remote health workforce and assist in removing major barriers to recruiting and retaining rural and remote health workers.

This programme has funded postgraduate scholarships for rural nursing and allied health professionals, training posts in rural areas for medical specialists, and a variety of training and support initiatives under the Rural Health Support Education and Training Programme.

REAFFIRMING A COMMITMENT TO A STRONG RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH WORKFORCE

The Australian Government has reaffirmed its commitment to improving access to high-quality health services for rural and remote communities by committing to continue \$17.2 million of funding over three years to 2007-08 for the National Rural and Remote Health Support Services Programme.

ADDITIONAL PRACTICE NURSES FOR RURAL AUSTRALIA AND OTHER AREAS OF NEED

The Australian Government has committed to continue providing grants to support employment of practice nurses, to general practices in rural areas and other areas of need. The grants are made available to practices enrolled in the Practice Incentive Programme (PIP), and will total \$129.7 million over the four years to 2008-09.

More than 1,000 general practices have directly benefited from the PIP practice nurse payment.

The role of the nurse in general practice will also be enhanced by other programmes being introduced by the Australian Government. This includes a new role for practice nurses as contacts for domestic violence victims, and in providing cervical screening to women in rural and regional areas.

RESPITE CARE TO ASSIST EMPLOYED CARERS

Carers in paid employment and carers re-entering the workforce will benefit from an increase in the number of respite services available through funding of \$95.5 million over four years. This will include increasing the funding to Commonwealth Carer Respite Centres, enabling day respite centres for older Australians to extend their hours of operation. This will provide additional respite for up to 5,000 employed carers.

RESIDENTIAL RESPITE FUNDING BOOST

Funding for residential respite will be boosted by \$41.8 million over four years which will enable an extra one million high care respite days in aged care homes. This will allow an estimated 47,000 carers to take a break from their demanding carer role, with the peace of mind that comes with knowing their loved one is receiving high quality care.

OVERNIGHT RESPITE IN COMMUNITY RESPITE HOUSES

The Australian Government will increase overnight respite in community respite houses by providing \$61 million over four years for Commonwealth Carer Respite Centres to purchase more than 55,000 nights of care in the community for 2,000 carers, particularly in areas where such options may be limited.

The funding will also support the development of specific standards and reporting requirements for community respite houses to ensure older people in community respite are receiving the quality care they need.

INCREASING RURAL AND REGIONAL RESPITE SERVICES

Rural and regional respite services' capacity will be increased to provide access to flexible respite services tailored to meet demand specific to rural and remote areas through \$9.3 million funding over four years to Multipurpose Services. This will provide more than 122,000 days of respite care through Multipurpose Services.

REAFFIRMING A COMMITMENT TO BETTER OUTCOMES IN MENTAL HEALTH CARE

The Australian Government's Better Outcomes in Mental Health Care Initiative has been providing GPs with education and training to help them deliver quality care to patients with mental health problems and it has allowed access for patients to allied health professional care.

The Australian Government has reaffirmed its commitment to the prevention and early intervention of mental illness in the community by providing continued funding of \$102.2 million over four years to 2008-09 to continue the Better Outcomes in Mental Health Care Initiative. Additional funding will also be available through the Medicare Benefits Schedule for GPs to provide chronic disease management, including care plans and reviews for patients with mental health problems.

The Australian Government will also provide an additional \$42.6 million over five years to expand the programme, which assists GPs in managing patients with mental health problems and rewards GPs for providing best-practice, primary mental health care.

These funds will also provide a GP Psychiatric Support Service so that GPs can seek advice from a psychiatrist via phone, fax or e-mail for patient care.

DEMENTIA

The Australian government will provide over \$250 million over four years to improve the care of elderly Australians living with dementia and will make dementia a National Health Priority Area. This includes the provision of 2,000 new Extended Aged Care at Home places specifically targeted to people with dementia, and expansion of the Carer Education and Workforce Training project, providing dementia specific training for up to 9,000 aged care workers and up to 7,000 carers and community workers.

CANCER PREVENTION AND SCREENING ACTIVITIES

The Australian Government will allocate \$43.4 million over four years for a bowel cancer screening pilot programme, which will reduce morbidity from bowel cancer. From the middle of 2006, people turning 55 years or 65 years old across Australia will be invited to complete a simple, yet highly effective test in the privacy of their own home and mail it in for analysis. People in regional Australia will benefit from having ready access to simple early detection services.

DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING MENTORING FOR REGIONAL CANCER SERVICES

Over the four years from 2005-06, \$14.1 million in new funding has been allocated to assist hospitals, providers and support networks to develop and implement cancer care mentoring.

A mentoring system involving major urban teaching hospitals in each state and territory, linked to several regional and bush nursing hospitals in regional centres, will help foster multidisciplinary approaches in regional areas where on-the-ground support is less comprehensive.

The mentoring plan will encourage specialists and other leading health professionals from centres of excellence in cancer to spend more time in rural and regional areas and be available to consult with regional colleagues.

NEW MEDICARE REBATE FOR PAP SMEARS TAKEN IN RURAL AUSTRALIA

Meeting the Australian Government's 2004 election commitment, a Medicare rebate is now available for Pap smears taken by a practice nurse on behalf of a general practitioner in regional, rural or remote areas.

The Australian Government has committed \$17.8 million over five years from 2004-05 to this initiative. The new Pap smear Medicare rebate, which came into effect on 1 January 2005, requires the practice nurse to be qualified and trained to take a Pap smear. The GP retains responsibility for the health, safety and clinical outcomes of the patient.

By supporting the mostly female practice nurses to carry out Pap smear tests, more women will be encouraged to take advantage of this important health service.

MEDICARE BENEFITS ELIGIBILITY FOR TWO MORE MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING UNITS

In February this year, 21 new providers of Medicare-eligible MRI services were announced.

In line with the Australian Government's election commitment, eligibility for Medicare will be extended to one Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) unit in Dubbo and one mobile MRI unit in the Gippsland region.

With the addition of these units, there will be 101 Medicare-eligible MRI machines in Australia.

The Dubbo unit will improve access to MRI services for people living in rural and remote western New South Wales.

As well as the recurrent Medicare costs for this unit, the Australian Government is providing new funding of \$3 million towards purchasing and equipping the mobile MRI unit. Patients who obtain Medicare-eligible services from the mobile MRI unit will not incur out-of-pocket expenses.

MRI is a powerful diagnostic tool that does not use radiation to generate scans. It is especially useful for scans of soft tissue like the brain and for the diagnosis of conditions such as cancer.

NEW MEDICARE OFFICES

In 2005-06, the Health Insurance Commission will be opening an additional two new Medicare offices. These are in Tuncurry, NSW and Wynnum, Queensland. This reflects the Australian Government's focus on and commitment to providing easy access to Medicare services.

ACCOMMODATION FOR VISITING HEALTH PROFESSIONALS, NORTH EAST TASMANIA

Meeting its 2004 election commitment, the Australian Government will provide one-off funding of \$100,000 to the Dorset Shire Council towards the cost of building an accommodation unit for visiting health professionals at Scottsdale Hospital. This money is being provided on a matching basis with the Tasmanian Government.

The accommodation will make it easier to attract health professionals, reducing the need for people in the area to travel far when they require specialist health services.

GIPPSLAND LAKES COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

In line with its 2004 election commitment, the Australian Government will provide funding of \$500,000 over two years for the building of a new community health centre in Gippsland, Victoria. The new centre will house important health care services for the broader Gippsland Lakes community.

INDIGENOUS PARTNERSHIPS

INDIGENOUS HOUSING, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ESSENTIAL MUNICIPAL SERVICES

The Australian Government will continue to supplement state, territory and local government efforts to increase access to adequate, appropriate and sustainable rental housing, related infrastructure and essential municipal services for Indigenous people in regional, rural and remote Australia.

The Australian Government will provide \$284.6 million in 2005-06 to deliver Indigenous housing, infrastructure and essential municipal services programmes through arrangements with state and territory governments and regional and local Indigenous community housing providers. A total of \$93.3 million will also be provided for the Aboriginal Rental Housing Programme.

In delivering Indigenous housing, infrastructure and essential municipal services programmes the Australian Government will provide \$102.8 million over four years from 2005-06 to continue the Healthy Indigenous Housing initiative and to further consolidate the Australian and state and territory governments' targeting of community housing need in rural and remote communities. The initiative will expedite reforms of Indigenous community housing, and will continue a programme of involving Indigenous households and communities in assessing and repairing houses to build local community capacity. The initiative will also continue to deliver the Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Programme in one remote community per year.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACTION PLAN FOR REMOTE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

The Telecommunications Action Plan for Remote Indigenous Communities (TAPRIC) was established as part of the Australian Government's response to the Telecommunications Service Inquiry.

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In keeping with the commitment announced by the Australian Government during the 2004 election, \$3 million has been allocated in the 2005-06 Budget to continue initiatives under TAPRIC. These funds will be used to continue to support the costs of providing essential voice telephone services and internet services for Remote Indigenous Communities (RICs).

RICs need access to both the telephone and internet which are basic tools for business contact with customers and suppliers and when accessing government, financial and information services. To address the existing inadequacy of such services a Community Phones Programme and associated Internet strategies are to be implemented.

Initiatives will seek to overcome a number of complex logistical and social factors affecting the provision of basic telephone services in remote Indigenous communities.

The provision of Community Phones will address the need in RICs for access to affordable and accessible basic telephone services and improved take-up and use of telephone services.

In parallel with telephone services, the provision of sustainable publicly accessible Internet will be targeted.

HEALTHY FOR LIFE PROGRAMME

A new programme to improve the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers, babies and children to reduce the impact of chronic diseases will receive \$102.4 million over four years from 2005-06.

The Healthy for Life Programme is a new, systematic approach to providing a healthy start in life for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. It is an important step in breaking the cycle of poor health into adulthood.

By improving access to early and regular ante-natal and child health care, the programme will result in improved birth weights and fewer health problems requiring doctor or hospital treatment for infants and young children. Increased screening and treatment for chronic diseases in adults will mean earlier identification and initiation of treatment to prevent progression of the disease and the medical complications associated with advanced diabetes.

The programme includes a workforce component designed to increase the number of Indigenous Australians trained as health professionals. This will help build the skills base in Indigenous communities to improve the performance of local health services and also to improve employment prospects for local people.

PRIMARY HEALTH CARE ACCESS PROGRAMME

The Primary Health Care Access Programme (PHCAP) aims to strengthen local health care systems to improve access to comprehensive primary health care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and to fund additional services based on priorities identified through regional and local area planning processes. The Australian Government will make available an additional \$40 million over four years of new funding which will provide for the establishment of a number of new centres in priority areas.

IMPROVED PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' access to GPs and other primary health care services across Australia will be further improved through the allocation of an additional \$40 million over the next four years.

This funding will enable the establishment of new primary health care clinics in communities where they are not currently available, and provide the primary health care professionals needed to staff them. The funding will also be used to strengthen established clinics to meet the health needs in communities where services are currently very limited. Strengthening health services will also provide the base to support other new targeted health initiatives such as the Healthy for Life programme being funded in this Budget.

Resources will be used to establish up to four new clinics and to provide additional opportunities for patients to access primary health care through existing clinics. The main focus of these additional resources will be in rural and remote areas and will immediately help to meet the current shortfall of health professionals in remote Indigenous services including Aboriginal health workers, nurses, doctors and counsellors.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE HEARING SERVICES

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will get greater access to Australian Government Hearing Services through new funding of \$10.1 million over the four years commencing from 2005-06.

The measure provides access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 50 years and over, and to participants on the Community Development Employment Programme (CDEP) to the Australian Government Hearing Services Programme.

Hearing problems can be a major barrier to workforce participation. The CDEP accounted for one in four jobs held by Indigenous Australians in 2002. Addressing

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hearing problems by extending access to hearing services for CDEP participants will assist these individuals to more fully participate in the programme and to secure ongoing employment.

An estimated 10,000 additional Indigenous Australians suffering a hearing loss will benefit from Australian Government subsidised hearing services over the next four years.

The new measure will come into effect on 1 December 2005.

COMBATING PETROL SNIFFING

The Australian Government has reaffirmed its commitment to promoting safer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, through the extension of its successful Comgas Scheme aimed at reducing petrol sniffing.

There are presently 37 communities that are assisted through the Comgas Scheme, which limits access to sources of sniffable fuel. An additional \$9.6 million over four years has been allocated to reach a further 23 communities.

The additional funding will also allow the trialling of regional specific approaches to reduce petrol sniffing in two Council of Australian Governments trial sites. This will help inform future planning to combat petrol sniffing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Reduction in petrol sniffing will make a major contribution to whole-of-government efforts to reduce the impact of substance abuse and secure better health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Engaging in direct partnerships with Indigenous communities has made programmes such as these possible.

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 focused on supporting Indigenous communities particularly those participating in the Council of Australian Governments' Indigenous Community Coordination Pilots around Australia. Funding of \$8.5 million was made available over four years from 2002-03.

ADDRESSING INDIGENOUS NEEDS – SHARED RESPONSIBILITY AGREEMENTS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This measure will continue support for communities to engage with government through Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs) and Regional Partnership Agreements (RPAs). A total of \$23.1 million will be provided in 2005-06.

The new whole-of-government arrangements for service delivery to Indigenous people are based on shared responsibility. This measure will provide resources for SRA development and fund priorities that do not fall neatly into individual government agencies' responsibilities, while also supporting existing and new Communities in Crisis interventions and continuing assistance for Torres Strait Islanders on the mainland.

This measure will also provide resources to support Indigenous communities engaging with governments around the development of SRAs and RPAs. Communities may need support at the local level to identify their short and long-term priorities and what commitments they will make in return for government investment in their SRA. These funds can also assist with SRA implementation.

FAMILY VIOLENCE REGIONAL ACTIVITIES PROGRAMME

With an allocation of \$4.2 million in 2005-06 the Family Violence Regional Activities Programme (FVRAP) aims to provide practical and flexible support for grassroots projects that have been identified by Indigenous communities as a local priority to address family violence, sexual assault, child abuse and/or child protection. FVRAP also seeks to trial new/innovative approaches to reduce family violence in Indigenous communities.

Particular focus is given to projects that reflect the importance of protecting women and children, and breaking the cycle of violence. This includes initiatives to address causal issues, such as recognition/healing/grieving projects, or perpetrator programmes. FVRAP supports effective solutions that involve all elements of the community and where appropriate, traditional approaches to family relationships and/or traditional law, increasing skills, developing, supporting and/or maintaining community capacity and social capital building initiatives.

FAMILY VIOLENCE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME

The Family Violence Partnership Programme builds on the Australian Government's commitment to tackle family violence and child abuse in Indigenous communities through the development of partnerships with state and territory governments.

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Funding of \$37.3 million over four years was announced in May 2004 for this programme.

The initiative aims to achieve sustained measures that address family violence and improve individual and community safety for Indigenous people. Funded activities aim to effect change by treating causal factors of family violence rather than symptoms. The partnership approach enables Indigenous communities to be involved in, and share responsibility for, planning and implementation of local solutions.

SUPPORT FOR INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

Under new arrangements for Indigenous education and training for 2005-08, the Australian Government has increased its focus on Indigenous students in rural and remote areas.

The new arrangements include increased funding for in-class tuition for those Indigenous students who do not meet Year 3, 5 and 7 literacy and numeracy national benchmarks, with a weighting to remote participants. Funding is also provided for a tuition scheme targeted at Indigenous 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.

Ongoing and enhanced support is being 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. Funds are also being provided under a programme of support for school-parent partnerships to tackle entrenched problems, with at least 50 per cent of this amount targeted at remote schools.

The Australian Government is also providing an estimated \$13 million over the period 2005-06 to 2008-09 to benefit isolated Indigenous students, by increasing the ABSTUDY basic School Fees Allowance for Indigenous students to \$6,000 per annum from 1 January 2005.

TUTORIAL SUPPORT FOR REMOTE INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

An additional \$8.7 million will be provided over four years for tutorial assistance and support for one year Indigenous students who leave their communities each year to attend school in provincial and metropolitan locations. From January 2006, some 680 students will be eligible to receive up to four hours of individual tutorial assistance per week, for up to 32 weeks.

INDIGENOUS YOUTH MOBILITY PROGRAMME

The Indigenous Youth Mobility Programme is part of the Australian Government's Indigenous Australians Opportunity and Responsibility election commitment. It provides \$19 million over four years to assist 600 young Indigenous people, primarily from remote areas of Australia, to access pre-vocational training, trade and non-trade New Apprenticeships and tertiary training opportunities in occupations such as nursing, accountancy, business management and teaching.

Young Indigenous people, with the support of their families and communities, will elect to relocate to major centres to take up training and employment opportunities. The programme will provide mentoring and support to participants and encouragement to return to their communities so that on completion of their studies they can continue to contribute to these communities.

Safe and supported accommodation will be provided by Aboriginal Hostels Limited. Local educational institutions, employers, mentors and Aboriginal Hostel House Parents will operate as a team to ensure the social and physical wellbeing of the young people and to optimise academic results.

ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR INDIGENOUS HIGHER EDUCATION

The Australian Government is providing \$3 million in additional funding over 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.

MAINTENANCE OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE AND RECORDS PROGRAMME

The Australian Government will provide \$8.5 million in 2005-06 for the Maintenance of Indigenous Languages Programme.

The Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records Programme supports the revival and maintenance of Indigenous languages as living systems of knowledge shared by communities and passed down from generation to generation. The programme supports a national network of 21 language centres, most of which are located in regional, rural or remote Australia. The programme also provides funding to community based language activities targeting endangered languages with less than twenty remaining speakers.

NATIONAL ARTS AND CRAFTS INDUSTRY SUPPORT STRATEGY (NACISS) PROGRAMME

NACISS is an Australian Government programme which fosters the development of community-based visual arts and crafts activities in order to develop and maintain a successful Indigenous visual arts and crafts industry that is economically viable and culturally sustainable. The programme supports Indigenous art centres, many of which are located in remote and regional areas. In 2005-06, approximately \$4.4 million will be allocated to NACISS.

REGIONAL ARTS AND CULTURE SUPPORT

The Australian Government will provide \$6.7 million in 2005-06 for the Regional Arts and Culture Support Programme.

The Regional Arts and Culture Support Programme funds activities that maintain the depth and diversity of cultural practice within Indigenous communities. It promotes Indigenous cultures as dynamic and integral elements of Australian culture and identity and aims to foster, maintain and preserve regional and local Indigenous arts and cultures and support community participation in the process of cultural transmission.

PROMOTING AND DEVELOPING INDIGENOUS ART

New Australian Government funding initiatives will provide additional support for the promotion and development of Indigenous visual arts with the allocation of \$4 million over four years from 2004-05 to 2007-08 for the upgrading of art centre facilities, and for training and marketing initiatives. Funds will also be released from the Northern Territory Aboriginal Benefit Account for a comprehensive Indigenous art development strategy, benefiting art centres and Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory.

INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT POLICY

The Indigenous Employment Policy (IEP) was implemented in July 1999 in recognition of the particular disadvantage of Indigenous Australians in the labour market and aims to generate more employment opportunities for Australia's Indigenous peoples.

The major components of the IEP include the Structured Training and Employment Projects, the Corporate Leaders for Indigenous Employment Project, Wage Assistance, the National Cadetship Project, the Indigenous Small Business Fund and Indigenous Community Volunteers.

ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY

The Aboriginal Employment Strategy (AES) service based in Moree, Tamworth and Dubbo will continue and expand to more sites from July 2005. The AES will match Indigenous job seekers with job opportunities and provide support for both the employer and job seeker to promote long term employment outcomes. The AES will provide more choice and complementary employment services for Indigenous job seekers in all sites where it operates.

EMERGING INDIGENOUS ENTREPRENEURS STRATEGY

In regional areas where employment opportunities are limited a new strategy, worth \$4.5 million over four years (2004-08), will encourage and empower potential Indigenous entrepreneurs toward self employment and small business opportunities. The Emerging Indigenous Entrepreneurs Strategy will link emerging Indigenous entrepreneurs with private sector intermediaries who have financial expertise and provide financial literacy training to community members seeking to start a business.

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AND THE MINING INDUSTRY JOIN FORCES

The Australian Government is providing \$2 million over four years to 2008-09 to foster and support effective partnerships between Indigenous communities and the mining industry. Now in its fourth year, the Working in Partnership programme is supporting effective partnerships between Indigenous communities and the mining/exploration sector in remote communities where there are very few alternative employment prospects.

FRINGE BENEFIT TAX SUPPLEMENTATION FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ORGANISATIONS

The Australian Government has reaffirmed its commitment to assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to retain professional staff through the continuance of its FBT supplementation programme.

Funding of \$59.7 million will be provided over four years to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations which provide health, housing, employment, educational and legal services to assist them with overcoming the disadvantages they face in attracting and retaining professional staff, especially to remote areas of Australia.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations were disadvantaged by additional costs resulting from the introduction of reforms to the FBT scheme in 2000. These

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reforms were designed to restrict the overuse of the FBT concessions available to public benevolent institutions.

The funding is a recommitment to the programme introduced by the Australian Government in April 2001. Over the past four years Indigenous organisations have been able to maintain staff in over 1,400 positions.

Continuing FBT supplementation will ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, especially those in rural and remote areas, are able to retain doctors, nurses, lawyers, teachers and competent and experienced administration and management professionals.

LEGAL SYSTEM AND SERVICES

FAMILY SERVICES TO REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

The Australian Government has committed an additional \$397.2 million over four years from 2005-06 for a package of reforms to the family law system. The reforms aim to enhance family relationships and to help separated families. Many of the new services will be accessible to rural, regional and Indigenous communities.

Central to the Australian Government's initiatives is a new network of 65 Family Relationship Centres to be established over three years. The centres will provide a range of information and referral to services that can help prevent family separation or help deal with separation. The centres will also provide advice about the family law system and about developing parenting plans and help parents to reach agreement on parenting arrangements after family separation. The centres will provide outreach facilities to rural centres and will be supported by a national advice line and website.

Other services to assist families have also been expanded. These include early intervention services including additional family relationship education services and 35 counselling and family relationship skills training services. An additional 15 services under the Contact Orders Programme and 30 additional children's contact services will assist parents who are having ongoing difficulties with contact arrangements with their children following separation.

Specific focus is also given to men's related services, such as Men's Line Australia, improving the ability for men in regional areas to access relationship services. Several of the 45 new men and family relationship services will be located in regional areas.

The new budget measures are in response to the report by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs *Every Picture*

Tells a Story. The Australian Government will also be introducing amendments to the Family Law Act which will aim to promote sharing of parental responsibility after separation and make the court system less adversarial and easier to navigate. The reforms will be supported by a community education campaign.

REGIONAL PRIMARY DISPUTE RESOLUTION SERVICES

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. A total of \$2.1 million is provided in 2005-06 to continue the programme.

AUSTRALIAN LAW ONLINE

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 non-metropolitan areas who require simple legal advice or information. The Attorney-General's Department is also developing a law and justice portal to be referred to as Australian Law Online. A total of \$1.4 million is provided in 2005-06 to continue the programme.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Australia is a nation prone to a range of hazards, including fire, flood, heatwave, severe storm, cyclone, earthquake, and the potential threat to Australia from terrorism.

The Australian Government policy initiative *Working Together to Manage Emergencies*, announced in September 2004, is recognition of the need to develop self-reliance at both the community and local government level in order to enhance community safety. Implementation of the commitment will be undertaken through programme partnerships between the Australian, state and territory governments, local authorities and emergency services sector volunteers.

Working Together to Manage Emergencies provides \$49 million in funding over four years, commencing in 2004-05, to support local governments, communities and volunteer organisations to develop strategies to improve community safety and to improve training for volunteers involved in emergency management. The initiative comprises two fully funded Australian Government grant schemes:

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- A Local Grant Scheme for local councils and communities.
- A National Emergency Volunteer Support Fund.

LOCAL GRANTS SCHEME

The Local Grants Scheme is intended to enhance the capability of communities to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters and emergencies arising from any hazard. The scheme will provide funding to assist communities to develop and implement community emergency risk management initiatives, enhance protective measures for critical infrastructure and provide emergency management and security awareness training. In the context of this scheme, 'community' includes local councils, remote and Indigenous communities.

NATIONAL EMERGENCY VOLUNTEER SUPPORT FUND

The National Emergency Volunteer Support Fund has been established to provide assistance for volunteer organisations to undertake projects that will boost recruitment, skills and training of volunteers at the frontline of emergency management. This fund recognises the significant role that Australia's national emergency services volunteer pool plays in assisting the community to respond to and recover from the effects of the range of hazards to which they are vulnerable.

NATIVE TITLE RESOURCING

The Australian Government has committed an additional \$72.9 million over four years (commencing 2005-06 to 2008-09) for native title resourcing. This funding will be directed to the Federal Court, National Native Title Tribunal, Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination in the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs and the Attorney-General's Department to continue improving the operation of the native title system.

The additional \$72.9 million will contribute to building a more efficient native title system that is increasingly focused on resolving native title issues through agreement-making and mediation, rather than costly and protracted litigation. More efficient 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. For example, the successful resolution of native title issues will facilitate the use and development of land, including exploration and exploitation of mineral resources, which will contribute to the development of the rural and regional economy.

NATIONAL COMMUNITY CRIME PREVENTION

The Australian Government has increased the funds available under the National Community Crime Prevention Programme (NCCPP) to \$58 million over four years (commencing 2004-05 to 2007-08). The centrepiece of the NCCPP is a national community grants scheme 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. Over \$5 million was awarded in the first round of grants announced in July and September 2004.

MIGRATION TO OUR REGIONS

BOOST FOR REGIONAL SERVICES THROUGH IMMIGRATION

The Australian Government is committed to having regional Australia share the benefits brought by our Migration Programme to achieve a greater dispersal of our migrant and humanitarian intake to regional areas. The Australian Government has approved an increase of 20,000 places to the Skill Stream of the Migration programme in 2005-06 (which will take the total skill stream to 97,500 places). Within the Skill Stream, at least 18,000 visas will be granted under State Specific and Regional Migration categories. The actual number achieved will be largely contingent on the extent to which state and territory governments utilise the State Specific and Regional mechanisms available to them. The Australian Government will work with the state and territory governments to identify skills shortages and to create opportunities to fill this shortage through a number of new initiatives.

The Australian Government will provide an additional \$3 million over four years for settlement services to support new arrivals in regional Australia.

To address the demand for more skilled migrants by many states and regions, the Australian Government has revised the eligibility criteria so that an additional 10 points will be allocated for state/region sponsorship under the Skilled Independent Regional (SIR) visa.

SKILLED DESIGNATED AREAS SPONSORED VISA

The Skilled Designated Area Sponsored Visa will be made more effective to retain skills in regional and designated areas. From mid 2006 the SDAS Visa will be issued as a temporary residence visa. SDAS Visa holders will be able to apply for permanent

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residence after they have lived and worked in a designated area for a minimum period of time.

TRADE SKILLS TRAINING VISA

The Australian Government will provide \$11.2 million through the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs and the Department of Education, Science and Training over four years to enable overseas students to undertake New Apprenticeships with employers in regional Australia, with a view to them applying for State-Specific and Regional Migration visas at the completion of their training. This measure includes a component for enhanced and targeted community relations and liaison to ensure the overseas apprentices are valued for the contribution they make to the regional communities.

SEASONAL HARVEST WORKERS — INCREASED WORKING HOLIDAY MAKER VISAS

Incentives will be provided to encourage working holiday makers to undertake seasonal work in regional Australia. Working Holiday Maker (WHM) visas are normally limited to 12 months and provided once in a lifetime. Under this new initiative, WHM visa holders who undertake a minimum of three months work in regional Australia will be entitled to apply for a second WHM visa.

REGIONAL SERVICES

REGIONAL ELECTION COMMITMENTS DELIVERED

Australia's regions continue to benefit from the funding commitments made by the Australian Government through the Regional Partnerships and Sustainable Regions Programmes.

The Budget includes funding to deliver commitments made during the 2004 election for projects identified and supported by local communities. Six significant regional icon projects will receive \$27.8 million, 15 Tasmanian projects share \$2.8 million and 14 other projects will benefit from \$10.8 million in grants.

SUSTAINABLE REGIONS

The 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 \$48.3 million for 2005-06, 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 Australian Government committed, during the 2004 election, to extending the programme to two new regions. The Darling Matilda Way Sustainable Region encompasses western New South Wales and south-west Queensland. The second new Region is the Northern Rivers and North Coast New South Wales Sustainable Region. The existing eight Regions 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 existing eight regions with approved projects attracting \$3 in partner contributions for each \$1 awarded under the Sustainable Regions Programme. The Advisory Committees and other administrative arrangements are being put into place for the two new Regions, with the first project announcements expected during 2005-06.

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

The Australian Government's approach to regional development as 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 Australian Government will spend a total of \$360.9 million over the four years from 2005-06 on the Regional Partnerships Programme which supports this approach to regional development.

Regional Partnerships focuses on projects which help communities:

- Strengthen growth and opportunities.

BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES

- Improve access to services.
- Support planning.
- 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.
- 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 Regional Partnerships. 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.

FEDERAL ASSISTANCE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

In 2005-06, local government is expected to receive \$1.6 billion in Local Government Financial Assistance Grants. Of the total, \$1.1 billion is for general purposes and the remaining \$497 million is for local roads. This is an increase of \$67.4 million over the 2004-05 allocation.

These grants are untied so councils can use them for local priorities. As councils are responsible for over 80 per cent of the nation's roads, these grants contribute to maintaining these roads and providing other essential council services.

The grants are allocated between councils primarily on the basis of relative needs. As a result more than \$1 billion will go to councils in rural and regional Australia.

In 2005-06, South Australian councils will receive \$9 million in supplementary funding for local roads. It is part of the Australian Government's \$26.3 million package to address South Australia's current disadvantage in the local roads funding formula.

Some areas of the Northern Territory, South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria are so remote they are not covered by the local council system. 'Unincorporated areas' like these will receive \$30 million over four years for local roads (\$7.5 million in 2005-06) under the AusLink Strategic Regional programme.

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT REGIONAL INFORMATION SERVICE

The Australian Government Regional Information Service brings together, under the one umbrella, a number of practical ways for regional, rural and remote Australians to obtain information about programmes and services delivered by the Australian Government.

The service provides clients with information on relevant services and programmes along with contact details for responsible agencies. The service aims to enable easy access to Australian Government information. The Australian Government has committed \$1 million in 2005-06 for delivery of call centre services, a website and a directory to assist the information needs of regional Australians.

The Australian Government Regional Information Service comprises of:

- A telephone information service – 1800 026 222 – available Australia wide Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm AEST.
- A website (www.regionalaustralia.gov.au) – The Regional Entry Point, providing information on and links to Australian Government services and programmes.
- A printed directory – the Australian Government Regional Information Directory (previously known as the Commonwealth Regional Information Directory and the Rural Book), a comprehensive guide to Australian Government Services and programmes with associated contact details.

NATURAL DISASTER MITIGATION

In 2005-06, the Australian Government will continue to support natural disaster mitigation at each level of government by providing funding through the Natural Disaster Mitigation Programme, the Regional Flood Mitigation Programme and the new Bushfire Mitigation Programme.

In 2005-06, \$33.3 million will be made available to support natural disaster mitigation projects and activities such as the construction of flood levee banks, cyclone shelters

BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES

and fire trails. This funding includes \$9.6 million for the Regional Flood Mitigation Programme, \$9 million for the Natural Disaster Mitigation Programme and \$5 million for the Bushfire Mitigation Programme.

Together, these partnership programmes provide funding to states and territories for cost-effective mitigation activities that contribute to safer, sustainable communities better able to withstand the effects of natural disasters.

BANK@POST

Around 260 communities in Australia will soon have access to electronic banking services provided through a new Government initiative called Bank@Post. The new services will be provided to Licensed Post Offices resulting in better business and personal banking services for many rural and isolated communities. Licensed Post Offices that handle a minimum of 2500 eligible transactions each year were selected to receive on-line banking services through the Australia Post giroPost system. Bank@Post is allocated \$10.8 million over five years from 2004-05, with \$6.1 million identified in 2005-06. The rollout of the programme will occur in five phases and will be completed by the end of 2006. The first two phases of Licensed Post Offices will be providing services to their communities by Christmas 2005.

RESEARCH AND SCIENCE

IMPROVED REGIONAL POPULATION ESTIMATES

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has been provided with \$2 million over four years to improve the accuracy of population estimates, including regional estimates. Funding will enable the ABS to explore and analyse administrative data sources that could be used to improve estimates of the usually resident population of state and territory regions. The ABS will also be able to examine better methods for producing inter-censal state and territory population estimates.

NEW SURVEY OF NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The ABS will be given \$3.3 million over four years to conduct a new biennial Natural Resource Management (NRM) Survey. The NRM Survey will provide regional (statistical division) estimates of the main land and water management activities undertaken by Australia's farmers. Topics planned for the survey include weed management, the management of native vegetation and degraded areas as well as the factors that affect the ability of farmers to manage the environment. Results of the

initial survey will be available at the end of 2006. The information from the survey will enable improved monitoring and evaluation of investments made under the Natural Heritage Trust, the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and the National Water Initiative as well as supporting State of the Environment reporting by the Commonwealth and State Governments.

CSIRO NATIONAL RESEARCH FLAGSHIPS

In addition to its core research activities, the Australian 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.

The Flagships are closely aligned to the National Research Priorities and will deliver solutions to advance national objectives. Regional communities will benefit with approximately 20 per cent of CSIRO research infrastructure located in regional areas.

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 10 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.

SMART MOVES PROGRAMME

Through funding provided in 2005-06 Budget, via the Backing Australia's Ability initiative, Questacon continues to deliver the Smart Moves Programme to regional Australia. The aim is to raise secondary school students' awareness of science and innovation and encourages involvement in science, maths, engineering and technology, especially in regional and rural areas.

The funding, over seven years, provides touring science outreach programmes to school, an annual Invention Convention and website material.

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.

A dedicated element of the ARC's grants programme operates as an on-going scheme to address issues of concern and direct benefit to regional and rural areas. The Linkage Projects scheme supports collaborative research projects between higher education researchers and industry. Funding is allocated through a competitive grant assessment process with approximately 20 per cent of available Linkage Projects funding earmarked to support collaborative research on issues of benefit to rural or regional communities.

COOPERATIVE RESEARCH CENTRES PROGRAMME

The Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) Programme supports research partnerships between the public sector (universities and government research agencies) and the private sector (firms and industry organisations). The programme emphasises the importance of collaborative arrangements to maximise the benefits of research through an enhanced process for utilisation, commercialisation and technology transfer. It also equips researchers with the skills needed to work in industry and improves private sector R&D.

Funding for the CRC programme is estimated at \$208.2 million in 2005-06, \$189.8 million in 2006-07 and \$212.1 million in 2007-08. There are currently 12 CRCs 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.

Results of the 2004 CRC round, for funding commencing in 2005-06, were announced in December 2004. Of the 16 successful applicants, at least half are based in regional centres or have regional applications, for example:

- Australasian Invasive Animal CRC (ACT).
- CRC for Beef Genetic Technologies (NSW).
- Cotton Catchment Communities CRC (NSW).
- e-Water CRC (ACT).
- CRC for an Internationally Competitive Pork Industry (Qld).
- CRC for Molecular Plant Breeding (Vic).
- CRC for National Plant Biosecurity (ACT).
- CRC for Sustainable Forest Landscapes (Tas).

MAJOR NATIONAL RESEARCH FACILITIES PROGRAMME

The Australian Government is funding 15 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 funding allocation for 2005–06 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:

- The International Livestock Resources and Information Centre based at Armidale.
- The Australian Maritime Hydrodynamic Research Centre based in Launceston.
- The Arafura – Timor Research Facility based in Darwin.
- Provisor Pty Ltd (formerly the National Wine Industry Cluster) which is based in Adelaide and has nodes at Merbein, Victoria and Wagga Wagga, New South Wales.

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, initially for four years, and has been extended through to 2007–08. 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. The budget over extra years (2004–08) will be limited to \$3 million annually (adjusted for cost increases).

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

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 Australian Government funding for the National Broadband Strategy is \$142.8 million over four years, commencing 2003-04. 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.

HIGHER BANDWIDTH INCENTIVE SCHEME

The Higher Bandwidth Incentive Scheme (HiBIS) is a \$107.8 million programme, launched in April 2004. The three year scheme was designed to provide regional Australians with access to higher bandwidth services at prices comparable to those available in metropolitan Australia.

HiBIS 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.

HiBIS has now assisted more than 400 communities in regional areas using satellite, wireless, cable and ADSL technologies. There are currently 30 HiBIS registered providers.

THE METROPOLITAN BROADBAND BLACKSPOTS PROGRAMME

The Metropolitan Broadband Blackspots Programme is a three-year \$50 million initiative, commencing with \$10 million in 2005-06, which will provide access to equitably priced broadband services in metropolitan areas where such services are not available. The MBBP will complement the HiBIS through providing assistance in those areas where HiBIS does not apply. These areas are each state and territory capital city and the adjacent regional centres of Wollongong, the Central Coast of New South Wales, Newcastle, Geelong, Palmerston and the Gold Coast, including Tweed Heads.

COORDINATED COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

The Coordinated Communications Infrastructure Fund is providing \$23.7 million over four years from 2003-04 with \$11.8 million provided for 2005-06 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 \$4.7 million for 2005-06 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

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broadband, greater choice of service providers and more affordable pricing for the local community.

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 Australian Government and \$15 million from Telstra. The LBP has been operating since June 2000 and will conclude in June 2006.

The LBP is helping Tasmania 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 trialled in the Broadband eLab.

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 Australian Government's response to the Telecommunications Services Inquiry, priority is being given in the Consumer Representation Grants Programme to representation of people with disabilities and those living and working in regional areas. A total of \$800,000 will be allocated in 2005-06.

IT TRAINING IN VERY REMOTE COMMUNITIES

The IT Training and Technical Support Programme is an \$8.8 million competitive funding programme designed to provide people and organisations located in very remote areas of Australia with better access to basic information computer technology training and technical support. The programme runs for four years from 2004-05. In 2005-06, \$4.3 million will be allocated.

SATELLITE PHONE HANDSET SUBSIDY SCHEME

The Satellite Phone Handset Subsidy Scheme has been allocated additional funding of \$3 million over four years from 2003-04 to broaden the Scheme to subsidise maritime and aviation users as well as terrestrial users. The revised Scheme commenced in March 2004 and is scheduled to continue until June 2007.

EXPANSION OF TERRESTRIAL MOBILE PHONE COVERAGE PROGRAMME

An additional \$15.9 million will be spent over three years from 2004-05 to increase and improve mobile phone coverage in regional Australia. Telstra was the successful tenderer and will construct new mobile phone facilities at 62 regional locations.

TRADE, BUSINESS, TOURISM AND INVESTMENT

HOSTING APEC IN 2007

The Australian Government will provide \$216.3 million over three years in the 2005-06 Budget to a range of departments and agencies for Australia's hosting of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in 2007. The Australian Government is committed to having regional Australia share the benefits brought by hosting APEC. While venues are still to be determined, some APEC meetings may be held in regional areas; regional products and capabilities will be showcased; and some of the estimated 10,000 visitors for APEC will participate in regional study tours and tourism.

30 AUSFTA EXPORT FACILITATORS

To enable Australian exporters to pursue market openings and enhanced trade opportunities resulting from the Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement (AUSFTA) the Australian Government has provided \$6 million over two years to appoint 30 new Austrade export facilitators to work specifically on the US market.

Of the 30 export facilitators, 23 will be based in the United States and seven in Australia. The US-based marketing staff will be a combination of industry specialists and generalists with the more specialised positions directly related to key AUSFTA outcomes such as Agriculture and Government Procurement. A new 'Selling to Government' office has already been established in the Australian Embassy in Washington to assist Australian exporters pursue opportunities in the \$200 billion US Government Procurement market.

The establishment of seven dedicated mobile export advisers in Austrade offices around Australia will facilitate export opportunities arising from the AUSFTA and provide on-the-ground assistance for Australian exporters.

EXPORT HUBS

In 2004 the Australian Government committed \$6.4 million over five years to establish eight new export hubs in regional Australia. The hubs will provide easier access to Government trade and industry programmes by bringing together the services and products provided by TradeStart and AusIndustry.

The eight new hubs will be a combination of two new TradeStart offices, the expansion of some existing TradeStart offices and the co-location of some TradeStart and AusIndustry offices.

Export hubs will be located in Ballarat, Carnarvon, Bega, Bundaberg, Port Augusta, Tweed Heads, Launceston and Darwin.

EXPORT MARKET DEVELOPMENT GRANTS SCHEME

An additional \$30 million has been allocated to the Export Market Development Grants (EMDG) scheme, which encourages small and emerging exporters to enter into export and to develop sustainable export markets by providing a partial reimbursement for eligible export production expenses. The budget will be increased by an extra \$20 million in 2005-06 and \$10 million in 2006-07. This brings the total EMDG budget to \$170.4 million in 2005-06 and \$160.4 million in 2006-07.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW EXPORTERS

In 2004-05 the Australian Government allocated \$6.1 million over four years to assist 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 Organization. In addition, Austrade is reallocating \$13.5 million over four years from within its current resourcing to support this initiative.

The funding is being used to provide marketing and export-promotion events both in Australia and in relevant offshore markets.

TRADESTART PROGRAMME

In 2002-03 the Australian Government committed \$21.5 million over four years to extend and expand the TradeStart network programme. Currently there are 50 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.

Since its establishment, TradeStart has helped over 600 new exporters achieve export sales in excess of \$200 million.

MENTORING SUPPORT FOR TASMANIAN SMALL BUSINESSES

The Mentor Resources Small Business Mentoring Project has played a role in the survival and growth of small businesses across the Tasmania and, thanks to an extension of \$150,000 in funding, will be able to do so for a further three years to 30 June 2008.

Through Mentor Resources, small businesses have access to 130 mentors with local knowledge and practical experience in a range of industries, across the small business sector. Over the past two years, 2000 Tasmanian small businesses have requested advice and support through the Mentor Resources Small Business Mentoring Project.

BUSINESS GATEWAY

As part of the Australian Government's commitment to reducing the compliance burden for business, the Australian Government will provide continued funding of \$36.4 million over four years from 2005-06 to support the Business Entry Point – www.business.gov.au.

The Business Entry Point provides an around-the-clock service to business in all parts of Australia, including regional areas. The site contains the latest tips and practical advice on running a business, applying and searching for Australian Business Numbers, seminars, training, funding opportunities and mentoring. Since it was established in 1996, www.business.gov.au has consistently received more than 150,000 visits per month.

BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES

SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT

The widely successful Small Business Assistance Programme will continue for a further four years from 2006-07 thanks to funding of \$30 million. The programme continues and builds on the Australian Government's commitment and investment to provide skills development, mentoring and advisory services to small business operators across Australia. It has had a positive impact in regional Australia, particularly for home-based and start-up business operators or those in areas which are not already served by similar organisations.

From 2005-06, the Australian Government is providing a further \$9 million over five years in support for Small Business Mentoring and Succession Planning. This initiative will help small businesses to understand demographic and market trends and prepare for their impact. This will be reflected in business growth and wealth creation, especially in regional Australia where there is an unmet demand for these services.

HOME BASED BUSINESS

The Australian Government has committed \$2 million over four years from 2004-05 to deliver approximately 50 home-based business seminars, and to establish home-based business clubs in regional Australia. This proposal aims to encourage home-based businesses to gain the skills and knowledge necessary for innovation and growth and provides for unique networking opportunities.

The home-based business sector comprises a significant proportion of the small business sector (66 per cent in June 2003). The need for greater workplace flexibility and the emergence of enabling technologies have contributed to the growth of this sector in recent times.

MAXIMISING AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRY PARTICIPATION

The Australian Government is providing funding of \$3.8 million over three years from 2005-06 to continue the Industry Capability Network Limited and Supplier Access to Major Projects Programme. The objective of these initiatives is to maximise opportunities for Australian industry in major projects and global supply chains, especially small to medium enterprises, including those in regional areas.

GOVERNMENT INVESTS IN REGIONAL TOURISM PROJECTS

The Australian Government remains committed to supporting regional tourism initiatives. A number of regional tourism initiatives were announced in the 2004 election. These included:

- Kimberley Cultural Tourism Promotion.
- Cairns Esplanade – Stage 3.
- The Great Green Way.
- Trail of the Tin Dragon.
- Restoration of Willow Court Barracks (subject to Tasmanian Government support).
- Oatlands Callington Mill Upgrade.

The 2005-06 Budget delivers on these commitments. The above projects will enhance the range and quality of tourism products in regional Australia, and contribute to increasing visitor numbers and employment opportunities and prospects.

AUSTRALIAN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Tourism operators across Australia will have more opportunities to access cash grants for new products and services thanks to increased funding to the Australian Tourism Development Programme. The programme promotes tourism development in regional Australia, contributes to long term economic growth, increases visitor numbers and enhances tourism expenditure in regional areas.

Funding for the Australian Tourism Development Programme is being extended by \$7.5 million, bringing Australian Government investment to \$31.5 million over the four year period from 2004-05 to 2007-08.

TOURISM AND CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

Nature based tourism is a large segment of the Australian tourism industry and a major drawcard for international tourists. The Australian Government's Tourism and Conservation Initiative encourages an expansion and diversity of nature-based tourism products, regional cooperation and tourism investment in biodiversity.

\$3.6 million is allocated for two years from 2005-06 which is available to fund business planning and feasibility studies and pilot projects that showcase private sector ventures that boost tourism and conservation, and to fund research that boosts tourism and conservation

TRANSPORT

AUSLINK

Australian Government investment in rail and road infrastructure in 2005-06 is \$2.2 billion – a figure that will grow even higher in future years as the Australian Government continues to implement AusLink, the National Transport Plan. AusLink has radically transformed how Australia plans and implements the rollout of essential transport infrastructure, directly linking rail and road improvements with industry needs and growth.

Under AusLink, the Australian Government is investing \$12.5 billion in land transport infrastructure. The Australian Government has a clear expectation that states and territories will invest in those projects on the AusLink National Network that provide benefits at the state or territory level. This means that, in many cases, project costs will be shared with state and territory governments.

The Australian Government will also, under AusLink, involve the private sector in developing and funding Australia's infrastructure. This will enable important infrastructure projects to be completed in a more timely fashion and enable governments to take advantage of private sector expertise.

The Australian Government's funding for its AusLink investment programme projects in 2005-06 will be available on the condition that the states and territories sign AusLink bilateral agreements. The AusLink investment programme projects account for \$1.3 billion of the \$2.2 billion in land transport spending announced in the 2005-06 Budget.

The condition will not affect the AusLink Roads to Recovery Programme, including its Strategic Regional Programme and funding for unincorporated areas, the AusLink Black Spot Programme, untied local road grants, the supplementary road funding for South Australian councils or the remaining project under the Federation Fund.

The AusLink agreements set out the Government's new approach to land transport planning and funding, and include the National Code of Conduct for the Construction Industry – a best-practice approach to workplace relations that will increase the sector's productivity. The South Australian and Victorian Governments have already indicated their willingness to sign up to the Code.

The Government's AusLink investment programme projects include WestLink, the new \$1.5 billion ring road for Sydney and a new 17 km northern gateway for Melbourne in 2005-06, extension of the Bruce Highway widening north of Brisbane, a new road and rail access for Adelaide and better port links for Melbourne and Perth.

Construction has started on the \$518.2 million Hume Highway upgrade at Albury Wodonga – the largest single road project in regional Australia. Further funding has been allocated for works further north as the Australian Government sets about meeting its objective of duplicating the Hume Highway by 2012. The Australian and New South Wales governments are also exploring options for meeting the AusLink objective of a duplicated Pacific Highway by 2016.

AusLink will also cut east coast train transit times to introduce real competition between road and rail in the crucial overnight delivery market. AusLink will substantially improve road and rail access to ports at Sydney, Newcastle, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Gladstone and Darwin.

Development on the National Network is being augmented by ongoing Australian Government support for the Roads to Recovery Programme and National Black Spot Programme.

BASS STRAIT TRANSPORT SCHEME

The Australian Government has budgeted \$131.5 million in 2005-06 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. The Australian Government's subsidy schemes will continue to enhance tourism and trade opportunities between Tasmania and the mainland, and make a major difference to the ability of Tasmanian firms and operators to compete on a equal footing with their mainland counterparts.

ROADS TO RECOVERY PROGRAMME EXTENDED

The 2005-06 Budget confirms that the Australian Government will invest \$1.35 billion in the AusLink Roads to Recovery programme – a vital injection of funds that is needed to build the future of Australia's local road system. The Australian Government will spend \$340.6 million on the programme in 2005-06.

Since 2001, Australia's 698 local authorities have used \$1.2 billion in Roads to Recovery programme funds on 14,500 road maintenance and upgrade projects.

The additional \$1.35 billion applies as follows:

- \$1.2 billion from 2005-06 to 2008-09 (\$300 million in 2005-06) will be distributed to Australia's local councils.
- \$150 million (\$40.6 million in 2005-06) is being allocated between unincorporated areas (\$30 million) and projects of strategic regional importance (\$120 million) to 2008-09.

BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES

The funding for local councils will be distributed according to the 2004-05 recommendations by the Local Government Grants Commission in each state and the Northern Territory. The Australian Government will notify each council of the funding it will receive under the extended programme. The \$30 million funding over four years for locals roads in unincorporated areas will be paid to the Northern Territory and the South Australian, New South Wales and Victorian state governments. Of this, the Northern Territory will receive \$16 million over the four-year period. Unincorporated areas are parts of states and territories where there are no councils and state governments provide local government services.

The 2005-06 Budget also commits the Australian Government to 21 strategic regional road projects. Details of all Roads to Recovery Programme spending are available at the Department of Transport and Regional Services website.

AUSLINK BLACK SPOT PROGRAMME

The Australian Government will extend the AusLink Black Spot Programme until June 2008.

The Australian Government will spend an extra \$45 million per year in 2006-07 and 2007-08 to extend the Black Spot Programme, which provides funding to improve dangerous sections of our roads. The Budget already includes \$45 million for the programme in 2005-06, which will fund about 370 black spot projects. By 30 June 2008, the programme is expected to have funded 4,400 projects.

The Black Spot Programme is a key part of government plan to reduce the national road fatality rate by 40 per cent over the decade to 2010.

The Australian Government has also:

- Committed monies to the groundbreaking trial of post-licence driver education that will begin later this year. In New South Wales and Victoria 14,000 young drivers will undertake a special driver training course as part of the trial. The trial is the first step in a Government strategy to work with the states and territories to set up a compulsory national scheme for P-plate drivers by 2007.
- Announced in the 2005-06 Budget an additional \$8.8 million over the next four years (\$2 million in 2005-06) for improving and administering motor vehicle safety standards.

REMOTE AIR SERVICES SUBSIDY SCHEME (RASS)

The RASS scheme subsidises the costs of air operators contracted to deliver a weekly passenger and freight service (including essential medical, food, educational and other

services) to around 225 remote communities in the Northern Territory, Western Australia, Queensland, South Australia and Cape Barren Island in Bass Strait.

Following the outcome of a competitive tendering process in 2004, nine RASS contracts were awarded to six air operators to provide RASS services. The 2004-05 Budget provided an additional \$7.7 million in RASS funding over the next four years until 2007-08. This level of funding will enable additional eligible communities to be admitted onto the RASS scheme.

STRENGTHENING SECURITY AT AUSTRALIA'S REGIONAL AIRPORTS

The Australian Government recognises that transport security at regional airports is a high priority. In August 2004 the Australian Government announced the \$48 million Securing Our Regional Skies package to help regional airports and airlines to respond quickly to a change in threat levels.

During 2005-06 the Australian Government will continue to work with airports and airlines and law enforcement bodies to implement six of the seven measures designed to develop response capacity, capability and deterrence at regional aviation facilities. Funding of \$8.3 million has been allocated for Securing Our Regional Skies in 2005-06. The initiatives include:

- Australian Federal Police Protective Service Regional Rapid Deployment Teams to enhance response capacity for airports.
- Joint training and exercise programmes for state and territory police.
- Delivery of a metal detection hand-wand capability (equipment and training) for 146 airports, to be implemented in the event of alert levels being raised.
- A trial of 24/7 closed circuit television surveillance at selected regional airports.
- Aviation security training for regional airline and airport staff.
- A targeted public awareness campaign to encourage the reporting of suspicious activity at regional airports.

The seventh initiative provided funding for the installation of hardened cockpit doors for charter aircraft with 30 seats or more and is close to completion.

ENROUTE CHARGES REBATE SCHEME

The Australian Government has allocated \$5.6 million in 2005-06 to continue the Enroute Charges Rebate Scheme. The scheme subsidise the enroute air traffic control

BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES

charges paid by more than 40 regional airlines and other operators. Regional airline and aeromedical aircraft with a maximum take-off weight of 15 tonnes or less, such as Saab 340s, Metros and Piper Chieftains, will continue to be eligible for the scheme.

Assistance will also be extended to services provided on sole operator routes by aircraft between 15 and 21 tonnes flown by operators wholly based in Western Australia. The extension recognises the circumstances involved in flying to regional Western Australian destinations, which require the use of larger aircraft.

The Australian Government will review the effect of Airservices Australia's charges on regional airlines to make sure they are not impeding the continued growth of the sector. The Australian Government will consider the outcomes of the review in the lead up to the 2006-07 Budget.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Australia's search and rescue capabilities will be substantially upgraded as a result of a four year \$54.7 million package which includes funding for four dedicated turbine engine search and rescue aircraft. The four contracted aircraft will significantly improve Australia's national search and rescue capability. Australia provides search and rescue capability over 53 million square kilometres or 10 per cent of the earth's surface including Australia's landmass, the East Indian Ocean, Coral and Tasman Seas and the Southern Ocean to Antarctica.

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

VETERAN AND COMMUNITY GRANTS

Veteran and Community Grants provide 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 Australian Government's efforts to ensure that veterans and war widows in these areas do not miss out on services or assistance.

RURAL AND REMOTE SERVICE DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS

In 2005-06, the Australian Government will continue 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.