



BUDGET

CONTINUING OUR EFFORTS TO CLOSE THE GAP

STATEMENT BY
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CONTINUING OUR EFFORTS TO CLOSE THE GAP

The Government is investing to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage.

We are investing an additional \$5.2 billion to help close the gap; build Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory; and develop a new approach to remote employment services to help more people into jobs and support community development.

The Australian Government is committed to Closing the Gap and has made record long-term investments, including the \$8.3 billion in existing commitments highlighted in this Statement. New funding in this Budget builds on these record investments.

While the Government is committed to managing our national Budget responsibly to achieve a Budget surplus in 2012-13, we are continuing our investments to address Indigenous disadvantage. We recognise that closing the gap is a goal shared by all Australians and that there is an ongoing need to invest in this national priority.

Our efforts to close the gap in the Northern Territory have made real progress over the last four years in health, housing, safer communities and the availability of healthy food. However, there is much more to be done. This Budget reflects the need for a long-term, comprehensive investment to close the gap in the Northern Territory – the place where the gap in Indigenous disadvantage is the widest across Australia.

Major investments to close the gap include:

- \$3.4 billion for Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory – a comprehensive ten-year plan to support Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory to live strong, independent lives, including the \$243.1 million investment announced in the 2011 Mid Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook
- \$1.5 billion for a new approach to employment and community development in remote communities across Australia – with a focus on working with communities and individuals to help people into jobs.

In this Budget, the Australian Government is also increasing its investment in Closing the Gap through:

- extending the Cape York Welfare Reform Trial for 12 months, with a further \$11.8 million to help Indigenous families budget, increase school attendance and job opportunities, make communities safer, and improve care and protection of children
- a \$43.4 million investment from the Australian Government to support the continuation of municipal and essential services, including power, water and sewerage services for about 38,000 Aboriginal people in approximately 350 remote

communities in Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania

- providing \$21.2 million funding to deliver better infrastructure, including water projects, sewerage infrastructure, roads, and housing subdivision in communities across the Torres Strait
- providing \$63 million over four years for the Special Broadcasting Service Corporation to establish a free-to-air national Indigenous television channel
- providing funding of \$55.7 million to 2015-16 to better prepare children for school through a home-based parenting and early childhood program in 100 sites across Australia, including 50 sites which will specifically benefit Indigenous children
- \$1.1 million over four years to give around 6,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children each year access to an additional dose of the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine
- \$14.3 million over three years to attract and retain high-calibre teachers in remote areas, by expanding initiatives delivered through the Teach Remote program
- \$4.8 million investment over three years to use sport to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys in schooling and to promote school engagement among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls
- providing \$30.6 million over four years to deliver an extra 200 culturally appropriate aged care places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- delivering \$85.5 million over four years to assist with the higher costs of delivering aged care services in regional and remote Australia, ensuring the financial sustainability of over 650 places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- investing \$475 million for new and extended regional and remote health care facilities, including \$48.6 million for ten projects which will deliver improved health care services for Indigenous communities
- \$1.8 million over three years to help achieve the Australian Public Service (APS) target of increasing Indigenous employment in the APS to 2.7 per cent by 2015
- providing \$6.4 million over two years to preserving the collections of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, which are of unique world significance and under threat from deterioration.

The Australian Government is merging its existing Indigenous home loan programs into a single Indigenous home ownership program to help more Indigenous

Australians own their own home and ensure that the significant investment made by government is best utilised.

This Budget also provides for streamlined management of native title claims by transferring responsibility for claims mediation from the National Native Title Tribunal to the Federal Court.

Each of these new initiatives build on the Australian Government's existing efforts to close the gap, including through Indigenous-specific and mainstream National Partnership Agreements with states and territories.

Remote Indigenous Housing – \$5.5 billion over ten years from 2008–09 to 2017–18

This funding is:

- Building 4,200 new houses
- Refurbishing 4,800 houses
- Providing Indigenous jobs
- Making sure houses are built to last
- Reforming tenancy arrangements to ensure houses are well cared for and maintained.

Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes – \$1.6 billion over four years from 2009–10 to 2012–13

This funding is:

- Tackling chronic disease and its risk factors, including smoking
- Expanding health services for Indigenous people
- Strengthening the Indigenous health workforce.

Indigenous Early Childhood Development – \$564.4 million over six years from 2008–09 to 2013–14

This funding is:

- Supporting early learning
- Helping Indigenous families
- Improving the health of mothers, babies and young children.

Indigenous Economic Participation – \$228.9 million over five years from 2008–09 to 2012–13

This funding is:

- Creating jobs in government service delivery
- Helping Indigenous people into jobs
- Helping Indigenous businesses.

Remote Service Delivery (December 2008) – \$291.2 million over six years

This funding is to:

- Increase access to services and raise the level of government services
- Build community governance capacity
- Provide translation services to assist in better understanding the needs of communities
- Build an evidence base on what services are needed in each location
- Develop local implementation plans in 29 priority locations
- Develop and operate a single government interface to make it easier for community to connect with government.

In all of this work, the Government is committed to ongoing **engagement and mutual respect**, and ensuring Indigenous people are central to policy development and implementation. For example, in developing our Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory package, we undertook some of the most extensive consultations with Aboriginal people the government has ever held in the Northern Territory. The Government's support for the national representative body, the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, further demonstrates this respect.

The Government is also committed to acknowledging the status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Australian Constitution. To support this commitment we are funding a community awareness initiative to build and sustain public engagement and understanding of constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

THE BUILDING BLOCKS

EARLY CHILDHOOD

With this Budget, the Government continues its significant investment in early childhood, recognising that this is a critical time in every person's development and that it lays the foundations for strong outcomes in health, education and employment later in life.

Early childhood investments also form an integral part of our plan to help build Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory.

2012–13 Budget initiatives to close the gap in early childhood

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory – Supporting Children, Youth and Families

The Australian Government is investing more than **\$442 million over ten years** to strengthen the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal children, youth and their families in the Northern Territory. This funding will support families with playgroups, home and parenting support services, youth workers and safe houses for the next decade.

Under this initiative, the number of Communities for Children sites in the Northern Territory will increase from four to 19, with a focus on remote locations. This approach encourages existing health, education and community organisations to get together to plan and deliver local parenting services, playgroups, and support to help people build healthy homes.

It also includes funding for another ten years for:

- eight existing supported and intensive playgroups to help develop children's social, emotional, physical and cognitive abilities
- Intensive Family Support Services in up to 23 communities, for practical parenting help where children are at risk of entering the child protection system
- continuing support for 16 women's safe houses in urban and remote areas to protect women and children through crisis accommodation and support
- continuing the Youth In Communities Program in more than 30 remote communities to keep young people connected with school or training and help prevent youth suicide, self-harm, and alcohol and substance abuse.

The Government is also continuing to invest in front line child protection through two mobile child protection teams. These teams provide 25 extra front line workers to support Northern Territory child protection officers so more investigations can occur in remote and regional communities to make sure more children are safe. An extra 12 part-time Aboriginal family and community workers will also be funded across 19 remote communities – on top of the current 35 full time workers, this will mean a total of 47 family and community workers in remote Northern Territory. These local workers inform and support people in communities to prevent child abuse and neglect.

This funding also includes ongoing support for nine crèches in very remote Indigenous communities through a **\$30.2 million allocation over ten years**. These crèches will continue to play an important role in better preparing up to 225 children for school.

Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY)

The Government is providing \$55.7 million to 2015-16 to expand the HIPPY program to 100 sites across Australia. This initiative will provide on-going funding for 50 Indigenous locations, with the first cohort of Indigenous children commencing in January 2014. This funding will also extend HIPPY for one additional cohort of children in the existing 50 locations, commencing in January 2013. HIPPY is a home-based parenting and early childhood program that runs for two years and helps Indigenous and non-Indigenous parents to be their child's first teacher and prepare their child for school. It also offers some parents and carers a supported pathway to employment and local community leadership.

These new initiatives strengthen the investments the Government has already put in place to support Indigenous early childhood development.

The National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education provides \$970 million from 2008-09 to 2012-13 to ensure that by 2013 every Australian child, including Indigenous children, can access a pre-school program delivered by a university-qualified early childhood education teacher in the 12 months prior to full-time schooling.

The National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development provides a further \$564.4 million over six years from 2008-09 to 2013-14 to improve outcomes for Indigenous children. Under the agreement, states and territories are establishing 38 Children and Family Centres by mid-2014 to deliver integrated early childhood services for Indigenous families, including childcare, early learning and parent and family support. The centres also link to other services for children and families at risk.

The Australian Government is also implementing a range of initiatives which are not specific to Indigenous children, but will have a positive effect on their lives. These include:

- The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children – an ambitious, long-term national approach which aims to deliver a substantial and sustained reduction in levels of child abuse and neglect
- The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care – which commits to high quality early childhood education and care through improved standards and increased qualification requirements
- The Family Support Program – which assists vulnerable and at-risk families across Australia.

SCHOOLING

A good education gives children the chance to reach their potential, opens up employment opportunities and encourages personal responsibility and independence.

With this Budget, the Government has stayed focused on helping to improve numeracy and literacy levels for Indigenous Australians. We are also continuing to invest in improving teacher quality in remote areas by training and supporting teachers to give children the best possible education.

Education is a key plank of our ten-year plan to build Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory, where we are funding more teachers, training and support to improve teacher quality, and initiatives to help make sure every child attends school every day.

2012–13 Budget initiatives to close the gap in schooling

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory – Building Schooling Outcomes

To improve schooling outcomes in the Northern Territory, the Government has responded with **\$583.4 million** over ten years in the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Package.

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory – Building a Quality School Workforce

The Government heard from people in the Northern Territory that they wanted to see more and higher quality teachers working with their children, as well as well-trained local teachers. The Government has responded with three linked initiatives.

Additional teachers

The Government will continue to support 200 teachers and engagement officers in remote Northern Territory schools.

Commonwealth funding will continue at current levels for four years. After that period, the Commonwealth's funding will begin to gradually taper down to allow the Northern Territory Government to take on its responsibility for funding teachers and the education system.

Quality teaching

The Government is also providing better support for those teachers so they are ready to teach in remote communities. We are making a ten-year investment in support and training programs to ensure teachers have the skills to get better literacy and numeracy results for Aboriginal children. Programs will also ensure teachers have the skills they need to teach with English as a second language children and how to ensure children with hearing or learning difficulties get the best possible education.

The Government is also continuing funding to build career paths and improve qualifications so local people can become teachers and educational workers in their communities.

Teacher housing

The Australian Government will build around 100 teacher houses in remote Northern Territory communities over the next nine years to address critical staff housing shortages and help attract and retain high quality teachers in remote schools.

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory – School Nutrition Program

The School Nutrition Program provides nutritionally sound meals to approximately 5,000 students in participating schools in the Northern Territory. School meals improve student behaviour, attention and health. The Government will continue to provide funding for the program, but will work with the Northern Territory Government to redesign the program to become self-funding with the Australian Government contribution reducing over time.

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory – Expansion of the School Enrolment and Attendance Measure (SEAM)

Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory have been clear that they want children to attend school regularly and that parents have a responsibility to help make this happen. As announced in the 2011 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook the Australian Government is providing funding to both improve and expand the current School Enrolment and Attendance Measure (SEAM) so that it aligns with the NT Government's Every Child Every Day attendance policy to provide a clear and consistent set of supports and consequences for parents whose children do not attend school regularly.

This funding also helps manage unacceptable levels of under-enrolment. Education authorities and Centrelink will now be able to share data to ensure children are enrolled in a school and attending school even if they move during the school year. This will prevent children from falling through the cracks, especially where families move frequently.

The measure will be able to apply to all parents on income support in affected areas.

Teach Remote Stage 2

As well as specific work in the Northern Territory, the Government is helping to create a more stable teaching and learning environment for all students living in remote and very remote locations in Australia. Funding of **\$14.3 million** over three years for Teach Remote Stage 2, will help the National Alliance of Remote Indigenous Schools to continue its work to attract and retain high calibre teachers in remote areas.

This funding will help by:

- providing a new funding pool of up to \$6 million over two years, to allow schools within the National Alliance for Remote Indigenous Schools partnership to offer salary supplements in order to attract and retain up to 200 highly qualified and experienced staff in remote schools
- providing a professional development bonus for new teachers so they can undertake focused training in best practice in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in remote settings
- resolving teacher registration and mobility issues
- partnering new teachers with an experienced principal or teacher mentor.

Expanding the Sporting Chance Program

The Government is providing **\$4.8 million over three years** to support the Clontarf Foundation to establish and operate new school-based academies for Indigenous secondary school boys in New South Wales.

This funding will also support the establishment of new strategies aimed at improving school engagement among Indigenous girls.

The Australian Government already has agreements and investments in place to improve education outcomes for Indigenous students and help meet Closing the Gap targets. These 2012-13 Budget initiatives complement and build on the three **Smarter Schools National Partnership Agreements**.

These agreements focus on the special needs of disadvantaged students, especially Indigenous students, and invest \$2.5 billion in the wider education system.

The **Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership** is delivering system-wide reforms over five years from 2008-09 to 2012-13, while more than one-quarter of Australian schools are being assisted under the **National Partnership Agreements on Literacy and Numeracy and Low Socio-Economic Status School Communities**.

The new Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory education initiatives build on existing commitments.

The Australian Government provided \$44.3 million over the three years to June 2012 under the **Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement**. This funding enabled education providers to improve student literacy and numeracy outcomes and up-skill local Indigenous Education Workers in targeted

remote communities. It added to a previous \$25.2 million investment in quality teaching and enhancing literacy measures.

To date, the Australian Government has provided \$107.8 million over the last four years to recruit, train and deploy up to 200 extra teachers.

The Australian Government is providing over \$11 million to support the **One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) Program** which will deliver over 50,000 custom built laptops to primary students in regional and remote Australia as part of a 12 month pilot program. The OLPC Australia Organisation (OLPC Australia) aims to support the learning opportunities of Indigenous children, particularly those in remote Australia, by providing primary school aged children with a connected XO laptop as part of a sustainable training and support program. Participating schools will also receive information and communications technology (ICT) coordinator professional development, local repair kits, and access to helpdesk and online support. The Government will also continue its support of OLPC Australia through its listing as a deductible gift recipient for taxation purposes to 2015-16.

HEALTH

This Budget continues our significant investment to close the gap in health outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Our new investments reflect the particular need to support the health and wellbeing of Indigenous people living in regional and remote areas of Australia.

This Budget also recognises the wider gap in health outcomes between Indigenous people in the Northern Territory and people elsewhere in Australia.

2012–13 Budget initiatives to close the gap in health

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory – Health

The Government is providing \$713.5 million over ten years for a health package for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory focused across the following areas.

Primary health care

- More than 250 full time primary health care staff, including Aboriginal Health Workers, to deliver medical, nursing and allied health support across approximately 80 clinics in the Northern Territory.
- Extra health professionals for approximately 450 short-term placements to ease the workload for permanent staff and give access to specialists such as optometrists or podiatrists whose services are not normally available in remote locations.
- Building and upgrading staff housing and regional hub services to continue to deliver chronic disease prevention and management services.

Hearing and dental health programs

- The Integrated Hearing Health Program will continue to provide audiology and specialist services to prevent ear disease; diagnose children in their communities; manage disease and refer children for treatment where this is required. It will also educate families to prevent and manage ear disease.
- The successful Australian Government dental health program, which provides dental checks and surgery to Aboriginal children across the NT, will be continued with a complementary focus on prevention work through a fluoride varnish program.

Child abuse and trauma counselling

- The Government is providing funding for counselling and education to children, their families and communities experiencing trauma from child abuse and neglect. Services will reach more than 200 Aboriginal families, and many more through community education and information sessions that deal with child abuse and neglect.

Tackling alcohol and other drug abuse treatment

- Funding is also being provided for 20 new workers to provide direct access to substance use treatment and support, and support families to deal with related issues.

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory – Food Security: Strengthening Remote Stores

Independent evaluation found a large improvement in the availability, range and quality of healthy food in remote communities as a result of the Government's work to licence community stores. As announced in the 2011 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, the Government will provide **\$40.9 million** to continue stores licensing in the Northern Territory; expand it to more stores that are an important source of food, drink and groceries for remote Aboriginal communities and improve the range of available management options to make sure stores can stay open to service local people. In addition, the Aboriginals Benefit Account has provided \$53.9 million to upgrade and construct new stores and store managers' housing in 18 communities throughout the Northern Territory. Participating stores are currently owned by, or in the process of transferring ownership to, licensed Indigenous corporations. Works will commence in 2012 and are expected to continue through to 2015.

Health and Hospitals Fund – 2011 Regional Priority Round

The Government is investing **\$48.6 million from the \$475m Health and Hospitals Fund 2011 Regional Priority Round** in new and extended health care facilities for regional and remote Australia. This will fund ten projects to provide new and extended health care facilities for regional and remote Indigenous communities. This investment will provide much needed infrastructure to help deliver improved health care services. Better and more timely care delivered closer to home will lead to earlier diagnosis and treatment of illnesses, better management of chronic conditions and broader choice of health services.

National Immunisation Program – Extended Listing of Prevenar 13®

The Government is providing \$1.1 million over four years to fund Prevenar 13®, a pneumococcal conjugate vaccine, to be given as the fourth dose of the pneumococcal vaccination schedule for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children between 12-18 months of age living in jurisdictions with a high incidence of invasive pneumococcal disease (IPD).

The pneumococcal conjugate vaccine induces a stronger immune response in younger children than the alternate polysaccharide vaccine currently available through the National Immunisation Program and enables the full childhood pneumococcal vaccination course to be completed earlier in life. It will bring the pneumococcal vaccination schedule for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in line with that of other children at high risk of IPD due to medical reasons.

It is estimated that each year, around 6,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children between 12 and 18 months of age living in Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory will benefit from this change.

Living Longer, Living Better – Culturally Appropriate Care for Elderly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

An extra 200 aged care places are being made available in Indigenous communities through the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care program. Funding of **\$30.6 million over four years** will allow many more older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have high care needs to stay close to home and country in culturally appropriate care.

Living Longer, Living Better – Residential Care in Regional, Rural and Remote Areas

The Government will provide **\$85.5 million over four years** to help with the higher costs of delivering aged care services in regional and remote Australia. This initiative includes support for aged care homes that provide services to Indigenous Australians and older people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, ensuring the financial sustainability of 650 places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

National e-Health Program

The Government is enabling all Australians to register for their own Personally Controlled Electronic Health Record (PCEHR). In time, participating Australians and their chosen healthcare providers will be able to access their healthcare information when and where it is needed.

Indigenous Australians experience a burden of disease two-and-a-half times that of other Australians and are frequent users of many different parts of the healthcare system. PCEHRs will help the system better respond to the needs of Indigenous Australians by enabling a timely and smooth transition of information between providers and reducing the time people have to spend reiterating their clinical history or waiting for test results to be located. This will support better health outcomes.

Remote Hearing and Vision Services for Children program

The Government is providing \$4.9 million over three years to improve access to allied health and education services to an additional 125 children with hearing and/or vision impairment in outer regional and remote Australia. This program will be delivered across Australia in 2012-13.

Utilising the National Broadband Network (NBN) where available, children and their families will have access to information, guidance, support, and skills development from qualified allied health and education services where such expertise may otherwise be scarce in regional and remote locations. The program will be delivered via a combination of high definition videoconferencing, mailed packages with lesson plans, information sheets, multi-media resources, telephone, fax, and email. In regions where the NBN is being rolled out, the government will provide for upgrades to existing videoconferencing infrastructure to ensure it is of high definition quality.

In addition to these 2012–13 Budget initiatives, the Government has already committed \$805.5 million over four years from 2009–10 to 2012–13 for health services as part of the \$1.6 billion **National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes**.

The main focus of that agreement is **chronic disease**, estimated to contribute around two-thirds of the gap in Indigenous health outcomes. The National Partnership Agreement is improving chronic disease management and follow-up care in primary health care, tackling risk factors, and expanding the Indigenous health workforce.

The **Establishing Quality Health Standards in Indigenous Health Services - Continuation** initiative has also provided \$35 million over four years from 2011–12 to 2014–15 to support eligible Indigenous health organisations to meet best practice through accreditation under mainstream health care standards.

Indigenous Australians will also benefit from the Government's investments in mental health, particularly those targeting prevention and early intervention (especially for children and young people) and better outcomes for people with severe and debilitating mental illness.

The 2011–12 Budget made a significant investment in **National Mental Health Reform**. Out of \$205.9 million in funding over five years for the expansion of **Access to Allied Psychological Services Program**, \$36.5 million has been earmarked to increase Indigenous Australians' access to these services.

In September 2011, the Government established the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Advisory Group to provide guidance on the development of Australia's first national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Strategy. The Advisory Group will also provide strategic advice on priorities for the investment of \$6 million for Indigenous suicide prevention activity.

The 2011-12 Budget included \$269.3 million to be invested over five years in community-based mental health services to assist more than 35,000 Australians with mental illness and their families and carers:

- \$154 million for 425 additional Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHaMs), including a \$50 million PHaMs employment component
- \$54.3 million to expand Mental Health Respite: Carer Support services
- \$61 million to establish 40 additional Family Mental Health Support Services.

The 2011-12 Budget investment will include the delivery of four new community mental health services in the Northern Territory between 2012 and 2014. These will consist of two new Personal Helpers and Mentors Services and two new Family Mental Health Support Services.

Personal helpers and mentors work one-on-one with people with persistent mental illness, providing practical help to achieve their personal goals and manage everyday tasks. Personal helpers also make sure participants are involved in community life and connected with other relevant services including clinical health services, accommodation and substance use services as required. PHaMS delivers specialist remote services that have a strong focus on cultural, mental and physical healing for Indigenous people. In 2011-12, 45 per cent of sites planned for new or expanded PHaMS services were in regional or remote locations. In the period July to December 2011, 1,359 (or 13 per cent of the total) PHaMS participants identified as Indigenous. This includes 320 participants from remote communities.

ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

The Australian Government wants all Australians to share in the opportunities of Australia's strong economy and to enjoy the financial and social benefits of work.

The 2012–13 Budget demonstrates the Government's commitment to supporting Indigenous economic development and opportunity. We are investing in job creation in the Northern Territory, and redesigning remote employment services across Australia to better support communities and help people move into work. We are also making investments in infrastructure projects to promote and support businesses and broader economic development.

2012–13 Budget initiatives to close the gap in economic participation

Remote Jobs and Communities Program

The Australian Government is providing **\$1.5 billion over five years** to introduce a new Remote Jobs and Communities Program (RJCP) on 1 July 2013. The new arrangements will provide better and more integrated services, with:

- a single provider of employment, participation and community development services in each of the 65 remote servicing regions – providing better services on the ground
- services that will be delivered in partnership with the community, underpinned by an action plan agreed with the community
- all communities and job seekers will be engaged in meaningful participation activities
- jobseekers will get personalised support from the single provider, so their skill development, participation activities and training meet their needs and better match local job opportunities.

A new Remote Youth Development and Leadership Corps for people aged under 25 will provide 12,000 places over five years to support young people on a clear pathway to employment. Building on the success of the Indigenous Rangers program, the Remote Youth Development and Leadership Corps will provide a nine-month program geared towards real employment opportunities for young people.

A new flexible \$508 million Participation Account will provide funding for participation activities that help people get ready for work and also benefit their community.

A Community Development Fund (\$240 million over five years) will also underpin larger community-development activities and community capacity building.

About 4,000 people who are currently receiving CDEP wages will continue to receive wages for the first five years of the new model. These people have been participating in CDEP for a long period of time, since before 2009, and many face significant barriers to employment.

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory – Jobs Package

Aboriginal people in remote communities across the Northern Territory will have greater employment and economic opportunities under the jobs package announced in the 2011 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, including the following components.

Working on Country Indigenous Ranger Program

The Government is providing \$19.1 million to create 50 new ranger positions in the Northern Territory in our Working on Country program. This program is about protecting the environment and delivering permanent jobs for Indigenous people. It has a strong track record in the Northern Territory, with almost 30 ranger teams already doing conservation work and providing role models for young people and the community.

Improving opportunities for Aboriginal people to get access to existing jobs in their communities

Through this package the Government will strengthen its efforts to ensure local people fill the jobs available in their communities by providing more traineeships and job shadowing. The new Local Jobs for Local People Indigenous traineeships will ensure up to 100 Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory are supported to fill services delivery jobs in their communities as these become available. The package will also provide a jobs guarantee for Indigenous students from Northern Territory Growth Towns.

As part of the jobs package, the Government will work with Aboriginal people to maximise local employment opportunities that flow from the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory investments. The Government work will with Aboriginal people to support local employment opportunities including Aboriginal youth workers, community support workers, child protection and family support workers, interpreters, Indigenous engagement officers and night patrol officers.

Australian Public Service Employment and Capability Strategy for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Employees

The Government is providing **\$1.8 million over three years** to build on existing efforts to recruit more Indigenous people into the Australian Public Service (APS) with the aim of achieving our target of 2.7 per cent Indigenous employment by 2015.

Under this initiative, current recruitment and retention strategies will be strengthened. Funding will help to provide employment pathways for Indigenous Australians into the APS, develop a cultural competency framework for APS agencies and support Indigenous APS employees with networking and development opportunities.

Free-to-air Indigenous television service

\$63 million over four years to establish a free-to-air national Indigenous television channel for all Australians as part of the Special Broadcasting Service Corporation (SBS). The new channel will launch in the second half of 2012 and increase the amount and quality of original Australian Indigenous content on free-to-air television.

Youth Pathways to Employment and Participation – BackTrack

The Government is providing \$0.8 million over four years to support BackTrack to continue to provide pathways to employment and participation for disadvantaged and disengaged young people, particularly Indigenous young people, through mentoring, training, and education programs. Backtrack provides a range of programs for young people in Armidale, NSW, that support them to reengage or remain engaged in education or vocational training to improve their employment, training or education outcomes and their engagement with community life.

Improved native title processes

The Government will streamline the management of native title claims by moving native title claims mediation from the National Native Title Tribunal to the Federal Court. The Tribunal will continue to play a crucial role in the effective functioning of the native title system. This initiative builds on the Government's success in tackling the backlog of outstanding native title claims and will make the native title system more efficient and effective.

These new Budget initiatives support existing national agreements and investments, working together to drive Indigenous economic development.

In October 2011, the Australian Government launched the Indigenous Economic Development Strategy 2011–2018 to help provide pathways for Indigenous Australians to have the same opportunities as all Australians – to get an education, find a job or start their own business, own their own home and provide for their families.

Last year, the Australian Government undertook a wide consultation process to design the new remote participation and employment arrangements. A discussion paper, *The Future of Remote Participation and Employment Servicing Arrangements*, was released in August 2011.

Around 1,200 people contributed to 42 consultation sessions across Australia in August – September 2011. The Australian Government spoke to Indigenous people, service providers, employers and others with an interest in this area. A Remote Participation and Employment Services Engagement Panel was appointed to provide advice on policy directions and on how to engage with remote communities.

The new **Remote Jobs and Communities Program** is an essential part of the Australian Government's agenda for Indigenous economic development. It is a key piece of a framework that is working to create job opportunities, connect Indigenous Australians with jobs, strengthen links between training and jobs and drive demand for Indigenous employment.

Another important component of the Government's economic development work is the **Indigenous Employment Program (IEP)** which operates nationally, providing \$658.6 million over four years, to improve employment outcomes and participation in economic activities for Indigenous Australians. In the first eight months of the 2011-12 financial year, the IEP has achieved more than 21,000 placements in employment and training related activities, including almost 10,000 job commencements. This work contributes to the Government's commitment to halve the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous employment outcomes within a decade.

The IEP funds projects which:

- encourage and support employers to provide sustainable employment opportunities
- encourage and support Indigenous Australians to take up training and employment opportunities, stay in jobs and enhance their future employment prospects
- develop Indigenous workforce and economic development strategies that support local and regional economic growth
- develop sustainable Indigenous businesses and economic opportunities in urban, regional and remote areas.

Commencing in 2011-12, the **Indigenous Youth Career Pathways Program** aims to assist more young people to make the transition from school to further education and work. It provides \$50.7 million over four years to fund 6,400 School Based Traineeship commencements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Years 11 and 12 to undertake a school-based traineeship.

The **Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Council (AIMSC)** is an initiative that works to strengthen business-to-business links between Indigenous enterprises and corporate and government Australia. Established in September 2009, AIMSC helps Indigenous-owned businesses access purchasing and supplier arrangements in the private and government sectors, contributing to a sustainable and prosperous Indigenous enterprise sector in Australia. As of 31 December 2011, AIMSC had certified 124 Indigenous suppliers and generated \$22.9 million in contracts and more than \$13 million in transactions between its members and suppliers. From 1 July 2012, the Government is providing additional funding of up to **\$7.5 million over three years** to support the ongoing work of AIMSC.

The \$22.3 million **Indigenous Carbon Farming Fund** provides assistance to Indigenous Australians to participate in the carbon market. Funding for this program, commencing in 2012–13, is provided for specialists to work with Indigenous communities on Carbon Farming Initiative projects, through providing training, legal support and advice on engagement in the carbon market.

The Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy (NAQS), within the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) employs 24 Indigenous staff to deliver biosecurity surveillance functions in coastal areas between Cairns and Broome (including Torres Strait), and quarantine services associated with movements into and between defined zones in Torres Strait. A network of these staff is located on all inhabited islands of Torres Strait, as well as Bamaga in northern Cape York Peninsula to assist in managing biosecurity risks through the Torres Strait pathway. Other Indigenous community liaison officers facilitate animal and plant health surveillance, public awareness functions, and the delivery of biosecurity monitoring services. The program also engages Indigenous communities on a fee-for-service basis to undertake a range of biosecurity monitoring activities in support of animal and plant health surveillance.

DAFF also administers the \$500,000 **Indigenous Pastoral Industry Project**, one of the three components of the Northern Australia Beef Industry Strategy, an election commitment under the Northern Australia Sustainable Futures Program. The project aims to increase the capacity of Indigenous people involved in the northern pastoral industry, complementing existing Indigenous Pastoral activities undertaken by the northern Australia state and territory governments. The project is focusing on the commercial viability and sustainability of the northern Australian Indigenous pastoral enterprises.

The Australian Government developed a **National Indigenous Forestry Strategy (NIFS)** in consultation with Indigenous communities and forest industry stakeholders. A key aim of this ongoing program is to encourage Indigenous participation in the forest industry by forming business partnerships with the forestry industry to provide long-term benefits to Indigenous communities. In 2012–13, DAFF will continue to pursue capacity building initiatives through mentoring and skills exchange, providing

assistance and promoting Indigenous participation in sustainable forest management policy development.

In 2012–13 the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) will invest \$350,000 in **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Rural Research and Development**. The focus will be the National Indigenous Climate Change (NICC) project, led by CSIRO. As part of this project a collaborative group of Indigenous leaders, senior researchers and corporate leaders are critically examining the opportunities associated with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement in Australia's carbon economies. A key activity of the research team has been to develop Indigenous carbon co-benefit criteria and guidelines that have been used to design the Carbon Farming Initiative (CFI) Indigenous co-benefit index. The team also supports policy level dialogue around Indigenous participation in the CFI through an active contribution to the CFI Indigenous Leaders Roundtable.

Natural Resource Management

Support will also be provided in 2012–13 to the Dynamic Rural Communities Transformation for Resilient Landscapes and Communities project. This project is assisting the Cape York Natural Resource Management Board with transitioning to a more inclusive and locally responsive approach to natural resource management.

Research and development to benefit Indigenous Australians

The Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) will invest \$658,000 in 2012–13 in research and development to benefit Indigenous Australians. FRDC supports Indigenous engagement, research development and extension (RD&E), culture and customs in the Australian fishing industry.

In 2012–13 FRDC will also continue to offer two **Indigenous Development Scholarships** worth \$10,000 each. These scholarships are awarded to individuals who seek to help shape the social and economic future of their community and/or region through engagement with the fishing industry, including fisheries management, commercial (including aquaculture) or customary use of sea resources.

HEALTHY HOMES

Healthy homes are the basis of healthy lives. They provide children and families with a safe and healthy place to grow, learn and thrive. Improved housing is a central strategy of the Government in achieving the targets for Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage. It is also critical to our work to build Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory.

2012–13 Budget initiatives to close the gap in housing

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory – Housing

The Government has now built over 600 new houses in the NT and rebuilt and refurbished some 2,100 more. We are working with communities to agree voluntary leases over social housing and Commonwealth assets to ensure major reforms to property and tenancy management continue in remote communities. This Budget provides a further **\$283.5 million** for two crucial elements to continue this work.

Improving existing housing and accelerating the construction of new houses

The Australian Government is investing an additional \$230.4 million to improve existing housing in remote Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory. This commitment is on top of the \$1.7 billion we are already providing for housing over ten years, some of which has been brought forward so we can build more houses sooner.

Healthy Homes

The Government is investing a further \$53.1 million on Healthy Homes in the Northern Territory. Many buildings in remote Northern Territory communities contain asbestos. The Government is providing funding to remove asbestos containing material, including in houses scheduled for demolition so that new housing can be built.

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory – Funding for Homelands and Outstations

Approximately 9,000 people live in more than 500 small, remote and dispersed communities across the Northern Territory, known as homelands or outstations.

Since 2007, the Australian Government has provided the Northern Territory Government with \$20 million each year to support the delivery of municipal and essential services to these communities. We have also made an unprecedented investment in facilities and services for people who choose to live in or regularly visit outstations and homelands through a range of programs and financial assistance, like health services, boarding facilities, housing maintenance and economic development.

Under the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory package, outstations and homelands in the Northern Territory will benefit from a \$221.4 million investment (including \$15 million from the Northern Territory Government in 2012-13) to support the continuation of basic essential and municipal services over ten years as part of the Stronger Futures package. The investment will include **\$206.4 million** from the Australian Government to provide more certainty for Aboriginal people living on outstations and homelands.

This investment will help supply outstations and homelands with access to power, water and sewerage and road maintenance. The funding will also support garbage collection, dog control programs and operational costs for organisations that provide municipal and essential services.

Municipal and Essential Services Program

Beyond the Northern Territory, the Government is providing \$43.4 million in the 2012-13 Budget to support the continuation of municipal and essential services to approximately 38,000 people in almost 350 remote Indigenous communities. This funding will supplement state and local governments in Western Australia, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania to deliver basic services including power, water and sewerage services, garbage collection and disposal, internal road maintenance, landscaping and dust control, animal and environmental health and organisational governance.

The Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments recently agreed to work together to progress genuine reform in this critical area.

Torres Strait Major Infrastructure Program Stage 5

The Government is providing \$21.2 million to work with the Queensland Government on a range of environmental health infrastructure projects in the Torres Strait related to water supply and reticulation, sanitation and wastewater, community roads and drainage, and serviced housing lots. Funding will also support new housing projects and help reduce overcrowding.

Previous projects have improved health outcomes in the region, with marked decreases in water and hygiene-related diseases. The program supports Indigenous economic development through local employment, training and business opportunities.

Helping Indigenous families to own their own home

The Australian Government supports Indigenous people to have access to the same housing options available to other Australians, including owning a home.

The Australian Government will assist up to an additional 545 Indigenous Australians to buy their own home in established housing markets over the next four years by merging the existing funding from the Home Ownership on Indigenous Land Program – which provides home loans and additional assistance in remote areas – and the Home Ownership Program – which provides home loans mainly in urban and regional areas, into a single Indigenous Home Ownership program.

The new program, to be managed by Indigenous Business Australia (IBA), will continue the existing range of support for people who cannot obtain finance from mainstream lenders. This will make best use of the significant investment the Australian Government provides for home loans to help meet home ownership demand across Australia while prioritising access for people seeking to move into home ownership on Indigenous land.

This will ensure we can meet demand for home ownership in remote Indigenous communities as states and the Northern Territory address their responsibility to resolve the barriers faced by people in remote communities such as lack of appropriate land tenure and individually surveyed and titled housing lots.

This initiative will assist approximately 490 people who are currently on the waiting list for a home loan with IBA and cannot obtain finance from mainstream lenders.

To date the Australian Government has supported over 15,000 Indigenous households to move into home ownership through concessional home loans and support provided by IBA.

The Australian Government also provides significant support to help Indigenous people build financial literacy skills. These services are available to people wishing to move into home ownership.

These new initiatives will improve the effectiveness of our existing investments.

The **National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing** is making an unprecedented investment of \$5.5 billion over ten years from 2008–09 to 2017–18 to tackle the very poor housing conditions in many remote areas.

Indigenous housing is an important sub-set of wider housing reform. The **National Affordable Housing Agreement** is working to provide all Australians with affordable, safe and sustainable housing. Through the National Affordable Housing Specific Purpose Payment, the Australian Government provides funding to the states and territories annually for housing programs to address supply and affordability issues for all Australians, with a focus on disadvantaged citizens. In 2012–13, states and territories will receive \$1.266 billion in funding through the National Affordable Housing Specific Purpose Payment.

At the end of February this year, close to 17,300 new homes had been delivered to vulnerable Australians under the \$5.6 billion **Social Housing Initiative**, the single largest investment in social housing ever undertaken by an Australian Government. Of the nearly 15,300 dwellings with tenant data at that date, more than 2,000 (or around 13 per cent) were tenanted by Indigenous Australians. The target of 19,600 homes is expected to be met in 2012.

The **Remote Indigenous Energy Program (RIEP)** announced in the 2011 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, is a \$40 million initiative and part of the Australian Government's Clean Energy Future Package. RIEP will support smaller remote Indigenous communities reliant on diesel generators for power to transition to a clean energy future by installing renewable energy systems. From July 2011 to June 2016, RIEP will install renewable energy systems in up to 50 smaller remote communities across South Australia, Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland. To complement the installation of renewable energy systems, service providers will provide community members with energy efficiency education and training in basic system maintenance. RIEP will provide employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians.

The **Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Program (AACAP)** is a joint initiative between FaHCSIA and the Australian Army. Each year AACAP delivers a \$6 million project to remote communities in Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia or the Northern Territory. The AACAP site for 2012-13 is Fregon in Western Australia. Each project has a construction component, a health component and a training component. The construction component focuses on the provision of environmental health infrastructure such as housing, water, sewerage and electrical services as well as improving access to primary health care facilities by construction or upgrading roads and airfields. The health component focuses on augmenting existing community medical, dental and veterinary programs. The training component focuses on specific skills required within the community and includes courses such as construction and building maintenance, vehicle and small engine maintenance, welding, concreting and cooking.

SAFE COMMUNITIES

All Australians have the right to live in a safe community, free from violence and abuse. While State and Territory Governments are primarily responsible for ensuring that Indigenous citizens enjoy the same level of safety as other Australians, the Australian Government also has a role to play. The Government recognises that without safe and stable communities, investment in areas such as housing and education will fail to make a difference.

Keeping vulnerable women and children safe has been a key priority for the Government in its work in the Northern Territory. Budget initiatives in 2012–13 provide a long-term plan to ensure communities build on progress which has been made in community safety over the last four years.

2012–13 Budget initiatives to close the gap in community safety

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory – Community Safety and Justice

The Government is making a **\$619.3 million** long-term investment in community safety in the Northern Territory.

More police

Funding will continue for 60 remote area police officers for a further ten years. The Government will also continue to support the Northern Territory’s Child Abuse Task Force, the National Aboriginal Violence and Child Abuse Intelligence Task Force, and the Substance Abuse Intelligence Desks, including the Dog Operation Units. People in remote communities expressed concern about issues related to alcohol and drug abuse and these investments will continue to work on these issues.

The Australian Government is also funding an additional four remote area police stations, as well as funding to operate these stations, and the five permanent stations we have already funded in the Northern Territory, for the next ten years.

Night patrols

The Government is also continuing to fund community night patrol services for the next ten years. These services operate across 80 communities to support community members, especially women and children, and defuse violent incidents before serious consequences arise to achieve community safety outcomes. This program not only provides an important safety service, but it also employs more than 350 people in Northern Territory communities.

Legal support

The Government will provide additional funding for legal assistance and advice, primarily in remote communities, for a further ten years. These services ensure Aboriginal people have access to appropriate advice, support, referral and representation when in contact with the justice system.

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory – Tackling Alcohol Abuse

To support communities to better tackle alcohol abuse the Government provided \$75.6 million in the 2011 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook to support community development of plans.

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory – Continue investment in the Alice Springs Transformation Plan

The Australian Government is providing **\$13.7 million in** funding to continue projects as part of the Australian and Northern Territory Government's commitment to:

- tackle the devastating and harmful effects of alcohol abuse on Aboriginal people, children and families
- improve school enrolment and attendance rates for Indigenous children
- ensure the safety and wellbeing of women and children escaping domestic violence remains a high priority for action
- deliver preventative measures that will overcome child neglect through strengthening parenting skills, education and support
- continue the Intensive Sustainable Tenancy Enabling Program to provide intensive services to people with complex social housing needs in Alice Springs town camps.

Cape York Welfare Reform Trial – Extension

The Government is providing **\$11.8 million** to continue the Cape York Welfare Reform Trial in partnership with the Queensland Government, Cape York Regional organisations and four Indigenous communities in Cape York (Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge). It trials an Indigenous-led approach to rebuild social norms, help participants into the real economy and support small business. We will also be calling on the Queensland Government to support continuation of Welfare Reform activities and to make a financial contribution.

The 12 months bridging funding to 31 December 2013 will continue the income management model and other elements of the trial, including the Family Responsibilities Commission.

National Children's Commissioner

The Government is complementing these important national initiatives in this Budget by providing **\$3.5 million** for a new **National Children's Commissioner**. The Commissioner will promote public awareness of issues affecting children, conduct research and education programs, consult directly with children and representative organisations and provide specialised advice to the government on issues affecting young people.

These new initiatives are anchored in ongoing work the Government is undertaking to keep Indigenous people safe, especially vulnerable women and children.

At the national level, progress is being made to support Indigenous community safety through commitments such as the **National Indigenous Law and Justice Framework**, announced in November 2009 to address the complex issues that mark the interaction between Indigenous people and the justice system.

The **Indigenous Family Safety Agenda** is a sub-set of this wider effort, funded by the Australian Government and targeting problems specific to Indigenous people. Launched in 2010, it provides a coherent policy framework aimed at addressing alcohol abuse, establishing a more effective police presence, strengthening social norms against violence and coordinating support services to aid the recovery of people who experience violence.

The **Indigenous Family Safety Program** aims to raise awareness and reduce acceptance of family violence, assist Indigenous communities to deal with violence and expand access to support services.

The **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Substance Use in Indigenous Communities Initiative** funds culturally appropriate substance-use prevention, early intervention, treatment, rehabilitation and aftercare. In addition, the **Breaking the Cycle** initiative is providing \$20 million over three years from 2011-12 to 2013-14 to support new community solutions for fighting alcohol and substance abuse in Indigenous communities, including development of alcohol and substance abuse management plans.

Announced in May 2009, the **Alice Springs Transformation Plan** represents a substantial investment of more than \$150 million and is making the Alice Springs town camps much better places to live. In partnership with the Northern Territory Government, the Plan has improved housing and infrastructure on the Alice Springs town camps, enhancements in complementary social services and the development of a number of initiatives to improve safety and reduce homelessness. Options for visitor accommodation have expanded and new social services are helping vulnerable people.

The Plan has:

- rebuilt or refurbished 196 houses and build 86 new houses
- commenced substantial upgrades to power, water, electricity, street lighting and road infrastructure within the town camps
- significantly strengthened and enhanced local services to address entrenched disadvantage for Aboriginal people in key areas of alcohol abuse, family support, domestic violence, safety and security, early childhood, tenancy management and life skills development
- helped to break the cycle of homelessness through building new and expanding existing accommodation facilities in Alice Springs, to provide safe and affordable places for visitors to stay and transitional support for people moving into public housing.

New initiatives in this Budget will ensure this substantial investment is sustained, and the long-term benefits of improved safety, housing, services and opportunities for Indigenous Australians living in Alice Springs are realised. In particular, we can continue to tackle the devastating and harmful effects of alcohol abuse on Aboriginal people, children and families and continue to safeguard women and children escaping domestic violence.

The Government's Indigenous community safety work sits within a broader framework of leadership on keeping vulnerable people safe right across Australia. The Government has provided leadership in this area through the **National Action Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022**, announced in February 2011. The Action Plan establishes a long-term direction for unified efforts by all levels of government to combat violence, in partnership with the community.

The **National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children** sets out an ambitious long-term effort to improve the health and safety of children and families. All Indigenous-related targets in the 2009–12 action plan are being met.

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

The Australian Government is investing in Indigenous governance and leadership at the individual, community, and national level.

If communities, organisations and corporations are not well-governed, they will not be effective. Good leadership is closely connected to good governance. Individuals can lead in their families, in their communities or by how they live their lives. The quality of Indigenous governance and leadership sets the environment in which efforts across all the building blocks will make a difference.

We also recognise that governance can be supported by the way governments deliver services and engage with the community.

2012–13 Budget initiatives to close the gap in governance and leadership

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory – Remote Engagement and Coordination

The Government is providing **\$427.4 million over ten years** to:

- increase the numbers of Indigenous Engagement Officers in communities from 30 to 54 over the next two years, creating full and part-time job opportunities for up to another 60 local Aboriginal people
- continue staff working and living in communities to support Indigenous Engagement Officers and become more involved in engaging with local people, including working in a more joined-up way at the regional level
- continue support for the Northern Territory Aboriginal Interpreter Service, so local community members can get equitable access to the services they need
- involve communities in planning and measuring what is happening in their communities under the Stronger Futures package.

This includes \$14 million of existing funding over three years to support governance and leadership development in communities in the Northern Territory, including to:

- build the capacity of local Indigenous organisations to be involved in the delivery of services
- provide increased opportunities to develop personal, family and community leadership.

Constitutional Recognition

The Government is providing \$10 million for a grass roots initiative to build community understanding and support for constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

Since 2008 the Australian Government has been supporting the formation of a new national representative body for Indigenous Australians. The National Congress of Australia's First Peoples held its first national forum in June 2011 and is providing national leadership in advocating for the status and rights of Indigenous peoples.

The Government is providing funding of \$29.2 million over five years from 2009–10 to 2013–14 to assist the Congress in providing effective and well-developed policy advice which reflects the views of its members from around Australia.

The Government also develops and delivers leadership programs for Indigenous people around Australia, with a focus on communities identified under the Remote Service Delivery National Partnership Agreement. The training is assisting Indigenous people to develop the skills and capacity to engage effectively with government on the programs and services that affect their lives. More than 400 community members from these communities have participated in 22 regional workshops.

As well as the work being done by communities, the Australian Government recognises that the way we manage our business in Indigenous communities is also important and can support better local planning and governance. Indigenous people have told us that they want government workers to continue to live and work in communities, and that they want to work better with government.

The Australian Government will continue to employ people to live and work in communities. These people work locally to make sure services are effective and to help support local planning processes.

As we move ahead, we will be asking these staff to become even more involved in engaging with local people. We will also be supporting our people to work in a more joined-up way at the regional level.

In remote areas, the **Remote Service Delivery National Partnership Agreement** is delivering a place-based approach to service design and delivery in 29 priority locations. With funding of up to \$291.2 million over five years from 2009–10 to 2013–14, the agreement involves cooperation between and across multiple government agencies and six jurisdictions to work in partnership with communities to deliver on local priorities. The RSD NPA aims to improve access to services, raise the level of services, improve governance and leadership and increase economic and social participation.