



BUDGET

STRONGER RURAL AND REGIONAL COMMUNITIES

STATEMENT BY

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11 MAY 2010

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ISBN 978 1742 71175 1

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FOREWORD

The Australian Government is committed to supporting stronger, more sustainable rural and regional communities across Australia.

The 2010-11 Budget continues record investment to ensure that rural and regional areas of Australia are best placed to benefit from the economic recovery as global growth resumes. This investment extends across rural and regional transport, water, energy, health, education and communications infrastructure for dynamic and productive regions.

Rural and regional Australia is critical to the Australian economy, generating 60 per cent of our export income and driving Australia's resource and agricultural industries. Infrastructure in our regions is therefore a vital part of preparing the nation's economy for future challenges.

In 2008 and 2009, the Rudd Government took decisive and immediate policy action to protect jobs from the impacts of the worst global economic crisis since the Great Depression.

The \$42 billion Nation Building and Jobs Plan supported some 200,000 jobs and made critical investments in rural, regional and urban infrastructure, and made Australia one of the only advanced economies in the world to avoid economic recession.

Australia now has the fastest growth, lowest debt, lowest deficit and the second lowest unemployment rate when compared with the major advanced OECD economies. And over the longer term, Australian communities will enjoy the enduring benefit of deep investments in transport and education infrastructure that boost the productive capacity of the economy. In short, we are supporting the economic recovery today by building infrastructure that rural and regional Australia needs for the future.

The growing economies of our region will continue to drive global demand for our mineral and agricultural commodities. The Australian Government is committed to addressing infrastructure bottlenecks and capacity constraints that can threaten economic growth in rural and regional Australia.

The Australian Government has begun a 'Nation Building Decade', investing a record \$37 billion in road, rail and port projects across Australia, from 2008-09 to 2013-14, to boost national productivity and create jobs.

This Budget invests \$996 million in equity into the Government-owned Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) for a productivity-boosting package of rail projects across rural and regional Australia to provide stronger steel rail, more concrete sleepers, bridge replacements, new passing loops and associated rail infrastructure works to strengthen the interstate freight rail network, take more trucks off our roads, and secure the future of freight rail over the longer term. This investment will improve the

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reliability, performance and capacity of ARTC's network and deliver significant productivity and safety benefits for rural and regional Australia.

This investment in the interstate rail network will help create and support jobs in regional areas, help take more trucks off our regional roads, increase the nation's productivity and deliver significant environmental benefits.

The Government will build on these investments by establishing a new ongoing infrastructure fund for the states and territories, as part of its tax plan for the future. The fund will commence in 2012-13 with an initial contribution of \$700 million and will be worth more than \$5.6 billion over the decade. This will support state investment in nation-building infrastructure, delivering better infrastructure for rural and regional communities, especially in the resource-rich states.

This Budget year, the Government will provide record funding to assist rural and regional councils and shires to deliver their services, maintain local roads and upgrade local community facilities. Around \$1.6 billion in funding will go to rural and regional councils through Financial Assistance Grants and the Roads to Recovery program.

Through the Australian Council of Local Government, we are partnering with local governments in an unprecedented way to address the future economic, social and environmental sustainability of our communities.

Regional Development Australia (RDA) committees, an Australian Government initiative, are working closely with stakeholders across all of our regions to promote economic, social and environmental solutions to local issues. The Australian Government is working closely with RDA committees to develop regional plans to help guide the future direction of our communities.

The Australian Government is committed to dealing with infrastructure shortfalls to support the population we have now and to manage a changing population. For the first time in Australia's history the Australian Government has a Minister for Population. Over the next 12 months the Government will consider what action is needed to accommodate Australia's long term needs. That will include how infrastructure investment can support future growth, increase our economic productivity, and deliver the best possible environmental outcomes.

Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries will continue to underpin economic growth and jobs in rural and regional communities. The Government will continue to support productivity, research and innovation in Australia's primary industries to help meet future challenges, including climate change and drought, biosecurity and global food security.

Australians are resilient, innovative and hard working. Investing in our productive capacity must include strengthening our skills base and education system. The Australian Government is providing an additional \$1.2 billion through the Apprentices Incentives Program to develop a significantly more skilled Australian workforce.

The Education Revolution will continue creating a world-class education system for Australia. The Australian Government's commitment to building school infrastructure, modernising digital education resources and to provide national consistency in education is delivering long-term benefits for our national and international competitiveness.

The Australian Government and seven of the states and territories agreed on 20 April 2010 at the Council of Australian Governments to a major shift in roles and responsibilities in the Australian health system, with consequent changes in funding arrangements that will see the Commonwealth become the major funder of the Australian hospital system. The National Health and Hospitals Network represents the largest reform to the health system since the inception of Medicare.

The Government has announced a major package of investments to support the delivery of the Network. The 2010-11 Budget delivers further investments of \$2.2 billion over four years in areas such as better access to General Practitioner (GP) and primary health care, the nursing workforce, modernising our health system through personally controlled electronic records, and fundamental changes to the way the health system works. These investments bring the Government's total reform investment package to \$7.3 billion over five years.

As part of these reforms, the Government is working to ensure all Australians have access to world-class health care no matter where they live by, ensuring funding reflects higher costs in rural and remote Australia; improving services in rural, remote or regional communities; and supporting the rural health workforce.

Rural and regional Australia will reap the benefits of the Australian Government's significant investment in communication technology. Developments in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have already helped reduce the tyranny of distance that separates Australia from major global markets. The National Broadband Network will bring fast and affordable broadband to Australian businesses, regardless of where they are located. The new network will dramatically improve broadband for households, particularly for people living in rural and regional Australia.

The Government is mindful of global environment and energy issues and is working towards the provision of adequate, reliable and affordable energy to meet future energy consumption needs and to underpin strong economic growth, consistent with the principles of environmental responsibility and sustainable development. That is why the Government is providing \$652.5 million over four years to establish a Renewable Energy Future Fund as part of the Government's expanded \$5.1 billion Clean Energy Initiative. It will provide additional support for the development and deployment of large and small scale renewable energy projects and will include partnerships between the Government and the private sector to make critical early stage investments to leverage private funds to support the commercialisation of renewable technologies.

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In just two years, the Australian Government has developed and delivered a comprehensive range of policies and programs designed to equip rural and regional communities to deal with global and local challenges. In the years ahead, we are committed to ensuring that our investments are well-targeted, that our partnerships are meaningful and productive and that our engagement with local communities delivers the best possible results for rural and regional Australia.

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BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

LAND TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

The Australian Government has embarked upon an unprecedented infrastructure investment program, investing \$37 billion in land transport and infrastructure across Australia, over the six year period of 2008-09 to 2013-14. The Australia Government is making good progress on this infrastructure program, which is supporting our growers and producers, boosting rural and regional productivity and sustainability and improving safety right across the country.

Investment through the Nation Building Program, the Nation Building Plan for the Future, Roads to Recovery, Black Spot Program, untied local roads grants and through the Australian Rail Track Corporation will significantly develop our national infrastructure and create stronger communities, addressing capacity constraints, improving road safety, and improving connections to major cities and ports.

Rail Productivity Improvements

This Budget invests \$996 million of equity into the Government-owned Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) for a productivity-boosting package of projects across rural and regional Australia to take more trucks off our regional and rural roads, and to improve the reliability, performance and capacity of the interstate freight rail network.

The upgrades are to the North-South and East-West rail corridors. These corridors are identified by Infrastructure Australia as national priorities. The upgrades will benefit households and businesses right across rural and regional Australia, from Loadstone down to Geelong, from Parkes to Maroona, and from Kalgoorlie to Koolyanobbing. For example, the planned re-sleeper work along the 691 kilometres of track from Broken Hill to Parkes will support 370 regional jobs.

These projects will put in place stronger steel rail, more concrete sleepers, bridge replacements, new passing loops and associated rail infrastructure to strengthen the network and secure its future over the longer term.

The Budget also allocates \$70.7 million to complete the detailed planning on the Moorebank Intermodal Freight Terminal Project in Sydney's South West, with the staged redevelopment of the site expected to start in 2013. The facility will take more than one million trucks off Sydney's roads, with benefits along the entire supply chain, including in rural and regional Australia.

AUSTRALIAN APPRENTICES INCENTIVES PROGRAM

The Government's Australian Apprentices Incentives Program provides an additional \$1.2 billion to boost Australia's skilled workforce and deliver long-term improvements to our national and international competitiveness. The Program aims to encourage employers to open up genuine opportunities for skills-based training of their

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employees, through provision by the Australian Government of financial incentives to employers who employ and train an apprentice or trainee. The government also funds a range of personal benefits for apprentices and trainees to encourage retention in, and completion of their apprenticeship or traineeship.

NATIONAL DROUGHT POLICY REFORM

The Government will conduct a pilot of improved drought support measures in a region of Western Australia for 12 months from 1 July 2010. This is a key step in our commitment to deliver a reformed drought support system which better helps farmers prepare for future challenges. For the first time, support measures will recognise both the social and financial impacts of drought. Under the current system, assistance is not provided until farmers reach crisis point, which can place them and their families under significant pressure. Three reports have been completed to inform the National Review of Drought Policy - looking at climatic, economic and social impacts of drought.

Exceptional Circumstances assistance will continue, including Exceptional Circumstances Relief Payments, the Exceptional Circumstances Interest Rate Subsidy and Transitional Income Support, along with a range of other drought support initiatives for farmers and drought-affected communities.

BIOSECURITY AND QUARANTINE

Australia remains free from many of the pests and diseases that affect our primary industries in the rest of the world. The risk of pests and diseases continues to grow, due to factors such as climate change and increased global movements of people and goods. A strong biosecurity and quarantine system is critical to our regional and rural industries and underpins jobs. We remain committed to a risk-based, science-based and conservative approach to quarantine.

In 2009-10, the Government progressed reforms recommended by the independent review of Australia's quarantine and biosecurity arrangements. Trials were conducted at the border towards developing a more comprehensive, risk-based intervention strategy, the Biosecurity Advisory Council was established, an interim Inspector General of Biosecurity was appointed, the drafting of detailed new biosecurity legislation continued and negotiations with states and territories on an intergovernmental agreement on biosecurity neared completion. Reform will continue over the coming years.

The Government also announced an additional \$14.7 million in 2009-10 to help plan quarantine IT system upgrades, examine future quarantine station needs and continue drafting new quarantine legislation.

In addition, the Government is working to deliver the largest reforms to export certification services in a generation, with a \$127.4 million industry reform package (\$75.7 million to be allocated in 2010-11).

In 2010-11, funding for biosecurity will allow the Government to continue with the foundation reforms already underway and to deliver the next stage of reforms. The government will also maintain its support for the Export Certification Reform Package, continuing to implement improved delivery arrangements for Australian Quarantine Inspection Service inspection and certification services in 2010-11.

RURAL AND REGIONAL HEALTH

As part of the National Health and Hospitals Network reform, the Australian Government is committed to improving rural health care and is introducing a range of initiatives targeted at rural, remote or regional communities.

The Government is ensuring that funding for small regional and rural hospitals and Medicare Locals reflects the needs of rural communities and the higher costs associated with delivering services in these locations.

The Government is working to improve access to health care in rural communities. This includes investing \$120 million over four years in capital funding to increase the number of sub-acute beds or their equivalent in rural and remote multi-purpose services and expanding the number of rural communities eligible to apply for multi-purpose service funding. Funding of \$18 million over three years is also provided to allow Medicare benefits to be claimed at certain hospitals in rural Australia to improve access to primary health care services for communities.

The Government is committed to encouraging health care workers to work in the bush and supporting those who currently do so. This includes ensuring that half of new GP and specialist training places continue to be provided in rural and remote communities and investing \$34 million over four years in rural services for nurses and allied health professionals to allow them to continue their professional development. In addition, the Government will invest \$6.5 million over four years to provide a further 100 clinical placement scholarships per annum for allied health students in rural and other areas of need to enhance the size, distribution and retention of the allied health workforce.

The Rudd Government is also investing more than \$1 billion to improve regional and rural health outcomes and critical health infrastructure through the Health and Hospitals Fund.

PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM

At the Pacific Island Forum Leaders meeting in August 2009, the Prime Minister committed to Australia playing a lead role in negotiating and implementing arrangements to help secure the region's valuable fishing stocks. The Government is delivering on this with a three-year, \$2.4 million program aimed at settling legal arrangements that will allow countries in the region to share data and better cooperate in fisheries enforcement activities. This process will begin with a meeting of Pacific

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Island Forum fisheries and law enforcement/justice ministers, to be hosted in Canberra by the Australian Government.

SOUTHERN OCEAN MARITIME PATROL AND RESPONSE

The Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) will continue its enforcement activities to help prevent and deter illegal foreign fishing in conjunction with the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service program, Southern Ocean Maritime Patrol and Response. Sustainable fish stocks underpin regional jobs in Australia and support our food security. The Australian fishing industry employs the latest technology and manages fishing effort to ensure our fish stocks are sustainable for the long-term. The Rudd Government will continue to invest in prevention and deterrence to ensure illegal foreign fishing does not undermine the profitability of our domestic fishing industry.

ENSURING THE RESILIENCE OF THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

The Australian Government is committed to the long-term protection and conservation of the Great Barrier Reef, recognising its vital ecological importance and significance to regional economies and the Australian community.

Funding of \$12 million over two years from 2010-11 will provide resourcing for three key measures including; increasing the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's baseline funding by \$4.2 million over two years, \$3.8 million over two years for measures to improve the outlook of the Reef and \$4 million over two years to repair and upgrade critical infrastructure of the popular tourist destination and educational facility, Reef HQ Aquarium.

Improving the Outlook of the Great Barrier Reef focuses on environmental stewardship, expanding the Reef Guardian initiative to increase community, local government and industry programs to adopt environmentally sustainable best practices, facilitating knowledge and sharing of information to achieve critical environmental outcomes for the Reef.

EXTENSION OF DROUGHT SUPPORT

The Government has allocated an additional \$6.5 million to fund Family Support Drought Response Teams in 2010-11 in those communities still experiencing severe drought. The additional funding will enable community organisations to provide much needed services such as counselling, skills training, family support, home visiting and case management to those farming families most in need.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

The Government is delivering on its commitment to accelerate the commercialisation and deployment of new renewable and low-emission energy technologies.

The 2010-11 Budget includes the establishment of the \$652.5 million Renewable Energy Future Fund, expanding the Clean Energy Initiative announced in the May 2009 Budget to a total of \$5.1 billion in investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency measures. This will complement the 20 per cent Renewable Energy Target by supporting the research, development and demonstration of low-emission energy technologies, including through the industrial scale Carbon Capture and Storage and Solar Flagships Programs.

The establishment of the Australian Centre for Renewable Energy in March 2010 complements the expanded Renewable Energy Target in accelerating the development and deployment of renewable energy in Australia and driving down technology costs. Furthermore, the creation of the Australian Solar Institute in August 2009 will support research and development into solar thermal and solar photovoltaic technologies.

TOURISM

A National Long-Term Tourism Strategy was launched by the Government in December 2009. As part of this strategy, the Government will provide \$5.5 million to establish a National Tourism Accreditation Framework, and \$4 million to ensure the continuation of the China Approved Destination Status Scheme.

FIND AND CONNECT SERVICE

Forgotten Australians and former child migrants will have access to a specialised support service to help them locate personal records and trace their families as part of the \$26.5 million initiative for a new National Find and Connect Service.

The loss of identity and connection with family is one of the most traumatic and distressing outcomes for Forgotten Australians and former child migrants as a result of their experiences in institutional care.

The Australian Government's investment will fund the new National Find and Connect Service, a records tracing and support service, which will help Forgotten Australians and former child migrants to trace their personal and family histories and get in touch with members of their families, where possible.

The National Find and Connect Service will provide a national website and 1800 number as a central point for records and family tracing and offer case management and counselling support services from trained providers to support Forgotten Australians and former child migrants on their journey to locate records and re-connect with their families.

The new service follows on from the Australian Government's historic apology last year to the estimated 500,000 children who were placed in institutional or out of home care in the last century, otherwise known as the Forgotten Australians. Prime Minister Rudd also apologised to the estimated 7,000 child migrants who were sent to Australia and placed in institutional care.

REMOTE SERVICE DELIVERY FLEXIBLE FUNDING POOL

The Australian Government has committed \$46 million to establish a funding pool that will respond flexibly and quickly to high priority needs identified in the Remote Service Delivery National Partnership priority locations.

This measure is a significant first step towards more effective collaboration across Australian Government agencies that will reduce red tape and ensure remote Indigenous communities are able to access the services they need.

This investment builds on the success of the Local Priorities Fund which was established under the Closing the Gap initiative in the Northern Territory in order to address local priorities such as environmental health and safety, community information technology equipment and essential maintenance and repairs for community facilities.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT EMPLOYMENT PROJECTS PROGRAM REFORM IN THE TORRES STRAIT REGION

The Australian Government is providing \$44.3 million over four years to reform the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program in the Torres Strait. These reforms contribute to the Council of Australian Government's target to halve the gap between Indigenous and non- Indigenous employment within a decade.

These reforms are an extension of reforms to the CDEP program that commenced in other areas of Australia from July 2009. This measure will ensure national consistency in the CDEP program and that Indigenous job seekers in the Torres Strait have the same incentives and participation requirements as others in the CDEP program.

ADDITIONAL MAINTENANCE FUNDING FOR ABORIGINAL HOSTELS LIMITED

The Australian Government is investing \$6.9 million for Aboriginal Hostels Limited to undertake necessary repairs and refurbishments to a number of its hostels. Aboriginal Hostels Limited is the largest provider of affordable temporary accommodation for Indigenous Australians.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

To provide disability and carer groups with funding of up to \$30,000 each to enable people with disability, their families and carers to make an active contribution to the National Disability Strategy, the Carers Strategy and the Productivity Commission's inquiry into long-term care and support.

The aim is to effectively engage people with disability, their families and carers and the peak bodies that represent them in these processes to ensure they are responsive to the needs and aspirations of those with the lived experience of disability.

The organisations will have a degree of flexibility in exactly how they apply these funds and may use them to fund travel and accommodation for those living in regional and rural areas to ensure their participation in metropolitan consultations. Alternatively, the organisations may use the funds to: run specific workshops/forums in regional areas of Australia; engage vulnerable people or people with mobility restrictions in consultations; or contract a facilitator to conduct their specific forums and write up the results into a report.

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT DISASTER RECOVERY PAYMENTS

Disasters are common occurrences in Australia and the majority of disasters occur in our rural and regional areas. In the Australian context, states and territories have primary responsibility for the protection of life and property. The Australian Government complements the relevant state or territory response, where appropriate, to lessen the impact on individuals and communities and to assist in their recovery.

No amount of assistance can ever fully address the suffering and loss experienced by Australians as a result of disasters, but it is hoped that the recovery assistance provided, together with other available assistance and generous community support, goes part of the way towards helping people and communities recover and get back on their feet.

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) has an ongoing role in addressing the recovery needs of individuals, families and communities affected by disasters.

Over 2009-10 FaHCSIA provided assistance to victims of flooding in northern NSW, in the southern and northern regions of Queensland and to victims of the bushfires in Western Australia.

WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT ICT DATA COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT AND SATELLITE FACILITIES — CHRISTMAS ISLAND

The Australian Government will provide whole of government ICT data communication equipment and satellite facilities on Christmas Island to improve service delivery capability with funding of \$11.2 million over three years.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO JUSTICE — LEGAL ASSISTANCE PRIORITIES

The Government is committed to enhancing access to justice for all Australians, including Australians who live in rural and regional areas. The Government is providing an additional \$154 million funding over four years to enhance access to justice through increased funding for legal aid commissions, community legal centres and Indigenous legal services. This funding will help to increase the availability of legal assistance generally, and will provide particular support for service providers in regional Australia.

AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

The Government will provide funding of \$2 million over the next four years to non-government organisations for the development and delivery of human rights education and engagement programs for the community. The Government will also provide an additional \$6.6 million over four years to the Australian Human Rights Commission to enable it to expand its community education role and to provide information and support for human rights education programs.

The Government will work in partnership with community organisations and the Australian Human Rights Commission to make sure education and information is available right across the community.

COMPENDIUM OF PRIORITIES AND INITIATIVES

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY

Drought support

The Government has allocated \$420.3 million in the 2010-11 Budget for Exceptional Circumstances (EC) measures—including EC Relief Payments and the EC Interest Rate Subsidy—for farmers and small businesses dealing with the current drought. This support is demand-driven and follows a dramatic drop in the percentage of agricultural land which is Exceptional Circumstances-declared, from 55.9 per cent in May 2008 to 28.9 per cent in May 2010.

The Government has announced a further 12-month extension of the \$20,000 off-farm salary and wages exemption for EC Relief Payments, the \$750,000 off-farm asset exemption for the EC Interest Rate Subsidy and EC assistance for small businesses. The extension of these measures will help to ensure that farmers and small businesses in need are assisted.

In addition, the Government continues to support farmers through \$18 million for professional advice and planning grants in 2010-11. A range of further drought support programs providing mental health support, financial information and other services have also been extended to 30 June 2011.

Adjustment support

The Government is providing \$24.8 million for re-establishment grants and training grants in 2010-11. Eligible primary producers may access re-establishment grants of up to \$150,000, as well as training assistance worth up to \$10,000 and a further \$10,000 to help with relocation expenses and to access job-seeking services after they have sold the farm. Transitional Income Support (for up to 12 months at the Newstart Allowance rate) is available to eligible producers until 30 June 2011, to help with daily living expenses, including keeping food on the table. Eligible producers may access a maximum of 12 months of adjustment support.

Drought policy improvement

Following the three reports commissioned for the National Review of Drought Policy, the Government will conduct a pilot of drought policy reform measures in a region of Western Australia for 12 months from 1 July 2010. A variety of measures will be available, including assistance for farm business planning, on-farm projects and capacity building, community activities, and support for farm households and communities. The pilot will be reviewed in 2011 as the Government considers the final national drought policy reform. The Australian Government has allocated \$17.9 million in 2010-11 to the pilot. The Western Australian Government has committed \$5 million.

Landcare

The Australian Government continues to invest in Landcare. This includes \$33.6 million over four years to support the National Landcare Facilitators Initiative. This initiative will fund up to 56 Landcare facilitator positions across Australia to work with and support local community and Landcare groups.

In 2009-10 the Government funded 56 Landcare projects totalling \$26 million over four years under the Caring for our Country business plan and 190 Landcare community-based environmental and sustainable agriculture projects worth around \$3.4 million under the Caring for our Country Community Action Grants program.

The Government has re-established the Australian Landcare Council and hosted 600 delegates at the successful 2010 National Landcare Forum in Adelaide. It is supporting the development of the Australian Framework for Landcare – a community strategy for the next decade of Landcare. The Government also continues to fund the National Landcare Facilitator position and in 2010-11 is providing over \$15 million to fund sustainable farm practices and on-ground action, through Community Action Grants and the Caring for our Country business plan.

FarmReady

The Government allocated \$26.5 million from 2008-09 to 2011-12 to boost training opportunities for primary producers and enable industry, farming groups and natural resource management groups to develop strategies to adapt and respond to the impacts of climate change. Demand for the FarmReady Reimbursement Grants is strong: over 11,200 pre-approval applications were received and over 7,300 reimbursements were paid in the first nine months of the financial year, to the end of March 2010. In January 2010, the Government agreed to the second round of FarmReady industry grants, committing \$2.5 million for 18 projects. In addition, two further projects that target people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds will be funded under the Community Networks and Capacity Building activities.

Community Networks and Capacity Building

The four-year Community Networks and Capacity Building component of Australia's Farming Future began in 2008-09. It targets people traditionally underrepresented or unrecognised in their contribution to primary industries. In March 2010, the Government agreed to the second round of the Recognising Women Farmers grants and the Next Gen Farmers grants, providing \$1.5 million for 33 projects.

The Government will also provide between \$146,000 and \$150,000 per year (GST exclusive) for up to nine candidates to attend the Australian Rural Leadership Program from 2010 to 2012.

Rural Research and Development

The ten-member, independent, skills-based Rural Research and Development Council has met regularly since it was established by the Australian Government in February 2009, delivering on an election commitment. The council's initial task is to develop a national strategic investment plan to strengthen rural research and development through improved multi-sector coordination, prioritisation of investment and performance reporting.

In December 2009, the Government announced the Productivity Commission would conduct an inquiry into rural research and development corporations. The Productivity Commission will have a final report to Government in February 2011. The inquiry will include an examination of the appropriateness of current funding arrangements, and the scope for improving the rural R&D corporation model.

Biosecurity and quarantine

The Government continues to make progress in its response to the reforms recommended by the independent review of Australia's quarantine and biosecurity arrangements. Trials have been conducted at the border to inform development of a more comprehensive, risk-based intervention strategy; the Biosecurity Advisory Council has been established and an interim Inspector General of Biosecurity was appointed. Drafting of detailed new biosecurity legislation continues and negotiations with states and territories on an intergovernmental agreement on biosecurity are nearing completion.

Funding for biosecurity reform in this year's budget includes \$32.5 million to fund various measures, including the development and trial of a new mode of operation comprising risk-based intervention, improved governance arrangements, continued development of the new legislation and finalisation and implementation of an intergovernmental agreement on biosecurity.

Additionally, funding will be provided through the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service to continue core quarantine border control services (\$136.7 million), including related pre- and post-border activities such as the Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy. A further \$127.9 million will be provided through the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service.

The Government is also working to deliver the largest reforms to export certification services in a generation, with strong support from the red meat, dairy, grain, fish, horticulture and live export industry sectors. The \$127.4 million industry reform package will cut red tape by updating IT systems, which will help to improve market access and underpin regional jobs. The investment will help to ensure Australia remains a world leader in export certification systems. An initial \$75.7 million will be allocated in 2010-11.

The Government is committed in 2010-11 to the next stage of the biosecurity reforms to help deliver a modern and rigorous biosecurity system.

Food security

The Government recognises the need for the Australian and international community to address global food security. We are working to meet the challenges by boosting research and development, helping to remove barriers to global trade and driving productivity along the food production chain.

The Government will continue to promote Australia's important long-term food productivity while building agricultural capacity in developing countries. Concluding the Doha Round of trade negotiations will support global food security by reducing distortions to global food markets.

National Fruit Fly Strategy

Key elements of the National Fruit Fly Strategy are being implemented under the Government's Quarantine Research and Preparedness Plan. To date, \$4 million has been invested in activities that contribute to implementation of the strategy, plant pest diagnostic tools and guidelines for biosecurity planning. The balance of the commitment will be used to complete these initiatives by 2011.

Climate Change Research Program

The Climate Change Research Program is helping primary producers adapt to climate change, particularly in the areas of soil carbon, biochar, nitrous oxide and livestock emissions; and on-farm demonstrations to the farming community of research outputs.

The Government's \$46.2 million commitment has leveraged over \$100 million from partners – including state government, industry and research organisations – for joint projects.

Wheat marketing

The Government's reformed bulk wheat export marketing system introduced on 1 July 2008 is operating effectively. In the 2008-09 marketing year, 17 companies shipped 12.2 million tonnes of bulk wheat to 41 countries. Twenty-nine companies are accredited to export wheat in bulk. Access undertakings have been agreed between the ACCC and the three companies CBH Ltd, GrainCorp Operations Ltd and AusBulk Ltd.

The Productivity Commission will review the system to ensure it is working as effectively as possible. Its final report is due by 1 July 2010. In 2010-11, under the transitional assistance package, \$1.4 million will be provided for the collection of market information by ABS/ABARE and for wheat export technical market support grants.

Initiatives for Rural Food Producers

Regional food programs worth \$40 million over four years began in 2008-09. The programs are designed to promote modern, competitive food production industries in

Australia. The Regional Food Producers Innovation and Productivity Program funds projects to boost the productivity of Australia's food industry.

The Promoting Australian Produce Program helps all agricultural sectors, including the food industry, develop the capacity to better market their produce to both traditional domestic markets and new export markets.

The Promoting Australian Produce (Major Events) Program is open to all agricultural sectors, including food, to stage major national events that facilitate exchanging information. This will boost productivity through improved efficiency along the value chain and through innovation and the adoption of new technologies and management practices, as well as promote Australian produce at home and overseas.

Forestry initiatives

The Government continues to deliver on its election commitment to support sustainable forest industries. Under the Forest Industries Development Fund, more than \$7 million in grants has been allocated to projects that add value to our forest resources, support regional jobs, and boost the industry's international competitiveness. In addition, \$6.3 million has been allocated to research that identifies and addresses major knowledge gaps about the impacts of climate change on forests and forestry.

ForestWorks, the new industry skills council, is helping to train skilled forestry workers. In addition, an industry skills database is expected to be delivered in July 2010.

Work continues with regional governments and industries to address issues associated with the illegal harvesting of timber and to develop a policy framework to deliver on the government's election commitment.

Australia and Indonesia have further strengthened their commitment to combat illegal logging, with an agreement to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to help secure the sustainable use of forest resources. This agreement builds on work already achieved to establish formal MOU agreements with China and Papua New Guinea to tackle the problem.

National Weeds and Productivity Research Program

The next round of the Government's \$15.3 million National Weeds and Productivity Research program is expected to open for applications in the second half of 2010. Over three years, \$12.2 million will be provided to fund new weeds research projects to reduce the impact and presence of invasive plants on agriculture, forestry and associated biodiversity, while 39 weed research projects from the first research call, worth \$3.6 million dollars, will be completed in June 2010. The Government also committed \$300,000 for research into fireweed control, to be completed by June 2012.

Southern Ocean Maritime Patrol and Response

The Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) will continue its enforcement activities to prevent and deter illegal foreign fishing in conjunction with the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service program Southern Ocean Maritime Patrol and Response.

Pacific Islands Forum

At the Pacific Island Forum Leaders meeting in August 2009, the Prime Minister committed to Australia playing a lead role in negotiating and implementing arrangements for securing the region's valuable fishing stocks. The Government is delivering on this with a three-year, \$2.4 million program aimed at settling legal arrangements that allow countries in the region to share data and more effectively cooperate in fisheries enforcement activities. This process will begin with a meeting of Pacific Island Forum fisheries and law enforcement/justice ministers, to be hosted in Canberra by the Australian Government.

Gippsland Lakes and Lakes Entrance

The Government is delivering on its \$11 million commitment to improve commercial fishing industry infrastructure and water quality, and flood mitigation in the Gippsland Lakes region. The new ice works at the Lakes Entrance Fishermen's Cooperative is complete, and construction of jetty and foreshore facilities at Cunninghame Arm Quay and the deepwater wharf at Bullock Island is well advanced.

Recreational fishing industry development

In 2008, the Government announced \$2 million over three years to review the 1994 national Recreational Fishing Policy and to develop and implement a new Recreational Fishing Industry Development Strategy. The Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee was established to advise on the strategy and has prepared and released a discussion paper for comment.

Funding of \$500,000 has been allocated to help scope and implement a coordinated national data collection project for recreational fishing in Australia. The Fisheries Research and Development Corporation will coordinate the project and seek co-investment from state and territory governments and industry organisations. The remaining funding will go to activities consistent with the Recreational Fishing Industry Development Strategy when it is finalised.

Further information

Further information about these and other agriculture, fisheries and forestry initiatives relating to rural and regional Australia is available at www.daff.gov.au.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Territories

The Australian Government continues to foster good governance in Australia's territories through the maintenance and improvement of laws and service delivery. The territories are assisted to manage their own futures through the provision of services and advice on ongoing administration. The Department delivers services, provides funding support and undertakes capital works with the objective of ensuring territory communities enjoy the same level of services as equivalent state communities. In 2010-11 support to the Indian Ocean Territories through the ongoing program is \$79.2 million and \$4.9 million to the Jervis Bay Territory for 2010-11. Funding of \$35.5 million over four years has been committed to refurbish the runway that services the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, supporting tourism and the delivery of essential services on the island.

Christmas Island

The Government is providing \$47.3 million over four years for additional infrastructure including housing and waste management and additional services including teachers, medical staff and police officers. This funding is in addition to the \$50 million Christmas Island infrastructure package announced by the Government last year.

In addition, the Government is providing \$11.2 million over three years for the Department to consolidate and rationalise Whole of Government ICT data communication equipment and satellite facilities on Christmas Island, to improve service delivery capability.

Australia's Northern Waters

Securing Borders against Illegal Foreign Fishing – Northern Waters. This proposal provides \$163.2 million to continue efforts to deter illegal foreign fishing in Australia's northern waters.

Social Inclusion

Improving Access to Justice – Legal Assistance Priorities.

The Government is committed to enhancing access to justice for all Australians, including Australians who live in rural and regional areas. The Government is providing an additional \$154 million funding over four years to enhance access to justice for disadvantaged and vulnerable Australians through increased funding for legal aid commissions, community legal centres and Indigenous legal services. This funding will help to increase the availability of legal assistance generally, and will provide particular support for service providers in regional Australia.

The investment takes total funding for legal assistance services from the Commonwealth to \$1.3 billion over four years, and is provided to the following programs:

Legal Aid

The new funding brings total Commonwealth funding for legal aid to \$194.2 million in 2010-11. Legal aid commissions maintain locations in regional Australia and also provide a range of 'outreach' services for those unable to access main offices.

\$1.5 million is also being provided under the Regional Innovations Program for Legal Services, an initiative specifically designed to assist legal aid commissions maintain legal aid services in regional, rural and remote Australia.

Community Legal Centres

The new funding brings total Commonwealth funding for community legal centres to \$31.5 million in 2010-11 to support community legal centres across Australia (including Centres that are based in or provide services to rural and regional areas).

Indigenous Legal Aid and Policy Reform

The new funding brings total Commonwealth funding for Indigenous Legal Aid to \$63.7 million in 2010-11. The Legal Aid for Indigenous Australians Program provides culturally sensitive and accessible legal aid and related services – often in rural and remote areas.

Family Violence Prevention Legal Services

The Government has committed \$19.5 million in 2010-11 to 31 Family Violence Prevention Legal Services in identified high need rural, regional and remote areas, which provide primarily legal and other associated services to victims and survivors of family violence.

Indigenous Justice Program

The Government has allocated \$13.2 million in 2010-11 to the Indigenous Justice Program for projects—many of which are in rural and remote areas—to support Indigenous Australians and reduce adverse contact with the criminal justice system.

Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory – Law and Order measures

In 2010-11, \$29.1 million in funding will be distributed under the Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory comprising law and order measures for night patrol services, legal assistance services, interpreter services and the Northern Territory Welfare Rights Outreach Project.

Native Title

The native title system will receive an additional \$10.6 million in the 2010-11 financial year, as part of the \$50.1 million in new money committed by the Government in the 2009-10 Budget to improve the native title system. Overall, the additional funding will help build a more efficient native title system that delivers sustainable, long-term outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

Australian Human Rights Framework

The Government will provide funding of \$2 million over the next four years to non-government organisations for the development and delivery of human rights education and engagement programs for the community. The Government will also provide an additional \$6.6 million over four years to the Australian Human Rights Commission to enable it to expand its community education role and to provide information and support for human rights education programs.

The Government will work in partnership with community organisations and the Australian Human Rights Commission to make sure education and information is available right across the community.

Further information

Further information about these and other initiatives relating to rural and regional Australia is available at www.ag.gov.au.

BROADBAND, COMMUNICATIONS AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

National Broadband Network

In April 2009, the Government established a new company (NBN Co Limited) to build and operate the National Broadband Network in urban, regional and rural areas. The company will invest up to \$43 billion to build the network over eight years, which will initially be publicly owned. Within this funding envelope the Government's objective is to:

- connect 90 per cent of all homes, schools and workplaces with optical fibre, fibre to the premises or 'FTTP', providing broadband services to Australians with speeds of up to 100 megabits per second – 50 times faster than most people experience today.
- connect all other premises in Australia with next generation wireless and satellite technologies that will be able to deliver 12 megabits per second or better.

NBN Co announced on 2 March 2010 the five first release sites to receive high speed Fibre to the Premise broadband on mainland Australia, as part of live trials of its network design and construction methods. These are:

- a part of the suburb of Brunswick in Melbourne;
- an area of Townsville covering parts of the suburbs of Aitkenvale and Mundingburra;
- the coastal communities of Minnamurra and Kiama Downs south of Wollongong;
- an area of west Armidale, NSW, including the University of New England; and

- the rural town of Willunga in South Australia.

These sites are in addition to the three regional sites in Tasmania (Scottsdale, Smithton and Midway Point) where the National Broadband Network is being rolled out and will be offering services from July 2010.

It is expected that the National Broadband Network will support up to 25,000 jobs every year, on average, over the eight year life of the project.

As part of the National Broadband Network initiative, the Government has entered into a \$250 million agreement with Nextgen Networks to rollout approximately 6,000 kilometres of regional backbone fibre links benefiting more than 100 regional locations on route to six priority locations. The new competitive backbone links will assist service providers to deliver higher quality and lower cost broadband and phone services to regional consumers.

Construction is underway and all routes are expected to be completed by mid 2011, although shorter links are expected to be delivering services much earlier. This investment in competitive backbone is expected to create more than 1,000 full-time equivalent jobs and will provide economic stimulus to regional locations during the construction and operation phases.

The Government released the Implementation Study into the National Broadband Network. The comprehensive report was prepared by McKinsey & Company and KPMG and has 84 recommendations for the Government about the National Broadband Network. These cover the technology, financing, ownership, policy framework, and market structure of this important infrastructure project. The Study confirms that high-speed broadband for all Australians is achievable, and can be built on a financially viable basis with affordable prices for consumers. The Government will carefully consider the recommendations in the Implementation Study, and the feedback received from public consultation, before it makes final decisions relevant to the National Broadband Network rollout and operation.

Digital Switchover

The Government is providing \$572.1 million over the period 2008-09 to 2020-21 for a package of measures to drive the availability of improved television services as Australia makes the transition to digital television. Digital switchover will take place on a region-by-region basis, commencing with switchover in the Mildura/Sunraysia area on 30 June 2010, and will be completed by the end of 2013.

As a centrepiece of this commitment, the Government will provide \$375.4 million over the period 2009-10 to 2020-21 for a new digital satellite service, and associated activities, which will ensure that viewers who cannot receive digital terrestrial services can access the same range of national and commercial channels that is available in mainland capital cities. For the first time ever viewers out of the range of normal terrestrial signals, together with viewers in remote parts of Australia, will be able to receive three main digital channels delivering Seven, Nine and Ten network programs,

additional digital multichannels such as GO! 7TWO and ONE HD, and all ABC and SBS digital television services.

As part of this satellite funding package the Government will also provide subsidies to eligible households in regional and remote areas currently served by analog self-help transmission facilities, to assist with the cost of installing equipment to receive the new satellite service in their homes, at a cost of \$99.1 million over five years (from 2009-10). For eligible households relying on self-help towers the subsidy will be \$400 per household. A higher subsidy is being considered for self-help towers in very remote and far north tropical areas. Further details about the Subsidy will be announced shortly.

The remaining elements of the package focus on the regions that will lead the switch to digital-only television services: Mildura/Sunraysia on 30 June 2010; regional South Australia will follow on 15 December 2010; regional Victoria in the first half of 2011; and regional Queensland in the second half of 2011. Key activities include the Household Assistance Scheme which assists eligible recipients by providing and installing a set top box and any necessary aerial and cabling work, and a substantial national and local communications campaign to help drive the conversion process and ensure that all Australians are aware of the requirement to switchover. A household is eligible for assistance where they own a functioning TV, do not already have access to digital TV and where at least one resident is receiving the maximum rate of the: Age Pension; Disability Support Pension; Carer Payment; Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Service Pension; or DVA income-support supplement payment.

Rural National Broadband Network Coordinators

The Government has provided \$5 million for Rural National Broadband Network (NBN) Coordinators to help regional communities maximise the benefits of the \$250 million Regional Backbone Blackspots Program by encouraging broadband awareness, take-up and use. Rural NBN Coordinators are being engaged during the early stages of the backbone fibre rollout. This will allow Coordinators to raise awareness of the new infrastructure deployment as well as highlight new broadband opportunities and services following the completion of the infrastructure.

This initiative will provide dedicated local support to help rural and regional communities take full advantage of the opportunities of broadband and engagement in the digital economy.

Regional Telecommunications Review

The Government responded to the recommendations of the 2008 Regional Telecommunications Review, chaired by Dr Bill Glasson AO, on 5 March 2009. In line with the recommendations made in the Review's report, the Government announced:

- the Digital Regions Initiative to fund innovative broadband applications to improve education, health and emergency services in regional areas.

- the continuation and enhancement of the Satellite Phone Subsidy Scheme for Australians living and working in areas without terrestrial mobile coverage.
- a refocused Indigenous Communications Program to improve basic telecommunications services, basic public internet access and training to remote Indigenous communities.

Digital Regions Initiative

The \$60 million Digital Regions Initiative commenced in 2009 and co-funds innovative digital enablement projects with state, territory and local governments. It is a collaborative approach to improve the delivery of education, health and/or emergency services in regional, rural and remote communities.

Round 1 of the program supports eleven projects with funding of \$32.9 million. Projects are commencing in 2010 to ensure regional communities benefit as quickly as possible. A second funding round in 2010 will support further initiatives.

Satellite Phone Subsidy Scheme

The 2009-10 Budget contained details on enhancements to the Satellite Phone Subsidy Scheme (the Scheme) and its extension until June 2013.

The Scheme improves the affordability of mobile communications for people living and working in areas without terrestrial mobile coverage, by providing subsidies for the purchase of satellite phone handsets.

The Scheme provides up to \$1,000 for eligible applicants who live in areas without terrestrial mobile coverage, and up to \$700 for eligible applicants who live in areas that have coverage, but who spend significant periods in non-coverage areas.

In 2009, the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy announced a number of enhancements to the Scheme. These improvements included:

- An increase in the subsidy to 85 per cent of handset cost, up from the previous 60 per cent, including for the replacement of handsets purchased more than three years ago.
- Additional individual handset subsidies for health and emergency service organisations, up from the previous limit of two subsidies per organisation.
- All people outside handheld mobile coverage areas are now eligible. Previously, the subsidy was only available outside areas where mobile coverage could be obtained with an external antenna.
- More streamlined processes for health and emergency service applications.

Indigenous Communications Program

The 2009-10 Budget detailed \$30 million of funding to install community phones in about 300 remote Indigenous communities, and to monitor and maintain both the newly installed phones and around 250 previously installed phones. The funding also covers payments to participating states and the Northern Territory to improve public internet access and provide computer training in remote Indigenous communities.

Community phone installations under the new program started in mid-2009, and are on target for the first 50 phones to be installed in 2009-10 and a further 100 in 2010-11. Over 20,000 calls have been made from the new community phones since September 2009. Community phones provide access to emergency and other medical and support services as well as family and friends, when needed.

The Commonwealth, States and Territories are working with remote Indigenous communities to develop public internet solutions that meet their needs.

In 2009-10, 46 remote Indigenous communities benefited from the installation of new or improved public internet access facilities. Many of these communities now have public access to online resources and services such as banking, health and education for the first time. This program will benefit additional communities over the next three years as the Commonwealth, states and Northern Territory will continue to work in partnership to install new and improved public internet facilities in remote Indigenous communities.

Australian Broadband Guarantee Program

The ABG program aims to ensure universal access to affordable broadband services for Australians who are unable to access such services on a commercial basis or as a result of other Australian Government funded infrastructure (for example, through the National Broadband Network). The broadband service standards for these end-users are measured against those broadband services most widely taken up in metropolitan markets.

Through the NBN, the Australian Government has committed to provide more remote Australia with faster services via the rollout of 'next generation' wireless and satellite technologies. Going forward, the Australian Government has announced improvements to the ABG to provide access to faster broadband services to eligible premises from 1 July 2010. The changes will see an upgraded threshold service, doubling speeds and download limits, amongst other improvements, within the existing ABG price to the end-user.

ABC Local Regional Broadband Hubs

The 2009-10 Budget provided \$15.3 million over three years to the ABC to encourage and assist the development of user generated content and to establish community web sites and portals, creating 'virtual town squares' for communities to share experiences.

The funding provides for the roll-out of more than 50 enhanced regional broadband hubs. Funding will be used to identify and employ local producers to work on cross-media stories and to train audiences to create their own content.

The project will also have benefits beyond the ABC - by raising the digital literacy of regional Australians there will be significant benefits for regional businesses, including other media organisations. It will also create approximately 50 new jobs in regional areas across Australia.

The new program - known as ABC Open - was launched on 4 February 2010 with recruitment underway across Australia to identify and recruit multimedia producers to drive the project.

Further information

Further information about this and other broadband and communications initiatives relating to rural and regional Australia is available at www.dbcde.gov.au.

DEFENCE HOUSING AUSTRALIA

New residential housing

Defence Housing Australia (DHA) will construct a total of approximately 919 homes for Defence personnel in 2010-11. About 188 of these homes will be built under the Government's continuing Nation Building program which provided funding of \$245.6 million for the period from 2009 to 2011. The remaining approximately 731 homes will be delivered under DHA's usual construction program.

Homes will be constructed near major Defence establishments including regional centres such as Cairns, Ipswich, Toowoomba and Townsville in Queensland; Sale and Wodonga in Victoria; Wagga, Nowra, the Hunter Valley and Riverina regions in New South Wales; and Rockingham and Karratha in Western Australia.

Further information

Further information about these and other Defence Housing Australia initiatives relating to rural and regional Australia is available at www.dha.gov.au.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS

Early Childhood Education and Care

In December 2009, the Council of Australian Governments agreed to substantial reform in education and early childhood development. This includes new compulsory national standards for childcare and early childhood education services.

This reform will deliver a higher standard of care for children, and clearer and more comprehensive information for parents.

This new National Quality Framework will be phased in from 1 July 2010 and will ensure national consistency in early childhood education and childcare services including outside school hours care.

The new framework will include requirements for:

- Improved staff-to-child ratios under the National Quality Standard;
- new qualifications requirements for all early childhood education workers under the National Quality Standard;
- a transparent quality ratings system, which will allow parents to easily compare the quality on offer at different child care services;
- streamlined regulatory arrangements, which will mean less paperwork for services, so they have more time to spend providing high quality care; and
- a new jointly governed national body between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories to oversee the new standards.

The new framework was developed collaboratively between all governments and the community and will ensure all providers operate under clear and nationally consistent standards for care and early education.

The National Quality Framework incorporates feedback received on the Regulation Impact Statement, which was released by COAG in July 2009.

The reforms will be implemented across all jurisdictions over 10 years and the Government will continue to help parents meet the costs of childcare.

In the 2010-11 Budget, the Australian Government has allocated \$84 million over four years to deliver the National Quality Framework. This is on top of the support the Australian Government provides to families through the Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate.

Improvements to Australian Government funded early childhood services in rural and regional areas

Particularly for rural and regional areas, funding of \$59.4 million will be available from 2010-11 to 2013-14 to assist Budget Based Funded early childhood services to meet the National Quality Standards agreed by the Council of Australian Governments in December 2009 and to be introduced from January 2012. Budget Based Funded early childhood services are funded by the Australian Government to provide childcare and early learning opportunities where the market would otherwise fail to deliver childcare. These services predominantly operate in rural, remote and Indigenous communities.

The funding will be targeted at improving the facilities Budget Based Funded services operate from, the qualifications of staff working in these services and their governance. Opportunities for improving the integration and potential co-location of services for children and their families in communities will also be considered. Families and children using these services can expect to receive quality early childhood education and care programs that meet the National Quality Standards.

TAFE fees waiver for child care diploma and advanced diploma courses

The Government has provided \$106.5 million from 2009-2010 to 2013-2014 to support over 8,000 people a year, including existing childcare workers, to gain a vocational education and training qualification in early childhood. Since January 2009, students enrolling in a Diploma of Children's Services or an Advanced Diploma of Children's Services delivered by a TAFE institute or other government-training provider are no longer required to pay the regulated course fee.

Enhancing scrutiny of the financial viability of large Long Day Care providers

Following the insolvency of ABC Learning, the Government has decided in the 2010-11 Budget that some additional scrutiny of the financial standing of large childcare providers is warranted. A draft framework for regular assessments of the financial viability of Long Day Care (LDC) providers managing or operating 25 or more services will be developed consisting of appropriate indicators, benchmarks and processes for collecting data and conducting assessments. Providers and the sector will be consulted on this draft framework before a decision is made on its implementation and final shape by the end of 2010. Funding of \$1.9 million has been provided to develop and implement this framework from 2010-11 to 2013-14.

Complementing this, the Family Assistance Legislation will be amended to give the Minister responsible for early childhood education and childcare additional powers of review. These powers will allow the Minister to commission an independent, confidential investigation or audit of a particular provider where there are concerns about its financial viability and the failure of the provider could have a material impact on the market or a section of the market. Both measures could take effect from July 2011, subject to legislative changes.

Education

Schools

Generally, the vast majority of people in Australia are well educated at school and make a successful transition from school to work or further study. The Government recognises that students in remote and rural locations face unique challenges that impact on their effective participation in education.

The Government is committed to ensuring that through its Education Revolution there is an investment in the education of all Australian school students regardless of where they live or the circumstances of their community.

There is currently a gap in the achievement of outcomes in important measures like literacy and numeracy attainment and Year 12 retention for students in rural and regional schools compared to those in metropolitan areas.

The Australian Government is implementing initiatives that take significant steps toward delivering for Australian students an education system that ensures all Australian school students acquire the knowledge and skills to participate effectively in society and employment.

The Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC)

The Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) scheme supports eligible primary, secondary and tertiary students unable to attend an appropriate government school on a daily basis because of their geographic isolation. The scheme provides financial assistance to families for the costs of boarding and other expenses for their children. In 2009, AIC assisted 11,098 rural and isolated school students at a cost of \$59.5 million and in 2010-11, funding is approximately \$69.4 million.

In 2010-11, two elements of the AIC are available to assist rural and remote communities. These include:

- the Additional Boarding Allowance, which provides supplementary assistance for low-income families whose children must board away from home for their schooling. This allowance is \$2,295 between 1 January and 31 December 2011; and
- the Distance Education Supplement, which recognises the financial stress on rural families. This allowance is \$1,061 until the end of June 2011.

Application for these two supplementary allowances is made through Centrelink. The AIC scheme is a demand-driven program based on the numbers of eligible claimants, and numbers are based on a calendar year.

The Country Areas Program (CAP)

The Country Areas Program (CAP) is designed to help schools and remote communities improve educational opportunities and outcomes for students who are disadvantaged because of their geographical isolation. The program aims to help isolated students to obtain similar learning outcomes as students in less isolated areas. Between 2005 and 2008, CAP provided funding of \$114.1 million to schools across all education sectors.

From 2009, CAP funding for government schools has been incorporated into the National Education Agreement. CAP funding for all Catholic and Independent schools is covered by the *Schools Assistance Act 2008*. In 2009, CAP funding for Catholic and Independent educational sectors totalled \$5.5 million. In 2010, CAP funding for Catholic and Independent education sectors is estimated at \$5.8 million and approximately \$6.1 million is allocated for 2011.

Since 2008, non-government schools have received a remoteness loading calculated as an additional percentage above their per capita general recurrent grant funding for students studying at eligible locations. Non-government schools or campuses classified as moderately accessible, remote or very remote receive an additional 5 per cent, 10 per cent or 20 per cent respectively of the funding entitlement associated with their socioeconomic status score. The funding is provided in recognition of the higher cost of delivering education services in regional and remote areas of Australia and the negative impact that this can have on student achievement levels. In 2009, 412 non-government schools across 444 campus locations received the loading.

A range of national schools initiatives can assist schools, students and families in remote, rural and regional areas.

Building the Education Revolution (BER)

The Commonwealth Government has committed funding of \$16.2 billion over four years from 2009 to provide new facilities and refurbishments in Australian schools to meet the needs of 21st Century students and teachers through the Building the Education Revolution (BER).

BER complements the existing and planned investments by the states, territories and the non-government system. It is a critical component of the Government's economic stimulus package, giving schools and students the bricks and mortar infrastructure and resources.

The program builds on the Government's commitment to deliver world-class education to all schools throughout the country.

The three key elements of BER are:

- Primary Schools for the 21st Century – \$14.1 billion for all Australian primary schools, K-12 schools (primary school component) and special schools to build new iconic facilities such as libraries, multipurpose halls or classrooms, or to upgrade existing facilities.
- Science and Language Centres for 21st Century Secondary Schools – \$0.8 billion for the construction of new science laboratories or language learning centres.
- National School Pride Program – \$1.3 billion for all schools in Australia, government and non-government, for funding for minor capital works and maintenance projects.

As an example of funding to rural and remote communities, \$89.2 million has been approved under the Building the Education Revolution for school projects in the 29 communities in which the Remote Service Delivery National Partnership will be implemented.

- National School Pride - \$5.4 million
- Primary Schools for the 21st Century - \$70.3 million
- Science and Language Centres for 21st Century Secondary Schools - \$13.6 million

Capital Grants Program (CGP)

The Capital Grants Program (CGP) has supported the construction and upgrading of schools in partnership with state and territory governments, non-government school authorities and local school communities. Between 2005 and 2008, as part of the CGP General Element, the Government provided \$1.2 billion to government schools and \$494 million to non-government schools, including in remote, rural and regional areas. This includes an amount of \$19 million in CPG funding made available over 2005-08 for non-government schools in rural and isolated communities in the Northern Territory. From 2009, states and territories have the capital grants funding rolled into their specific purpose payment. Over the funding period 2009-12, the Australian Government is providing an estimated \$543 million in funding to the non-government school sector for Capital Grants funding.

Local Schools Working Together (LSWT)

The Local Schools Working Together (LSWT) pilot program is an important element of the Australian Government's Education Revolution. The LSWT program aims to encourage government, Catholic and independent schools to work together to develop shared educational facilities to broaden the benefit of the Government's expenditure on school capital infrastructure. Funding of \$62.5 million was made available over four years commencing 2008-09 for the development of shared educational facilities nationwide, including in remote, rural and regional areas.

Parliament and Civics Education Rebate

The Parliament and Civics Education Rebate (PACER) provides a subsidy for students from Years 4 to 12 to travel to Canberra to visit Parliament House, Old Parliament House (the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House and/or the National Electoral Education Centre), the Australian War Memorial and other national civic institutions where possible, as part of their civics and citizenship education. Funding of \$16.7 million has been allocated to PACER between 2009-10 and 2012-13.

The National Schools Chaplaincy Program

The National Schools Chaplaincy Program is a voluntary program that provides up to \$20,000 per year for schools to establish chaplaincy services, or enhance existing services, to provide pastoral care within their schools. The Government has committed a total of \$207.8 million over the four years of the program (2007-08 to 2010-11), with 1,160 rural and regional schools being provided with funding for chaplaincy services.

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)

The Australian Government is committed to the development of a rigorous and world-class Australian Curriculum from Kindergarten to Year 12, beginning with the learning areas of English, mathematics, science and history. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) has been established to oversee this work.

The Government has committed \$20 million over the four-year period from 2008-09 to 2011-12 to support the work of ACARA for the development of the Australian Curriculum.

The Australian Curriculum in the four initial learning areas will be released by the end of 2010 and implemented by the states and territories from 2011. A second phase of work will involve languages, geography and the arts.

The development and implementation of an Australian Curriculum will help to ensure that all Australian students, including those living in rural and regional areas, receive the highest quality education. It will provide agreement on the curriculum content that all Australian students should be taught. It will also provide explicit advice on the achievement standards that all Australian students should be meeting, regardless of their circumstances or the location of their school.

Trade Training Centres in Schools Program

The Trade Training Centres in Schools Program will provide \$2.5 billion over 10 years to enable all secondary schools across Australia to apply for funding of between \$500,000 and \$1.5 million for Trade Training Centres. The program will help increase the proportion of students achieving Year 12 or an equivalent qualification. An important step in achieving this goal is to ensure students have access to high quality, relevant education and training opportunities that engage and encourage them to complete their studies while opening pathways for future employment.

The program was implemented in 2008 and key priorities are to support secondary school communities with Indigenous students, and students from regional or other disadvantaged communities and to establish regional skills hubs whereby secondary schools in regional locations develop partnerships for improved trade training delivery.

National Secondary School Computer Fund (the Fund)

The National Secondary School Computer Fund (the Fund) is investing \$2.1 billion over six years (2008-2013) to improve secondary school student access to world-class information and technology as part of the \$2.2 billion Digital Education Revolution. The Fund will provide for new or upgraded ICT for secondary students in years 9 to 12, including rural and remote communities. Since 2008, the Australian Government has granted funding of over \$1.4 billion to assist 2,900 schools.

As agreed at the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), the aim of the program is to achieve a 1:1 computer to student ratio by 2011. A preliminary audit of computers was conducted in 2008 and determined that 780,000 computers will need to be funded through the Fund to achieve a ratio of 1:1 by 2011.

Smarter Schools: Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership

The Smarter School National Partnership for Literacy and Numeracy will provide \$540 million over four years (2009-2012) to facilitate and reward states and territories for implementing literacy and numeracy models or approaches that clearly demonstrate evidence for accelerating improvement in student results. Up to 1,022 schools around the country will receive assistance, with a focus on disadvantaged students. Many of the schools selected by states and territories to participate in this National Partnership are in rural and remote areas.

The Australian Government has also invested around \$41 million from 2008-09 to 2010-11 in Literacy and Numeracy Pilots in Low SES (socioeconomic status) Communities across Australia. The 30 pilot initiatives are driving changes at the school level and building an evidence base of what works for disadvantaged students. Over 400 schools, including rural and remote schools, are actively involved in finding out what works to improve literacy and numeracy.

Helping children with Autism

In response to the increasing prevalence of children with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in Australia, the Government is providing targeted support for these children, their parents, carers, teachers and other professionals through the Helping Children with Autism (HCWA) package. The \$190 million package is being delivered over four years by the departments of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA); Health and Ageing (DoHA); and Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).

DEEWR is responsible for delivering two initiatives under the package, which aim to foster positive partnerships between schools and families to improve the educational outcomes of children with an ASD. The initiatives, which have been named Positive Partnerships: supporting students on the autism spectrum, provide:

- professional development for teachers, school leaders and other school staff to build their understanding, skills and expertise in working with children with an ASD;
- workshops and information sessions for parents and carers to assist them to work with their child's teachers, school leaders and other staff.

These initiatives are being delivered across Australia, including in rural and remote areas.

Partnerships and careers

The National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions aims to increase the educational engagement and attainment of young people and to improve their transition to post school education, training and employment through immediate, concerted action supported by broader long-term reform.

The National Partnership clarifies roles and responsibilities between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories and was established to achieve a national Year 12 or equivalent attainment rate of 90 per cent by 2015.

Under the National Partnership, the Australian Government is providing funding of \$623 million over four years (from 2009-10) for improved youth engagement, attainment and transition arrangements. These arrangements include two new programs: School Community Business Partnership Brokers and Youth Connections.

The main objective of the Partnership Brokers program is to improve education and transition outcomes for all young people by facilitating stakeholder engagement, building community capacity and infrastructure and driving the Government's education reform and social inclusion agendas.

This will be achieved through a national network of Partnership Brokers that broker partnerships between and among education and training providers (including primary and secondary schools), business and industry, parents and families, and community groups to foster a strategic, whole-of-community approach that supports young people's learning and development. Partnerships will support young people, including those in rural and regional communities, to reach their potential and make a successful transition through school to further education or training and work.

Youth Connections providers will provide flexible, individualised and responsive services to assist young people who are at risk of disengaging from education or training. The objective of Youth Connections is to support these young people to attain Year 12 or equivalent and to help them make a successful transition through education and onto further education, training or work. Services available to Youth Connections participants include individualised case management and access to one-on-one assistance, group assistance, mentoring, advocacy and/or referrals to external support or specialist services.

Partnership Brokers and Youth Connections providers will work closely together to build partnerships that increase the capacity of education and training providers to support young people at risk, including those living in rural and regional communities.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students

A number of national initiatives are designed to assist in closing the gap in educational disadvantage between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, by focussing on

young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from regional or remote parts of Australia.

Indigenous Youth Leadership Program

The Indigenous Youth Leadership Program (\$48 million over four years 2009-2012) supports greater access to additional education choice for Indigenous students, particularly from remote and very remote areas of the country, through scholarships to attend participating high performing secondary schools (government and non-government, day and boarding) and/or universities to complete Year 12 and/or an undergraduate degree.

Indigenous Youth Mobility Program

The Indigenous Youth Mobility Program (\$49.2 million over four years 2009-2012) supports young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, aged 16 to 24, primarily from remote areas, to move away from home to gain the qualifications they need to have a greater chance of obtaining sustainable employment. There is a strong focus on Australian Apprenticeships, Vocational Education and Training and higher education.

The School Nutrition Program

The School Nutrition Program (\$31.7 million over three years 2010-2012) continues the Government's contribution towards improving student engagement and attendance. In the Northern Territory this contribution is through a breakfast and lunch program for school-aged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in targeted communities. The program also provides job opportunities and training for local Indigenous people living in remote communities.

The Three New Boarding Facilities in the Northern Territory initiative

The Three New Boarding Facilities in the Northern Territory initiative will provide for construction and operation of boarding facilities for up to 152 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary school students from remote areas in the Northern Territory. Two 40-bed facilities and one 72-bed facility will be constructed in 2010. It should be noted that these facilities are not boarding schools but supervised accommodation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to have access to a quality secondary education.

Parental and Community Engagement Program

The Parental and Community Engagement Program (\$84.3 million over four years 2009-2012) is a community-driven program that focuses on the development and implementation of creative and innovative approaches to improve the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school students through enhancing parental engagement with schools and education providers.

Sporting Chance Program

The Sporting Chance Program (\$41.3 million over four years 2009-2012) uses sport and recreation as a vehicle to increase the level of engagement of Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander students to improve their educational outcomes. The program focuses on school-based sports academies to provide innovative and high quality sports-focused learning and development opportunities to secondary school Indigenous students, and education engagement strategies that provide a range of sport, recreation and education activities for primary and secondary Indigenous students.

Community Festivals for Education Engagement program

Community Festivals for Education Engagement program (\$12.2 million over four years 2009-2012) encourages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to attend school regularly, complete Year 12 and pursue further educational and employment opportunities. The program's events also promote a greater understanding of contemporary and traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

The Indigenous Education Ambassadors Program

The Indigenous Education Ambassadors Program (\$400,000 over four years 2009-2012) uses a number of selected Indigenous Ambassadors to promote the importance of education, literacy and numeracy to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their parents, and to the wider community, through the provision of a range of services to schools and other organisations. Ambassadors have been selected based on their knowledge, experience and community profile.

Intensive Literacy and Numeracy Programs

The Closing the Gap - expansion of intensive literacy and numeracy programs and individual learning plans 2008-09 Budget measure was allocated \$56.4 million over four years (2009-2012). An amount of \$22.1 million has already been committed for expenditure under this program with an amount of \$14.5 million or 66 per cent of the total committed for expenditure to date going to benefit schools in either provincial or remote locations.

Supporting Teachers

Smarter Schools: Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership

The single greatest influence in school on student engagement and achievement is the quality of the teacher. To support Australia's teacher workforce, the Australian Government is investing \$550 million over five years (2008-09 to 2012-13) through the Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership. This will help attract and retain quality teachers and leaders in schools. Of this funding, \$50 million over five years (2008-09 to 2012-13) will be directed to professional development to support principals to better manage their schools and improve student results. Strategies to retain teachers in rural and remote areas are an important element of the National Partnership.

The Teacher Housing Program

The Teacher Housing Program (\$11 million over one year, 2010) as part of the Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement addresses the

urgent need for teacher accommodation in remote areas in the Northern Territory. Up to 22 additional teacher houses will be built in Northern Territory Emergency Response communities. This measure builds on the \$5 million provided for up to 10 teacher houses in Wadeye and a further \$5 million provided for renovation and construction of teacher houses for Aboriginal Independent Schools in Western Australia by 2013. These measures will assist in teacher recruitment and retention.

Higher education

Sustainable higher education provision that is responsive to the specific needs of regional Australia is essential to Australia's social and economic prosperity. Regional universities and their campuses play a significant role in the economic and social fabric of their communities. The Australian Government's reform agenda set out in Transforming Australia's Higher Education System will create a more flexible, student focused and accessible higher education system. The reforms will increase access to student income support and provide more equitable assistance. This will ensure more students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, Indigenous students and those from rural and regional areas are able to participate in education and training.

New models of educational delivery, based around partnerships and collaborations between universities, VET providers and schools, will play an important part in achieving the Government's ambition that by 2020, 20 per cent of higher education enrolments at the undergraduate level should be of people from a low socioeconomic status background.

Income support

Significant reforms to student income support were announced in the 2009-10 Budget and commenced from 1 April 2010 following passage of amendments to the *Social Security Act 1991*. The reforms will increase access to, and better target income support for students who need it most, by ensuring that more students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, Indigenous students and those from rural and regional areas are able to participate in education and training.

Commencing 1 April 2010, the Australian Government has introduced scholarships as an entitlement for university students receiving student payments. The Student Start-up Scholarship of \$1,300 in 2010, increasing to over \$2,128 in 2011, and indexed in following years, assists university students with costs associated with study each year they are receiving Youth Allowance, Austudy or ABSTUDY. The Relocation Scholarship, of \$4,000 in the first year of study and \$1,000 each year following (also indexed), assists dependent university students, or independent students disadvantaged by personal circumstances, who are receiving Youth Allowance or ABSTUDY with the costs of establishing accommodation away from home. The Relocation Scholarship particularly benefits rural and regional students.

More students will be eligible to receive Youth Allowance as a result of the changes the Government has made to student income support arrangements. The Parental Income Test (PIT) threshold for maximum payment will increase from \$33,300 to \$44,165 from

1 July 2010 and the payment withdrawal rates for incomes above the threshold will be significantly relaxed.

From 1 July 2010 the workforce participation criterion for independence under Youth Allowance is being tightened. Students who have worked an average of 30 hours in each of six consecutive 13 week blocks in the two-year period prior to claiming will still be considered independent but students who have undertaken part-time work or earned more than \$19,532 over 18 months will not. Under transitional arrangements, young people who completed Year 12 in 2008 took a 'gap year' in 2009 and started university during 2010 will have until 31 December 2010 to meet the current workforce participation criterion for independence under Youth Allowance and ABSTUDY. To be eligible, they must need to live away from the parental home to study at university or, if they live in the family home while studying, their combined parental income must be less than \$150,000.

Effective from 1 January 2011, the three elements of the workforce participation criterion for independence will apply for students disadvantaged by distance from educational institutions. Students who live in very remote, remote and outer regional areas (according to the Australian Standard Geographical Classification), who have to move away from home to study and whose parents earn less than \$150,000 a year, will be eligible for the existing independence test criterion.

The Government is also establishing a new Rural Tertiary Hardship Fund with funding of \$20 million to help reduce the barriers for rural and regional students accessing higher education. A rural and regional taskforce will be created to consider issues of regional participation and advise on delivery of the fund from 1 January 2011 to 30 June 2013.

Regional loading

Regional loading provides extra funding under the Commonwealth Grant Scheme to assist higher education providers with regional campuses to meet additional costs faced by providers because of their location, size and history. Regional loading recognises the unique contribution universities with regional campuses play in sustaining regional economic growth and development and the social and cultural life of their communities. In 2010, \$31.8 million in regional loading has been allocated. The Australian Government is currently reviewing regional loading and the outcomes of the review will inform the Government's policy on the future provision of regional loading from 2012.

Equity Funding

The Australian Government is providing \$56.4 million in higher education equity funding in 2010. The equity funding will support higher education institutions to attract and retain students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds. The funding will deliver:

- a new partnership program to systemically link universities with schools, vocational education and training providers and adult education to increase aspirations of low SES Indigenous and regional and remote students to access and participate in higher education; and
- a major student-related component paid as a loading based on numbers of low SES in the enrolment profile of each institution.

HECS-HELP benefit

The Government has provided \$12.4 million over 2008-09 to 2011-12 to reduce by about half the HELP debt of early childhood education teachers who work in areas of high need. Areas of high need are regional or remote areas, Indigenous communities, or areas of high socioeconomic disadvantage as determined by postcode.

The benefit will reduce compulsory HELP debt repayments by \$1,558.50 a year (for the 2009-10 income year, indexed annually) for up to a lifetime limit of 260 weeks (five years) of eligible employment.

Early childhood education teachers whose income is below the minimum repayment threshold for making a compulsory HELP repayment may also apply for a reduction in their HELP debt. Early childhood education teachers working in eligible regional or remote locations since the 2008-09 income year have been able to apply to the Tax Office for the benefit following 1 July 2009.

Additional nursing university places

The Government funded 1,134 new Commonwealth supported higher education nursing places in 2009. More than 300 of these places have been allocated to regional campuses to create opportunities for students to study nursing without having to relocate to a metropolitan campus. More than 60 per cent of courses will provide clinical placement opportunities in rural and regional areas.

Additional early childhood university places

The Government has provided \$53.9 million over 2008-09 to 2011-12 to create additional Commonwealth-supported higher education places for students wishing to undertake early childhood education courses, starting with 500 additional places in 2009 and rising to 1500 additional places by 2011.

For the years 2009 and 2010, 500 additional places were allocated for each year. Of these, 150 places for 2009 and 125 places for 2010 were allocated to campuses in regional areas.

Of the 280 places allocated for 2011, 90 places were allocated to campuses in regional areas. Additional places for 2011 are still to be allocated in 2010.

Vocational education and training

Australian Apprenticeships

Australian Apprenticeships (apprenticeships and traineeships) combine training and employment through paid work and structured training and lead to a national recognised qualification. They are available through a variety of certificate levels in more than 500 occupations, in traditional trades as well as a diverse range of emerging careers in most sectors of business and industry. Australian Apprenticeships are administered through Australian Apprenticeships Centres (AACs) located in 22 regions across Australia.

Declared Drought Area Incentive

The Declared Drought Area Incentive is designed to encourage rural employers to continue to offer employment opportunities to those who are willing to remain in drought declared areas and pursue training. Retaining employment in drought declared areas contributes to the Government's Social Inclusion agenda. Eligible employers can apply for a \$1,500 Declared Drought Area commencement incentive and a \$1,500 completion incentive payment for Australian Apprentices (apprentices and trainees) who meet the eligibility criteria. Being demand driven the funding for this program is not capped.

Rural and Regional Skills Shortage incentive

The Rural and Regional Skills Shortage incentive is designed to boost training in rural and regional Australia. This incentive provides a special commencement incentive to a rural or regional employer who employs an Australian Apprentice undertaking a Certificate III or IV qualification that leads to an occupation on the National Skills Needs List. Eligible employers can receive a \$1,000 Rural and Regional commencement incentive payment for Australian Apprentices who meet the eligibility criteria. Being demand driven the funding for this program is not capped.

The Living Away From Home Allowance

The Living Away From Home Allowance (LAFHA) assists eligible Australian Apprentices in their first three years of their Australian Apprenticeship. The allowance is for Australian Apprentices who are required to move away from their parent's or guardian's home in order to take up or remain in an Australian Apprenticeship, or receive essential supplementary on-the-job training with another employer. LAFHA is also available when an Australian Apprentice is homeless. Eligible apprentices receive \$77.17 a week for up to a year, \$38.59 a week for a further 12 months and \$25 a week for an additional 12 months. Being demand driven the funding for this program is not capped.

Tools For Your Trade

The Tools For Your Trade (TFYT) payment is designed to provide support to Australian Apprentices in skills shortage trades, and in agricultural and horticultural occupations in rural and regional Australia. The payment will provide eligible Australian Apprentices with up to \$3,800 over the life of their Australian

Apprenticeship. Eligible Australian Apprentices will receive a tax-exempt \$800 payment at the 3, 12 and 24 month points of their training and a \$700 payment at the 36 month point and on successful completion. Being demand driven the funding for this program is not capped.

Support for Adult Australian Apprentices

The Support for Adult Australian Apprentices (SAAA) was introduced in January 2010 as a replacement for the Support for Mid-Career Apprentices initiative. It is designed to remove barriers for Adult Australian Apprentices aged 25 years and over who commence an Australian Apprenticeship at the Certificate III and IV level in a trade where there is a skills shortage. Eligible Australian Apprentices, either full time or part time will receive a maximum of \$7,800 for first year payments and \$5,200 for second year payments (full time). Being demand driven the funding for this program is not capped.

Securing Australian Apprenticeships

The Commencement Incentive and the Completion Incentive were both introduced to encourage employers to take on and retain an Australian Apprentice to the point where they successfully complete their Australian Apprenticeship at the Certificate II, III, IV or Advanced Diploma level for the Commencement Incentive and Certificate III, IV or Advanced Diploma level for the Completion level. Eligible employers are paid \$1,250 for Australian Apprentices commencing Certificate II qualifications for the Commencement Incentive and \$1,500 for the remaining qualifications. For the Completion Incentive, eligible employers are paid \$2,500 for the successful completion by an Australian Apprentice of the qualifications listed. Being demand driven the funding for this program is not capped.

Through the Recommencement Incentive, the Government offers a financial incentive to employers who provide opportunities for out-of-trade, unemployed and transferring Australian Apprentices undertaking Certificate III, IV, Diploma or Advanced Diploma qualifications to complete their training. Eligible employers are paid \$750 that can be claimed three months after the date of recommencement. Being demand driven the funding for this program is not capped.

The Securing Australian Apprenticeships Recommencement Bonus is designed to provide additional incentives to employers who employ an out of trade, unemployed or transferring Australian Apprentice undertaking a Certificate III, or IV qualification that leads to an occupation on the National Skills Needs List (NSNL) or a Diploma or Advanced Diploma level. Eligible employers are paid \$1,800 that can be claimed three months after the date of recommencement. Being demand driven the funding for this program is not capped.

The Securing Australian Apprentices Completion Bonus provides additional incentives to employers who retain an Australian Apprentice through to successful completion of a Certificate III, or IV qualification that leads to an occupation on the NSNL or a Diploma or Advanced Diploma level qualification. Eligible employers are

paid \$1,000 on the completion of the apprentice's qualification. Being demand driven the funding for this program is not capped.

The Securing Australian Apprenticeships Bonus for Group Training Organisations (GTOs) incentive is designed to increase the national skills base in Australia by providing an additional payment to GTOs in recognition of the increased effort that may be required to undertake to establish a new host employer for Australian Apprentices during their Australian Apprenticeship. GTOs must be listed on the Group Training National Register. Eligible GTOs are paid \$1,800 per eligible Australian Apprentices. Being demand driven the funding for this program is not capped.

Critical Skills Investment Fund

A significant training fund will be established by the Australian Government and industry, who will work together to plan for and meet Australia's emerging skills demands. The Government will contribute \$200.2 million to the fund on the basis that industry will also make significant contributions to train existing workers and job seekers.

The aim is to develop the right skills in high demand sectors as the recovery proceeds. The fund will reduce the need to import labour in these key sectors.

The initial focus will be on up-skilling existing workers and training job seekers for work in key industries that are especially vulnerable to skills shortages – infrastructure and construction, renewable energy and resources – and is expected to benefit regional and remote communities supporting mining projects.

Emphasis will also be on regions and sectors under stress as a result of skilled workers attracted to major projects in other industries or regions

Foundation skills — Improving literacy and numeracy

More than 4.5 million working age Australians lack the core skills to progress in their work. The Government is determined and committed to tackling the language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) deficits that have been identified as affecting the future employment and earning prospects of more than 4.5 million working age Australians. The Government will provide \$119.2 million over four years from 2010-11 to improve and strengthen the Language Literacy and Numeracy Program, expand the Workplace English Language and Literacy Program and develop the new national Foundation Skills and Outreach Leadership project, to assist up to 140,000 Australians to build skills that will enable them to complete further training, secure employment and progress to higher skilled jobs. This means helping more and more Australians to be ready for work including in remote, rural and regional areas.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students

Away from Base (AFB)

Away from Base (AFB) for 'mixed-mode' delivery covers travel costs including fares, meals and accommodation for students studying approved 'mixed-mode' courses when they are required to travel away from their permanent home for a short period to undertake approved activities. Eligible providers in the higher education and vocational educational and training sectors administer AFB funding. The primary objective of AFB is to increase access and participation by Indigenous students from rural and remote areas in tertiary study (higher education and Vocational Education and Training), leading to increased enrolments and retention, improved educational outcomes and improved employment prospects, life choices and quality of life for Indigenous people. A 'mixed-mode' course is a nationally accredited course that is delivered through a combination of distance education and face-to-face teaching for students who are based in their home communities and undertake occasional intensive study periods on campus. The funding for this program is demand driven and has averaged expenditure of approximately \$26 million for each year of its operation since 2000.

Employment

Reforms to Employment Services - Job Services Australia: People, Skills and Jobs

On 1 July 2009, the new national employment services system, Job Services Australia, commenced. The Government is investing \$4.9 billion over three years until 30 June 2012 in Job Services Australia.

Job Services Australia is designed to meet the employment and recruitment requirements of both job seekers and employers. Under Job Services Australia, job seekers receive assistance tailored to their individual needs and level of disadvantage. Job Services Australia providers help job seekers access the right combination of training, work experience and other assistance to help them to find employment.

Job Services Australia also have a greater focus on employers, and providers will work with local employers to understand their labour needs and how best to fill their job vacancies.

Drought Force

Drought Force helps individual farms and farming communities in drought-declared areas that meet the Exceptional Circumstances criteria. The program is designed to ensure that these properties are maintained and are able to cope until the drought breaks. Drought Force also encourages people to remain in their local communities to build and retain skills that support local economies.

Job seekers undertaking Drought Force activities receive a supplement payment of \$20.80 per fortnight to cover additional costs associated with participation.

Drought Force activities may be undertaken on private land where workers are not displaced. Individual volunteers or people on income support, as well as groups, can assist with drought mitigation tasks such as maintaining irrigation channels, hand feeding, watering stock, fencing, general repairs and maintenance.

Funding/places are not capped. For the term of the Employment Services Deed 2009-10, funding for Drought Force activities, whether individual or group-based, is available through the Employment Pathway Fund (EPF), a flexible pool of funds that can be drawn down by Job Services Australia providers (JSA providers) to help job seekers obtain employment. For group-based Drought Force activities, JSA providers can access up to \$20,000 of an Advance EPF to help them cover initial activity establishment costs.

This funding is part of the total \$469.5 million allocated over three years to fund Work Experience activities including Drought Force.

Priority Employment Areas

Twenty priority employment areas were announced during 2009, following analysis of local labour markets vulnerable to the effects of the economic downturn. The regions receive targeted Government assistance until 30 June 2011 through the \$20 million Local Employment Coordinator initiative. A number of factors were taken into consideration to select the priority employment areas including the pre-existing unemployment rate, sharp increases in applications for income support benefits, low levels of post compulsory education and high exposure to vulnerable industries such as manufacturing. A number of the priority employment areas are located in regional Australia.

Local Employment Coordinators work with employers and not-for-profit groups to identify new job opportunities and help match employment and training opportunities with Government services and funding. They have worked with communities to develop projects for funding and have worked through Job Services Australia providers to help job seekers access Government support and training. Local Employment Coordinators have established Keep Australia Working Advisory Committees in their priority employment areas and a number of these committees include representation from Regional Development Australia. The Committee's role is to assist Local Employment Coordinators with the development and implementation of a regional employment plan.

Early access to intensive employment services for workers made redundant

The Government has committed \$298.5 million to ensure redundant workers or workers who have lost their job on or after 24 February 2009 have immediate access to personalised employment services. This assistance is available until 31 March 2011.

Disability Employment Services

The Australian Government values the contribution of people with disability to Australian society. People with disability who want to work should be supported in

their efforts to get a job. All job seekers should have access to employment services that respond effectively to individual circumstances, local labour market conditions and to the needs of employers.

Following a comprehensive review of the previous employment programs for people with disability, Disability Employment Network and Vocational Rehabilitation Services, the new Disability Employment Services commenced on 1 March 2010. The Government will invest \$2.7 billion over the next four years in these services.

In the development of the new model, the Government consulted widely and received valuable feedback from employment service providers and peak bodies, as well as from a range of individuals with disability and their advocates.

The new Disability Employment Services are demand driven, so that for the first time all eligible job seekers with disability have immediate access to a place in employment services that will help them get a job.

The new Disability Employment Services focuses on the needs of job seekers, with an increased emphasis on employment, skills development, education and training. The new services provide individually tailored assistance to job seekers so that they can achieve sustainable outcomes, and will offer more flexible options for those who need ongoing support in the workplace to retain their job.

Indigenous Employment Program (IEP)

The Government, in partnership with Indigenous people, is supporting Indigenous employment and enterprise development as pathways to greater economic independence. In 2009, the Australian Government made significant changes to the Indigenous Employment Program to make it more flexible and responsive to the needs of employers, Indigenous Australians and their communities. The Indigenous Employment Program now supports a broader range of activities that are suited to employers to increase opportunities for employment and economic development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Program is better able to focus on employer needs, and provide expanded support for Indigenous business development. The IEP can address literacy and numeracy barriers, build aspirations and support mobility. It complements the services provided by Job Services Australia providers.

Individuals, communities and organisations can access assistance directly from the DEEWR, or through the two panels of providers that have been established to help provide services under the Indigenous Employment Program. The IEP has a budget allocation of \$152.1 million for the financial year of 2010-11.

The Indigenous Employment Program also has several pre-designed elements that can be accessed directly. These include:

- The Indigenous Capital Assistance Scheme
- Indigenous Wage Subsidy

- CDEP Work Experience Subsidy
- Indigenous Cadetship Support

The IEP, together with the reformed Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) Program are contributing towards meeting the target of halving the employment gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade.

Further information

Further information about these and other education, employment or workplace relations initiatives is available at www.deewr.gov.au

ENVIRONMENT, WATER, HERITAGE AND THE ARTS

Regional Marine Planning

The Regional Marine Planning program will continue with funding of \$8.1 million in 2010-11 to enable the finalisation of planning in all marine regions around Australia. This will complete the planning phase of the program to ensure that the social, economic and environmental aspects are fully assessed and all relevant stakeholders are consulted. It will also support the initial implementation of the plans, including commencement of the statutory process for declaring networks of new Commonwealth Marine Reserves. The plans will provide information on conservation values and regional conservation priorities and assist industry in considering the impact of their activity on matters of national environmental significance under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. The proposed marine reserves will have a positive environmental impact on these regions and underpin the conservation and sustainable use of the marine environment.

Australia-Antarctica Airlink

The Australian Government has confirmed its commitment to Australia's engagement in the Antarctic with continued funding of \$11.7 million in 2010-11 for the Australia-Antarctica Airlink. The Airlink provides an efficient means of transport from Australia (Hobart) to Antarctica during the Antarctic Summer season to transport scientists, expeditioners and other personnel participating in Australia's Antarctic Program. The implementation of this project has been an outstanding success and other Antarctic nations are highly impressed by Australia's ability to operate the first ever regular passenger jet flight to Antarctica. Expenditure related to the Airlink will have a positive impact on the Tasmanian economy with a significant portion of expenditure related to the project paid to Tasmanian based staff and suppliers.

National Plan for Environmental Information

The Government has committed \$18 million over four years for A National Plan for Environmental Information that will establish enduring institutional arrangements and clear responsibilities for the consistent collection and provision of environmental

information for decision-makers. The program will coordinate and prioritise the way the Australian Government collects, manages and uses environmental information, with a view to engaging with other jurisdictions over time. The program will establish the Bureau of Meteorology as a central authority for environmental information and will develop an Environmental Information System which will ultimately ensure more and better quality information on the environment is available. This will facilitate better informed decision-making that will benefit rural and regional areas of Australia.

Ensuring the Resilience of the Reef

The Government continues to support a number of initiatives by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA). Funding of a total of \$12 million over two years from 2010-11 will provide resourcing for three key measures. This includes funding for:

- An increase to the GBRMPA's baseline funding of \$4.2 million over two years to ensure the long-term protection, ecologically sustainable use, understanding and enjoyment of the Great Barrier Reef for all Australians and the international community through the care and development of the Marine Park.
- Improving the outlook of the Great Barrier Reef to focus on environmental stewardship and ensure the Reef community and users of the ecosystem understand they have a role to play by taking positive action to improve the outlook for the Reef. A commitment of \$3.8 million over two years will see the expansion of the highly successful Reef Guardian initiative to increase community, local government and industry stewardship programs to adopt environmentally sustainable best practices, facilitating knowledge and sharing information to achieve critical environmental outcomes for the Reef.
- Reef HQ Aquarium is a cornerstone of tourism activity in North Queensland that will benefit from additional funding of \$4 million over two years to repair and upgrade critical infrastructure and ensure the facility's ongoing operational effectiveness, and longevity.

Contemporary Music Touring Program

Continued funding of \$0.4 million in 2010-11 will provide support to emerging artists to tour regional Australia. The program provides grants to professional musicians performing contemporary Australian music in regional and remote locations. This initiative allows opportunities for regional Australia to experience a variety of live music, and enjoy the arts, close to home. Regional Australian communities will also benefit from an injection of funds into small businesses and local economies from these touring events.

Australia Council

The Government will provide ongoing funding of \$695.9 million over four years to the Australia Council to fund artistic endeavours across Australia. This includes \$94.9 million for arts in rural and regional areas. This will mean increased exposure to

arts and culture within regional areas which facilitates cultural development of individuals and communities as a whole. Continuation of the funding for the Australia Council provides rural and regional areas with enhanced access to the arts and the opportunity to be involved in the production or experience of various art forms. This also provides an important mechanism for expression of life in rural Australia and a means of dealing with challenges of natural disasters such as drought, fire and flood.

Business Skills for Visual Artists

Continued funding of \$4 million over four years to the Business Skills for Visual Artists program will support Indigenous arts centres to provide targeted professional development, business skills training and access to the commercial marketplace for Indigenous artists and artswomen. Arts centres contribute to the development and sustainability of the Indigenous arts industry particularly in regional and remote parts of Australia and make a significant contribution towards maintaining Indigenous culture. Many Indigenous artists live and work in rural and regional areas of Australia and investment in this program provides enormous social, cultural and economic returns to Indigenous communities.

National Indigenous Television (NITV)

The Australian Government will continue funding for the National Indigenous Television Service with \$15.2 million ensuring its operation for the next 12 months. NITV provides Indigenous television content that reflects the diversity of Indigenous communities including those in rural and remote areas. A review of Government investment in Indigenous broadcasting and media will be carried out during 2010-11, to ensure that the resources allocated to Indigenous broadcasting and media are delivering the best outcomes for Indigenous people in terms of their communication, information and knowledge transmission needs.

Community Development and Employment Projects Program Reform in the Torres Strait

The Government supports an ongoing commitment of \$21.6 million over four years to reform the Torres Strait Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program in line with the national program. This measure will improve access to reformed employment services, build work readiness skills for individuals and enhance community capacity to engage and develop economically. This funding supports both arts and culture and ranger positions in the Torres Strait.

This program plays a major role in the supporting activities in the arts sector, primarily by subsidising the employment of local Indigenous people to undertake activities in Indigenous community organisations. The Indigenous rangers funded through this proposal will provide environmental services for land, sea and heritage management in the Torres Strait. This initiative will ensure current ongoing environmental management continues in these regional areas as well as providing opportunities for substantial further work for members of these communities.

Community Development and Employment Projects Program Reform

The Government supports the ongoing commitment to funding for Commonwealth service delivery jobs through reform of the CDEP nationally, creating jobs and traineeships for Indigenous Australians with proper remuneration and employment conditions. The total funding includes \$101.1 million for rangers and \$78.1 million for jobs in the arts, culture and broadcasting. Many Indigenous communities in rural and regional Australia will benefit from this ongoing funding. Conservation values in regional Australia will also benefit through the employment of Indigenous rangers.

Caring for our Country

Caring for our Country is an ongoing program in its second year and has released the second business plan targets for the delivery of the Caring for our Country outcomes. These outcomes work towards a healthier, more resilient, well managed, and better protected environment. The program continues to focus on the six priority areas including:

- the National Reserve System;
- biodiversity and natural icons;
- coastal environments and critical aquatic habitats;
- sustainable farm practices;
- natural resource management in northern and remote Australia; and
- community skills, knowledge and engagement.

The program will continue to work with Natural Resource Management regional bodies to achieve effective management of natural resources throughout Australia.

Further information

Further information about these and other environment, water, heritage and arts initiatives is available at www.environment.gov.au.

FAMILIES, HOUSING, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Australian Disability Enterprises

Australian Disability Enterprises are commercial businesses that provide employment opportunities for people with disability. Across Australia, there are 330 ADEs that collectively employ about 20,000 people with disability.

There are 178 ADE outlets (54 per cent) in regional and remote parts of Australia, employing around 6,000 people with disability. ADEs contribute significantly to the local economy and are an active part of the community.

Volunteer Grants

The Volunteer Grants Program recognises the valuable work of Australia's volunteers and is part of the Australian Government's ongoing commitment to supporting volunteers and encouraging volunteering in local communities. In 2009, more than 3,997 organisations in rural and regional Australia shared in a total of \$12.4 million in volunteer grants.

Funding is available to not-for-profit organisations to purchase small equipment to help existing volunteers and to encourage more people to become volunteers. Organisations are also able to request funding to contribute towards reimbursement of their volunteers for fuel costs incurred in their volunteering work such as those who use their cars to transport others to activities, deliver food and assist people in need.

For the first time, Volunteer Grants 2010 also allowed organisations to apply for funding for training for volunteers such as first aid or leadership development training.

Mental Health - Targeted Community Care Program

Through its Targeted Community Care Program, FaHCSIA delivers three community mental health initiatives, implemented as part of the COAG National Action Plan on Mental Health 2006-2011. In 2010-11 these initiatives will receive total funding of \$139.7 million:

- Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHaMs) services providing practical support for people with severe mental illness to help them to overcome social isolation and increase their connections to their community. There are 51 PHaMs services in rural and regional locations, and nine specialist remote services focussing on the needs of Indigenous Australians;
- Mental Health Respite for carers of a person with a severe mental illness and/or intellectual disability; and
- Mental Health Community Based Projects to assist families, carers, children and young people affected by mental illness.

The initiatives are designed to assist people with a mental illness to recover and participate more fully in social and community life. They recognise that a strong, supportive family environment is integral to an individual's recovery and also that carers and families have needs of their own associated with their caring and support role.

Helping Children with Autism

The Australian Government's Helping Children with Autism (HCWA) package provides support and services to children with autism spectrum disorders. The initiative helps families and carers to cope better with the pressures they face in raising their children.

The Package provides flexible early intervention funding for families with children with an autism spectrum disorder under 7 years of age, and also includes an additional Outer Regional, Remote and Access Support Payment (Access Payment) in recognition of the increased cost for some families in these areas to access specialist early intervention services such as speech pathology and occupational therapists. Eligibility for the Access Payment is based on a number of criteria including geographical challenges.

Since the program began in 2008, over 700 children living in regional, rural and remote areas have been assisted with early intervention funding.

Commonwealth Financial Counselling

Commonwealth Financial Counselling funds non-profit community-based organisations and local government community service organisations to provide free financial counselling services to people who are experiencing personal financial difficulties, including due to circumstances such as unemployment, sickness, housing stress and family breakdown. It is particularly focused on people on low-incomes.

The Australian Government funds around 130 full-time equivalent financial counselling positions in regional and rural Australia, which includes additional positions funded in recognition of the impact on families of the global economic recession and the Victorian bushfires.

Money Management services

Money management services provide practical and essential support to help people build longer-term capability to manage their money better and increase financial resilience. They are generally delivered in remote locations with high Indigenous populations. Services are voluntary, confidential, free, and open to the broader community. Around 12,000 people are assisted by money management services each year. Money management services:

- deliver education, information and coaching in financial literacy and budgeting to individuals, families or communities in a way that meets local needs;
- help people use tools to implement individual and family budgeting and savings, and debt management plans including on-going budget monitoring;
- organise related family support and referrals, including to financial counsellors for more complex financial matters; and
- help people to access financial institutions (e.g. banks, credit unions) and financial services information, including through internet banking or by phone.

Emergency Relief

Emergency Relief services provide support to address immediate needs in time of crisis. Assistance often includes food parcels and clothing, transport, chemist

vouchers, help with accommodation, payment of bills and budgeting assistance. Importantly, Emergency Relief agencies provide appropriate referrals to other services that help to address underlying causes of financial crisis.

Extension of Drought Support

The Government has provided \$7.7 million in 2010-11 to continue social and emotional counselling services to support families who are living in drought declared areas. The additional funding will enable community organisations to provide much needed services such as counselling, skills training, family support, home visiting and case management to those farming families most in need.

Find and Connect Service

Forgotten Australians and former child migrants will have access to a specialised support service to help them locate personal records and trace their families as part of the \$26 million Federal Budget 2010-11 initiative for a new Find and Connect Service.

The loss of identity and connection with family is one of the most traumatic and distressing outcomes for Forgotten Australians and former child migrants as a result of their experiences in institutional care.

The Australian Government's investment will fund the new national Find and Connect Service, a records tracing and support service which will help Forgotten Australians and former child migrants to trace their personal and family histories and get in touch with members of their families where possible.

The Find and Connect Service will provide a national website and 1,800 number as a central point for records and family tracing and offer case management and counselling support services from trained providers to support Forgotten Australians and former child migrants on their journey to locate records and re-connect with their families.

The new service follows on from the Australian Government's historic apology last year to the estimated 500,000 children who were placed in institutional or out of home care in the last century, otherwise known as the Forgotten Australians. Prime Minister Rudd also apologised to the estimated 7,000 child migrants who were sent to Australia and placed in institutional care.

Remote Service Delivery Flexible Funding Pool

The Australian Government has committed \$46 million to establish a funding pool that will respond flexibly and quickly to high priority needs identified in the Remote Service Delivery National Partnership priority locations.

This measure is a significant first step towards more effective collaboration across Australian Government agencies that will reduce red tape and ensure remote Indigenous communities are able to access the services they need.

This investment builds on the success of the Local Priorities Fund which was established under Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory in order to address local priorities such as environmental health and safety, community information technology equipment and essential maintenance and repairs for community facilities.

Community Development Employment Projects Program Reform in the Torres Strait Region

The Australian Government is providing \$44.3 million over four years to reform the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program in the Torres Strait. These reforms contribute to the Council of Australian Government's target to halve the gap between Indigenous and non Indigenous employment within a decade.

These reforms are an extension of reforms to the CDEP program that commenced in other areas of Australia from July 2009. This measure will ensure national consistency in the CDEP program and that Indigenous job seekers in the Torres Strait have the same incentives and participation requirements as others in the CDEP program.

Community Engagement Strategy for People with Disability

To provide disability and carer groups with funding of up to \$30,000 each to enable people with disability, their families and carers to make an active contribution to the National Disability Strategy, the Carer's Strategy and the Productivity Commission's inquiry into long-term care and support.

The aim is to effectively engage people with disability, their families and carers and the peak bodies that represent them in these processes to ensure they are responsive to the needs and aspirations of those with the lived experience of disability.

The organisations will have a degree of flexibility in exactly how they apply these funds and may use them to fund travel and accommodation for those living in regional and rural areas to ensure their participation in metropolitan consultations. Alternatively, the organisations may use the funds to: run specific workshops/forums in regional areas of Australia; engage vulnerable people or people with mobility restrictions in consultations; or contract a facilitator to conduct their specific forums and write up the results into a report.

Aboriginal Hostels Limited

Aboriginal Hostels Limited is the largest provider of affordable temporary accommodation for Indigenous Australians. It plays a significant role in ensuring that Indigenous people have access to safe and healthy accommodation and services across Australia, including in regional and remote areas. AHL provides 3,000 beds and 9,000 meals every day to Indigenous people staying at the hostels that it operates or funds through its community grants program.

The Australian Government is investing \$6.9 million for Aboriginal Hostels Limited to undertake necessary repairs and refurbishments to a number of its hostels.

Remote Indigenous Housing

The Australian Government is providing \$5.5 billion over 10 years from 2008-09 to lay the foundations for major reforms to Indigenous housing in remote Australia.

The funding is provided under the Remote Indigenous Housing National Partnership agreed with all states and the Northern Territory. It will mean up to 4,200 new houses are built and 4,800 major upgrades are made to existing houses to ease the housing shortage and improve living conditions for over 9,000 Indigenous families living in remote communities.

Governments are working together to improve housing delivery in remote Indigenous communities by developing better ways of managing new construction and by improving property and tenancy management practices.

Local people will be provided with training and real job opportunities, learning trades through construction work and working on property management such as ongoing repairs to and maintenance of the houses.

This package will also ensure land tenure arrangements are in place where new houses are being built and upgraded and is a critical first step for housing reform and for fostering economic development in Indigenous communities. Without long-term tenure, ownership is uncertain and residents and tenants have no security or certainty.

The Commonwealth, the states and the Northern Territory will also work towards clearer roles and responsibilities with respect to the provision of municipal services and essential services in Indigenous communities.

Housing investment for the benefit of Indigenous people in remote Indigenous communities is a central plank in achieving the targets for closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage.

Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory

The Australian Government is continuing to target additional effort to improving the well being of Indigenous citizens living in the Northern Territory through the Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory National Partnership agreement with the Northern Territory Government. To fulfil our commitment to close the gap in the Northern Territory, \$807.4 million was appropriated in the 2009-10 Budget and will continue through to 2012-13.

Through the National Partnership, regional and remote Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory are supported by measures that focus on strengthening community safety, law and justice, supporting families, enhancing education, improving child and family health, reforming welfare and ensuring effective engagement between the Government and Indigenous people.

Improved Service Delivery for Indigenous People Living in Remote Communities

Through the Remote Service Delivery National Partnership, Australian governments have agreed to a coordinated approach to identifying and addressing investment priorities in 29 priority Indigenous locations.

The 2010-11 Budget includes the establishment of a Remote Service Delivery Flexible Funding Pool to meet interim needs in priority communities. This will improve responsiveness and reduce red tape by funding projects identified as immediate community needs where there is currently no readily accessible alternative source of funding.

Community Development Employment Projects Program Reforms in the Torres Strait Region

The Australian Government recently implemented national reforms to the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program. In 2010-11, these reforms will be extended to include CDEP program delivery in the Torres Strait. The reformed CDEP program in the Torres Strait will focus on work readiness, getting more Indigenous people into jobs that have proper remuneration and entitlements, extending local training opportunities and promoting community development.

The reforms will ensure that Indigenous job seekers in the Torres Strait have the same incentives and participation requirements as others in the CDEP program.

Strengthening Leadership in Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities

The Australian Government provides leadership and capability training to Indigenous individuals and communities throughout Australia. This work, combined with local community development initiatives coordinated by the Indigenous Coordination Centres and Regional Operation Centres, has created greater capability for Indigenous people to participate in decision making and policy implementation.

Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payments (AGDRP)

Disasters are common occurrences in Australia and the majority of disasters occur in our rural and regional areas. In the Australian context, states and territories have primary responsibility for the protection of life and property. The Australian Government complements the relevant state or territory response, where appropriate, to lessen the impact on individuals and communities and to assist in their recovery.

No amount of assistance can ever fully address the suffering and loss experienced by Australians as a result of disasters, but it is hoped that the recovery assistance provided, together with other available assistance and generous community support, goes part of the way towards helping people and communities recover and get back on their feet.

Far North Queensland Floods, January/February 2009

In February 2009 the AGDRP was made available for those affected by the Far North and Northern regions of Queensland as a result of the rain depression caused by Tropical Cyclone Ellie. The Government has provided \$55.5 million in the 2009-10 Budget under the AGDRP program to provide assistance for this event.

Victorian bushfires, February 2009

The Government provided \$465.5 million in response to the Victorian Bushfires in the 2009-10 Budget. In addition to funding provided under AGDRP, the Government also made ex-gratia payments, a contribution to Victoria's Rebuilding Together Plan, payments to Victoria under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements, and, a donation to the 2009 Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund.

Qld/NSW Floods, May 2009

In May 2009, the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment (AGDRP) was made available to people impacted by the storms and associated flooding over South-east Queensland, and the North Coast and Northern Rivers regions of New South Wales. The Government has provided \$14.2 million in 2009-10 under the ADGRP program to provide assistance for this event.

Mid-North Coast NSW Floods, November 2009

In November 2009, the AGDRP was made available to people impacted by the extreme rainfall and associated flooding that hit the Mid-North Coast of New South Wales. The Government has provided \$12.9 million under the AGDRP program to provide assistance for this event.

Western Australian Bushfires, December 2009 – January 2010

In December 2009, the AGDRP was made available for people impacted by the bushfires that began in the areas of Dandaragan, Coorow, and Toodyay in Western Australia. The Government has provided \$0.9 million under the AGDRP program to provide assistance for this event.

South West Queensland Floods, March 2010

In March 2010 the AGDRP was made available for those impacted by heavy rain and flooding in south-west Queensland. The Government has provided \$14.8 million under the AGDRP program to provide assistance for this event.

Other Disaster Support

Disaster Relief Appeal Fund

The Commonwealth Government also contributed \$500,000 to the Queensland Premiers Appeal Queensland Premier's Disaster Relief Appeal Fund to assist the victims of the recent Queensland floods. (\$250,000 each from FaHCSIA and the Attorney-Generals Department, from existing appropriation).

Further information

Further information about these and other family, housing, community services and Indigenous affairs initiatives relating to rural and regional Australia is available at www.fahcsia.gov.au.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE

TradeStart Program

The Government is committed to developing and expanding trade and investment opportunities for Australian companies and is providing \$14.4 million over four years to maintain the TradeStart program.

The program will deliver Austrade trade and investment services in a range of locations across Australia. The refreshed program will focus on enhanced effectiveness through collaboration with delivery partners and will assist small and medium business in metropolitan and regional areas to compete in international markets. It will also broaden the focus from export opportunities to assistance in trade and investment. The partnership based model aims to achieve integrated service delivery and improve access for businesses to the complementary range of services offered by Austrade and partner organisations.

Export Market Development Grants scheme

The Export Market Development Grants (EMDG) scheme is a key Government financial assistance program for current and aspiring exporters. The scheme, administered by Austrade, aims to encourage small and medium-sized Australian businesses to develop export markets by reimbursing up to 50 per cent of eligible export promotion expenses above a threshold of \$10,000. The scheme is open to eligible Australian businesses who can claim up to a total of eight grants of a maximum of \$200,000 each.

Of the total number of EMDG grants paid in 2008-09 (relating to eligible expenditure incurred in 2007-08), 22.8 per cent were awarded to recipients from rural and regional Australia, an increase of 0.5 per cent over the previous year. For the same year, 79.2 per cent of all grants were awarded to small businesses with an annual income of \$5 million or less.

Consistent with its election commitment, the Government implemented changes in 2008 to revitalise the EMDG scheme which applied for the first time to eligible export promotional expenditure incurred from 1 July 2008, and which impact on grants paid in 2009-10. Of particular relevance to regional Australia have been the changes allowing approved regional not-for-profit economic development bodies, including tourism bodies which promote Australian exporters, to access the scheme; cutting the minimum threshold of expenditure by \$5,000, to a \$10,000 minimum; and replacing the list of eligible services provided in Australia with a negative list, which means all services are now considered eligible unless otherwise specified.

Other changes impacting on grants paid in 2009-10 included increasing the maximum grant by \$50,000 to \$200,000; allowing as an eligible expense the costs of patenting products; lifting the maximum turnover limit from \$30 million to \$50 million; and extending the limit on the number of grants from seven to eight annual grants.

Further information

Further information about these and other foreign affairs and trade initiatives relating to rural and regional Australia is available at www.austrade.gov.au.

HEALTH AND AGEING

Petrol Sniffing Strategy — Enhancing the supply and uptake of Opal

The Government will provide a \$38.5 million funding package over four years to continue to expand the voluntary roll out of Opal fuel. Additional fuel subsidies will be provided to the manufacturer of Opal fuel that will enable the establishment of new storage facilities for Opal fuel in Darwin and northern Queensland. The new fuel storage facilities will enable community demand for Opal fuel to be met in northern Australia, in particular the Top End of the Northern Territory, the Gulf of Carpentaria and Cape York regions of Queensland and the East Kimberley in Western Australia. The new storage facilities are planned to be operational by 2012-13.

Nursing Rural Locum Scheme for Nurses

The Government will provide \$28.8 million over four years between 2010-11 and 2013-14 to assist around 750 locum nurses (3,000 over four years) with their costs of living, including accommodation and travel support. This measure will also provide a locum allowance thus improving the attractiveness of the locum posts.

This scheme aims to boost nursing service delivery and capacity in rural locations.

Support for the Allied Health Workforce

Rural and remote areas of Australia are experiencing shortages of allied health professionals, which impacts on service delivery capacity and potentially health outcomes in rural and remote areas.

The Government has committed \$5.3 million over four years to establish a rural locum scheme for allied health professionals. The scheme will provide around 100 locum placements annually, allowing allied health professionals, such as physiotherapists, occupational therapists and podiatrists, in rural areas to undertake professional development opportunities and take leave. This 2010-11 measure will contribute to improved service delivery and improve recruitment and retention of allied health professionals.

The Government is also providing \$6.5 million over four years to fund an additional 100 clinical placement scholarships for allied health students each year. This 2010-11 measure builds on the success of the Government's Allied Health Clinical Placements

Scholarship Scheme and will support an increase in health workforce capacity, including in rural primary care settings.

Additional Places on the Australian General Practice Training (AGPT) Program

The Government is funding a \$344.9 million expansion of the Australian General Practice Training (AGPT) Program. When combined with previous investments, this will double General Practice training places from 600 to 1,200 over the period 2008 to 2014, delivering around 1,375 new GPs or GPs-in-training by 2013, or 5,500 new GPs or GPs-in-training over the next decade.

The Australian General Practice Training (AGPT) Program has a rural training pathway and the general training pathway. General Practice Education and Training Limited (GPET), the Commonwealth Company responsible for the management of the AGPT program, is required to ensure at least 50 per cent of registrars are training in rural and regional areas (defined as areas falling within the ASGC RA 2-5 classification).

Financial incentives are available to registrars undertaking their training in rural and remote areas of Australia.

This will improve access to General Practice in rural and regional Australia (as registrars provide services while they train), and increase the likelihood of registrars choosing to stay in rural and regional Australia throughout their careers.

Specialist Training Program

The Government is spending \$144.5 million over four years to increase the capacity of the Specialist Training Program. This measure will provide for an increase of training places sufficient to bring the total number of annual places up to 900 by 2014 to deliver the equivalent of 680 more specialist doctors into the health system over the next decade. The delivery of training in rural and regional areas is a priority under this program.

Prevocational General Practice Placements Program (PGPPP)

The Government is committing \$149.6 million over four years for the Prevocational General Practice Placements Program (PGPPP). The PGPPP is a national prevocational training program offering junior doctors the opportunity to gain clinical experience in primary care practices around Australia. The program aims to increase junior doctors' understanding of primary care and encourages them to take up general practice as a career. A priority of the program is to make placements available in rural and remote areas.

MSOAP Cataracts Funding - Ophthalmology Eye Teams for Rural Australia

\$5 million over four years from 2010-11 to 2013-14 has been allocated to increase the number of ophthalmology outreach services provided through the Medical Specialist Outreach Assistance Program (MSOAP). It is anticipated the delivery of new or expanded ophthalmology services will start from 1 January 2011. People who are aged over 55 years and live in Australian Standard Geographical Classification Remoteness Areas 2 (Inner Regional) to 5 (Very Remote) will be targeted under the program.

Multi-Purpose Services

This proposal will provide funds to build more than 280 sub-acute beds or bed-equivalents to Multi-Purpose Services, providing around 33,000 more acute services each year when fully implemented at a cost of \$122 million over four years. This will provide more flexible places in rural and regional areas to patients who require either sub-acute or aged care services.

Improving the viability of community care providers

The Government is committing \$10.1 million to the initiative to increase the viability supplement paid to eligible rural and remote community care providers by 41 per cent in real terms. About 400 eligible aged care providers in rural and remote areas operating about 6,300 places will receive the increase in the viability supplement.

Extension of the Mental Health Support for Drought Affected Communities Initiative

The Extension of the Mental Health Support for Drought Affected Communities Initiative will provide \$5.5 million to enable the continuation of community outreach and crisis counselling for individuals, families and communities who are in distress due to drought. This initiative will raise community awareness of mental illness, promote help-seeking behaviors and increase access to crisis counselling and support, for drought-affected rural and regional communities.

Removal of practice accreditation requirement for General Practitioners (GP) Focused Psychological Strategies services

From 1 July 2010, GPs with appropriate accredited Focused Psychological Strategies skills training will be able to provide Medicare-eligible services in any medical practice, whether or not the practice is accredited. This will improve access for patients in rural and remote areas in particular, where there are lower proportions of accredited GP practices.

COAG Improving Access to Primary Care in Rural and Remote Areas Initiative

The Government is committed to ensure increased access to primary health care services for rural and remote communities experiencing workforce shortages.

The COAG Improving Access to Primary Care in Rural and Remote Areas Initiative recognises that hospitals fulfill a role in meeting primary care needs in these communities. The initiative allows Medicare benefits to be claimed for bulk billed non-admitted non-referred professional services (including nursing, allied and dental services) provided in emergency departments and outpatient clinics at an increased number of eligible small rural hospitals.

Building the Capacity of Australian Sport initiative

The initiative will provide \$195.2 million over 4 years to enhance the Australian Sports Commission's (ASC) work with key system partners including state governments and national sporting organizations to deliver comprehensive whole of sport initiatives and build the long term sustainability of the Australian sport system. Its objective is to support the development of a collaborative and sustainable national sports system which will in turn create opportunities for all Australians to participate, excel and to enjoy the benefits of sport and of being physically active.

This initiative will support sport participation rates to influence the overall health of Australians, the capacity and sustainability of national sporting organizations and the significant volunteer labour underpinning the Australian sporting system.

From 2010-11, this initiative will, amongst other components:

- increase the quality and breadth of delivery of community sport by providing additional coaching and officiating training enabling 45,000 people to access coaching and officiating accreditation programs;
- drive capability and capacity building in 28 sports with an associated impact of up to five community and education initiatives per sport; and
- embed 28 sport management and development experts in 28 sports impacting directly or indirectly on 800,000 Australians.

The measure includes specific participation and sport development strategies which will impact regional communities. The beneficial effects on social cohesion, educational outcomes for young people, and the positive impacts on physical and mental well-being which flow from participation in organised sport and recreation is particularly important in regional areas, where it has always been one of the main cohesive elements that draw people together. Sporting clubs provide a focus within the communities and a sense of community cohesion, particularly in times of economic hardship when other institutions and structures are disappearing.

National Talent Identification and Development Program

The National Talent Identification and Development (NTID) program is designed to help sports identify talented athletes (12 years and older) and prepare them for participation in domestic, national and international competition. The program uses information across all disciplines of sports science to identify young athletes with

characteristics associated with elite performance. Once identified, the young athletes are provided with the opportunity to realize their potential in a high-quality talent development program. The NTID program also has project coordinators located at various locations around Australia, including Melbourne, Canberra, Brisbane and Adelaide.

Australian University Sport (AUS) closely supports the NTID program through talent assessment centers at regional universities, which provide support to national recruitment and testing initiatives undertaken by NTID.

The Talent Assessment Centre (TAC) network, which has the purpose of extending the reach of the NTID program into regional areas of Australia, has now conducted more than 30 testing sessions on behalf of the NTID program. In addition to this, the development of the fully national, interactive website ETID now extends the metropolitan reach of the NTID program to every corner of Australia that has an internet connection. This works to provide the considerable regional athletic talent residing in this country with another avenue to come to the notice and attention of high performance sport.

Further information

Further information about these and other health and ageing initiatives relating to rural and regional Australia is available at www.health.gov.au.

HUMAN SERVICES

Medicare Australia Access points

Funding of \$7.7 million will be provided in 2010-11 to maintain access to a number of Medicare Australia services in rural and metropolitan areas with limited access to a Medicare Office. This funding will provide for 800 access points to continue to operate in Pharmacies, Post offices, Village Centres, General Stores and health centres in areas where it is not appropriate to open a Medicare Australia office.

Further information

Further information about these and other human services initiatives relating to rural and regional Australia is available at www.humanservices.gov.au.

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme

In the 2008-09 Budget, the Government provided \$23.6 million over four years to support the Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme. The measure will allow up to 2,500 workers from Kiribati, Tonga, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea to be employed in the Australian horticulture sector over three years. The Government is conducting the pilot to examine whether a seasonal worker scheme could contribute to foreign aid objectives and assist Australian employers.

Further information

Further information about these and other immigration initiatives relating to rural and regional Australia is available at www.immi.gov.au.

INFRASTRUCTURE, TRANSPORT, REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Rail Productivity Improvements

This Budget allocates a \$996 million equity investment to the Government-owned Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) for a productivity package of upgrades across Australia to modernise and improve the capacity of the interstate rail network, helping to get more trucks off rural and regional roads. The new projects will create some 1,500 jobs, mostly in regional Australia, and help save some 280,000 tonnes of carbon emissions over 30 years.

In a boost for regional economies, the required material – the new concrete sleepers and metal rails – will be sourced from factories in Whyalla, Grafton, Geelong, Mittagong and Wagga Wagga. The productivity package includes:

- \$170 million to straighten the line between Maitland and the Queensland border at 57 locations (NSW), helping to reduce transit times along the eastern seaboard by almost one hour.
- \$24 million to build three double track passing loops near the NSW towns of Goulburn, Moss Vale and Glenlee, providing trains with more overtaking opportunities and fewer delays.
- \$312 million to re-rail the lines between Whyalla and Broken Hill and between Parkes and Broken Hill, which will allow both to be used by heavier trains.
- \$253 million to replace the existing old wooden sleepers on the line between Parkes and Broken Hill with one million new concrete sleepers, greatly improving its capacity as well as reducing transit times and the need for temporary speed restrictions during summer.
- \$110 million to re-rail the line between Albury to Melbourne to Geelong, reducing transit times and allowing it to be used by heavier trains.
- \$32 million to build four new passing loops between Gheringhap and Maroona, providing trains with more overtaking opportunities and fewer delays.
- \$95 million project to re-rail the line between Koolyanobbing and Kalgoorlie and build two new passing loops, reducing transit times and delays. The project will support 315 jobs and take approximately 11 months to complete. Investment is subject to ARTC concluding arrangements for access to the interstate network with WestNet Rail.

Compendium of Priorities and Initiatives

The projects will support significant rural and regional construction and economic activity and boost the cost competitiveness of freight rail along the North-South and East-West rail corridors benefitting rural and regional communities around Australia.

In addition, the 2010-11 Budget allocates \$70.7 million to complete detailed planning of the Moorebank Intermodal Freight Terminal Project in Sydney's South West, with the staged redevelopment of the site expected to start in 2013. This work will be undertaken in partnership with the site's current owner, the Department of Defence, the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, and the Department of Finance and Deregulation.

Once operational, the new facility will take more than 1 million trucks a year off the road, with benefits across the supply chain including in rural and regional Australia.

Nation Building Plan for the Future

The Nation Building Plan for the Future allocated \$8.5 billion from the 2009-10 Budget for nationally significant transport infrastructure projects across Australia that are critical to boosting our economy's productivity. This is part of the Australian Government's continued rollout of the most significant infrastructure program in our nation's history, supporting jobs, productivity and sustainability right across the country.

Projects will help to connect our regional areas with major towns and cities and with commercial and export markets. They will increase the efficiency of freight and passenger transport, and will bring long term economic benefits to our regions.

An example of this investment includes \$488 million to upgrade the Bruce Highway from Cooroy to Curra. This investment will separate long distance from local traffic and improve safety and travel times for all people travelling on this section of road.

\$5.6 billion State Infrastructure Fund

World class infrastructure will boost Australia's productivity for the future, and will ensure Australia remains an attractive place to invest and establish new businesses, creating jobs now and in the future.

Reinvesting some of our resource profits into capacity-building infrastructure will help workers make the best use of their skills, and businesses to make the best use of their capital, building sustainable growth well into the future.

The Rudd Government will build on its existing investments by establishing a new ongoing infrastructure fund for the states and territories, as part of its tax plan for the future. The fund will commence in 2012-13 with an initial contribution of \$700 million and will provide more than \$5.6 billion over the decade.

This Fund will ensure infrastructure investment is a permanent priority of Commonwealth and state budgets, and will boost infrastructure development in rural and regional communities, especially in resource-rich states.

Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program

Since it was announced in November 2008, the Government has provided funding of more than \$1 billion under the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program. This funding is provided to local government authorities to support jobs and continue the process of building and modernising infrastructure that revitalises our communities and promotes long term economic, social and environmental sustainability in Australia's regions. Under this program local government authorities have identified projects of significance.

By providing communities the opportunity to nominate their priorities, the Government's investment has resulted in more than 4,900 projects being funded including town halls, libraries, community centres, sports grounds and environmental infrastructure.

National Transport Regulation

The Government will provide \$8.3 million in 2010-11 to establish national regulators for heavy vehicles, rail safety and maritime safety, and for an expanded rail and national maritime safety investigatory function.

Of this funding, \$2.3 million will be provided for the Commonwealth's contribution to set up project implementation teams in the host jurisdictions to establish the national heavy vehicle regulator in Queensland and the national rail safety regulator in South Australia. State and Territory Governments will also contribute to this activity according to the National Transport Commission formula. The Australian Maritime Safety Authority will receive \$5.1 million to take on maritime safety regulation responsibilities for all commercial vessels, and the Australian Transport Safety Bureau will receive \$0.8 million to establish a national investigation framework for rail and maritime safety.

National transport regulation reform is part of the national partnership agreement reached by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to deliver a seamless national economy. Further information about the COAG agreement to implement national transport regulation reforms can be found in the COAG Communiqués of 2 July 2009 and 7 December 2009.

Infrastructure Employment Projects

Infrastructure Employment Projects aim to support jobs and skills development through projects that build long term community infrastructure and social capital across Australia. The program focuses on projects that generate jobs in regions affected by the global economic crisis.

An example is the Government's investment of \$5.5 million to upgrade the terminal at Gladstone Airport, to help the region's recovery from the impact of the global recession and to assist it to prepare for significant planned industrial expansion in coming years. The upgrade will expand the arrival and departure halls, provide space for additional security screening facilities and construct passenger facilities in the departure hall, as part of the Council's broader development plans.

National Bike Path Projects

National Bike Path Projects (NBPP) is a \$40 million initiative that will invest \$14.5 million in 2010-11. The program will develop, extend and refurbish cycling infrastructure across Australia.

Over 170 projects have been approved for funding and are expected to support more than 1,900 jobs in local communities across Australia. Improved cycling infrastructure will provide more Australians with a greener, healthier way of getting to and from school or work, and over time will help take cars off local roads and reduce carbon emissions.

Bike path projects will include:

- off-road bike paths (excluding mountain bike trails);
- on-road bike lanes (road-widening or marking bike lanes on an existing road), and
- bicycle parking facilities.

Better Regions Program

The Better Regions program is providing \$176 million over four years, with an investment of \$110.9 million in 2010-11, to assist regions build on their strengths, improve liveability and create jobs. The Program is designed to fund projects that have been identified as priority investments by local communities. The projects were announced as commitments by the Government during the 2007 election campaign.

The funding is helping local communities deliver local infrastructure and other regional community projects including arts and cultural centres, sports facilities and community centres. This investment by the Government seeks to address the economic and social needs of communities by providing important community infrastructure built through partnerships between the community and all levels of government.

The Government is using this program to fund over 100 diverse projects. Projects completed under the program include the provision of pit lane infrastructure for the V8 Super Car race in Townsville, which was also used as rehearsal space for the Australian Festival of Chamber Music; a \$2 million contribution towards the regional aquatic centre in Launceston, Tasmania and a \$40,000 grant for the installation of rainwater tanks for the Kyabra Community Association in outer Brisbane.

Local Government Reform Fund

The Local Government Reform Fund was established by the Government to accelerate the implementation of the Local Government and Planning Ministers' Council agreed asset and financial management frameworks, deliver improved capacity and sustainability for councils, and provide better outcomes for local communities.

The Government is providing funding of \$25 million under the Local Government Reform Fund in 2009-10 and 2010-11, with \$24 million to be delivered to the states and territories under a National Partnership Agreement covering a range of innovative and collaborative reform projects. The balance of funding of \$1 million will be used to support the collection and analysis of nationally consistent local government data. Improved national data capabilities will bolster local government's workforce planning ability and support states and territories reforms to increase business, asset and financial planning capacity.

Local Government Financial Assistance Grants

The Rudd Government is providing a record \$2 billion in local government financial assistance grants in 2010-11, including an estimated \$1.35 billion for rural and regional councils and shires to deliver basic services, maintain roads and upgrade community facilities.

To assist local councils with planning for the recovery and to ensure local government has maximum certainty to begin planning their 2010-11 works programs, the first instalment of 2010-11 payments will be paid early, with some \$511.6 million going to councils before the end of 2009-10.

Local Government Financial Assistance Grants are provided under the *Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995*. They have a general purpose and an identified local road component, both of which are untied to enable councils to fund local infrastructure and service priorities.

The 2010-11 estimated grant allocation of \$2 billion is \$578 million more than the 2009-10 allocation. To assist with the effects of the economic downturn, around one quarter of the 2009-10 grant pool (\$479.7 million) was paid to councils in June 2009.

South Australian councils will also receive \$15.5 million in supplementary local road funding in 2010-11 to address the relative disadvantage of South Australian councils in the local road component of the Financial Assistance Grants.

Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government

As part of its partnership with Local Government, the Australian Government has invested \$8 million towards the establishment of the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government.

The centre's program for 2010 includes delivering local government leadership programs and courses, coordinating infrastructure asset and financial management,

building local government capacity to meet challenges like climate change and encouraging best practice in the sector.

The centre will also provide support to other Government initiatives including the \$25 million Local Government Reform Fund and the collection and reporting of local government data.

Australian Council of Local Government

In 2008, the Rudd Government announced the establishment of the Australian Council of Local Government (ACLG) to forge a new cooperative engagement between the federal and local government.

The second ACLG meeting was held in Parliament House, Canberra, on 25 June 2009 with a theme of "Building Resilience in Local Communities". The Australian Government was joined by over 400 mayors and shire presidents from councils and shires across Australia and representatives from state and territory governments. The meeting provided the opportunity to address current or emerging issues facing local government which included the challenges posed by the global financial crisis and climate change.

The third meeting of ACLG will look further at building the economic, social and environmental sustainability of our communities and is planned for 18 June 2010.

Women in Local Government

As part of its commitment to the 2010 Year of Women in Local Government, the Australian Government is providing \$490,000 towards some practical initiatives to help increase the engagement of women in local government, including:

- \$250,000 for a three-year 50:50 Vision: Councils for Gender Equity program. To be conducted by Australian Local Government Women's Association, this program will audit councils and shires to determine the status and role of women in leadership roles as well as their participation in the workplace. The program will also establish an awards program to recognise excellence;
- \$100,000 in scholarship funding to enable senior women in local government to participate in the new Executive Leadership Program being developed by the recently established Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government and the Australia and New Zealand School of Government;
- \$100,000 to improve the collection of data and reporting on the status of women in the local government sector; and
- \$40,000 will be provided to the Local Government Managers Australia for their 2010 Management Challenge, which will involve around 130 councils identifying strategies to promote gender equity in their councils.

Regional Development Australia

The Government's Regional Development Australia (RDA) network is fully operational, with committees established in all states and territories. RDA committees have held their first meetings and are developing their Business and Regional Plans.

Initial areas of focus for Committees are on the economic, environmental and social issues of their community, with Regional Development Australia committees contributing to and driving:

- regional business growth plans and strategies, which help support economic development, the creation of new jobs, skills development and business investment;
- environmental solutions, which support ongoing sustainability and the management of climate change (including the impact of drought, flood or bushfires); and
- social inclusion strategies, which bring together and support all members of the community.

The inaugural RDA National Forum was held at Parliament House, Canberra, on Thursday 18 March 2010. The Forum brought together Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the 55 RDA committees to discuss the strategic direction of the network, share information and meet colleagues from across the country.

Funding of \$15 million will be provided in 2010-11 for RDA committees, to support the growth and development of Australia's regions.

East Kimberley Development Package

The East Kimberley region in Western Australia, including its Indigenous communities, is benefiting from a significant injection of funds from the Australian Government. The Government is contributing \$195.2 million over 2008-09 to 2011-12 to support economic development and reinvigorate essential community infrastructure in Kununurra and the surrounding region.

The Australian Government's investments will help address key deficiencies in health, housing, education and community infrastructure. Many projects will be underway in 2010 and all projects will be completed by mid 2012.

Office of Northern Australia

The Office of Northern Australia (ONA) was established in March 2008 to:

- provide advice on sustainable development issues in or affecting northern Australia;

Compendium of Priorities and Initiatives

- improve coordination between governments, businesses and communities in Northern Australia and when they are involved in issues about northern Australia; and
- since 2008, the Office of Northern Australia has also provided support to the Northern Australian Land and Water Taskforce and implemented the National Partnership Agreement on the East Kimberley Development Package.

Funding of \$2 million a year for four years was provided in the 2008-09 Budget.

Nation Building Agenda

Funding of \$5.9 billion will be provided in 2010-11 for road, rail and port initiatives across Australia, to support jobs, help drive Australia's long-term productivity and international competitiveness. This infrastructure investment is vital to strengthening the national economy and enhancing rural and regional Australia's capacity to access opportunities to prosper. The Australian Government's land transport infrastructure projects will benefit rural and regional Australia, by addressing capacity constraints, relieving traffic congestion, improving road safety, and improving connections with major cities and ports.

Black Spot Program

The Black Spot program provides funding for safety works such as roundabouts, crash barriers and street lights at places where there have been serious crashes or where serious crashes are likely.

The investment of \$502.2 million from 2008-9 to 2013-14 is helping to make our local roads even safer for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. Each state and territory receives a share of the total funding, based on population and crash data.

State and territory governments, councils, community groups and individuals can nominate a black spot for funding. Nominations are considered by Black Spot Consultative Panels, which are made up of road experts, government advisors and local representatives. After examining each nomination, the panels make a recommendation to the Australian Government about a project's merit for funding.

Approximately 50 per cent of Black Spot funds in each state are reserved for projects in non-metropolitan areas. This ensures that crash locations in rural areas are treated, ensuring that rural and regional areas will receive the road safety enhancements they need.

Roads to Recovery Program

The Government will provide around \$335 million of funding for rural and remote councils through the Roads to Recovery Program.

The Roads to Recovery program provides funding direct to local councils for road works chosen by the councils and to states and territories for roads in areas where

there are no councils. Each funding recipient has a set allocation of funding over a program life. The Australian Government has increased funding for the program by \$250 million over the five year period 2009-10 to 2013-14, bringing the total program funding to \$1.75 billion.

Infrastructure Australia

Infrastructure Australia, the advisory council established to provide advice to the Australian Government on infrastructure issues, sought in October 2009 further proposals for reform and investment initiatives which support its seven themes for action. At the present time, Infrastructure Australia seeks to build a long term pipeline of reforms and investments.

In addition, Infrastructure Australia, in conjunction with the National Transport Commission, is currently preparing a National Ports Strategy for consideration by the Council of Australian Governments in mid 2010. Infrastructure Australia is also developing a National Freight Network Plan for later in 2010.

These initiatives will improve planning and coordination of our critical economic infrastructure, and ensure Australia's roads, rail networks and ports remain internationally competitive.

The Airservices Australia Enroute Charges Payment Scheme

The Australian Government is providing \$14 million over four years to amend the current Airservices Australia Enroute Charges Payment Scheme (Enroute Scheme) to support vulnerable, uneconomic remote routes.

The Enroute Scheme was introduced in January 2002 as a transitional measure to assist former Ansett subsidiaries and other regional airlines in the wake of the Ansett collapse. Under the scheme eligible regional operators have their enroute navigation charges fully refunded by the Government across their whole networks.

The Government is continuing its support for services to remote areas by establishing a more appropriate method of assistance to regional airlines than the assistance put in place following the Ansett collapse.

The Government has announced that it will amend the current model for assisting remote air services under this Scheme, targeting vulnerable routes rather than whole airline networks. The Government will use the Australian Standard Geographical Classification to identify those routes that will qualify for an increased subsidy. The changes will be introduced from 1 July 2010. The increased subsidies available will better encourage services to those locations where the need for regular air services is greatest.

Consolidation of existing remote aviation programs into a single program

Through the National Aviation White Paper (the White Paper), the Australian Government announced it will improve the effectiveness of its remote aviation

programs by integrating infrastructure and service delivery components through the consolidation of remote aviation support programs into the Regional Aviation Access Program. This will result in a single program with a 2010-11 Budget allocation of \$25.1 million.

The Government has already acted to bring these programs together administratively. Integrating the programs will ensure support for remote air services and aerodromes is better coordinated and will provide greater flexibility in allocating funding, based on the greatest need.

The following programs will be consolidated under the Regional Aviation Access program.

Remote Aerodrome Inspection Program

The Australian Government's Remote Aerodrome Inspection (RAI) Program provides an aerodrome inspection service for 59 designated Indigenous communities. It was initiated as part of the Australian Government's response to recommendations contained in the report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. Normally, aerodrome inspections of this type would be the responsibility of the aerodrome owner/operator. However, they require specialised technical expertise not readily available in remote communities.

This Australian Government funded service provides practical assistance to remote communities heavily reliant on air services. The program facilitates training of aerodrome reporting officers as required for compliance with aviation safety regulations.

Remote Air Services Subsidy Scheme

The Remote Air Services Subsidy Scheme (RASS) subsidises weekly passenger and freight air transportation to communities which would otherwise have no regular access to transport. In 2008-09, the scheme carried over 3,500 passengers and over 265,000 kg in freight and mail to 244 remote communities (including 78 Indigenous communities) in 10 remote regions across the Northern Territory, Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland and Tasmania.

Remote Aviation Infrastructure Fund

The Remote Aviation Infrastructure Fund is used to upgrade remote indigenous airstrips that received a RASS service and were also identified as requiring priority works. These upgrades will make them safer and more accessible. The airstrips present a vital lifeline to those living in remote indigenous communities across Australia. The airstrips allow those living in these areas to be supplied with essential items such as medical and business supplies, fresh food and long-distance educational materials.

Remote Aerodrome Safety Program

The Remote Aerodrome Safety Program (RASP) funds upgrades to airstrips in remote and isolated communities across Australia. Projects funded under the program improve the safety and accessibility of airstrips and facilitate the provision of non-commercial essential community air services including delivery of food supplies, community mail, passenger transport services, medical supplies and medical care.

Further information

Further information about these and other infrastructure, transport, regional development and local government initiatives relating to rural and regional Australia is available at www.infrastructure.gov.au.

INNOVATION, INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

Australian Centre for Plant Functional Genomics

The Australian Centre for Plant Functional Genomics uses key genomic technologies to develop techniques for improving the resistance of wheat and barley to hostile environmental conditions such as drought, salinity and mineral deficiencies. It also evaluates the commercial potential for products and services resulting from the research. The total Australian Government funding commitment to the ACPFG from 2001 to 2012 is approximately \$41.1 million.

Cooperative Research Centres Program

The objective of the Cooperative Research Centres (CRC) Program is to deliver significant economic, environmental and social benefits to Australia by supporting partnerships between researchers and end-users. In 2010-11, the Australian Government has allocated \$172.7 million for the program. There are currently 42 CRCs operating across the agricultural, mining, manufacturing and services sectors. The objective of the CRC Program is to find solutions to Australia's major challenges and create vital new products, services and processes. CRCs are required to have an end-user focused education and training program and small or medium enterprise strategies that build innovation and research and development capacity. CRCs are also required to have utilisation activities to deploy research outputs and encourage take up by end-users. Many CRCs contribute to strengthening rural and regional development.

Dispute Resolution Services for *Trade Practices Act* Codes Affecting Small Business in Rural and Regional Australia

Enhanced, early intervention dispute resolution services under the Horticulture Code of Conduct, the Franchising Code of Conduct and the Oilcode will provide small business in these sectors with access to low-cost, informal dispute resolution services and may reduce the need for small businesses to resort to more formal mediation or litigation. The service is likely to have a positive impact in supporting businesses located in rural and regional Australia.

Enterprise Connect

Enterprise Connect is a \$50 million a year Australian Government initiative that provides support to eligible Australian small and medium sized enterprises to help them become more innovative, productive and globally competitive through a network of twelve centres located around Australia. Enterprise Connect assists rural and regional businesses, in particular, through its Innovative Regions Centre in a number of regions around Australia; and through the Remote Enterprise Centre, based in Alice Springs.

National Centre for Groundwater Research and Training

The National Centre for Groundwater Research and Training has been established to undertake scientific research in all aspects of groundwater. It will provide high quality training for postgraduate and postdoctoral students and for professional hydrogeologists, groundwater engineers and groundwater managers.

North West and Northern Tasmanian Innovation and Investment Fund

The North West and Northern Tasmanian Innovation and Investment Fund (NWNITIF) will provide competitive, merit based grants to local businesses and groups for new employment creation in the North West and northern region of Tasmania. The NWNITIF's purpose will be to support innovative job creation projects that strengthen the regional economy and employment base. The Fund has \$17 million made up of \$12.5 million from the Australian Government and \$4.5 million from the Tasmanian Government.

Regional Managers Network

The AusIndustry Regional Managers Network has officers located in 15 regional centres to improve access to information and programs directly benefiting regional businesses.

Small Business Support Line

The Small Business Support Line (SBSL) provides initial information and referral services to small business owners on matters such as obtaining finance, cash flow management, retail leasing, diagnostic services, promotion and marketing advice, and personal stress/hardship counselling. Support Line agents link into the myriad of support provided by the Australian and state governments and other government supported services such as the nationwide network of Business Enterprise Centres (BECs) and other small business advisory services around Australia.

Small Business Online

The Small Business Online program provides support through service providers to help small businesses go online by offering training seminars and mentoring assistance on e-business, advice on establishing an online presence and the development of other e-business resources to help reduce their costs and improve their market opportunities.

Forty-two grants have been made to businesses providing services to regional Australia.

Small Business Advisory Services

The Small Business Advisory Services program aims to maximise the growth potential, prosperity and sustainability of small businesses. It provides enhanced access to information and advice on issues important to sustaining and/or growing small business in response to the global financial crisis. There are 36 Business Enterprise Centres across Australia funded under this program to assist small businesses. Seventeen of these are located in regional Australia.

Super Science Initiatives

In its 2009-10 Budget, the Australian Government made targeted investments totalling \$1.1 billion over five years to support the following three fields of scientific research: space and astronomy; marine and climate; and future industries.

This investment is limiting the impact of the global financial crisis by providing funds for critical infrastructure needs across Australia, including rural and regional centres. These major infrastructure developments will create highly skilled jobs and provide important research capabilities and information gathering on natural resource management, forestry and agriculture to benefit rural and regional Australia.

Further information

Further information about innovation, industry, science and research initiatives relating to rural and regional Australia is available at www.innovation.gov.au.

RESOURCES, ENERGY AND TOURISM

Expanded Clean Energy Initiative

The Government will provide \$652.5 million over four years to establish a Renewable Energy Future Fund to support Australia's transition to a low pollution economy prior to the future commencement of the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme.

This Fund forms part of the Government's expanded \$5.1 billion Clean Energy Initiative. It will provide additional support for the development and deployment of large and small scale renewable energy projects. It will include partnerships between the Government and the private sector to make critical early stage investments to leverage private funds to support the commercialisation of renewable technologies.

The Expanded Clean Energy Initiative also complements the 20 per cent Renewable Energy which will ensure that by 2020, 20 per cent of Australia's energy comes from renewable sources, such as wind, solar and geothermal.

Compendium of Priorities and Initiatives

The other elements of the Clean Energy Initiative include:

- the Australian Centre for Renewable Energy;
- the Australian Solar Institute;
- the National Low Emissions Coal Initiative;
- the Solar Flagships Program; and
- the Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) Flagships Program.

Australian Centre for Renewable Energy

The Australian Centre for Renewable Energy is a national renewable energy technology body which will consolidate efforts and provide the focus to boost Australia's capacity to develop, commercialise and deploy renewable energy and enabling technologies. A key activity for the Australian Centre for Renewable Energy is to establish a new venture capital mechanism to help develop promising renewable energy technologies in Australia.

The Australian Centre for Renewable Energy draws together more than \$560 million of renewable energy investment, and includes the following Programs:

- the Renewable Energy Demonstration Program;
- the Second Generation Biofuels Research and Development Program; and
- the Geothermal Drilling Program.

Australian Solar Institute

The Australian Solar Institute Limited was registered as a company limited by guarantee under the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997* on 10 August 2009.

The Government will provide \$100 million over four years to the Australian Solar Institute to support research and development into solar thermal, solar photovoltaic, and other areas of solar energy technology.

As part of the initial funding for the work of the Australian Solar Institute, the Government is providing \$15 million to three foundation projects:

- \$5 million to support the development of a crystalline silicon pilot line at the University of New South Wales;
- \$5 million to establish a state-of-the-art solar thermal tower at the CSIRO in Newcastle; and

- \$5 million to assist in the establishment of a world-class process and characterisation solar research facility at the Australian National University in Canberra.

The ASI announced its first round of grants in December 2009 totalling \$11.1 million for innovative solar research and development projects. The five projects relate to photovoltaic (PV) and solar thermal technologies and will be located in Newcastle, Sydney, Brisbane and Canberra. The projects are expected to leverage other funding and deliver a total of \$31 million in investment in Australian solar research.

A second round of grants to be announced in May 2010 will provide \$18.9 million for five projects in Sydney, Canberra, Adelaide and Newcastle, delivering a further \$67 million investment in innovative solar research.

National Low Emissions Coal Initiative

The Government allocated \$500 million over eight years from 2008-09 to support the National Low Emissions Coal Initiative (NLECI). The NLECI is aimed at accelerating the development and deployment of low-emission coal technology including carbon capture and storage to develop and implement a nationally coordinated strategy aimed at ensuring these technologies are available for deployment from 2020.

The Government established the National Low Emissions Coal Council (NLECC) and the Carbon Storage Taskforce (CSTF) in 2008, as part of the NLECI announced in the 2008-09 Budget.

The CSTF has developed and provided the Government with a National Carbon Mapping and Infrastructure Plan. The Plan's recommendations are currently being implemented. In particular, the Government is providing financial assistance under this plan to WA, NSW, Victoria and Queensland to conduct pre-commercial geological storage assessments.

The NLECC has brought together key stakeholders to develop and implement a national low-emissions coal strategy to contribute to the Government's longer term overall policy objectives of reducing carbon emissions while improving energy security. The NLECC has advised the Government on the establishment of the Australian National Low Emissions Coal (ANLEC) Research and Development Ltd and endorsed ANLEC's initial research program. It also provided advice to the Minister for Resources and Energy on CCS issues, including the development of selection criteria for the short listing of CCS Flagships projects which are currently being assessed. In addition the NLECC has provided the Minister its strategy aimed at accelerating the deployment of low-emission coal technologies. The strategy is being considered by the Government.

Global Carbon Capture and Storage Institute

The Government committed up to \$100 million per annum from 2008-09 to fund the Global Carbon Capture and Storage Institute. On 12 June 2009 the Global Carbon

Capture and Storage Institute was registered as a company limited by guarantee and commenced operation on 1 July 2009.

The Australian-based Global Carbon Capture and Storage Institute will help deliver the G8's July 2008 goal of developing at least 20 fully integrated industrial scale demonstration projects around the world to accelerate the broad deployment of CCS technology by 2020. It will promote the collaboration of existing efforts; share non-proprietary knowledge; seek out mechanisms to address technological and financial gaps; develop technology roadmaps; and produce assessments on the status of CCS technologies.

Tourism Initiatives

A National Long-Term Tourism Strategy was launched by the Government on 15 December 2009. It provides a work plan for skills, infrastructure and removing barriers to investment, giving investors greater confidence in the sector's long-term prospects. The work plan includes better research for the industry and less red tape to encourage more tourism investment.

Establishment of a National Tourism Accreditation Framework

The Government has provided \$5.5 million over four years to establish a National Tourism Accreditation Framework. The Framework will be an effective mechanism for quality assurance in the tourism industry and will assist to streamline and improve the existing processes of accrediting tourism businesses. It will bring together over twenty existing ratings and accreditation programs under one governance framework.

Extension of the China Approved Destination Status Scheme

Quality assurance in the tourism industry continues to be a priority of the Government with \$4.1 million being committed to extend the China Approved Destination Status Scheme for four years.

The Scheme will ensure inbound tour operators continue providing a quality service to leisure tour groups from China, based on their compliance with the ADS Code of Business Standards and Ethics. Ongoing improvement in the quality of services provided to Chinese tourists has the potential to increase significantly the number of Chinese leisure tour visitors to Australia. The Scheme has been very successful to date in removing, and keeping out rogue operators from the industry.

TQUAL Grants

The TQUAL Grants Program was launched in April 2009, with up to \$8.3 million available over two years (2009-10 and 2010-11) under a competitive program to fund eligible tourism projects across metropolitan and regional Australia.

The objective is to stimulate sustainable growth in the Australian tourism industry by supporting initiatives that:

- develop innovative product, services or systems within the tourism industry;
- contribute directly to long-term economic development in the host region; and
- develop or support high quality visitor services and experiences.

Rum Jungle – Northern Territory

The Government has provided \$8.3 million over four years from 2009-10 and 2012-13 to contribute to the resolution of environmental, economic development and Indigenous land access issues currently presented by the former Rum Jungle site. The initiative will have a positive impact on the Batchelor region in the Northern Territory.

The project will:

- undertake site monitoring and maintenance activities at the former Rum Jungle site, which will provide regional employment opportunities and contribute to the protection of the Finniss River system;
- bring together the site's traditional owners, the Northern Territory Government and industry to guide and contribute to this process; and
- support ongoing management of the site to maintain and improve the effectiveness of the current rehabilitation structures.

Ethanol Production Grants Program

The Ethanol Production Grants Program was designed to facilitate ethanol as part of the transport fuel mix in Australia. It commenced in 2002 and will operate until 30 June 2011. Grants are paid to ethanol producers at a rate of 38.143 cents per litre. Recipients include Dalby Biorefinery (Dalby, Queensland), Sucrogen BioEthanol Pty Ltd (Sarina, Queensland), and Honan Holdings (Nowra, New South Wales).

Working in Partnership Program

The Working in Partnership Program is allocated \$0.5 million a year to support and encourage cultural change taking place in relations between Indigenous communities and the mining industry, promoting long-term, effective partnerships that benefit all stakeholders. It provides funding for regional workshops and support for committees and projects that address issues such as employment, education and training, business opportunities, cultural awareness, capacity building and economic empowerment.

Kimberley LNG Precinct

The Government is working with the Western Australian Government, Woodside Energy and the Kimberley Land Council to move forward with the Kimberley Liquefied Natural Gas precinct at James Price Point.

Further information

Further information about these and other resources, energy and tourism initiatives relating to rural and regional Australia is available at www.ret.gov.au.