

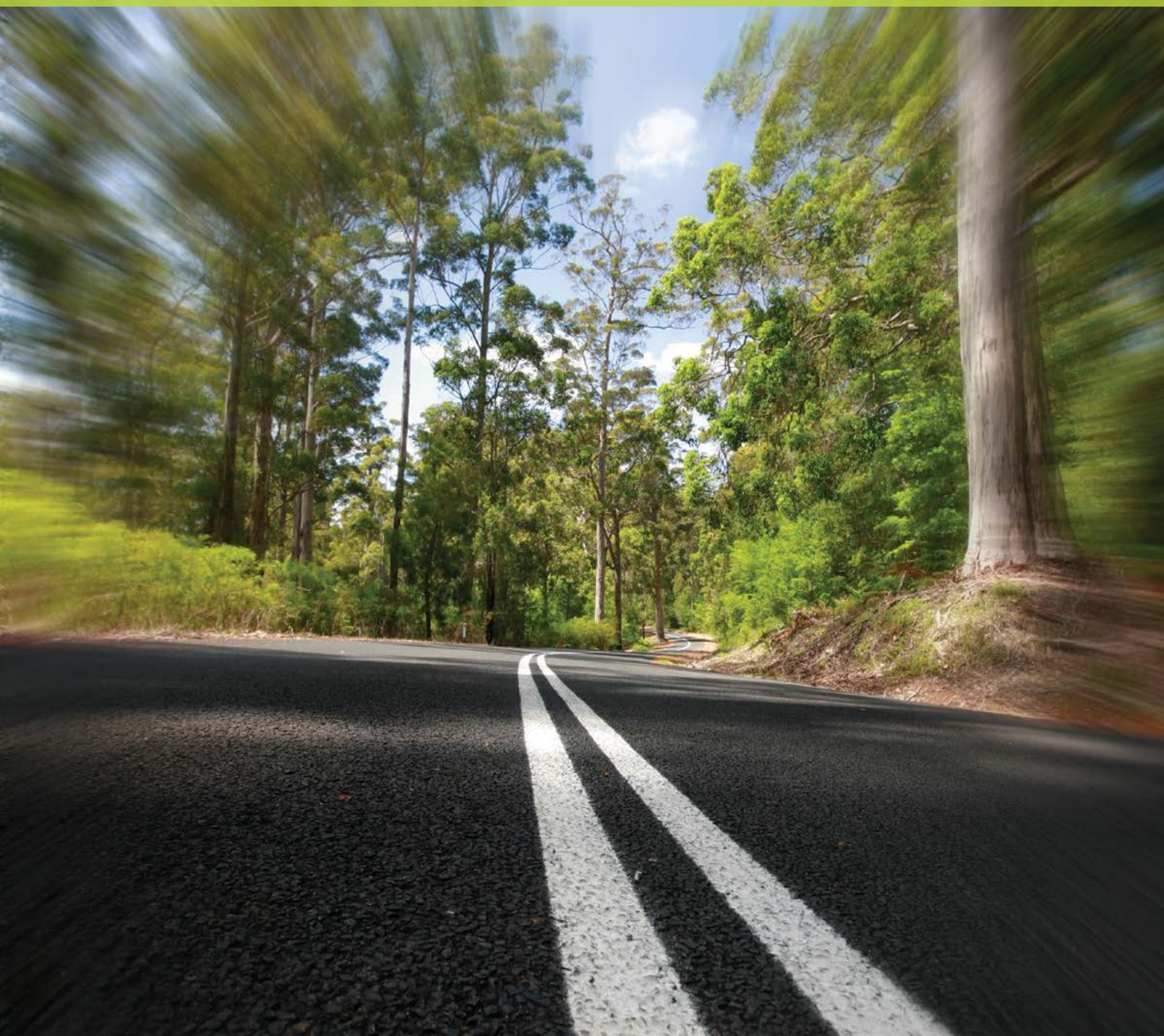


Australian Government

Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development

Building Stronger Regional Communities

Budget Outcomes 2014–15



Building Stronger Regional Communities

Budget Outcomes 2014–15

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FOREWORD

The 2014-15 Budget has delivered the foundations of the Australian Government's national vision for a strong economy.

The strength of our economy is dependent on the productivity of our regions. Australia's regions are essential to our nation's export income: investing in these regions will enhance our national growth. The Australian Government is enabling Australians to boost the nation's economic strength by fostering initiatives and creating jobs that will benefit regional Australia now and in the long term.

Our commitment to driving Australia's growth is manifest in our decision to make the most significant investment in infrastructure in Australia's history: a total investment of \$50 billion. This investment will build the infrastructure of the 21st Century - the vital road and rail projects that are essential to improving efficiency, boosting productivity and creating jobs throughout Australia.

This includes an additional \$350.0 million commitment on top of an earlier commitment of \$2.1 billion for the Roads to Recovery Programme, to help councils maintain and upgrade local roads, improving safety, access and transport efficiency, and supporting economic development across the country. Of this investment, more than 75 per cent - or \$1.9 billion - will be provided to regional areas. The Australian Government is also committing \$300.0 million to deliver the iconic Inland Rail project. This investment will boost rail access and national productivity by linking our eastern production zones and revitalising regional centres across three States.

The Australian Government will also invest in small-scale infrastructure projects through the \$1.0 billion National Stronger Regions Fund. Over the next 5 years the Fund will boost regional economic development with a focus on the expansion and upgrade of local infrastructure. Regional Australia will also benefit through the Community Development Grants Fund which will support key infrastructure and strengthen regional economies.

Establishing connectivity across our regions will strengthen international gateways, freight hubs, and trade corridors, improving Australia's ability to trade and access international markets. This greater capacity will flow-on to other regional industries, providing them the ability to tap into global supply chains and capitalise on the opportunities presented by new and emerging national and international markets, particularly in Asia.

The 2014-15 Budget has delivered another cornerstone infrastructure project in the Coalition's National Broadband Network (NBN), which will ensure that all Australians, particularly in regional areas, have access to very fast, affordable broadband using a mix of technologies.

Building Stronger Regional Communities: Budget Outcomes 2014-15

The \$100.0 million Mobile Black Spot Programme will extend mobile phone coverage and competition in regional Australia. The Programme will invest in telecommunications network infrastructure to improve coverage of high quality mobile voice and wireless broadband services and competition in the provision of these services.

The Building Stronger Regional Communities Budget Outcomes 2014-15 outlines a range of programmes and initiatives to build stronger regional economies and communities. These include:

- Over \$2.34 billion in water infrastructure upgrades for the Murray-Darling Basin, working to restore our greatest natural resource to full health whilst supporting economic development.
- \$50.0 million for the 20 Million Trees programme that will provide job opportunities for Australians whilst also providing local solutions to local conservation needs.
- \$320.0 million for a comprehensive drought support package that will support farm businesses, families and communities that are experiencing hardship and to help them recover when the current drought ends.
- \$18.2 million under the Regional Aviation Access Programme for infrastructure upgrades to regional airstrips across Australia.

The Australian Government is focused on developing a strategic plan for growth in key regional areas. These strategies will be based on sound, evidence-based policies informed by a broad suite of White Papers, including: the White Paper on Developing Northern Australia, the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper, the Energy White Paper, Tax Reform White Paper, and the White Paper on Reform of the Federation.

This Australian Government recognises the role regional areas can, and must, play in overcoming Australia's national challenges and driving economic development. Through its policies and investment programmes the Australian Government is building stronger regional communities.

Warren Truss

Deputy Prime Minister

Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development

Jamie Briggs

Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development

INFORMING FUTURE POLICY

The Australian Government is committed to strengthening Australia's economy. To ensure the sustained economic growth now and in the long-term, the Australian Government is investing in comprehensive evidence-based policies. These policies are currently being informed by a range of targeted reviews and a broad suite of White Papers which will be reporting in the coming months.

This body of policy work allows for extensive consultation with the Australian community and will identify pathways to deliver the Australian Government's priorities. The resulting policy framework will have benefits for the entire nation as well as regional Australia. The Australian Government will be better placed to more fully utilise the strengths of Australia's regions, to boost productivity and build regional economies, as well as to target assistance where impacts of change will be most felt.

Importantly, all changes to policies and programmes will be informed by the Australian Government's overarching focus on well-informed investments and cutting red and green tape to businesses, individuals and the non-profit sector. This agenda will improve productivity growth and enhance competitiveness across the Australian economy.

In supporting regional Australia to access opportunities and to be competitive, the Australian Government is ensuring Australia is open for business, delivering the infrastructure needs to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st Century, providing a safe and secure Australia and building a strong economy.

WHITE PAPERS

Developing Northern Australia

The Australian Government is preparing a White Paper on Developing Northern Australia. It will set out a clear, well-defined and timely policy platform for realising the full economic potential of the north, including a plan for implementing these policies over the next two, five, 10 and 20 years.

The White Paper will examine Northern Australia's natural, geographic and strategic assets, and potential to further develop the region's minerals, energy, agricultural, tourism, defence and other industries. It will set out actions to capitalise on the region's strengths, manage impediments to growth, and create the right conditions for private sector investment, innovation and growth. It will also consider the infrastructure needed to support the long-term growth of the region.

Northern Australia is broadly defined as the parts of Australia north of the Tropic of Capricorn, spanning Western Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland; an area

of approximately three million square kilometres with a population of around one million people.

A Green Paper seeking public comments will be published in the next few months. The White Paper will draw on submissions to the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia.

Agricultural Competitiveness

The Australian Government is currently developing an Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper. The White Paper will be the Australian Government's plan to grow agriculture's competitiveness, farm gate profitability and contribute to Australia's prosperity – including the prosperity of our rural and regional communities.

The Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper will provide a strong policy platform for enhancing the contribution of agriculture to economic growth, employment creation and national prosperity through increased innovation, productivity, investment and trade.

The Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper will consider food security, improving farm gate returns, debt sustainability, drought management, supply chain competitiveness, job creation, infrastructure, skills and training, research and development, regulatory effectiveness, and market access.

Energy

The Energy White Paper will set out a coherent and integrated approach to energy policy. It will consider Australia's supply and use of energy resources, including how increases in new energy sources can meet demand. The Energy White Paper will also look at regulatory reform to put downward pressure on prices and improve energy efficiency.

Australia has plentiful energy resources mostly in regional and remote areas. These are supported by well-developed transmission and distribution infrastructure and open energy markets. Coupled with improving energy productivity, this provides a solid base to support economic growth and high living standards.

Ongoing reforms are needed to boost business competitiveness, drive export growth, encourage investment and put downward pressure on the cost of living. Energy policy must support day-to-day reliability, longer term security and cost of energy in a transparent and competitive market, this is particularly important in regional and remote areas which can be vulnerable to external shocks to supply and where the cost of energy is high. The Energy White Paper will guide reforms in the sector.

Reform of the Federation and Taxation

The White Paper on the Reform of the Federation is an opportunity to ensure the federal system: supports Australia's economic growth and international

competitiveness; is better understood and valued by Australians (and the case for reform supported); has clearer allocation of roles and responsibilities; and enhances governments' autonomy, flexibility and political accountability.

The White Paper on Tax Reform will examine the Australian tax system as a whole, and seek to improve our tax settings for productivity, international competitiveness and growth.

The objective of the White Paper is to improve Australia's productive capacity by eliminating waste, duplication and complexity as well as setting out clearly for the community the respective roles of Government within the federation in delivering services.

This will provide clarity to all Australians, including regional communities, of the roles and responsibilities of each level of government which will contribute to making interactions with all forms of government, simpler and more efficient.

Defence

The Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence announced on 4 April 2014, the arrangements for the development of the 2015 Defence White Paper.

The Defence White Paper will align Defence policy, strategy and force structure in an affordable deliverable way. It will also consider the merits of an enhanced Defence presence in northern Australia.

State and Territory governments play a key role in supporting the strategic and operational activities of the Department of Defence and the Australian Defence Force. There will be a comprehensive consultation process with Australian industry, State and Territory governments and the Australian public.

Following the release of the 2015 Defence White Paper, the Australian Government will publish a ten-year Defence Capability Plan and a Defence Industry Policy Statement providing Australian defence industry with greater transparency and certainty.

REVIEWS

Competition Policy Review

The Australian Government's Competition Policy Review is undertaking a comprehensive review of competition laws and policy, the first in more than 20 years. The 'root and branch' review delivers on a key election commitment and will help identify ways to build the economy and promote investment, growth and job creation.

On 27 March 2014, the Minister for Small Business, the Hon Bruce Billson MP, released the final Terms of Reference for the Review following consultation with the States and Territories and announced the Review Panel.

The review is an independent process, led by Professor Ian Harper, who is assisted by an expert panel. The Review is examining not only the current laws but also the broader competition framework, to increase productivity and efficiency in markets, drive benefits to ease cost of living pressures and raise living standards for all Australians.

The Terms of Reference ask the Review Panel to ensure that there is thorough engagement with all interested parties, and to release an Issues Paper and a Draft Report before finalising their report to the Australian Government within 12 months. The Issues Paper was released on 14 April 2014 and is open for submissions until 10 June 2014.

Industry Investment and Competitiveness Agenda

The Australian Government is developing an economic plan to make Australia more internationally competitive. The Industry Investment and Competitiveness Agenda, to be released later this year, will foster stronger, more diverse and enduring economic growth. It will build on our dedicated reform efforts in relation to taxation, competition, regulation, financial markets, federal financial relations and infrastructure. In developing the Agenda, the Australian Government is examining initiatives to promote national competitiveness and productivity including:

- economy wide measures to boost the competitiveness of Australian manufacturing and lower the costs of doing business;
- options to encourage innovation, including employee share schemes, support for research and development and commercialising good ideas;
- options to accelerate the development of productivity enhancing infrastructure;
- options to encourage the growth of small to medium businesses; and
- economy-wide incentive mechanisms to boost investment in Australia.

Australia is open for Business

The Australian Government has committed to reducing the regulatory burden it imposes on business, community organisations and individuals by at least \$1 billion per annum. Families, businesses and community organisations, including those in regional areas, pay the price for ineffective and unnecessary red tape. The Australian Government is committed to a more efficient and effective approach to regulation. This includes only introducing new regulations when it is absolutely necessary to do so and offsetting any increases in regulatory burden with decreases elsewhere. Further information is available at www.cuttingredtape.gov.au, where anyone can provide suggestions on how the Australian Government can make further inroads towards removing red and green tape.

WORKING GROUPS

Water Infrastructure – Options for Managing Australia’s Future Water Needs

Australia will continue to face challenges in ensuring a sustainable supply of quality water in a future where the resource is likely to become increasingly constrained.

The Australian Government recently established a ministerial task group to investigate how investment in water infrastructure could be targeted to improve the management of water resources to support economic development, flood mitigation and community and industry needs. Based on this investigation the group will identify priorities for investment in water infrastructure.

The group will also investigate strategic approaches to the way the Australian Government could support the development of water infrastructure, including identifying how investment in water infrastructure could be accelerated. A set of principles for Australian Government investment to support water infrastructure will also be considered.

The group will prepare an options paper for the Australian Government by July 2014 so that its outcomes can be considered as part of the White Papers on Developing Northern Australia and Agricultural Competitiveness.

National Infrastructure Committee of Federal Cabinet

Chaired by the Prime Minister, the Hon Tony Abbott MP, the National Infrastructure Committee of Federal Cabinet makes recommendations to Cabinet on the progress of major infrastructure projects and policy and reports on the delivery.

The National Infrastructure Committee of Federal Cabinet is charged with driving and assessing the progress of major projects and acts as the direct line of accountability for Australian Government infrastructure delivery. The Committee, including the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, the Hon Warren Truss MP, supports the efficient delivery of major infrastructure projects across Australia, advancing the productivity gains for local economies that will be derived from the infrastructure of the 21st century.

KEY AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA BY PORTFOLIO

AGRICULTURE

The Agriculture portfolio provides service and benefit to regional Australia. The majority of agriculture, fisheries, forestry and food industries are located in regional Australia, and their employees and related businesses underpin many local economies. The portfolio's industries are worth approximately \$51 billion to the Australian economy, employ over 320,000 people domestically and feed 60 million people globally.

These industries also contribute strongly to the Australian way of life, the food Australians eat, the sustainability of our environment and the state of the economy. In 2014-15 the portfolio will continue important work to improve the productivity, competitiveness and sustainability of these critical industries and help goods and people to move in and out of the country while managing the risks to the environment and animal, plant and human health.

The Department of Agriculture has a strong presence in regional Australia, with more than 15 per cent of the Department of Agriculture's employees based in regional areas. These officers undertake a range of functions including quarantine services and plant and animal pest and disease monitoring and surveillance. The Department of Agriculture also maintains a biosecurity service delivery network with over 2,500 quarantine-approved premises located throughout Australia. Australia's biosecurity system lies at the heart of our position as a trading nation. It directly underpins more than \$38 billion per annum worth of agricultural commodity exports; primarily from regional Australia.

Through the Department of Agriculture and its portfolio agencies, the Australian Government will continue to support regional Australia by delivering services directly to those who need it. For example, in 2014-15:

- the Australian Government is investing an additional \$100.0 million in the rural research and development corporations, which will contribute to the longer-term productivity of rural businesses and provide funding to researchers, helping to support employment in the rural workforce;
- the National Landcare Programme will be delivered by organisations and community groups in regional areas, leading to positive socio-economic and environmental outcomes; and
- the Australian Government's \$20.0 million investment in Stronger Biosecurity and Quarantine will provide resources to manage field responses in regional areas and safeguard the competitiveness of Australian agriculture.

NEW INITIATIVES

Boosting Farm Profits Through Rural Research and Development

The Boosting Farm Profits Through Rural Research and Development programme implements the Australian Government's election commitment to invest an additional \$100.0 million over four years in rural research and development. The funding is for research to increase the profitability of agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries and address particular high-priority challenges to achieve the best outcomes for producers. Consistent with the election commitment, the research will focus on delivering cutting edge technologies, with an emphasis on making research accessible to end-users.

Stronger Biosecurity and Quarantine

The Stronger Biosecurity and Quarantine initiative delivers on the Australian Government's election commitment to provide \$20.0 million over four years to strengthen Australia's biosecurity and quarantine arrangements.

The initiative provides immediately available resources to respond rapidly to pest and disease incursions in order to reduce the adverse impacts on affected regions, industries and communities.

The funding is intended for measures to supplement existing Australian Government arrangements to contain and assess new pest and disease incursions for eradication. This could include field deployment as well as support arrangements such as access to technical information and advice on best practice response measures and arrangements. It also augments existing preparedness activities, improving the development of standard operating procedures, training of personnel, and vaccine stores to aid early detection and rapid response.

The funding also assists to maintain market access for Australian industries in the event of a pest or disease incursion by working to ensure necessary processes are in place for affected commodities to each export destination. It supports the Australian Government's capacity to respond to food safety or pest and disease incidents where overseas representation may be required to maintain or regain market access for Australia's agricultural industries.

Support for Small Exporters

The 2014-15 Budget implements the Australian Government's election commitment to provide a rebate for export certification costs to assist small exporters. A total of \$15.0 million has been allocated over four years to focus on assisting small exporters to improve market access. For small exporters located in regional Australia, this initiative will assist in supporting their businesses while they work to better establish export opportunities over the four years.

Improved Access to Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals

The Australian Government is investing \$8.0 million over four years to deliver its election commitment to improve access to agricultural and veterinary (Agvet) chemical products for minor use.

Access to safe and effective Agvet chemicals is important to Australian agricultural and livestock industries, the community and the environment. Some users, particularly specialty or emerging industries, have difficulty gaining access to the chemicals they need. Specialty industries include horticultural crops, herbs and spices, some pulses/grains, honey bees, aquaculture, live horse exports and goats. Larger industries also face an access to Agvet chemicals problem managing uncommon or emerging pests and diseases. These chemical access issues are often referred to collectively as the 'minor use' problem.

The Australian Government's investment will increase access to more uses of Agvet chemicals for controlling pest, diseases and weeds. This will result in Australia's increased productivity and competitive ability in the global market. The key stages are to:

- establish a system for prioritising minor use needs;
- develop tools to provide access to these uses;
- provide access to the most critically needed chemicals; and
- establish a long-term sustainable improvement to access by implementing a framework that improves coordination of chemical companies, Rural Research and Development Corporations and grower groups in prioritising needs and pooling resources.

National Landcare Programme

The Australian Government will merge Caring for our Country and Landcare to create a single National Landcare Programme. The new Programme will be built on the principles of simple, local and long-term, and will give Landcare a greater role in setting local and regional priorities and in on-ground delivery.

Although implementation details are yet to be finalised, the National Heritage Trust Ministerial Board, comprising the Ministers for the Environment and Agriculture, has considered the high-level programme architecture and a consultation process. The Programme will be collaboratively managed by the Departments of the Environment, Agriculture, and the Prime Minister and Cabinet (refer also page 58).

The Programme will deliver grants to promote a healthier environment and more sustainable agriculture. Delivery agents will include regional natural resource management (NRM) bodies, agri-businesses, industry, Landcare groups, environmental Non-Government Organisations and farming groups.

The Programme will include the revision of existing guidelines to better enable feral animal and weed control projects, including the management of wild dogs. In addition, OceanWatch will be recognised as a NRM organisation with responsibility for enhancing fish habitats and improving water quality in estuaries and coastal marine environments.

Drought Assistance Package

On 26 February 2014, the Australian Government announced a drought assistance package worth \$320.0 million to support those farm businesses, farm families and rural communities facing hardship brought on by drought. The drought package includes:

- the Interim Farm Household Allowance, available from 1 March 2014;
- Drought Concessional Loans totalling up to \$280.0 million to give eligible farm businesses the resources to recover from the effects of drought;
- assistance of up to \$12.0 million to assist drought-affected farm businesses to install water-related infrastructure;
- up to \$10.0 million in assistance to help reduce the impact of pest animals in drought-affected areas; and
- up to \$10.7 million to increase access to social and mental health services in drought-affected communities.

Interim Farm Household Allowance and Farm Household Allowance

The Interim Farm Household Allowance replaces the Transitional Farm Family Payment. The allowance has been available to eligible farmers and their partners from 1 March 2014. It will be replaced by the permanent Farm Household Allowance from 1 July 2014.

The Interim Farm Household Allowance and the Farm Household Allowance are paid at a fortnightly rate equivalent to the Newstart Allowance. The Australian Government has committed \$30.5 million to these payments in 2014-15, although actual expenditure will be driven by demand.

This farmer-specific income support payment recognises that many farmers are unable to access mainstream social security due to the value of their farm assets, even when those assets are generating no, or exceptionally low, income.

Drought Concessional Loans

Under the Drought Concessional Loans Scheme, the Australian Government is providing up to \$280.0 million over 2013-14 and 2014-15 for the provision of concessional loans to drought-affected farm businesses for debt restructuring, operating expenses and drought recovery activities.

The Drought Concessional Loans Scheme will help farm businesses recover from and prepare for future droughts and return to viability in the long term.

Water-Related Infrastructure

The Australian Government is contributing up to an additional \$12.0 million to support State Government water-related infrastructure rebate programmes. Drought-affected farmers in Queensland and New South Wales will benefit by having the rebate for water infrastructure expenses for emergency animal welfare.

This commitment extends existing support of \$10.0 million provided to top up rebate programmes in 2013-14 in Queensland and New South Wales. The additional funding is contingent on States announcing the continuation of their 2013-14 emergency water infrastructure rebate programmes.

This support will help farmers in Queensland and New South Wales invest in infrastructure to provide water for emergency animal welfare and improve long-term drought resilience.

Managing Farm Pests Programme

The Australian Government will contribute up to \$10.0 million to help drought-affected farmers reduce the impact of pest and feral animals, which during drought add further pressure to pastures and groundcover at a time when feed is critical for livestock.

It will also help manage the impacts that predators such as wild dogs and foxes have on grazing animals concentrated around fewer watering points due to the drought.

This funding will be provided to State and Territory governments to build on existing pest management programmes and will be delivered through local delivery organisations.

Social and Community Support

The Australian Government recognises that hardships, like drought, can have significant impacts on the mental health and wellbeing of farmers, farm families and communities. The Australian Government will provide \$10.7 million to strengthen social and community support for drought-affected areas (refer also page 133).

This will provide free professional help, including one-on-one counselling, family support services and referrals for people in need. Community engagement activities and events will be a key focus to link people to services that meet their individual needs.

Drought coordinators, based in drought-affected areas, will ensure services are coordinated and support is accessible to those who need it.

Beef Australia 2015

The Australian Government is contributing \$2.5 million to the running of the Beef Australia 2015 exposition. This unique event, being held in Rockhampton, Queensland from 4 to 9 May 2015, supports a \$7.4 billion industry. The Australian Government's investment will provide long-term benefit across rural and regional Australia, as well as regional benefit during the event. The Beef Australia 2012 exposition hosted participants from 35 countries among its 85,000 attendees.

The Beef Australia 2015 exposition will educate domestic and international stakeholders on topics including resource management, productivity and marketing. It also aims to promote Australian beef to consumers here and overseas, and to increase the Australian community's awareness of the industry and its importance to our economy. The industry-based conference, supported by seminars and property tours, provides an opportunity to deliver the latest industry education, with a strong emphasis on research outcomes and technological innovation. The Australian Government is always working to improve market access, to ensure industry sustainability and competitiveness, and to optimise returns at the farmgate and through the value chain.

Australian Grape and Wine Authority

The new Australian Grape and Wine Authority will commence operation on 1 July 2014 following the wind-up of the Grape and Wine Research and Development Corporation and the Wine Australia Corporation on 30 June 2014. The Authority will take on the roles and functions of these two corporations to become the single statutory authority for the Australian wine industry. The Australian wine industry is valued at approximately \$3.4 billion annually and is a major contributor to the economy of rural and regional Australia.

The benefits of replacing the two existing statutory bodies with a single authority will come at no additional cost to winemakers or grape growers. The move does not include any changes to the levies that fund the authorities and therefore no change to Australian Government matching funds. This will result in benefits and savings to the wine industry such as improved service delivery and administrative efficiency.

Tasmanian Fruit and Vegetable Industry Taskforce

The Australian Government has appointed an expert taskforce to prepare an agreed, industry-led plan that will detail what industry and government can do to promote competitiveness, investment and jobs growth in the Tasmanian fruit and vegetable industries. The taskforce is expected to complete the plan by August 2014.

The plan will be made available to industry and the Joint Commonwealth and Tasmanian Economic Council. It will complement and contribute to the White Paper on Australia's Agricultural Competitiveness.

A growing, internationally competitive fruit and vegetable industry will deliver significant benefits to regional Tasmania in the form of employment and income generation.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

National Drought Programme Reform

Through National Drought Programme Reform, the Australian Government is moving away from crisis-framed drought assistance programmes to programmes that help farmers better manage risk and prepare for future challenges, including drought.

Regional Australia will benefit from the reform through a more productive and resilient agriculture sector. The Australian Government has committed \$193.3 million over four years from 2014-15 for the National Drought Programme which comprises:

- a Farm Household Allowance;
- continued access to Farm Management Deposits and taxation measures that support risk management;
- a national approach to farm business training;
- a coordinated, collaborative approach to the provision of social support services; and
- tools and technologies to inform farmer decision-making.

Farm Household Allowance

The Farm Household Allowance is an uncapped, demand-driven programme that provides eligible farmers and their partners who are experiencing financial hardship with assistance and support to improve their long-term financial position. Legislation to enable the allowance was passed by the Australian Parliament on 20 March 2014. The allowance commences from 1 July 2014, replacing the Interim Farm Household Allowance.

The Australian Government recognises that farmers may experience significant financial hardship at any time for a range of reasons. Through the Farm Household Allowance, eligible farm families Australia-wide will be able to apply for household income support, paid at the same rate as Newstart Allowance.

Farm Management Deposits Scheme

Under Farm Finance, two enhancements are being made to the Farm Management Deposits (FMD) scheme to give greater flexibility to primary producers in managing their finances:

- Increasing the non-primary production income threshold from \$65,000 to \$100,000 to enable more primary producers who diversify their income to continue to access to the scheme.

- Allowing primary producers who hold multiple FMDs to consolidate them once they have been held for the minimum 12 month period. The removal of this red tape will allow primary producers to make better use of the scheme, and reduce the administrative burden for financial institutions.

These amendments were introduced into Parliament on 27 March 2014, to take effect from 1 July 2014.

Further information on the FMD scheme can be found at www.daff.gov.au/fmd.

Farm Finance Concessional Loans Scheme

The Farm Finance Concessional Loans Scheme provides eligible farm businesses, who are experiencing difficulties servicing their current debt levels, short-term assistance in the form of concessional loans for productivity enhancement projects or debt restructuring.

Under the scheme, \$420.0 million has been allocated over two financial years (\$210.0 million in 2013-14 and \$210.0 million in 2014-15) for the provision of concessional loans.

Rural Financial Counselling Service Programme

The Australian Government, together with State Governments, funds the Rural Financial Counselling Service Programme to provide free financial counselling to primary producers, fishers, and small rural businesses in financial difficulty. There are currently approximately 110 full-time equivalent (FTE) rural financial counsellors throughout regional Australia.

The Australian Government will allocate \$17.0 million to the Programme in 2014-15, which provides grants to 14 not-for-profit organisations to deliver the service.

The 2014-15 budget allocation includes \$3.0 million under the Farm Finance initiative, which will provide for up to 17 FTE rural financial counsellors.

Further information, including the location of rural financial counsellors, is available from www.rfcs.gov.au, 1800 686 175 or rfcs@daff.gov.au.

Pest and Disease Eradication

The Australian Government, in partnership with the States, Territories and industry, contributes to the effective control of pest and disease outbreaks if and when they occur. The Australian Government contributes to the costs for eradication of nationally significant agricultural and environmental plant and animal pests and diseases. Under the Plant Disease and Eradication Programme, \$10.9 million is available for eradication in 2014-15.

Reforming Australia's Biosecurity System

The task of protecting Australia from exotic pests and diseases is becoming more challenging with the globalisation of trade and increased passenger and cargo movements. The Australian Government recognises that an efficient and effective biosecurity system is critical to regional Australia and its economy. It underpins \$38.0 billion per annum worth of agricultural exports, primarily from regional Australia.

As announced in previous Budgets, the Australian Government will invest \$106.3 million in 2014-15 in reforms to continued delivery of a modern system that is responsive and targeted. The reform agenda focuses on building a sustainable system that manages risk across the continuum to better support consistent service delivery onshore, at the border and offshore; providing effective biosecurity risk management underpinned by sound evidence and policy; improving the efficiency and responsiveness of operations; and strengthening stakeholder relationships.

Australian Government Reef Programme

The Australian Government has announced \$142.3 million in funding to its Reef Programme over five years from 2013-14 to 2017-18. The Programme is jointly managed by the Department of the Environment and the Department of Agriculture (refer also page 58).

The Australian Government Reef Programme will assist land managers across the reef catchment to adopt improved agricultural and urban management practices that will reduce the discharge of nutrients, sediments and pesticides in the Reef lagoon and thereby improve the Great Barrier Reef's resilience.

Investment in Rural Research, Development and Innovation

Investment in research, development and innovation is vital for ongoing growth and improvement in the productivity, profitability, competitiveness and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries, forestry and food industries. The main way that the Australian Government invests in rural research and development (R&D) is through the 15 rural R&D corporations. The Australian Government provides approximately \$250 million per year to the rural R&D corporations. These investments are complemented by funding to Cooperative Research Centres, universities, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation and other departmental programmes.

The 15 rural R&D corporations commission research for the benefit of the industries that they service, and the Australian community in general. The research focuses on strategic priorities, which may include improving productivity, developing new products or crop varieties, advancing profitable farming systems, managing resources sustainably, or building skills and capacity within the industry. The work of the rural R&D corporations contributes significantly to the strengthening of the economic

diversity of regional Australia. Each R&D corporation has developed five-year strategic plans and, during 2014-15, each corporation will continue to advance these strategic goals.

Better Regulation of Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals

The Australian Government is implementing 2013 legislated reforms to agricultural chemicals and veterinary medicines regulation to improve the predictability and transparency of the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority's (APVMA's) decision-making and provide greater certainty to the community that Agvet chemicals used in Australia are safe. These measures will:

- reform the APVMA's application and review assessment processes so they will be more transparent, consistent, streamlined, easier to understand and more flexible and cost effective to administer;
- remove disincentives and introduce further incentives for companies to invest in modern and safer chemicals; and
- provide the regulator with contemporary compliance powers to improve its ability to protect humans, animals and the environment.

Council of Australian Governments Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Reforms

In response to a request from the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), the Australian Government, States and Territories have developed a single national framework to improve the regulation of Agvet chemicals. The national framework will improve consistency and reduce compliance costs for businesses operating across State boundaries.

The Agvet Chemical Regulation Committee (ACRC) oversees the implementation of the COAG reforms. In 2013-14 working groups were established under the ACRC to focus on delivering key elements including looking at the minimum training and licensing requirements and access to agricultural chemicals.

Trade and Market Access

Agricultural export industries underpin prosperity in regional Australia through both employment and income generation. The Australian Government is continuing to develop and maintain opportunities for agricultural products to ensure they remain competitive and find new markets overseas. The Department of Agriculture contributes to improving market access through:

- negotiating science-based, commercially viable conditions for Australian exports;
- making representations and submissions in response to importing country measures or international standards that are not science-based or unnecessarily restrict trade of Australian products; and

- influencing international standards so that Australian exports are not disadvantaged in world markets.

A new Post-Entry Quarantine Facility

The 2012-13 Budget included a \$379.9 million investment over seven years in the construction and operation of a new Australian Government-owned and operated post-entry quarantine facility for high risk animal and plant imports.

The funding will deliver a state-of-the-art facility that consolidates existing animal and plant services to a single location.

Land for the new facility was acquired at Mickleham in Victoria in 2012 and construction commenced in May 2014.

The new site will begin operation from late 2015, when the existing facility at Eastern Creek in New South Wales is scheduled to close. Operations at other facilities will be transferred progressively to the new station with the process scheduled to be completed by 2018.

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

The Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) manages the Commonwealth's fisheries on behalf of the Australian community using the provisions of the *Fisheries Management Act 1991*. The gross value of production from Commonwealth fisheries was around \$308 million in 2011-12, which was around 13 per cent of total production from Australian fisheries.

Commonwealth fisheries are based right around the coast of Australia and many form a vital economic and social component of many rural and regional communities. AFMA manages Commonwealth commercial fishing activities to ensure healthy fish populations and profitable fisheries now and into the future and, in so doing, contributes to maintaining and improving the prospects for fishing communities. AFMA anticipates investing \$14.0 million in regional Australia in 2014-15.

Key initiatives for AFMA in 2014-15 include removing unnecessary regulation and simplifying regulatory and other business processes. This will be achieved through reviewing the need for some fisheries regulations, the adoption of modern technologies (such as electronic logbooks and at sea electronic monitoring tools) and expanding online services to industry and the public. Reduced costs for fisheries management and improve profitability of all Commonwealth fisheries are the outcomes AFMA is seeking from these initiatives.

The Authority will also continue to meet regularly in rural and regional communities to discuss fisheries management issues and engage closely with its stakeholders, particularly the fishing industry. In some fisheries co-management is in place, enabling

Building Stronger Regional Communities: Budget Outcomes 2014-15

industry bodies to undertake functions on behalf of AFMA including research, stakeholder liaison and monitoring.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S

Through a range of measures and programmes, the Attorney-General's portfolio supports the Australian Government's commitment to build strong and prosperous communities in regional Australia.

Under the portfolio's civil justice initiatives, all Regional Family Dispute Resolution and Post Separation Cooperative Parenting services under the Family Support Programme are located in regional Australia.

Approximately 30 per cent of Community Legal Centres are located in regional Australia and up to 40 per cent of legal aid grants for Commonwealth matters are received by persons who reside in non-metropolitan areas.

Indigenous Australians seeking legal assistance are served through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services Programme where approximately 88 per cent of service outlets are located in regional Australia.

It should be noted that successful grant applicants often have head offices based in non-regional areas while their projects may be based in regional areas resulting in significant benefits to those communities.

The Attorney-General's portfolio also supports the Australia Government's agenda in regional Australia through the delivery of a number of Specific Purpose and National Partnership programmes such as the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment and the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements.

The Attorney-General's portfolio supports a number of initiatives to increase access to and participation in the arts and cultural activities by people living in regional Australia. This recognises that culturally vibrant regions are vitally important to our national cultural identity, and ensures that all Australians have access to quality arts and cultural experiences. The portfolio supports Indigenous culture, languages and visual arts through a number of initiatives to build a more sustainable and ethical Indigenous visual arts industry, support the preservation, revitalisation and strengthening of Indigenous culture through support for Indigenous languages centres and community-based languages and culture projects, and increase Indigenous Australians' participation and employment in arts and culture.

The Australia Council supports a number of programmes in regional Australia to enrich the nation by supporting the creation, presentation and appreciation of the arts including a suite of programmes aimed at supporting festivals, touring of music, performing arts tours and exhibitions in regional and remote areas.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements

Every year cyclones, floods, storms and other devastating natural disasters cause significant loss and damage in communities across Australia and result in costly recovery efforts for individuals, communities, regions and State and local governments. In 2014-15, the Australian Government will continue to support communities to recover from natural disasters through the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA).

NDRRA is a comprehensive national policy and financial framework for disaster recovery. Through the NDRRA, the Australian Government provides funding assistance to State and Territory governments to alleviate the financial burden of providing emergency and recovery assistance to disaster-affected individuals, communities, small businesses and primary producers, including for the restoration or replacement of essential public assets.

In December 2013, the Australian Government delivered on a key election commitment and announced the inclusion of NDRRA concessional loans of up to \$100,000 to small businesses, primary producers and not-for-profit bodies whose incomes have been significantly affected as a consequence of a natural disaster. The new loan scheme recognises that without help, a significant loss of income for these operators may risk their viability and the important contribution they make to disaster recovery and resilience in their local community. This loan complements the existing NDRRA concessional interest rate loans for operators that have sustained direct physical damage from a disaster.

Small businesses, primary producers and the not-for-profit sector in the Victorian regional community of Morwell have since benefitted from this additional assistance following the Hazelwood Mine Fire in February 2014.

Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment

Regional Australia has experienced natural significant disasters and benefited from recovery assistance. The Australian Government may provide direct assistance to disaster affected individuals and families through the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment (AGDRP). The AGDRP is intended as a helping hand to support individuals and families that have been so significantly affected by a disaster that assistance beyond that already provided by the Australian Government and State governments through the NDRRA is needed.

The AGDRP is a one-off payment provided under the *Social Security Act 1991* ('the Act') to eligible Australian residents. It is made pursuant to the Act if the Minister for Justice determines an event has had such a significant impact on individuals that an Australian Government response is required and is therefore a major disaster. In making this decision, the Australian Government will also consider the number of

individuals affected, the extent to which the nature or extent of the disaster is unusual, overall impact on a community, State or Territory response to the disaster, and the full range of Australian and state or territory government assistance measures available to the community. The AGDRP provides short-term financial assistance of \$1,000 per adult and \$400 per child who are adversely affected by a major or widespread disaster, either in Australia or overseas.

Disaster Recovery Allowance

The Disaster Recovery Allowance (DRA) commenced on 1 October 2013 and provides short-term income support to individuals that experience a loss of income as a direct result of a disaster.

The DRA assists employees, sole-operators and farmers without the waiting periods, and the asset and activity-testing associated with the Newstart Allowance or Youth Allowance. DRA also provides consequential assistance to small businesses by ensuring that the local workforce stays in disaster affected areas to support local and regional economic and community recovery.

DRA is paid at a rate equivalent to the Newstart or Youth Allowance for up to thirteen weeks or until the person regains their pre-disaster income. If after thirteen weeks, the person is still suffering hardship from a loss of income, they will be able to test their eligibility for a longer-term income support payment such as the Newstart Allowance.

The DRA was made available for the first time for individuals affected by the New South Wales bushfires in October 2013 and has since been activated for the community of Hope Vale in northern Queensland in response to tropical cyclone Ita.

National Emergency Management Projects

The Australian Government National Emergency Management Projects (NEMP) grant programme funds emergency management projects of national significance. NEMP projects support measures to strengthen communities, individuals, business and institutions to minimise the adverse effects of disasters in Australia. Projects are designed to improve the ability to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters across social, economic, environmental and governance elements. While projects must achieve national outcomes, their application can benefit regional areas, as well as metropolitan, rural and remote areas.

Natural Disaster Resilience Programme - National Partnership Agreement on Natural Disaster Resilience

The National Partnership Agreement on Natural Disaster Resilience (NPA) is the mechanism for administering the Natural Disaster Resilience Programme. It is a joint funding arrangement between the Australian Government and States and Territories, which allows for the delivery of initiatives that contribute to safer, sustainable communities, better able to withstand the effects of natural disasters. The current two

year NPA provides \$52.2 million and provides certainty and flexibility for States and Territories in meeting their disaster management priorities, as well as meeting the broader national aims of building community resilience and supporting emergency management volunteers.

States and Territories identify and implement specific activities as well as determining the location of activities being funded under the NPA based on their state-wide risk profiles. It is likely that some of these activities will occur in regional areas and have a positive impact on those communities, by reducing their risk of natural disasters.

The National Bushfire Mitigation Programme

The National Bushfire Mitigation Programme (NBMP) is a 2013 Australian Government election commitment that will provide \$15.0 million over three years to States and Territories to implement long-term bushfire mitigation strategies and better fuel-reduction programmes. The Australian Government will partner with States and Territories to contribute to safer, more resilient communities, which are better able to prepare for, respond to and withstand the impacts and effects of bushfires. The NBMP aligns with the Council of Australian Governments endorsed National Bushfire Management Policy Statement for Forests and Rangelands, which identifies that sustainable long-term solutions are needed to address the underpinning drivers of increased bushfire risk, and that greater investment in prevention and preparedness is also essential.

Broadly, the NBMP will contribute to:

- more effective land management resulting in better fuel reduction;
- the construction and maintenance of fire trails and associated accessibility measures;
- the implementation of cost-effective activities that reduce the impact of severe bushfires and promote community resilience, such as support for volunteers; and
- the generation of scientific information, including hazard mapping, to develop best-practice strategies for bushfire mitigation and mitigating the effects of bushfires on communities.

States and Territories will identify and implement specific activities as well as determining the location of activities being funded under the Programme based on their individual bushfire risk profiles. It is likely that some of these activities will occur in regional areas and have a positive impact on those communities, by reducing their risk of bushfire.

Improving Access to Justice – Legal Assistance Priorities

The Australian Government is committed to enhancing access to justice for all Australians, including Australians who live in regional areas. A number of urban legal

assistance providers are trialling the use of digital technology to provide outreach services in regional areas.

Legal Aid Commissions

There are approximately 80 legal aid commission offices across Australia, with about 58 per cent located in regional areas. The most recent reporting indicates approximately 40 per cent of legal aid grants for Commonwealth matters are received by persons who reside in non-metropolitan areas.

A National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services exists between the Australian Government and the States and Territories. One of the aims of the Agreement is to improve the targeting of legal aid services for disadvantaged Australians, including those living in regional locations.

Community Legal Centres

There are 128 community legal centres (CLCs) funded under the Australian Government's Community Legal Services Programme. Approximately 30 per cent of these services are located in regional Australia. In addition to these, there are other CLCs located in metropolitan areas that receive Australian Government funding to provide targeted specialist assistance in both metropolitan and regional areas through outreach work and 1800 or 1300 telephone advice lines.

Several CLCs are funded to employ rural women's outreach lawyers for the provision of legal services to women in regional areas, particularly where isolation is exacerbated by factors such as disability, age and domestic violence. Dedicated women's legal services also provide extensive outreach services to outlying communities.

The Australian Government has committed \$18.0 million to the National Association of Community Legal Centres for the establishment and operation of 'knowmore', a free legal advisory service to support the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Knowmore delivers targeted community education sessions in regional Australia to ensure people are able to access legal information and advice when engaging, or seeking to engage, with the Royal Commission.

Regional Legal Assistance Services and Initiatives

The Australian Government is committed to working collaboratively with legal assistance services and the private legal sector to raise awareness of the challenges facing lawyers and communities in regional Australia.

The Australian Government has contributed one-off funding towards a number of projects and initiatives that aim to address workforce challenges in regional Australia and encourage long-term solutions. These include:

- a Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales research project – which is investigating recruitment and retention of public legal service lawyers in

- regional areas of New South Wales and factors likely to affect recruitment and retention;
- a Professional Legal Training Programme in New South Wales –intended to encourage law graduates to work in regional legal centres for their professional legal training work experience placement;
- the Country Lawyers Project administered through Legal Aid Western Australia –aimed at improving the recruitment and retention of lawyers in regional and remote areas by recruiting, developing and rotating junior solicitors throughout regional Western Australia; and
- supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and Community Legal Centres to help these organisations deliver family law services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients areas across Australia.

Family Support Programme – Family Law Services

The Australian Government provides ongoing funding for a range of post-separation services under the family law stream of the Families and Children activity of the Families and Communities Programme. The funded services are: Family Relationship Centres; the Family Relationships Advice Line; Family Dispute Resolution; Regional Family Dispute Resolution; Children’s Contact Services; Parenting Orders; Post Separation Cooperative Parenting; and Supporting Children after Separation, and Counselling.

The family law services stream aims to provide alternatives to formal legal processes for families who are separated, separating or in dispute to improve their relationships in the best interests of children.

These services are located throughout Australia, including regional areas. All Regional Family Dispute Resolution and Post Separation Cooperative Parenting services are located in regional Australia.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services Programme

The Indigenous Legal Assistance Programme provides culturally sensitive and accessible legal aid and related services across Australia. Approximately 88 per cent of service outlets are located in regional locations. Management of legal assistance services to the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula was added in July 2012.

Improved Native Title Outcomes

The Australian Government is committed to improving the native title system, and promoting leading practice and strong governance in native title agreements. This has been supported through \$50.1 million in funding to the native title system. Included in this funding is approximately \$575,000 for the Native Title Anthropologist Grants Programme in 2013-14. The Programme supports projects to attract a new generation of junior anthropologists to native title work and encourage senior anthropologists to remain within the system.

The Australian Government will provide over \$2.0 million in 2014 and 2015 to fund native title respondent costs. This funding will facilitate respondents' fuller participation in native title claims, thereby enabling the efficient and effective resolution of the claims. It also restores the balance of funding between claimants and respondents within the native title system.

Regional Arts Fund

The Australian Government has allocated \$3.3 million to the Regional Arts Fund for 2014-15. The Regional Arts Fund supports sustainable cultural development in regional Australia including through supporting professional development of artists and arts workers, building the capacity of communities to sustain cultural activities, and supporting the costs of delivering arts and cultural projects. The Fund is delivered on behalf of the Australian Government by regional arts organisations in each State and arts agencies in each Territory.

National Collecting Institutions Touring and Outreach Programme

The National Collecting Institutions Touring and Outreach Programme provides \$1.0 million per annum to assist the National Collecting Institutions in the development and touring of their collections both nationally and internationally. The aim of the Programme is to:

- improve access for all Australians to the national collections, with a particular emphasis on providing access for audiences in regional Australia;
- promote Australia by supporting works from Australian national collections to tour overseas; and
- attract smaller international collections to tour to multiple venues, particularly in regional Australia.

Indigenous Repatriation Programme

The Indigenous Repatriation Programme facilitates the return of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' ancestral remains in overseas collections, and ancestral remains and secret sacred objects held in major government funded museums, to their communities of origin. Many of these communities are located in regional Australia.

Indigenous Languages Support Programme

The Indigenous Languages Support Programme addresses the steady erosion and loss of Australia's estimated 250 original Indigenous languages by providing support for the maintenance and revival of these languages to community organisations throughout Australia.

In 2013-14, the Indigenous Languages Support Programme provided approximately \$13 million in funding to support 113 activities around Australia.

Indigenous Culture Support Programme

The Indigenous Culture Support Programme assists the continued development, maintenance and transmission of traditional culture and contemporary Indigenous cultural expression. It facilitates the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in a wide range of Indigenous cultural activities and supports the transferral of cultural knowledge across age groups. It also promotes cultural exchange among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and between all Australians.

In 2013-14, the Indigenous Culture Support Programme provided \$7.6 million in funding to support 140 activities around Australia.

Support for Indigenous Visual Art

The Australian Government will provide over \$10.8 million in 2014-15 to over 80 Indigenous-owned art centres and a number of industry service organisations, mostly located in regional Australia, through the Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support Programme.

The Programme supports the production and marketing of Indigenous art and the intergenerational transmission of stories of law and culture, as well as providing targeted training, employment opportunities and sustained economic development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Australian Government is committed to investing in Australia's world-class Indigenous visual art sector and to supporting the rich and dynamic culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Visual Arts and Craft Strategy—Indigenous Visual Arts Component

The Visual Arts and Craft Strategy (VACS) is a joint initiative of the Australian, State and Territory governments to support a strong, sustainable visual arts sector. A component of the funding is delivered through the Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support Programme to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists.

In 2014-15, funding of \$0.8 million will enable five industry support organisations to provide professional support to artists and art centres, primarily in regional Australia. VACS is a valuable partnership between governments, and provides the sector with increased resilience, allowing it to take a strategic, long-term approach to addressing issues and pressures.

Australia Council Programmes

The Australia Council (the Council) is the Australian Government's principal arts funding and advisory body and supports the creation, presentation and appreciation of the arts by providing assistance to Australian artists, including those in regional and remote areas, making their works accessible to the public.

The Council's programmes include:

- The Contemporary Touring Initiative, which assists collecting institutions and other organisations with the costs of developing and touring major exhibitions of contemporary Australian visual arts and craft across Australia. In 2014-15 the Australian Government has allocated \$0.6 million to support its ongoing commitment to contemporary Australian visual arts and craft with the objective of encouraging wider audience access to Australian visual arts and craft through quality publications, education and public programmes that are part of touring exhibitions.
- The Festivals Australia programme, which assists in the presentation of new arts and cultural activities at Australian regional community festivals. In 2014-15 the Australian Government has allocated \$1.2 million to support a range of disciplines such as dance, music, theatre, literature, comedy, circus, parades, instrument making, film and video, animation, puppetry, visual arts and crafts, and multimedia.
- The Playing Australia programme, the Australian Government's national touring programme for the performing arts. In 2014-15 the Australian Government has allocated \$7.0 million to support projects in theatre, music, opera, dance, puppetry and circus performance to tour regionally where it would otherwise not be commercially viable and there is a demonstrated public demand.
- The Contemporary Music Touring programme, which assists emerging and established musicians to take their music on tour to Australia's regional and remote areas. The programme provides assistance with touring costs such as transport, accommodation, insurance, production and marketing and supports all types of genres including jazz, fusion, blues, hip hop, world, new classical, pop, funk, country, folk, electronic, alternative and rock. In 2014-15, the Australian Government has allocated \$0.4 million to this programme.
- The Visions of Australia programme, which supports access to exhibitions of Australian cultural material by providing funding to eligible organisations to develop and tour exhibitions. Through this, the programme provides more Australians in regional and remote areas better access to Australian cultural material. In 2014-15, the Australian Government has allocated \$2.4 million to this programme.

Maritime Museum of Australia Project Support Scheme

Many cultural institutions and community organisations around Australia care for maritime items of historical and national significance. The Maritime Museums of Australia Project Support Scheme is a grants programme which collects, conserves and exhibits Australia's rich maritime heritage by helping these groups undertake this important role.

The Scheme is jointly funded by the Australian Government and the Australian National Maritime Museum and provides grants up to \$10,000 to cultural institutions

and community organisations for collection management initiatives, including storage and research; conservation activities, including documenting and caring for collections; and presentation projects, including education programmes and workshops.

More than 70 per cent of the grants funded under the Scheme in the 2012-13 financial year were provided to projects and institutions located in regional Australia.

Community Heritage Grants

The Community Heritage Grants (CHG) Programme provides grants of up to \$15,000 to community organisations such as libraries, archives, museums, genealogical and historical societies, multicultural and Indigenous groups. Funded by the Australian Government and administered by the National Library of Australia, the grants are provided to assist with the preservation of locally owned, but nationally significant collections of materials that are publicly accessible including artefacts, letters, diaries, maps, photographs and audio visual material. There are two categories of projects funded: Collection Preservation Projects and Training Projects. Further information is available from the National Library of Australia website at: <http://www.nla.gov.au/chg/guidelines>.

In 2013, 38 of the 78 recipients of CHG funding, or 48.7 per cent, were regional and remote community organisations.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Communications portfolio is committed to improving communications services to regional, rural and remote Australia. Many regional communities across Australia are benefitting from a number of initiatives that are being delivered by the Department of Communications, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and the Special Broadcasting Service Corporation (SBS).

In addition to the new Mobile Black Spot Programme, which will improve mobile coverage in regional, remote and outer metropolitan areas, there are existing digital productivity and broadcasting initiatives, which provide benefits to regional Australians.

These programmes relate to converting to, or extending the reach of, digital television services, and on improving engagement, use and delivery of services online by individuals, local governments and small-to-medium enterprises and not-for-profit organisations.

To date, the National Broadband Network (NBN) rollout has simply not reached enough Australian households and businesses in a timeframe or at a cost that is sustainable. Currently, around 1.6 million households and businesses across Australia are in areas that have no or limited access to fixed broadband. Addressing these under-served areas by directing the NBN rollout towards the localities that need it most is a key objective of NBN policy. The Australian Government has issued NBN Co with a new Statement of Expectations that requires it to prioritise areas identified as poorly served by the 'Broadband Availability and Quality Report' published by the Department of Communications in February 2014 (including any subsequent refinements arising from additional data) to the extent commercially and operationally feasible.

NEW INITIATIVES

Mobile Black Spot Programme

The 2014-15 Budget includes \$100.0 million over four years to improve mobile coverage in regional, remote and outer metropolitan areas. The Mobile Black Spot Programme is an election commitment, which is expected to provide around 250-300 mobile base stations and generate substantial co-contributions from industry, local and State and Territory governments and local communities. The Programme will improve coverage along major transport routes, in small communities and in locations prone to experiencing natural disasters, as well as addressing unique mobile coverage problems.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

National Broadband Network

The Australian Government is committed to completing the NBN and ensuring all Australians have access to very fast broadband as soon as possible, at affordable prices, and at least cost to taxpayers.

To assist with the prioritisation of the NBN rollout, the Department of Communications provided the Australian Government with a comprehensive analysis of broadband availability and quality in over 78,000 local areas of Australia. The analysis has been provided to NBN Co, who has been asked to prioritise areas identified as poorly served, where it is commercially and operationally feasible to do so.

The NBN Co will determine which technologies are most cost-effective and should be utilised on an area-by-area basis. NBN Co will receive up to \$29.5 billion in Government equity to undertake this task and meet its other rollout parameters, such as achieving minimum network speeds, improving the speed of deployments and serving under-served areas with priority, including in regional communities. In the short term, people living in regional areas of Australia will benefit from the NBN Co spending \$34.0 million to improve its satellite services.

Equalisation of ABC and SBS digital television services

The ABC and the SBS are extending their digital television services to an additional 95 regional locations across Australia. This extension programme is expected to be completed during 2015.

Regional Equalisation Programme

The \$250.0 million Regional Equalisation Programme commenced in 2000-01 and provides financial assistance for the conversion of commercial analog television services to digital in regional and remote areas. All relevant services were converted to digital by the end of 2013, and assistance to most affected broadcasters has concluded. However, assistance towards commercial broadcaster operational costs will continue until 2017 at 28 sites in remote central and eastern Australia, and 49 sites in regional and remote Western Australia.

Digital Switchover – Viewer Access Satellite Television

The Viewer Access Satellite Television (VAST) Programme provides funding to broadcasters to deliver digital free-to-air television services for “direct to home” satellite users. The VAST service provides all 17 free-to-air digital channels from the ABC, SBS and commercial broadcasters, and in remote central and eastern Australia, a dedicated regional news channel, which features the news bulletins of regional commercial television broadcasters. Information about accessing VAST can be found at <https://www.myvast.com.au/access>.

Digital Local Government

The Australian Government is providing grant funding of \$17.1 million from 2011-12 to 2014-15 under the Digital Local Government programme to provide funding to local governments to improve the online delivery of their services using high speed broadband, particularly to homes and businesses. Projects funded under the Programme must be able to be replicated by other local governments.

The 48 projects funded under the programme are scheduled to be completed by 30 June 2015 and encompass a range of services including:

- online lodgement and tracking of development applications;
- provision of health services;
- hosting online workshops;
- disaster management coordination;
- 3D modelling/mapping;
- closed circuit television implementation; and
- use of high-definition videoconferencing to deliver customer support services.

The benefits of these services for regional Australians are expected to include:

- reduced travel times for local council staff and ratepayers between locations and across local government areas;
- improved customer service by enabling local residents and businesses to access council staff and services through videoconferencing;
- more efficient use of council resources, enabling the re-allocation of staff to other priority tasks; and
- more efficient dissemination of information to local residents and businesses.

Digital Hubs Programme

The Australian Government is providing grant funding of \$13.6 million from 2011-12 to 2014-15 to enable local residents in eligible communities to increase their online engagement and better understand the opportunities presented by the digital economy.

Digital Hubs have been established in 40 communities across Australia, with an average of \$0.3 million allocated to local community organisations, such as local governments (through public libraries), community groups and educational institutions.

Digital Hubs are funded to operate for up to two years with funding covering project management, qualified trainers, purchase of technology and equipment, and minor accommodation fit-out.

The Programme assists local residents to:

- increase their digital literacy skills and build confidence in the use of online services;
- experience broadband-enabled services and technology;
- learn how to connect to broadband, including internet connectivity options;
- access online government, health and education services;
- use social media and videoconferencing technology; and
- participate safely online.

It is estimated the Digital Hubs Programme will deliver approximately 65,000 training sessions for up to 130,000 participants by its conclusion.

Digital Enterprise Programme

The Australian Government is providing grant funding of \$16.8 million from 2011-12 to 2015-16 to enable small-to-medium enterprises and not-for-profit organisations in eligible communities improve the way they do business and deliver services online.

A total of 69 communities are now served by the Programme, with an average of \$0.2 million allocated to local community organisations, such as local councils, Regional Development Australia committees, Business Enterprise Centres, educational institutions and information technology training firms.

Digital Enterprise services are funded to operate for up to two years with funding covering project management, qualified trainers and travel. Outcomes that may be achieved from the Programme include for:

- small-to-medium enterprises, strategies to: improve their online presence and competitiveness; offer new products and services; expand their market; and increase the ways they communicate with customers and suppliers; and
- not-for-profit organisations, learning to: deliver their services online; undertake online fundraising and awareness activities; and achieve administrative efficiencies using online tools.

Incorporated within the Digital Enterprise Programme is access to online training through the Virtual Advisor Programme that primarily assists Indigenous Australians, small-to-medium Indigenous owned and operated enterprises, and not-for-profit organisations located in regional, rural and remote areas of Australia.

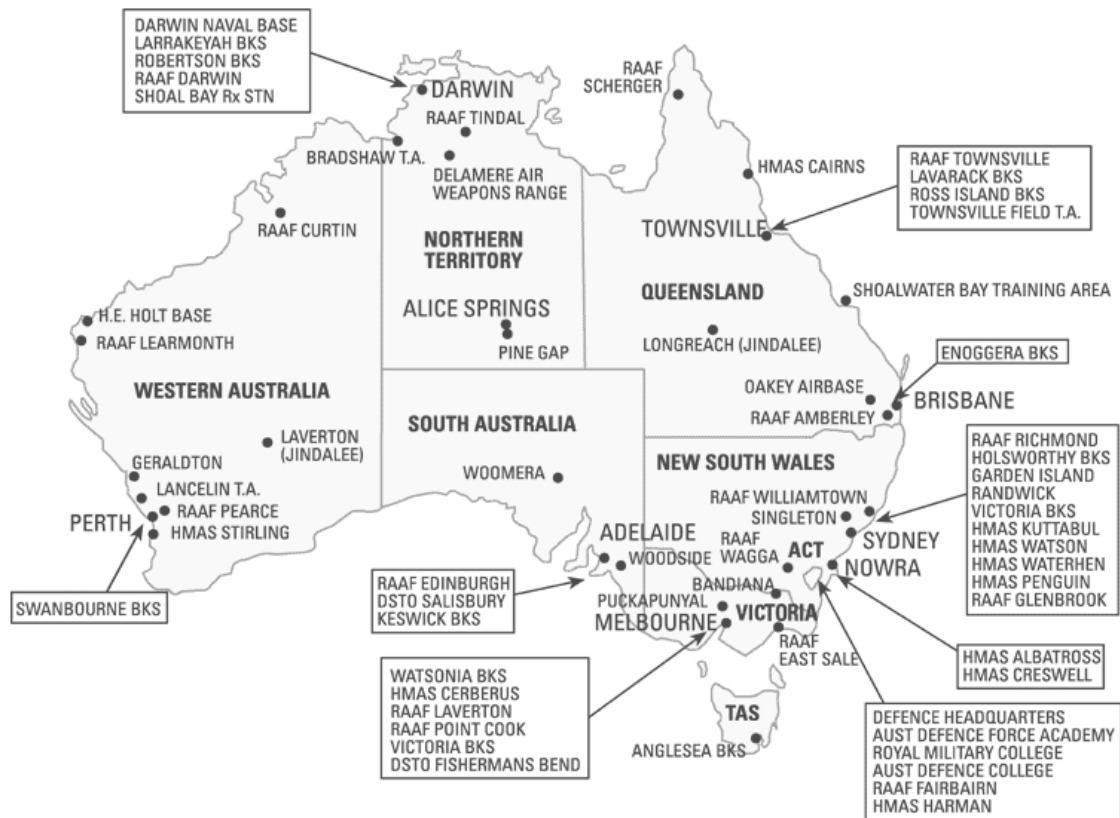
It is estimated that over the life of the Programme it will deliver: 3,650 group training sessions; 14,350 one-on-one training sessions; and reach 49,000 training participants.

DEFENCE

The Department of Defence and the Australian Defence Force (ADF) make a significant contribution to the development of regional Australia through the establishment and operation of Defence facilities and by fostering linkages with the communities in which Defence members are based. Defence activities provide considerable indirect support to regional communities surrounding its facilities. As at 31 March 2014 there were 28,931 Defence personnel located outside of Australia's major cities, which equates to 28 per cent of the total 101,915 Defence personnel.

The Defence footprint is evident through employment, industry, community involvement and services, childcare facilities, housing, cooperation on heritage issues, Indigenous affairs and economic activity. Figure 1 depicts the location of major Defence facilities across Australia.

Figure 1: Location of Major Defence Facilities across Australia



NEW INITIATIVES

ADF Family Health Programme

Between 2009 and 2013, a pilot ADF Family Health Programme was conducted in eight primary regional and remote areas plus their Defence outposts.

Following the final evaluation of the trial, the National ADF Family Health Programme commenced on 1 January 2014 providing benefits to all ADF dependants throughout Australia. The number of eligible ADF dependants is approximately 71,000 based on the 2011 Defence Census which included a number of assumptions relating to the number of ADF households with dual serving members.

The total budget allocation for this programme across the Forward Estimates is \$261.8 million.

Defence Logistics Transformation Programme

The Defence Logistics Transformation Programme is a complex programme that is implementing deep reform across the national Defence logistics network to contribute to Defence's Strategic Reform Programme savings. It will achieve reform by implementing a new logistics service delivery model via new contracts for Warehousing and Distribution (W&D) and Land Materiel Maintenance (LMM) services. Defence signed the contract for new LMM services with Transfield Australia on 3 May 2013 and a successful transition to business as usual was completed by 28 September 2013. Defence signed the contract for new W&D services with Linfox Australia on 19 December 2013 and transition will be completed by 30 June 2014.

The logistics service delivery model is supported by modern, purpose-built facilities employing efficient, best practice processes, technology and systems. In November 2012, the Australian Government committed \$752.0 million of logistics infrastructure involving new and upgraded logistics facilities. Construction is underway in Moorebank, Townsville, Amberley, Darwin, Bandiana and Adelaide with works scheduled to commence in Perth from June 2014. Depending on location, facilities will be completed between mid 2014 and late 2016.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Indigenous engagement

Defence has extensive engagement with Indigenous communities in remote, urban and regional Australia. Defence runs the Defence Indigenous Development Programme, aimed at preparing young Indigenous Australians from remote and regional Australia for entry into the ADF, at Batchelor (Northern Territory) and Cairns (Queensland). There are other Indigenous Pre-Recruitment Courses and Indigenous development courses conducted across Australia including at Wagga Wagga and Sydney (New South Wales), Adelaide (South Australia) and Katherine

(Northern Territory) where participants are sourced more broadly. Defence has staff based across many locations including Townsville (Queensland), Launceston (Tasmania) and Perth (Western Australia) who work with Indigenous communities throughout the country.

Defence Community Organisation Programme

Defence, through the Defence Community Organisation Programme (DCO), promotes the engagement of ADF families with their local communities. These activities and the extent of the engagement vary by location, but tend to be strongest in regional areas. Activities include annual welcome functions and local information sessions. DCO also administers Defence's Family Support Funding Programme (FSFP), which offers non-recurrent annual grants to community organisations that have a focus on supporting Defence families. The emphasis of the FSFP is on supporting groups that encourage engagement with the wider community.

DCO has commenced a programme of community capacity building that is designed to promote connections between Defence families and their local communities. In time this will also enhance the ability of local communities to support the families of ADF members because of increased awareness of the contribution that Defence families bring to their communities.

ADF Transition Centres are located across Australia to provide practical guidance and information to ADF members who are planning to leave Defence. Support services include practical information seminars, personalised assistance to prepare for transition, referrals, help with administration and support for post-service training and employment. ADF members and their families can be linked into support services such as the ADF Rehabilitation Programme, the Department of Veterans' Affairs, ComSuper and Centrelink and community resources.

Defence Force Recruiting Support to Regional Australia

In addition to each of the capital cities, Defence Force Recruiting maintains recruiting centres across Australia including the following regional centres:

- New South Wales - Newcastle, Wollongong and Albury; and
- Queensland - Cairns, Coolangatta, Maroochydore, Rockhampton and Townsville.

Defence Infrastructure / Capital Facilities Projects

Defence bases and facilities around the country are being redeveloped and upgraded to deliver increased capability and support the ADF. In 2014-15 capital infrastructure projects located in regional Australia include:

United States Posture Initiative

The Australian Government has agreed for Defence to fund the up-front costs of infrastructure development for the United States Force Posture Initiatives at Robertson Barracks and RAAF Base Darwin in the Northern Territory.

HMAS Albatross Redevelopment Stage 3

The project aims to replace ageing and obsolete engineering services and infrastructure. It will also provide a combination of new and refurbished facilities to support operational and training outcomes as well as enabling functions. The project is scheduled to be completed in mid-2017.

RAAF Base East Sale Redevelopment Stage 2

This project aims to provide in-ground engineering services upgrades, new working accommodation, new training and maintenance facilities, security upgrades, a new air traffic control complex, new commercial and community facilities, a new chapel, a new firing range, and new living-in accommodation. It also involves the demolition of redundant facilities. The project is scheduled to be completed in mid-2015.

Facilities for the MH-60R Seahawk Maritime Combat Helicopters (AIR 9000 Phase 8)

This project was previously reported as Facilities for Future Naval Aviation Combat System Support Air 9000 Phase 8. The project aims to provide new and upgraded facilities for maritime helicopter operations at HMAS Albatross (Nowra, New South Wales) and HMAS Stirling (Fremantle, Western Australia) and at Eden, New South Wales. The works include the provision of facilities for aircraft hangars and workshops, synthetic training and working accommodation primarily at Nowra as well as additional explosive ordnance facilities at Fremantle and Eden. Construction commenced in late 2013 and is scheduled for completion in mid-2017.

ADF Support for Natural Disaster Recovery

The ADF continues to provide significant assistance to the Australian community following natural disasters, and has demonstrated its adaptable nature and ability to respond to challenging and complex tasks at short notice, when called upon by the Australian Government. Most recently, the ADF has assisted communities in Australia affected by bushfires in New South Wales and Western Australia. Tasks performed by the ADF included the provision of accommodation, meals, aircraft refuelling and airfield basing for fire fighters. Support to the bushfire recovery was also provided through clearing unsafe trees and buildings as well as general clean-up activities.

Defence Housing Australia

The main function of Defence Housing Australia (DHA) is to provide housing and related services to members of the ADF and their families. DHA adds new properties to its portfolio across Australia, including in regional areas with a significant ADF presence, through the renewal of expiring leases, constructions, acquisitions and

leasing from private investors or in bulk from property developers. DHA has also supported the creation of nine apprenticeship places in regional locations in the residential construction industry.

Defence Industry Development

Australia's defence industry plays a key role maintaining and supporting the equipment of the ADF. Defence industry provides production and support services across a wide range of regional locations. In particular, regional defence industry provides an extensive maintenance capability to the ADF. Examples of Defence maintenance and support locations in regional Australia include: Oakey (Queensland), Townsville (Queensland), Darwin (Northern Territory) and Nowra (New South Wales) for helicopters; Bandiana (Victoria) and Darwin (Northern Territory) for military fighting vehicles; Lithgow (New South Wales) for weapons manufacture and maintenance; and Darwin and Cairns for naval vessels.

Defence continues to provide assistance programmes aimed at improving skills in local industry, encouraging innovation in defence technology and improving the domestic and international competitiveness of Australia's defence industry. Small to medium enterprises, many of which are based in Australia's regional areas can access programmes, such as Skilling Australia's Defence Industry, the Defence Industry Innovation Centre and the Global Supply Chain Programme, to enhance their capacity to support the ADF.

The Australian Defence Force Posture Review 2012

Defence is implementing key recommendations from the 2012 Australian Defence Force Posture Review, relating to:

- enhancing and increasing visibility of the ADF's presence in the north and north-west of Australia;
- improving stakeholder engagement and communication with regard to regional defence activity; and
- enhancements to increase the capacity of particular facilities, bases and airfields to support operations in the north and north-west and to support the operation of new major capabilities entering service in coming years.

EDUCATION

The Education portfolio administers many Australian Government programmes, some of which are specifically designed to support regional, rural and remote Australians, while others with a national focus provide considerable additional support to regional Australia.

The Department of Education focuses on ensuring all Australians can access quality and affordable childcare; early childhood education, school and higher education. There is also a continued focus on making a positive difference in the outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

The 2014-15 Budget contains major improvements to the way higher education will be funded and provided across the nation, with a view to ensuring more regional Australians can access quality higher education nearer to where they live and work.

In a competitive global economy, it's important to ensure the nation's higher education system is one of the best in the world. Australia operates in an international market and young people studying in regional Australia in particular need to know that their qualification can take them anywhere. In today's world, Australia cannot have a world-class economy and world-class living standards without a world-class higher education system.

As part of the 2014-15 Budget, the Australian Government has introduced reforms that will lay the ground for Australia's higher education system and students to succeed in an increasingly competitive and knowledge-based global economy.

The higher education reform package has been designed with the needs of regional students and their communities as a core concern. The best way to advance the interest of regional communities is to create a more diverse and responsive higher education system in the regions that is driven by the needs of local communities and economies.

Increasing participation by regional Australians at university is necessary to provide sufficient professionals to work in regional Australia, enable regional industries to diversify and grow, and enable regional Australia to participate fully in the modern world economy.

Lifting attainment in regional areas will rely on a combination of strategies, including an improvement in access to the very best institutions across Australia, regardless of location, and fostering excellence, diversity and opportunities delivered by higher education providers in regional areas.

There are a number of good partnerships that have been forged between universities and colleges that the Australian Government will continue to support and build on. By way of example, Charles Sturt University (CSU), in partnership with the North Coast TAFE and Wodonga TAFE, is establishing two Regional University Centres in

Northern Victoria and the mid-north coast of New South Wales. In collaboration with the TAFEs, CSU will deliver programmes locally to new, underserved regional markets where there are poor higher education attainment rates but good VET preparation to Diploma level.

NEW INITIATIVES

Reform of Higher Education Funding

From 1 January 2016, the Australian Government will be extending subsidies to include all students enrolled in an accredited higher education associate degree, diploma and advanced diploma courses. These will increase options and pathways for students that are less well prepared for university, in particular those from low socio-economic, rural and regional backgrounds. These qualifications are not funded in this demand driven way under the current system.

Students will also have greater choice in the type of institution they wish to study at with subsidies to be extended to private universities and non-university higher education institutions. This is in addition to the current subsidies provided for students studying at one of Australia's public universities. Over 80,000 additional students (measured in equivalent full-time students) will benefit by 2018 as they are supported in studying the course that is best for them.

The reforms will enable a greater number of public and private higher education institutions to offer Australian Government supported courses to students in the regions where they live. These reforms will ensure students living in rural and regional Australia will have the same world-class higher education opportunities as students living in metropolitan areas, and allow them to contribute to their growing local economies. This will remove the arbitrary distinction that sees some students supported and others paying their own way, depending on where they study. Students will be supported, irrespective of where they choose to study.

The 2014-15 Budget includes \$820.4 million in funding over three years to extend Australian Government subsidies to all students studying a bachelor, diploma, advanced diploma or associate degree course at a university or accredited higher education institution.

The Budget also includes a series of measures to allow universities to set their own charges for the courses they offer. This will allow our best universities to compete with world class universities, including the fast moving universities of Asia. It will also allow universities to compete for students and may also lead to cheaper fees in some universities. These arrangements will come into place in 2016.

Students will continue to be supported by the HECS loan scheme, under which no student need pay a cent up front for their degree and repayments are required only after they are earning a good income as a result of their education. In addition, current students (as at 13 May 2014) will not be affected by the new fee policies.

Ensuring regional students from disadvantaged backgrounds can access higher education

Regional students from disadvantaged backgrounds, Indigenous students and students from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds will benefit as the Australian Government will require institutions to invest 20 per cent of additional revenue from increased student contributions into student access and participation through the Commonwealth Scholarship scheme. This will provide support to students including scholarships to help meet the costs of living, and other support such as fee exemptions and tutorial support. The Australian Government will work with universities to ensure that these funds create scholarships, bursaries and other assistance to help support regional students to access opportunities based on their capability to succeed rather than on proximity to their home.

In addition, the Higher Education Participation Programme will be streamlined to give universities greater flexibility in how they allocate the funding to help students from low SES backgrounds participate and succeed in higher education. Administration and reporting requirements will be reduced, freeing up universities to better help disadvantaged Australians go to university and complete their studies.

National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy

The Australian Government will provide \$150.0 million in 2015-16 to operate and maintain existing research infrastructure under the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS). The strategy will support research excellence by providing significant research infrastructure to the Australian research community. NCRIS provides benefits to rural and regional Australia through the work of the capabilities funded under the programme as well as its many distributed networks across the research community.

The NCRIS provides support for projects such as:

- Nano-patch technology which has the potential to revolutionise vaccination technology. With this technology patients in remote or developing areas such as remote Indigenous communities, will have access to vaccines without reliance on refrigeration. The nano-patch is a material studded with microscopically-sized needles 50 – 100 micro metres in length that when pressed to the skin pass vaccine easily and painlessly into the body.
- The Population Health Research Network (PHRN) which enables Australian researchers to access data from a diverse and rich range of health datasets. This can help us understand Indigenous health better, for example, assisting governments in developing policies aimed at improving health.

Antarctic Gateway Partnership

The establishment of the ARC Antarctic Gateway Partnership in Hobart, Tasmania, will invest \$24.0 million over three years from 2014-15 to cement Hobart and Australia as a global hub for Antarctic and Southern Ocean research with flow on financial

benefits to Tasmania. The Partnership will be responsible for coordinating collaborative research relating to the Antarctic and Southern Ocean between the University of Tasmania, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, and the Australian Antarctic Division.

Expansion of the Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine at James Cook University

The expansion of the Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine at James Cook University will provide \$42.0 million over four years with flow on infrastructure, health and financial benefits to far North Queensland. The institute will provide facilities and research funding for an institute focused on tropical diseases and illnesses.

National School Chaplaincy Programme

The National School Chaplaincy Programme, will assist participating schools to engage a chaplain to support the emotional wellbeing of students. The new Programme will commence on 1 January 2015 for a period of four years and will facilitate the engagement of school chaplains in around 2900 schools. Schools will be selected through an application process open to all Australian schools. Schools will receive up to \$20,000 per annum while schools in remote areas will receive up to \$24,000 per annum.

Indigenous Boarding Students

The Indigenous Boarding Schools initiative will provide \$6.8 million of urgently needed interim additional funding in 2014 to support non-government schools with more than 50 Indigenous boarding students from remote or very remote areas, or where 50 per cent or more of their boarding students are Indigenous and from remote or very remote areas. The additional funding will assist non-government boarding schools with providing these students with the essential services and support they need to achieve a high quality education.

Long Day Care Professional Development Programme

The Australian Government has established a new professional development programme to assist all educators in long day care centres.

The \$200.0 million Long Day Care Professional Development Programme (LDCPDP) will assist all long day care centre educators to meet the qualification requirements under the National Quality Framework and improve quality outcomes for children.

The LDCPDP allows funding to be used flexibly by services to meet educator needs, and targets known workforce shortages such as early childhood teachers and long day care educators working in rural and remote locations.

Services in rural and remote areas will receive a loading in their funding in recognition of the extra challenges of accessing professional development for their educators.

In 2014-15 an additional \$30.0 million will be directed towards training and support for educators working with vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

National Occasional Care Programme

The Australian Government believes that families deserve a greater choice when it comes to child care and understands that occasional care provides a vital service for many families. This is particularly evident for those families living in regional, rural and remote areas where occasional care may be required due to seasonal work.

As such the Australian Government will reinstate funding for non-Child Care Benefit approved occasional care, to be known as the National Occasional Care Programme. The reinstated Programme, to commence from 1 July 2014, will operate as per previous arrangements, with joint funding from both the Australian Government (\$12.6 million over four years) and States and Territories. The Programme will also give preference to funding services in regional, rural and remote areas.

Jobs, Education & Training Child Care Fee Assistance programme — Improving Education and Employment Outcomes

Jobs, Education and Training Child Care Fee Assistance (JETCCFA) provides parents on eligible income support payments, many of whom live in regional areas, with assistance with the cost of child care while they enhance their skills through work, study or training to enable them to enter or return to the workforce.

The Australian Government is investing \$117.2 million in the programme in 2014-15 and has made changes to ensure the programme is better targeted and sustainable. These changes include introducing:

- a maximum \$8 per hour cap for JETCCFA payments, after Child Care Benefit; and
- a 36 hour weekly limit per child for JETCCFA payments for recipients undertaking study.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Higher education programmes

Commonwealth Grant Scheme

In 2014 the Australian Government is providing more than \$6 billion through the Commonwealth Grant Scheme to subsidise students' higher education tuition costs. All domestic students enrolled in a bachelor degree at a public university receive a subsidy, including those from regional areas. Students enrolled in other kinds of courses or at private higher education providers may also be eligible for a subsidy.

Under the Commonwealth Grant Scheme, universities with regional campuses also receive additional funding to help them meet the higher costs associated with these campuses.

Higher Education Loan Programme

The Australian Government supports access to tertiary education through the provision of Higher Education Loan Programme loans to assist students, including many from rural and regional areas, with the cost of their tuition. Students are not required to start repaying their loans until their income has reached a minimum threshold. This usually occurs some years after they graduate, when they are in full-time employment.

Australian Maritime College

The Australian Government provides more than \$7 million annually to the University of Tasmania to support the Australian Maritime College (AMC). Located in Launceston, Tasmania, the AMC is Australia's specialist provider of maritime education, training and research. The Australian Government's investment in the AMC helps to maintain Australia's maritime workforce.

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

In 2014, the Australian Government is providing \$4.4 million to support the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. Batchelor provides unique tertiary education opportunities for students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, including in remote parts of northern Australia.

Promotion of Excellence in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education

The Australian Government provides funding through the Office for Learning and Teaching for the promotion of excellence in learning and teaching in higher education. The Office of Learning and Teaching provides funding to universities for academics and professional staff to investigate, develop and implement innovations in learning and teaching. The regional universities and those universities with regional campuses have received funding for projects that benefit regional and rural Australia.

Schools and Youth programmes

Students First – Australian Education Act 2013

Through Students First the Australian Government, in partnership with States and Territories and the non-government schooling sector, will work to improve outcomes in Australia's schools by focusing on teacher quality, school autonomy, engaging parents in education, and strengthening the curriculum.

From 1 January 2014, Australian Government recurrent funding to all schools and systems in Australia is based on needs based funding arrangements contained within the *Australian Education Act 2013* (the Act).

The Act also provides for capital funding, special circumstances funding and funding for non-government representative bodies.

Consultation will occur with school authorities during 2014 to amend the Act to reduce regulatory burden and ensure that States and Territories remain responsible for schools and non-government schools and maintain their independence and autonomy.

Independent Public Schools

The Australian Government has established the \$70.0 million Independent Public Schools initiative, as local school communities are best placed to have a greater say in how their schools are run. This initiative will assist government schools in building stronger school communities. The Australian Government is working with interested States and Territories to encourage some 1,500 government schools to become Independent Public Schools by 2017.

In participating schools, the initiative could support the provision of training for school leaders, parents and community members, and will better place schools to respond to the needs of their students. State and Territory governments will be responsible for the selection of schools, however it is anticipated that schools from regional Australia will be among the 1,500 schools to benefit under the initiative.

Flexible Literacy Learning for Remote Primary Schools

The Flexible Literacy Learning for Remote Primary Schools programme will provide \$22.0 million over four years to fund effective approaches to teaching in selected rural and remote primary schools.

This grant programme will build on the existing leadership expertise in improving student literacy outcomes in remote regions. Participating remote primary schools must have in-place a whole-of-school attendance strategy, a whole-of-school literacy strategy, and parental and community support.

Teach for Australia

The Teach for Australia programme aims to fast track high-calibre non-teaching graduates into disadvantaged schools through providing an employment-based pathway into teaching. Participants accept two year employment contracts in schools and teach with a reduced teaching load and a high level of support and training throughout their two year placement period. On completion of their placement, participants are awarded with a postgraduate teaching qualification.

While the organisation aims to place high quality teachers into rural and regional areas, this is ultimately dependent on the employer (government, catholic or independent sector in the State or Territory) participating in the programme and identifying suitable vacancies in their schools.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan contains outcomes, targets and performance indicators as well as 55 actions at the national, systemic and

local levels across six domains of activity that evidence suggests will have the most impact on lifting the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. These domains are: readiness for school; engagement and connections; attendance; literacy and numeracy; leadership, quality teaching and workforce development; and pathways to real post-school options.

Under the Action Plan, around 950 Focus Schools have been nominated. Focus Schools have high populations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and are likely to be underperforming in national testing. Around 65 per cent of Focus Schools are located in regional, remote, or very remote locations and include enrolments of around 45,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Youth Engagement - Heywire

Heywire is an annual competition designed to encourage young people aged 16-22 living in rural or regional Australia to submit short stories about life outside the major cities. Each year the winning stories are published throughout the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's (ABC) platforms and winners are flown to Canberra to develop leadership and policy development skills at the annual Regional Youth Summit.

As the programme is specifically targeted at young people from rural and regional areas, it provides a valuable opportunity for government to engage with this key demographic. The programme also provides young people from rural and regional areas with a platform to share their unique stories, and for the winners, an opportunity to develop a range of skills at the Regional Youth Summit.

Students with Disabilities

The Australian Government is committed to better support for students with disability. This includes, in 2014, the commencement of a funding loading under the *Australian Education Act 2013* for eligible school students with disability which applies no matter where they live or the type of school they attend (this programme was formerly known as More Support for Students with Disabilities). The Australian Government also provides more than \$5.5 million per annum for the Positive Partnerships programme, part of the Helping Children with Autism package. Workshops and information sessions are held in rural and regional areas around Australia to provide professional development for teachers and school staff to build their understanding and skills in working with children with autism spectrum disorder, and for parents and carers of school-age children with autism. Online resources are also available.

Broadband Enabled Education and Skills Services Programme

The Broadband Enabled Education and Skills Services Programme is supporting the development and trialling of online education and skills services that take advantage of high speed broadband communications technology. Thirteen projects are

demonstrating how students, teachers and parents can benefit from improved online access to education, training and skills services made possible by broadband communications technology. Students in participating regional or remote schools are receiving interactive lessons or instruction via live video streaming from specialist teachers or trainers who are not available to them locally.

Child Care and Early Childhood Learning programmes

Child Care Services Support Programme

The Australian Government funds the Child Care Services Support Programme (CCSSP) to support and promote access to quality early learning and child care for children, families and communities. The CCSSP includes the Community Support Programme (CSP) which provides a range of payments directly to child care service providers. CSP is designed to improve access to child care, especially in areas where the market or services might otherwise be unviable, such as in regional and remote locations.

In March 2014 the Assistant Minister for Education announced changes to the eligibility requirements for new family day care services seeking financial support under the CSP. Further changes announced in the 2014-15 Budget will bring support for all family day care services in line with other child care service types. From 1 July 2015 all family day care services seeking funding through the CSP will be subject to eligibility criteria that target funding to services providing care in regional, remote and disadvantaged communities. In addition a \$250,000 annual cap will be introduced on the operational support payments that a family day care service can receive from the CSP. These changes ensure that the CSP is managed in a responsible and sustainable way in light of the tight fiscal environment, and bring eligibility requirements for family day care into line with other service types.

Australian Early Development Index

The Australian Government supported the first national collection of Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) data in 2009, and following its success, committed to ongoing funding of approximately \$28 million for the collection of this important data every three years. Following the second national data collection in 2012, the Australian Government now has two point-in-time snapshots of children's development as they enter their first year of formal full-time school. Future data collections will further strengthen this evidence base. The AEDI data is publicly available for around 96 per cent of Australian communities, including regional, remote and Indigenous communities.

The 2015 AEDI data collection is expected to be undertaken from May – July 2015 with the data release expected in early 2016. This is the third national implementation of this important data set, and analysis of trends across the datasets will be able to be undertaken for the first time.

Home Interaction Programme for Parents and Youngsters

The Home Interaction Programme for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY) is a two-year, home-based parenting and early childhood enrichment programme targeted to disadvantaged communities. The Australian Government investment of over \$100 million since its introduction will support ongoing programme delivery in 50 mainstream locations and expansion to an additional 50 locations, with an emphasis on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Twenty-five new locations will commence programme delivery in 2014 with the remaining 25 new locations commencing in 2015. This expansion means HIPPY will be operating in 100 locations across Australia from 2015, targeting around 2,250 children (aged four years) each year.

Budget Based Funded Services

The Australian Government provides funding to more than 340 early childhood, early learning and school age care services through the Budget Based Funded Services programme. The programme plays a vital role in ensuring families have access to a service where one would not otherwise be viable, particularly in regional and remote communities. Delivery models for these services are diverse and include centre-based long day care and out of school hours care services, mobile services, playgroups and a range of flexible services that meet the needs of local communities.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment is central to the Australian way of life and our common future. Employment provides individuals and families with the means to prosper and fulfil their potential. The workplace is where we foster human capital, innovation and productivity.

The Employment portfolio supports these goals by ensuring the employment framework supports job creation and retention and by helping as many people as possible to take part in the workforce and make a positive contribution to society. The Employment portfolio also supports employees who lose their jobs due to employer insolvency.

Many of the Employment portfolio's programmes are of practical benefit to regional communities or target regional Australia.

The new Restart wage-subsidy programme will provide up to \$10,000, over a period of two years, to employers that hire people aged 50 or older. The scheme comes into effect on 1 July 2014 and is expected to benefit up to 32,000 mature-age job seekers annually.

The reinvigorated Work for the Dole scheme—one of the Australian Government's 2013 election commitments—gives job seekers valuable experience, helping them to move from welfare to work. It will also see them work on worthwhile local projects—many of them in regional Australia.

The Tasmanian Jobs Programme seeks to boost employment specifically in Tasmania by providing a one-off incentive payment of \$3,250 to Tasmanian businesses when they employ an eligible job seeker.

The Relocation Assistance to Take Up a Job programme provides unemployed people with financial assistance so they can relocate to take up ongoing work. This scheme, which starts on 1 July 2014, provides eligible job seekers with up to \$6,000 in relocation payments if they move to a regional area.

NEW INITIATIVES

Restart

Restart aims to encourage employers across Australia—including in regional communities—to employ mature-age job seekers aged 50 or over who often face significant barriers in entering the workforce. Businesses will be eligible to receive up to \$10,000 if they hire a mature-age job seeker who has been unemployed and on income support for six months or more.

Under the new programme, eligible employers will receive \$3,000 if they hire a full-time mature-age job seeker who was previously unemployed for a minimum of six months and employ that person for at least six months. Once the job seeker has been working for the same employer for 12 months, the employer will receive another payment of \$3,000. The employer will then receive a further \$2,000 once the same job seeker has been with them for 18 months, and \$2,000 again at 24 months.

The Restart programme aims to help up to 32,000 mature-age job seekers looking for work annually, delivering on the Australian Government's election commitment.

Work for the Dole

The Australian Government's election commitment to reinvigorate the Work for the Dole programme ensures that, if people aren't working for a wage, they are engaged in work that assists them in moving from welfare to paid work and making a positive contribution to their local community. Taxpayers expect that people who can work should work and this programme ensures that those receiving taxpayer benefits are also contributing to society.

The focus of the reinvigorated programme is to create opportunities for young Australians to find and keep a job. Young Australian job seekers aged 18–30 will be required to participate in Work for the Dole, developing valuable skills that will help them into paid work.

Restart and Work for the Dole are part of the Australian Government's commitment to increase opportunities and employment participation.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Tasmanian Jobs Programme

The Tasmanian Jobs Programme is part of the Australian Government's commitment to boost employment in Tasmania. The aim of the programme is to encourage businesses to provide jobs to unemployed Tasmanians.

The programme provides an incentive of up to \$3,250 to businesses that employ job seekers (who have been out of work for at least six months and are at risk of long-term unemployment) in full-time positions for at least six months. Funding for the programme will be rolled out over the next two years, and is capped at 2000 participants. The Tasmanian Jobs Programme started six months early on 1 January 2014 and has an allocated budget of \$6.9 million over three years. It will help up to 2,000 job seekers and employers.

Relocation Assistance to Take Up a Job

The Relocation Assistance to Take Up a Job programme will help connect job seekers to regional jobs by providing financial assistance to eligible long-term unemployed job

seekers who relocate to take up ongoing work. The programme will start from 1 July 2014 and provide relocation payments of up to \$6,000 for job seekers who move to a regional area or up to \$3,000 if they move to a metropolitan area either from a regional or metropolitan area with higher unemployment. Families with dependent children will receive up to an extra \$3,000.

The programme will be available to job seekers who are participating in Job Services Australia, Disability Employment Services or the Remote Jobs and Communities Programme; have been receiving Newstart, Youth Allowance (Other) or Parenting Payment for at least the preceding 12 months; and have an activity test or participation requirements.

Job Commitment Bonus for Young Australians

The Job Commitment Bonus will encourage long-term unemployed young Australians to find and keep a job and remain off welfare, in response to the high levels of youth unemployment being experienced in some areas, including some regional areas.

The programme will provide a payment of \$2,500 to young people aged 18 to 30 who have been in continuous receipt of certain income support payments for 12 months or more, if they get a job and remain completely off welfare for a continuous period of 12 months. They will receive a further \$4,000 if they remain in a job and completely off welfare for a continuous period of 24 months. The new waiting period for income support, under the stronger participation measures for job seekers aged 18-30 will count as part of the 12 month qualifying period.

The Job Commitment Bonus for Young Australians is due to commence on 1 July 2014, with the first payments expected to start from July 2015. The Australian Government will provide \$157.1 million over five years for this measure.

Job Services Australia

Job Services Australia provides flexible and tailored support to job seekers and employers across metropolitan and regional Australia.

Job Services Australia gives job seekers access to support and services that are relevant to their individual circumstances—which may include access to prevocational and vocational training—to help them find secure and sustainable employment. Nearly 40 per cent of job seekers being assisted under Job Services Australia live outside the capital cities.

Corporate Champions

The Corporate Champions programme aims to attract large employers throughout Australia—including regional communities—to make a public commitment to using better practices for employing mature people aged 45 years and over. Employers receive a package of tailored assistance from contracted providers to support this commitment.

New Enterprise Incentive Scheme

The New Enterprise Incentive Scheme helps eligible job seekers who are interested in starting and running a small business. The Scheme provides job seekers with accredited small business training, business advice and mentoring, as well as ongoing income support during the establishment phase of the business.

There are 43 New Enterprise Incentive Scheme Panel Members nationally, and the Scheme is funded through the Job Services Australia appropriation.

Harvest Labour Service and National Harvest Information Service

The Harvest Labour Service helps growers to supplement local labour with out-of-area workers, where there is an acknowledged shortfall in a local labour market during harvest periods.

Nine organisations (which are also Job Services Australia providers) deliver the Harvest Labour Service through 27 sites across 15 harvest areas, in the Northern Territory and all states except Tasmania.

The National Harvest Labour Information Service coordinates and disseminates information about harvest related work opportunities across Australia, including those areas not serviced by the Harvest Labour Service. It is delivered by a single national provider.

The Harvest Labour Service and National Harvest Labour Information Service are funded through the Job Services Australia appropriation.

Access to Mentoring Support for Indigenous Job Seekers Pilot

The Access to Mentoring Support for Indigenous Job Seekers Pilot is a three year measure worth \$6.1 million. The Pilot is trialling additional dedicated mentoring support for Indigenous job seekers in areas with significant Indigenous job seeker populations and high employer demand, with the aim of achieving sustained employment outcomes. The Pilot is being delivered by Job Services Australia providers, and will inform future policy.

Helping Young Parents

The Helping Young Parents measure introduces mutual obligation requirements for young parents to help prepare them for employment when their children reach school age. It provides parents with additional services to boost their educational attainment and their job readiness. It also focuses on improving the functioning of families, early childhood development and preparation for school.

Helping Young Parents is a \$47.3 million programme over four years and started on 1 January 2012. It is available to eligible young parents in ten local government areas – Kwinana (Western Australia), Rockhampton and Logan (Queensland), Wyong,

Bankstown and Shellharbour (New South Wales) Greater Shepparton and Hume (Victoria), Burnie (Tasmania) and Playford (South Australia).

Supporting Jobless Families

The Supporting Jobless Families measure is a trial of a new approach to supporting young and long-term unemployed parents on income support who have young children. The measure gives parents access to additional services to boost their job readiness and ability to find a job when their youngest child turns six. Parents also need to look for work while taking part in the measure.

Supporting Jobless Families has funding of \$71.1 million over three years and started on 1 July 2012. The measure is available in ten local government areas – Kwinana (Western Australia), Rockhampton and Logan (Queensland), Wyong, Bankstown and Shellharbour (New South Wales), Greater Shepparton and Hume (Victoria), Burnie (Tasmania) and Playford (South Australia).

Seasonal Worker Programme

The Seasonal Worker Programme enables Australian employers in the horticulture sector to employ seasonal workers from participating countries in order to meet seasonal demands. The Programme began on 1 July 2012 and builds on the Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme.

The Australian Government is also carrying out a small-scale trial of the Programme in the accommodation, aquaculture, cotton and cane sectors in selected locations in regional Australia.

Employers may use the Programme to hire seasonal workers from Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, from periods of 14 weeks to 6 months according to seasonal demand. A total of 12,000 visas will be available under the Programme – 10,450 for horticulture and the remaining 1,550 for the three-year trial (3,250 visas are available in 2014-15). This Programme is delivered in partnership with the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (refer also page 99).

Protection for Unpaid Employee Entitlements

The Australian Government provides a safety net to protect unpaid employment entitlements for employees who lose their job through the liquidation or bankruptcy of their employer. Employees in this situation may claim financial assistance under the Fair Entitlements Guarantee for unpaid wages, annual leave, long service leave, payment in lieu of notice and redundancy pay. Some eligibility conditions and payment thresholds apply.

ENVIRONMENT

The Environment portfolio supports the achievement of a healthy environment, strong economy and thriving communities now and for the future. The programmes and initiatives in the portfolio work to protect and improve the environment through the four pillars of Clean Air, Clean Land, Clean Water and Heritage Protection.

The Environment portfolio's new and existing initiatives will provide a variety of environmental and economic benefits to regional Australia. These initiatives will support strong and diverse regional economies through protecting and improving the natural asset base upon which they rely.

To encourage development and jobs in regional areas the Australian Government will establish the One Stop Shop for Environmental Approvals.

The Australian Government is currently establishing the Green Army, Australia's largest-ever environmental workforce to deliver on-the-ground environmental projects across Australia.

The Australian Government will create the National Landcare Programme focussed on empowering communities, farmers and Landcare groups to improve their local environment by redesigning land management investment to make it simple, local and long-term.

The Murray-Darling Basin Plan, the Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Programme and other water reform initiatives support regional Australia by providing for the responsible management of water for communities, the environment and farmers. Alongside a number of continuing initiatives, the 2014-15 Budget gives effect to new measures in support of the protection, rehabilitation and improvement of this vital resource in regional Australia.

NEW INITIATIVES

Emissions Reduction Fund

The Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF) is the centrepiece of the Australian Government's climate change policy. With an initial \$2.55 billion commitment, the ERF will support practical actions by businesses to achieve real reductions in emissions, lower their energy costs and increase their productivity. These funds will be allocated flexibly over time, according to the profile of projects contracted.

Regional Australia will benefit from the incentives available under the ERF. The ERF will help reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions while delivering valuable co-benefits to Australian businesses, households and the environment. For example, revegetation will improve water quality, and reduce erosion and salinity. Replenishing the carbon content of soils will improve the health and productivity of Australian

farms. Households and businesses will save money by improving their energy efficiency.

The ERF will build on the architecture of the Carbon Farming Initiative (CFI), which provides benefits to the agriculture sector and regional centres where emissions reduction projects are undertaken. Existing land sector and agricultural activities under the CFI are well-placed to benefit from the ERF as many projects are already underway, and the ERF will continue to provide a market for Australian Carbon Credit Units following the repeal of the carbon tax.

Solar Towns

The Solar Towns programme will provide funding totalling \$2.1 million to support the installation of solar photovoltaic and solar hot water projects. These measures will help reduce the impact of electricity costs and support renewable energy. The Solar Towns programme will assist community groups in the regional Victorian electorates of Corangamite, McEwan and Bendigo, and the Tasmanian electorate of Lyons. The programme also provides funding to communities in Adelaide, Brisbane and Melbourne.

Antarctic Icebreaker, Operations and Science Support

The Australian Government is strongly committed to our role in Antarctica and is providing new funding in the 2014-15 Budget that will support Australia's presence and scientific activities in Antarctica, with flow on benefits to the Tasmanian economy. This funding will deliver continuing financial benefit to the Tasmanian economy through supporting local businesses, employment, economic diversity and the community both directly and indirectly through the Australian Antarctic Programme's supply chain.

Central to Australia's Antarctic operations is a modern icebreaker which can both support Australia's Antarctic bases but provide the opportunity to expand Tasmania's role as the gateway to the Southern Ocean and Antarctica. The Australian Government is taking the next steps towards replacing the ageing *Aurora Australis* with the release of a Request for Tender in 2014-15, signifying its commitment for the future of Australia's presence in Antarctica.

The Australian Government will also provide \$68.0 million over the forward estimates to ensure the critical functions that support Australia's presence in Antarctica are maintained. This measure includes ongoing funding to maintain logistical shipping support for Australia's Antarctic operations and ongoing funding for the operation of the Australia-Antarctica Airlink.

Replacement Supercomputer for the Bureau of Meteorology

Communities and businesses across Australia depend on high quality weather forecasts and early warning of impending severe weather events. For the Bureau of

Meteorology to provide these services they require continuing access to high performance computers. The Australian Government will provide funding for the replacement of the Bureau of Meteorology's supercomputer when it reaches its end-of-life in 2016.

Replacement of the Bureau's supercomputer will allow the Bureau to improve forecasting and warning capabilities to protect life and property over the coming years. Detailed, high resolution forecasts will allow the Bureau to provide more accurate weather information to regional communities, including through improved tropical cyclone forecasting. Forecasts will be provided on more frequent intervals in a more timely and responsive way, particularly during extreme weather situations such as bushfires, tropical cyclones, flooding, thunderstorms and rain.

The new supercomputer will also assist industries such as agriculture, mining, aviation, shipping, fishing and tourism whose operations are reliant upon, or impacted by, the weather. More accurate and detailed forecasting will enable industry to make long-term planning decisions to minimise or maximise the impact of the weather on their operations.

20 Million Trees

The 20 Million Trees programme is a central component of the Clean Land and Clean Air pillars of the Australian Government's Plan for a Cleaner Environment. The programme sees the commencement of planting 20 million additional trees and associated understory species, on both public and private land.

Delivering on the Australian Government's election commitment, the 20 Million Trees programme is focused on meeting local environmental needs and land productivity, re-establishing green corridors and urban forests, providing habitat for threatened species and contributing to Australia's carbon abatement. The Australian Government will provide \$50.0 million over four years from 2014-15 for this programme and will engage closely with local Landcare, Indigenous and other community groups. The 20 Million Trees programme will complement other initiatives, including the Green Army and Coastal River Recovery Initiatives.

A significant share of the trees will be planted in regional Australia. The Australian Government has announced three site-specific election commitments: Point Cook and West Melbourne in Victoria; the Cumberland Conservation Corridor in New South Wales; and several Green Army and Coastal River Recovery Initiatives project sites.

Plantings in regional Australia will provide the opportunity for local economic benefits such as supporting crop pollination, maintaining water quality, improving nutrient cycles to maintain the productive capacity of land, as well as enhanced amenity value.

Reef Programmes

In the 2014-15 Budget the Australian Government will establish the Reef Trust with an initial contribution of \$40.0 million. The Reef Trust will combine Australian Government investment with Queensland Government and private funds to focus on key threats to the Reef by improving coastal habitat and water quality throughout the Great Barrier Reef and adjacent catchments.

The Reef Trust will operate alongside the existing Reef Programme investments, which means land managers along the central and northern Queensland coast will continue to be supported to adopt improved land management practices that reduce the discharge of nutrients, sediments and pesticides into the Great Barrier Reef. Research to address the threats of declining water quality and climate variability will also be enabled. This investment will help to protect and preserve the Great Barrier Reef and maintain environmental health and tourism industries in regional Queensland.

The Programme has already contracted the delivery of approximately \$142 million to sustain the health of the Reef over the next five years to 2018. This investment builds on the success of the previous Reef programme, where more than 3,200 land managers received water quality grants for on-farm projects to adopt better land management practices and improve quality of water entering the Great Barrier Reef lagoon. The Programme is jointly managed by the Department of the Environment and the Department of Agriculture (refer also page 17).

One Stop Shop for Environmental Approvals

The creation of a One Stop Shop for Environmental Approvals will see positive benefits for regional communities across Australia. The Australian Government will deliver on its commitment to establish a single environmental assessment and approval process in each State and Territory by accrediting planning systems under national environmental law.

Duplication of Australian Government, State and local processes adds complexity and cost to environmental approvals across Australia. Cumbersome regulation makes it difficult for the community to navigate, and participate in, assessment and approval processes. For business, project delays cost jobs and hamper investment.

The One Stop Shop will maintain the high environmental standards demanded under national environmental law, but will simplify and streamline processes for both business and the community. This will promote development, deliver jobs, secure investment and drive enhanced economic benefits to regional Australia whilst ensuring that the environment is adequately protected.

National Landcare Programme (Natural Heritage Trust)

Delivering on the Australian Government's election commitment, the National Landcare Programme will provide a simple, local and long-term approach to land

management so communities across Australia can take practical action to improve their local environment and productive landscapes across regional Australia.

The Programme will deliver on the Australian Government's commitment to consolidate natural resource management investments, primarily sourced from the Natural Heritage Trust, under the banner of a single National Landcare Programme. It is jointly managed by the Department of the Environment and the Department of Agriculture.

The new Programme will focus investment to ensure that:

- communities are engaged in decision-making; and
- the Programme is more simple and requires clearer reporting of local and long-term environmental outcomes.

The Australian Government has committed to ensuring that Landcare has a greater say in how funding is delivered at a regional level. Through the new Programme, natural resource management bodies will be required to engage Landcare and other similar community groups through the selection and prioritisation of small and medium scale local projects.

Programme funding will be delivered across Australia through regional delivery. A significant proportion of the investment is provided to natural resource management bodies in regional and remote areas. These organisations are a central source of support and funding for farmers and communities to take practical action in improving their environment, improving practices and conserving their land for future generations.

The National Landcare Programme is focussed on caring for the environment and productive landscapes, undertaking important work that leads to positive employment, socio-economic and environmental outcomes in regional Australia.

Whale and Dolphin Protection Plan

The Whale and Dolphin Protection Plan will support local communities by increasing tourism and employment. It will also ensure Australia's management of whales and dolphins continues to reflect world's best practice and is informed by robust and up-to-date scientific evidence. The Australian Government will provide \$2.0 million over three years from 2014-15 for the following elements of the Plan: a National Whale Stranding Action Plan; National Dolphin Recovery Plan; and a National Whale Trail.

The National Whale Trail will benefit regional communities by enhancing whale watching tourism opportunities in coastal towns and educating the public on whale migrations. Local government bodies will be provided \$0.4 million for grants to build or improve land-based whale watching facilities across Australia.

Kimberley Cane Toad Clean Up

The Kimberley Cane Toad Clean Up will raise awareness and empower the Kimberley community of Western Australia and the wider Australian public to address the impacts of cane toads on Australia's native wildlife. To mitigate the spread of cane toads in the Kimberley, the Australian Government will provide \$0.5 million over two years from 2014-15.

The cane toad is now common across much of northern Australia and is a listed Key Threatening Process under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. Migration into the Kimberley area of Western Australia is a current threat and continues to pose a significant danger to biodiversity, especially on significant populations of threatened species such as the northern quoll, World Heritage sites and Ramsar sites with high biodiversity values.

The programme will improve public understanding of the impact of cane toads and provide practical community-led monitoring activities and strategies to help slow cane toad migration to other parts of Australia.

1,500 Gigalitre Cap on Water Buybacks

The 1,500 gigalitre cap on water buybacks in the Murray-Darling Basin will provide a positive impact to regional Australia by prioritising water recovery through infrastructure investment in preference to water buybacks, to ensure the productive future of regional economies in the Murray-Darling Basin. In the 2013 Mid Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, four years of spending on water buybacks was spread over six years. Capping buybacks at 1,500 gigalitres further illustrates the Australian Government's commitment to prioritising water recovery by other means.

Industry and the community have expressed a preference for water recovery through infrastructure investments because of the positive effect on production and other economic outcomes generated in their regions.

The Water Recovery Strategy will clearly outline how the Australian Government will recover the water needed to reduce extraction levels in the Murray-Darling Basin to sustainable levels. The adaptive approach in the water recovery strategy will maximise positive outcomes for communities, industry and the environment.

Port Arthur Penitentiary Restoration

The Port Arthur Historic Site Restoration grant will provide employment and tourist-related economic opportunities on the Tasman Peninsula of Tasmania. Funding of \$1.5 million in 2014-15 will be provided by the Australian Government for urgent conservation works for this World Heritage listed property.

The site is a major employer on the Tasman Peninsula. Increased visitation to the Port Arthur Historic Site is likely to result from the project. This will provide new

opportunities for employment in the region and support flow-on benefits to other tourist related businesses in the area.

Community Heritage and Icons Grants

Community Heritage and Icons Grants will support local historical and heritage groups in their efforts to conserve, manage and interpret cultural heritage. The Australian Government will provide funding of \$1.4 million over three years from 2014-15 for local heritage project grants, and to support the Federation of Australian Historic Societies and the Australian Heritage Council.

These grants will benefit regional areas by strengthening local community involvement in managing our heritage. This will result in positive on-ground impacts for local communities and heritage in regional Australia and will support community wellbeing through improvements to regional community assets. There will also be benefits to regional tourism as a result of local heritage sites being better looked after and better promoted to visitors.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

The Green Army

The Green Army is a key Australian Government election commitment that will create Australia's largest-ever environmental workforce, building to 15,000 participants by 2018, capable of delivering 1,500 on-ground environmental projects.

The Green Army will make a real difference to the environment and local communities through projects such as restoring and protecting habitat, weeding, planting, cleaning-up creeks and rivers and restoring cultural heritage places.

It's an opportunity for young Australians aged 17-24 to gain practical training and experience in environmental and heritage conservation fields and explore careers in conservation management.

The Australian Government is providing \$300.0 million over four years from 2013-14 to deliver the Green Army. It will commence with the rollout of up to 250 Green Army Projects and approximately 2,500 young people undertaking on-the-ground environmental activities in its first year of operation. By 30 June 2017, the programme will have supported 1,500 Green Army Projects and 15,000 young people. Already more than 150 projects have been committed and these will be delivered in the initial rollout. Project proposals will be submitted from across Australia by individuals and organisations such as local groups, councils and natural resource management bodies. Projects may be carried out across urban, regional and remote Australia on public land, Indigenous-held lands, or private land where there is a clear community and environmental and heritage benefit.

Green Army Projects will involve environment and/or heritage activities that can be undertaken by a Green Army Team for 20-26 weeks. Participation in the Programme will be voluntary and available to a diverse spectrum of young people aged between 17 and 24, including Indigenous Australians, school leavers, gap year students, graduates and unemployed job seekers. Up to nine eligible participants and at least one Team Supervisor will constitute a Green Army Team.

Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Programme

The Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Programme is a national programme investing in rural water use, management and efficiency to achieve positive outcomes for industry, communities and the environment. The Programme provides direct employment and environmental benefits to regional areas.

The majority of rural water infrastructure funds have been committed to projects in the Murray-Darling Basin for improving the operation of off-farm delivery systems and helping irrigators improve on-farm water use efficiency. The water savings generated from these projects are shared between the Australian Government for environmental use and irrigators for consumptive use, supporting increased productivity and economic activity in regional communities.

The Australian Government's priority for future recovery of water will be through infrastructure investment, which helps strengthen Basin communities and industry while delivering the Basin Plan's environmental outcomes. Over four years from 2014-15 to 2017-18, the Programme's spending on infrastructure projects is expected to total over \$2.34 billion.

Commonwealth Environmental Water

As part of Murray-Darling Basin reforms, the Australian Government is committed to bridging the gap to the sustainable diversion limit, with the objective of returning more water to the environment. These entitlements, which become part of the Commonwealth Environmental Water holdings, are managed so that increased flows of water are provided to rivers and wetlands throughout the Basin.

At 30 April 2014, 3,449 gigalitres of Commonwealth Environmental Water had been delivered to rivers, wetlands and floodplains of the Murray-Darling Basin, contributing to the sustainability and amenity of these unique regional landscapes.

The Commonwealth Environmental Water Office is recruiting Local Engagement Officers in regional locations of the Basin, to work with communities to ensure local knowledge and views are taken into account in environmental water management decisions. The officers will also provide communities with greater access to information from the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office. The six local engagement officers will be based at Deniliquin, Leeton and Dubbo in New South Wales, Mildura in Victoria, Berri in South Australia and Goondiwindi in Queensland.

Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Coal Mining

The Australian Government continues to support the Independent Expert Scientific Committee that provides scientific advice to governments about relevant coal seam gas and large coal mining approvals, where they have significant impacts on water resources. The Committee also provides scientific input to bioregional assessments. This initiative helps to build community confidence that advice regarding the risks of water related aspects of coal seam gas and coal mining developments are able to be considered as part of the regulatory process.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE

The Foreign Affairs and Trade Portfolio, while focused internationally, undertakes activities that directly benefit Australian businesses in regional Australia. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade played the lead role in negotiating and implementing the free trade agreements that were recently concluded with Japan and Korea. These free trade agreements will provide new and larger markets for Australian agricultural exporters – including preferential access and large cuts to tariffs in the beef and dairy sectors, giving Australian producers an immediate and long-term advantage over their competitors in Japan and a level playing field with the United States of America into Korea. Further, through contributing to the Agricultural Competitiveness and Northern Australia white papers, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will assist in growing farm profitability and boost agriculture's contribution to economic growth, trade, innovation and productivity.

The Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio, through the Australian Trade Commission (Austrade) and Tourism Australia, assists Australian companies to grow their international business, attracts foreign direct investment into Australia, promotes Australia's education sector internationally, and works to strengthen Australia's tourism industry, including in regional areas.

Austrade develops policy, manages programmes and provides research to strengthen Australian tourism and grow Australia's tourism market share. Austrade is committed to assisting Australian businesses pursue export and investment opportunities, including businesses based in regional locations. In addition to Austrade's network of 12 offices around Australia, export advisory services are provided to regional businesses through partner organisations delivering the TradeStart Programme in 31 locations around Australia.

Tourism Australia promotes Australia as a destination for business and leisure tourism. Working in partnership with State and Territory government, industry and commercial partners, Tourism Australia aims to increase the economic benefits of tourism to Australia by building demand and increasing visitation and visitor spending. Growing the number of international visitors and encouraging them to disperse throughout Australia bolsters the economic contribution of tourism to regional economies, many of which rely on tourism as a key sector. Tourism underpins many local economies and is a significant source of income for regional Australia, where 45 cents in every tourist dollar is spent.

As Australia's export credit agency, the Export Finance and Investment Corporation (EFIC) helps Australian businesses take advantage of commercial export and overseas investment opportunities by providing tailored financial solutions when the private market is unwilling or unable to do so. This includes providing export working capital, project finance, buyer finance, contract bonds, insurance against non-payment and foreign exchange guarantees. Many exporters and export projects in regional Australia

benefit from EFIC's financial solutions. This is consistent with the fact that two-thirds of Australia's total export earnings come from regional industries.

NEW INITIATIVES

Demand Driver Infrastructure Programme

The Australian Government will provide \$43.1 million over four years for a new Tourism Demand-Driver Infrastructure Programme. This Programme delivers on the Australian Government's commitment to refocus tourism grants funding to a Programme that will ensure that the benefits of government investment are multiplied across the tourism sector. Funds for this Programme will be provided to States and Territories, who are best placed to decide their tourism infrastructure priorities. These funds can be applied to projects across all 77 tourism regions.

Tourism Promotion

Tourism Australia will spend \$129.9 million in 2014-15 to grow demand for Australia as a leisure and business tourism destination. Tourism Australia's new campaign under its flagship brand, "There's nothing like Australia", is built around Australia's food and wine experiences. This campaign has a very strong resonance with regional Australia.

The campaign video features some of our most appealing regions: wine making in the Australian Capital Territory, South Australia's Barossa Valley, Rottnest Island in Western Australia, the Queensland's Whitsundays, Uluru in the Northern Territory's red centre and Freycinet in Tasmania.

The products—and the location in which they are set—have been carefully selected in partnership with the State and Territory Tourism Organisations to demonstrate that Australia has distinctive, unique and high quality tourism products and experiences that are amongst the finest in the world.

Many more regional experiences are showcased on the campaign website: www.australia.com/restaurantaustralia. Those involved in the food, wine and tourism sectors throughout Australia have many opportunities to become involved in the campaign and should visit the campaign website to find out more.

Export Finance and Insurance Corporation – Capital Injection

The Australian Government will provide \$200.0 million of additional capital to EFIC. This equity injection ensures that EFIC has sufficient capital to support more Australian exporters, including those in regional Australia.

Tasmanian Regional Tourism Package

As part of the Australian Government's commitment to jobs and growth in Tasmania, it will provide funding of \$4.5 million for the Tasmanian Regional Tourism

Package. The Package will be comprised of a Tasmanian Regional Tourism Infrastructure and Innovation Fund (\$4.38 million) and a Tasmanian Whisky and Cider Trail (\$120,000). Components of this package will align with the national tourism policy (Tourism 2020) strategic areas (refer also page 118).

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Asian Business Engagement Plan

The Asian Business Engagement (ABE) Plan is an annual merit-based competitive grant programme established to assist Australian member-based business organisations harness commercial opportunities in the Asian region for small to medium sized Australian firms. The ABE Plan programme is capped at \$1.5 million per year and provides partial funding to deliver new and innovative projects aimed at achieving the objectives and goals of the ABE Plan.

Export Market Development Grants Scheme

The Export Market Development Grants (EMDG) scheme is an Australian Government financial assistance programme for current and aspiring exporters.

Administered by Austrade, the EMDG scheme encourages Australian small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to develop export markets by reimbursing up to half of eligible export promotion activities above \$5,000, provided the total of such expenses incurred amounts to at least \$15,000.

While not specially targeted at regional firms, each year the EMDG scheme helps many regional firms to market their products overseas. Of the 2,643 EMDG grants paid in 2012-13 (relating to eligible export promotion expenditure incurred in 2011-12), 21 per cent were awarded to recipients from regional Australia. These grants provided \$17.8 million in financial support to 562 regional grant recipients. These recipients reported exports of \$552.6 million and employed 10,741 people in 2011-12.

The EMDG scheme also supports a variety of industry bodies, regional not-for-profit economic development bodies and tourism bodies to promote Australian exports internationally on behalf of regional SMEs in specific sectors. There are currently 17 regional bodies, seven State bodies and 35 national bodies registered as 'approved bodies' eligible to apply for EMDG grants.

Following the Australian Government's election commitment to restore funding to EMDG with an initial boost of \$50.0 million, the Australian Government allocated this additional funding in 2013 to be provided over four years. The Export Market Development Grants Amendment Bill 2014, which passed Parliament in March 2014, aligned the scheme's rules to the revised level of funding. The Bill:

- increased the number of grants from seven to eight;
- reduced the minimum expenses threshold from \$20,000 to \$15,000;

- reduced the deduction from the applicant's provisional grant amount to \$2,500;
- introduced fit and proper person provisions for EMDG consultants; and
- enabled grants determined before 1 July to be paid more quickly.

Tourism Australia Programmes

The Australian tourism industry comprises over 280,000 enterprises (13 per cent of all enterprises in the Australian economy), generates \$110.0 billion in annual spending, contributes \$42.0 billion to Australia's gross domestic product and employs around 540,000 people. In 2014-15, Tourism Australia will invest \$24.5 million in tourism industry development programmes. A number of these programmes highlight Australia's many regional experiences and encourage our visitors to travel throughout Australia.

The Australia's National Landscapes Programme is a partnership between tourism and conservation, identifying and promoting the very best in Australia's natural and cultural regions. Managed by Tourism Australia and Parks Australia, this unique partnership aims to achieve environmental, social and economic outcomes for Australia's most significant natural and cultural areas. Specifically, the Programme provides a framework for regions to collaborate on developing tourism and conservation infrastructure to support new tourism products and greater visitation.

Tourism Australia also supports sector specific programmes such as the Ultimate Winery Experiences of Australia, Great Golf Courses of Australia and Great Walks of Australia which promote some of the signature products in these sectors throughout regional Australia.

Tourism 2020

The Australian Government is providing funding of \$6.0 million over four years from 2011-12 to support the implementation of Tourism 2020.

The national long-term tourism strategy, Tourism 2020, was developed to respond to ongoing challenges and emerging opportunities for the Australian tourism industry and provides the policy framework that underpins much of the work currently being undertaken within Austrade to support the tourism industry. Tourism 2020 focuses on supply-side reforms including removing barriers to investment, addressing labour and skills gaps and improving the quality of Australia's tourism products and services. Tourism 2020 is providing industry with programmes and tools to compete in the global economy and take advantage of growth opportunities, particularly from Asia.

Tourism 2020 recognises the importance of tourism to the national economy, and the fundamental role tourism plays in providing jobs, investment and growth in towns and communities across Australia. Regional Australia is a key component of Australia's tourism industry, with support provided under Tourism 2020 to address issues which are specific to their diverse needs. Initiatives such as Tourism

Employment Plans are focused on using practical strategies to ease the labour and skills pressures facing industry, improving the capability and capacity of regional businesses in areas such as Kangaroo Island and Tropical North Queensland.

Tourism provides opportunities for regional and remote communities to grow jobs, diversify their economic base, and generate higher standards of living. As a national investment priority, Austrade and Tourism Australia are actively promoting the benefits of investing in the tourism industry, including showcasing over 20 projects in regional Australia. Austrade's Tourism Major Project Facilitation service provides tailored assistance to progress approvals for major tourism projects, with current projects in Tropical North Queensland having the potential to generate \$2.0 billion of tourism development and over 12,000 jobs for the region.

Tourism Research

Tourism Research Australia (TRA) continues to provide statistics, research, forecasts and analysis to support tourism industry development, policy development and marketing. TRA enables access to reliable, independent visitor information which can support the development of the tourism industry in regional areas and the growth of regional economies.

TRA's annual Regional Tourism Profiles are a vital resource for regional areas when making business, planning and marketing decisions. Profiles are available for each State and Territory and 77 tourism regions. Ranging from information on visitor characteristics and travel behaviour to economic performance data, the profiles are an indispensable tool for growing tourism in Australia's regions.

TRA also manages the Destination Visitor Surveys Programme which provides destinations with high quality tourism research at the local or regional level to support their information needs and business decision-making. Projects are determined in collaboration with State tourism organisations and are divided into two streams. Visitor Profile and Satisfaction reports, profile visitors to individual regional tourism destinations and report on their satisfaction with their visit. Strategic Regional Research reports focus on broader strategic issues affecting regional destinations.

TradeStart

TradeStart is an Australian Government initiative that delivers Austrade's export advisory services through local public sector and industry organisations throughout Australia. The prime objective of the TradeStart network is to assist export ready SMEs develop international markets for their products and services.

Of the 31 TradeStart locations, 21 are in regional areas providing greater access to Austrade services for businesses in these regions. TradeStart advisers provide practical export advice to around 2,000 export ready companies throughout Australia each year, and work closely with Austrade's international network to facilitate assistance for these exporters in overseas markets.

Expanding Export Finance and Insurance Corporation's Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Network

Since 2012 EFIC has expanded its inter-state presence by placing permanent SME business development staff in Austrade's Perth, Melbourne and Brisbane offices. From these offices EFIC is better placed to assist SMEs throughout regional Australia. EFIC plans to place further SME business development staff in interstate locations to further strengthen EFIC's regional coverage.

Support for Subcontractors

EFIC is working to address the financial constraints that can restrict Australian SMEs from realising opportunities in the supply chains of major resource export projects, most of which are located in regional Australia. For example, Geraldton-based electrical contractor GCo Electrical (GCo) won a contract to supply electrical control systems and power supplies to the berth facility for the Karara Iron Ore Project in Western Australia's mid-west region. When GCo's bank was unable to cover their bonding requirements due to a lack of tangible security – a common problem for SME subcontractors – EFIC stepped in by taking risk on the ability of the company to fulfil the contract. This enabled GCo to deliver on one of its most significant contracts and realise the benefits flowing from the Karara project.

HEALTH

The Australian Government recognises that people living outside the major Australian cities can face barriers in accessing the same range of health care services as those living in urban areas. Consequently, it directs significant assistance to improving the quality of, and access to, health services for people living outside metropolitan centres.

Assistance is provided through general health programmes and programmes targeted specifically at regional Australia, where the Australian Government provides funding to address factors that specifically impact on the health and wellbeing of people living in rural and remote communities. In addition, substantial Australian Government assistance is provided to States and Territories through various Specific Purpose Payments, with a significant amount directed to people living in regional Australia.

The Australian Government continues to see improvements in the health outcomes of people living in regional Australia. These improvements arise from the delivery of services tailored to meet the needs of local communities and improvements in the coverage of the health workforce. Additionally, Rural and Regional Health Australia provides easily accessible information about health programmes in regional Australia through its website www.ruralhealthaustralia.gov.au and its free call 1800 020 103 telephone line.

NEW INITIATIVES

Population Health

Full Implementation of National Bowel Cancer Screening Programme

This Programme invites eligible people across Australia to undertake bowel screening tests in the privacy of their home. The Programme currently provides screening to Australians aged 50, 55, 60 and 65 years, and from 2015 those aged 70 years.

Australia has one of the highest rates of bowel cancer in the world and bowel cancer is the second most common cause of cancer-related deaths in Australia. Participation in screening programmes has the potential to significantly reduce the number of Australians who die each year from bowel cancer.

In the 2014-15 Budget, the Australian Government will provide a further \$95.9 million over four years to accelerate the implementation of a biennial screening interval for all Australians aged 50 to 74 years of age between 2015 and 2020. This gives effect to a 2013 election commitment.

Over the next four financial years the Australian Government will provide up to 7.8 million Australians the opportunity to undergo free bowel cancer screening as part of the Programme. People living in regional Australia, who face greater difficulties in

attending health services, particularly benefit from this Programme which is self-administered in the person's own home.

Primary Health Care

Doubling the Practice Incentives Programme Teaching Payment

The Australian Government will provide \$238.4 million over five years to double the Practice Incentives Programme Teaching Payment for general practices who provide teaching opportunities to medical students. This gives effect to a 2013 election commitment. This will allow more students to experience general practice and is expected to result in more students pursuing a career in primary care, bolstering the general practice workforce.

The Payment will increase from \$100 to \$200 for each three hour session, to encourage general practices to provide teaching sessions to undergraduate and graduate medical students. A rural loading of up to 50 per cent will also be applied to payments to practices in rural and remote locations.

Establishment of Primary Health Networks

Primary Health Networks (PHNs) will be established through an open and competitive tender process in readiness for operation from 1 July 2015. The Commonwealth will no longer fund the Australian Medicare Local Alliance from 30 June 2014. There will be fewer PHNs than Medicare Locals. They will be larger and better focused on improving patient health outcomes. PHNs will be aligned to Local Hospital Networks (LHNs) and will improve frontline service delivery by working to integrate the primary, community and secondary sectors for the benefit of patients. PHNs will actively engage GPs, health professionals and the community through local level structures to identify and respond to local health priorities, establish care pathways and monitor the quality and performance of services. A key focus of the PHNs will be working collaboratively with LHNs to reduce hospital admissions and re-admissions.

headspace

The Australian Government will provide an additional \$14.9 million over four years to establish 10 new *headspace* sites, to bring the expanded *headspace* network to 100 sites across Australia. Once all 100 sites are fully operational, they will assist up to 80,000 young Australians each year. This gives effect to a 2013 election commitment.

One in four young Australians aged 16-24 years will experience a mental health disorder (including substance use disorder) in any given year. Only 25 per cent of this group is accessing help.

This programme provides a national, coordinated focus on youth mental health and related drug and alcohol problems and aims to improve access for young people aged

12-25 years to appropriate services and ensure better coordination between services through a network of headspace sites.

The headspace model provides for holistic care in four key areas – mental health, physical health, alcohol and other drug use and social and vocational support. It has proven to be very successful and many communities are keen to have a headspace site established in their area.

Of the 85 headspace sites and two outpost services announced to date, 39 sites and one outpost, will be located in rural and regional areas across Australia. Outreach activities are also provided in additional locations around the country.

Indigenous Australians Health Programme

The Australian Government is committed to the delivery of high quality essential services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians aligned with need, reducing red tape for services and ensuring services produce tangible outcomes.

In 2014-15, this programme will be established to consolidate Indigenous health funding, streamline arrangements and better address basic health needs at a local level to improve health outcomes. This programme will complement and support whole-of-government efforts to improve school attendance, employment and community safety outcomes as the focus of reducing Indigenous disadvantage. The Department of Health will also develop a new funding allocation methodology for Indigenous health grant funding for implementation from 2015-16.

Indigenous Teenage Sexual and Reproductive Health and Young Parent Support

The Australian Government will work with States and Territories in 2014-15 to implement and evaluate activities to increase access to teenage sexual and reproductive health and young parent support services. This will help ensure young people have the information, skills and resources to make informed choices.

This commitment builds on established State and Territory services that provide effective support for young parents and strategies that are culturally and socially appropriate to support safe sex and prevention of sexually transmitted infections. This funding will have a positive impact on regional Australia in areas that have high numbers of births to Indigenous teenagers and high prevalence of sexually transmitted infections among young Indigenous people.

Mental Health Nurse Incentive Programme

This Programme provides incentive payments to community based general practices, private psychiatric practices and other eligible organisations which engage mental health nurses to assist in the provision of coordinated clinical care for people with severe and persistent mental disorders. This helps ensure that people can access the

support that they need during periods of significant disability and assists in maintaining long term health protective behaviours and resilience.

Approximately 11 per cent of all services under this Programme are provided in rural and remote areas, and services in these areas receive a 25 per cent loading to reflect a higher cost of service delivery.

Mental health nurses have a key role to play in supporting people with severe mental illness during periods of significant disability and help maintain long term mental health, wellbeing and resilience. The 2014-15 Budget provides funding of \$23.4 million to the Mental Health Nurse Incentive Programme to allow services to be maintained at existing levels while the Australian Government considers the outcome of the National Mental Health Commission's review of mental health programmes.

Supporting the Royal Flying Doctor Service

In the 2014-15 Budget, the Australian Government will provide an additional \$6.0 million to the current funding of the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

The Royal Flying Doctor Service provides a range of essential services in rural and remote Australia (New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory from Tennant Creek to the South Australian border) such as primary aero-medical evacuations, primary and community health care clinics, remote consultations (including by telephone) and medical chests containing pharmaceutical and medical supplies for remote locations.

Health Infrastructure, Regulation, Safety and Quality

Improving Local Access to Health Care on Phillip Island

In the 2014-15 Budget, the Australian Government will provide \$2.5 million to upgrade health care infrastructure on Phillip Island with the aim of improving local access to required care.

Phillip Island has a population of over 9,000 permanent residents and is a popular tourist destination, with the population swelling to approximately 40,000 people over the summer and an estimated 1.5 million tourists each year. The nearest hospital is the Wonthaggi Hospital, which is 41km away and which takes around 30-40 minutes to reach by car.

The specific health services to be supported by this investment will be determined through a detailed planning process involving consultation with the local community, local health care providers, and the Victorian Government.

Feasibility Study for the Bright Hospital Redevelopment, Victoria

In the 2014-15 Budget, the Australian Government will provide \$150,000 as a contribution towards a feasibility study for the Bright Hospital redevelopment. This

gives effect to a 2013 election commitment. Implementation is expected to commence in 2014-15 and conclude by December 2015.

Bright Hospital forms part of the country's largest multi-purpose service under the auspice of Alpine Health. Alpine Health provides integrated acute health, community health and community and aged residential services for residents and visitors of the Alpine Shire.

The multi-purpose service delivery of care has been operating well in Bright, but the redevelopment is required to provide a more flexible facility that can appropriately meet the needs of the community into the future, particularly in relation to high care aged care beds.

Rural and Regional General Practice Teaching Infrastructure Grants

In the 2014-15 Budget, the Australian Government will provide \$52.5 million over three years for a minimum of 175 grants for existing general practices in rural and regional settings to provide additional space for supervision, teaching and training of medical students and general practice registrars. This gives effect to a 2013 election commitment.

These grants will strengthen the rural workforce, improve the distribution of the medical workforce in Australia and improve access to health services in these communities.

General practitioners (GP), registrars, medical students and rural and remote communities will benefit from opportunities for registrars and medical students to experience rural practice, encouraging them to pursue careers outside of metropolitan areas and assisting rural and remote GPs to maintain or increase effective supervisory skills.

The grants will be capped at \$300,000 and successful practices will be required to match the Commonwealth contribution. This will leverage private investment and demonstrate a commitment by participating practices to supporting the future rural and remote medical workforce.

Health Workforce Capacity

Investing in the Nursing and Allied Health Workforce

In the 2014-15 Budget, the Australian Government will provide \$13.4 million over three years to support 500 additional scholarships targeted to areas of workforce shortage, and to support students and health professionals from rural and remote areas to access education and further training. This gives effect to a 2013 election commitment.

The scholarships will assist rural students, health professionals and those wanting to re-enter the workforce. The additional scholarships will support undergraduate and postgraduate studies, continuing professional development, re-entry and transition to practice for nursing and allied health students and professionals.

General Practice Rural Incentives Programme

The Australian Government will provide an additional \$35.4 million over two years from 2013-14 to meet higher than anticipated demand for this programme, which provides relocation and retention incentive payments to GPs to work in underserved rural, regional and remote areas.

Participation in the Programme has exceeded expectations. The number of full-time workload equivalent GPs working in regional, rural and remote areas has increased by more than 15 per cent and the number of GP Registrars has increased by more than 34 per cent.

Rebuilding General Practice Education and Training to Deliver More GPs

The Australian Government will support training for up to 300 extra GPs a year by boosting GP training places from 1,200 to 1,500 in 2015. The new training positions will be based in rural areas as far as possible and at least 50 per cent of the new trainees will be required to be in rural and regional areas. As registrars deliver services to the community while training, the increase in training places will result in more services being provided to communities in rural and regional areas.

Sport and Recreation

Australian Government Commonwealth Games Funding Commitment

In the 2014-15 Budget, the Australian Government will provide \$156.0 million for the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games. This gives effect to a 2013 election commitment. This will be the first time a regional city has hosted a Commonwealth Games or similar event in Australia. The Australian Government's investment will see it partner with the Queensland Government to develop key Games infrastructure such as the Carrara indoor stadium and precinct and a major velodrome being developed in Brisbane. These projects will be centrepieces around which the Games will be delivered and will provide long term benefits for the Gold Coast.

This funding will create a large number of jobs during construction, help ensure Australia stages a truly world-class event and provide a lasting legacy to South-East Queensland and the nation more broadly.

Sporting Schools Initiative

In the 2014-15 Budget, the Australian Government will provide \$100.3 million over three years for the new Sporting Schools Initiative, which replaces the current Active After-school Communities programme. The Initiative will encourage primary school

and a select number of secondary school students to participate in physical activity before, during or after school, by providing funding to schools and sports groups. It will be implemented in up to 5,760 schools (5,680 primary schools and 80 secondary schools), accounting for 70 per cent of primary schools across Australia and reaching about 860,000 children each year. A key feature will be an interactive website, providing all schools across Australia access to support resources. The Initiative will seek greater engagement from schools in outer metropolitan regions across Australia, which has been determined a growth area not fully realised by the current programme.

Water Safety: Policy to Reduce Drownings

In the 2014-15 Budget, the Australian Government will provide \$15.0 million over five years to implement the Australian Government's Policy to Reduce Drownings. This gives effect to a 2013 election commitment. Funding will be provided to Surf Life Saving Australia, surf lifesaving clubs, the Royal Life Saving Society – Australia and AUSTSWIM.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

The Australian Government continues to provide targeted initiatives and incentives to improve service delivery and the health workforce in regional, rural and remote Australia. These initiatives and incentives have resulted in, but are not limited to:

- tailored services that meet the needs of local communities;
- increased accessibility to services; and
- improvements to workforce coverage and distribution.

Australians in rural and regional areas can face barriers in accessing health information. In addition to a range of targeted programmes to assist with overcoming this information barrier, Rural and Regional Health Australia provides information about Australian Government health programmes on its website www.ruralhealthaustralia.gov.au and its free call 1800 020 103 telephone line.

In 2014-15, in addition to providing up-to-date and easily accessible programme information, Rural and Regional Health Australia will continue to engage with stakeholders, perform advocacy functions across Government and provide a strong leadership role in developing initiatives targeted at improving health outcomes in rural and regional Australia.

Population Health

Blood Borne Viruses and Sexually Transmissible Infections Prevention Programme

This Programme aims to address rising rates of Blood Borne Viruses and Sexually Transmissible Infections (STIs). One of the elements of the Programme is the delivery of STI reduction programmes targeted towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

priority populations in regional and remote settings. This element of the Programme aims to increase STI testing and treatment and raise awareness about STI prevention. Areas of focus include models of care that reach high prevalence communities and young people.

McGrath Specialist Breast Care Nurses

McGrath Breast Care Nurses are specially-trained Registered Nurses who provide information, care, and practical and emotional support to women diagnosed with breast cancer, their families and carers.

Australian Government funded McGrath Breast Care Nurses are currently in place in over 44 communities around Australia, with more than 89 per cent located in rural and remote areas.

The number of Government funded McGrath Breast Care Nurse positions will increase to 57 in 2014-15. These positions will support the new Regional Cancer Centres and outer metropolitan areas where there is an unmet need, assisting up to 15,000 women and their families.

Non-Government Organisation Treatment Grants Programme

This Programme provides funding to non-government organisations to operate a range of drug and alcohol treatment services, including services in non-metropolitan areas.

Specialist Prostate Cancer Nurse Initiative

This Initiative supports the placement of up to 14 (full time equivalent) new Prostate Cancer Nurses over three years until September 2017, assisting up to 4,000 men and their families.

These trained, registered nurses will address the needs of people living in metropolitan and regional Australia who have been affected by prostate cancer by providing information, care and support to men with prostate cancer and their families.

Substance Misuse Service Delivery Grants

Grants are provided to support organisations to deliver drug and alcohol treatment services across Australia, including in non-metropolitan areas.

Access to Pharmaceutical Services

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Programme

This Programme supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the pharmacy workforce and provides improved, culturally appropriate pharmacy services to better meet the needs of Indigenous communities and patients. The

Programme offers 16 Pharmacy Assistant traineeships and three undergraduate or post graduate Pharmacy scholarships annually to approved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Closing the Gap Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme Co-Payment Measure

This measure improves access to Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) medicines for eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living with, or at risk of, chronic disease in urban and rural settings. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in remote settings receive similar support through the Section 100 Remote Area Aboriginal Health Service Programme.)

This measure lowers or removes the patient co-payment for PBS medicines. Eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients are registered through a general practice participating in the Indigenous Health Incentive under the Practice Incentives Programmes or Indigenous Health Services in urban and rural settings.

Medication Management Review Programmes

These programmes aim to improve the quality use of medicine and reduce the risk of medication misadventure, including in rural and remote areas. Services include Home Medicines Review and the Residential Medication Management Review, which are conducted by an accredited pharmacist in the consumer's home or in an Australian Government funded aged care facility respectively. Other services include the MedsCheck and Diabetes MedsCheck, which aim to improve the use of medicine by providing an in-pharmacy review of a patient's medicines by a registered pharmacist.

Pharmacy Practice Incentives Programme

This Programme provides incentives to community pharmacies, including those in rural and regional areas, which deliver services to consumers to a defined quality standard, with the goal of improving patient health outcomes

Quality Use of Medicines Maximised for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Programme

This Programme is a quality use of medicines support initiative that aims to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The focus of the Programme is to improve quality use of medicines through a range of support services provided to Indigenous patients through participating Aboriginal and Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHSs) and community pharmacies in rural and urban Australia. The support services include Dose Administration Aids, devices (e.g. asthma spacers), and education to clients and staff of ACCHSs.

Rural Pharmacy Maintenance Allowance

This allowance is paid monthly to eligible rural or remote section 90 pharmacies, in recognition of the additional burden of maintaining a pharmacy in rural and remote areas of Australia.

Rural Pharmacy Workforce Programme

This Programme aims to maintain and improve access to quality community pharmacy services in rural and remote communities and strengthen and support the rural and remote pharmacy workforce in Australia. It comprises various initiatives designed to recruit, train and retain pharmacists for rural and remote areas, including undergraduate scholarships, intern support, professional development support and an emergency locum scheme.

Section 100 Remote Area Aboriginal Health Service Programme

This Programme is administered under section 100 of the *National Health Act 1953* and allows for the supply of PBS medicines to clients of eligible remote area Aboriginal Health Services at the time of medical consultation, without the need for a normal prescription form, and without charge.

The Programme aims to address geographic, financial and cultural barriers experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in remote areas of Australia in accessing essential medicines through the PBS.

Section 100 Remote Area Pharmacy Support Allowance

This programme provides an annual financial allowance that supports visits by pharmacists to provide targeted quality use of medicines and medication management support services to remote area Aboriginal Health Services which participate in the Section 100 Remote Area Aboriginal Health Service Programme. The visits assist in improving health outcomes for clients of remote area Aboriginal Health Services by supporting quality use of medicine at those services.

Access to Medical and Dental Services

Child Dental Benefits Schedule

The Child Dental Benefits Schedule commenced on 1 January 2014. Eligible children aged 2-17 years are entitled to access up to \$1,000 in benefits for basic dental services, with benefits capped over two consecutive calendar years. Benefits are available to eligible children throughout Australia, including in regional Australia.

Improving Access to Primary Care Services in Rural and Remote Areas - COAG s19 (2) Exemptions Initiative

This Initiative provides funding through the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) to approved rural and remote public hospital sites which, due to workforce shortage, can employ salaried medical officers to provide traditionally GP/primary care services.

Medicare Benefits Schedule

The Australian Government makes rebates available to Australians for private medical treatments through the MBS. Additional support is provided for services in regional, rural and remote areas, including all of Tasmania.

National Partnership Agreement on Treating More Public Dental Patients

The Australian Government is providing the States and Territories with \$344.0 million over three years from 2012-13 to 2014-15 under the National Partnership Agreement on Treating More Public Dental Patients. The purpose of the Agreement is to alleviate pressure on public dental waiting lists by providing services to an additional 400,000 public dental patients. Under the Agreement, States and Territories are encouraged to have a particular focus on Indigenous patients, patients at high risk of, or from, major oral health problems and those from rural areas. States and Territories provide services in both metropolitan and rural areas.

Acute Care

Block Funding for Small Rural and Regional Hospitals

To ensure rural and regional communities continue to have access to vital public hospital services, the Australian Government provides States and Territories with a dedicated block funding contribution for small rural and regional hospitals. In 2014-15, the Australian Government will provide approximately \$0.9 billion in block funding to States and Territories to support services provided by small rural hospitals.

Improving Australia's Emergency Department Workforce Project

The aim of the project is to improve the supply of suitably qualified staff in the Australian emergency medical workforce, including developing and supporting emergency medicine specialist training capacity in rural and regional training sites.

One component of the project is Emergency Medicine Education and Training, with 33 hub hospitals participating in regional and rural areas and delivering outreach training, supervision and educational support to non-specialist doctors and other staff working in emergency departments.

The project is providing positive results, with many of the participating emergency physicians extending their teaching capability to smaller hospitals within their own hospital region.

Primary Health Care

Access to Allied Psychological Services Programme

Many specific populations, such as low income earners and those in rural and remote areas, have difficulty accessing mental health services subsidised through the MBS due to cost and workforce limitations in some locations.

This Programme provides access to short term focused psychological services for people with a diagnosed mental illness, with referral through their GP. It is particularly effective at targeting hard to reach groups and people who would otherwise miss out on mental health services.

In 2012-13, 68,000 referrals were received for services through the Programme and approximately 41 per cent of services were provided in rural areas.

Closing the Gap – Improving Eye and Ear Health Services for Indigenous Australians

This initiative provides improved eye and ear health outcomes for Indigenous Australians. The eye component has a significant focus on the eradication of trachoma, an infectious eye disease endemic in some rural and remote regions of Australia, through the National Partnership Project Agreement on Improving Trachoma Control Services for Indigenous Australians 2013-2017. Increased access to cataract surgery is also provided in the Northern Territory.

Ear health activities include the purchase of ear health equipment for primary health care services, workforce training and provision of outreach ear and hearing services.

e-Mental Health

It is estimated that one in five Australians experience a mental health disorder in any given year. Only a third of people with a mental disorder use mental health services, which leaves two thirds not accessing support or treatment. In addition, access to psychological care is often limited for people living in rural and remote areas. These people may have to travel long distances to obtain face-to-face services and other barriers can include concerns regarding the possible stigma of attending outpatient appointments in a small community.

Online mental health therapies have a sound evidence base and have benefitted from a significant Australian Government investment in their development and application, particularly in the treatment of anxiety and depression.

In the 2013-14 Mid-year Economic and Fiscal Outlook Statement, the Australian Government provided \$5.0 million over three years from 2013-14 to develop a youth e-mental health platform. This initiative will be led by the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre.

Indigenous Maternal and Child Health – A Better Start to Life

The Australian Government provides targeted maternal and child health programmes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in urban, regional, and remote areas. This includes the development of a Better Start to Life approach, to help ensure more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are healthy and ready for school. This approach will build on the Nurse Family Partnership and New Directions: Mothers

and Babies Services programmes. New activities will be ready to launch in 2015-16, some of which will occur in regional localities.

Medical Outreach - Indigenous Chronic Disease Programme

This Programme provides support for multidisciplinary teams, comprising specialists, GPs and allied health professionals, to better manage complex and chronic health conditions in rural and remote Indigenous communities. Five health priorities are specifically addressed: cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic renal disease and chronic respiratory disease.

Mental Health Services in Rural and Remote Areas Programme

This Programme funds organisations working in primary health care to deliver mental health services by appropriately trained mental health care workers in communities that would otherwise have little or no access to mental health services.

The Programme is designed to address inequities in access to the MBS by targeting areas where access to MBS-subsidised mental health services is low.

The Programme also addresses workforce shortage issues by providing flexible employment models suited to local needs and conditions. This includes flexibility to accommodate geographically, culturally and linguistically diverse populations in rural and remote areas of Australia.

National Suicide Prevention Programme

This Programme allocated funding to 23 projects in 2013-14 that targeted populations in rural and remote areas. These include farmers, workers and their families in rural and remote Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and men in rural and remote areas.

These projects will be extended for a further 12 months until 30 June 2015 to enable continuity of service while the National Mental Health Commission completes its review of existing mental health programmes. Future decisions on how the Australian Government should fund mental health programmes will be informed by the Commission's review.

Practice Incentives Programme

Under this Programme, a Procedural General Practitioner Payment is available to appropriately qualified GPs to encourage GPs in rural and remote areas to maintain local access to surgical, anaesthetic and obstetric services.

A rural loading ranging from 15 to 50 per cent (depending on the remoteness of the practice location) is also applied to the incentive payments of practices in rural and remote areas. The rural loading is paid in recognition of the difficulties of providing care, often with little professional support, in rural and remote areas.

Preventing and Managing Indigenous Chronic Disease

Within the consolidated Indigenous Australians' Health Programme, the Australian Government will deliver a number of targeted initiatives designed to improve prevention and primary health care management of chronic diseases, reduce the risk factors for and rates of chronic disease and improve health outcomes for Indigenous Australians with chronic disease in remote, rural and urban locations. These include:

- action to reduce Indigenous smoking rates, including review of the Tackling Indigenous Smoking programme in 2014-15 to ensure it is being implemented efficiently and in line with best available evidence;
- prevention programmes targeting individuals, families and communities;
- more coordinated and patient focused primary health care including access to more affordable PBS medicines, multidisciplinary outreach services and chronic disease care coordination; and
- an expanded Indigenous health workforce, including a focus on the employment and training of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the health workforce.

Quality Assurance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Medical Services Programme

This Programme supports the better management of diabetes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by enabling participating health services to provide culturally appropriate and clinically effective point-of-care diabetes related pathology testing on site. It also includes training, technical support, quality assurance and a consultation programme for community leaders to support programme management.

As at 31 December 2013, a total of 175 sites participated in the Programme, with 80 per cent of these located in rural and remote areas.

Renal Services

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with kidney disease in the central region of the Northern Territory are able to access renal health services through Australian Government funding arrangements with the Northern Territory Government.

Funding is provided to the Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Palyantjaku Tjutaku Aboriginal Corporation to deliver renal dialysis services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Central Australia. The funding is managed through a Project Agreement with the Northern Territory Government. This funding allows patients from the communities of Alice Springs, Yuendumu, Ntaria and Kintore to access renal dialysis treatment.

Rheumatic Fever Strategy

The Australian Government provides funding under this strategy to address Acute Rheumatic Fever and Rheumatic Heart Disease among Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The funding supports the continuation and expansion of State-based register and control programmes in Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. Expansion of these arrangements to South Australia is under negotiation.

Funding is also provided to the Menzies School of Health Research for a National Coordination Unit.

Rural Health Outreach Fund

This Fund improves access to health services for people living in rural, regional and remote Australia by supporting a range of outreach health activities. Four health priorities are specifically addressed: maternity and paediatric health, eye health, mental health and support for chronic disease management. Services are provided direct to communities by specialists, GPs, nurses and allied health professionals.

Rural Women's GP Service

This programme, which operates under the auspices of the Royal Flying Doctor Service, seeks to improve access to primary health care services for women in rural and remote Australian communities, who have little or no access to a female GP. It facilitates the travel of female GPs to these communities. The service is open to all members of the community, including men and children.

Support for Day to Day Living in the Community: a Structured Activity Programme

People with severe and persistent mental illness often face significant obstacles to learning new skills and participating in social activities. A lack of meaningful activities and social roles for people with severe and persistent mental illness can contribute to poor recovery and frequent relapse.

This Programme supports people with severe and persistent mental illness through the provision of educational, social and recreational activities. It is delivered by 39 non-government organisations at 60 locations around Australia, including 22 sites in regional or remote Australia.

Visiting Optometrists Scheme

This Scheme improves access to optometry services for people living and working in rural and remote communities, including additional optometrist services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Scheme addresses some of the financial disincentives incurred by optometrists providing outreach services, with funding provided for costs that include travel and accommodation, facility fees and administrative support at the outreach location and lease and transport of equipment.

Health Infrastructure, Regulation, Safety and Quality

Supporting Leave for Living Organ Donors Pilot Programme

The Supporting Leave for Living Organ Donors Pilot Programme provides a payment to an employer to be used to either re-credit an employee's leave, or to contribute towards reimbursing the employer where paid leave has been provided to an employee who has exhausted their leave credits or is not entitled to leave. Assistance is paid at up to the National Minimum Wage for up to six weeks. This programme helps to alleviate the hardship of lost income, or the exhaustion of leave entitlements incurred as a result of the donation process.

Because transplant units are based in major metropolitan hospitals, this programme is of particular assistance to living donors from regional or rural Australia as they may need more time away from work for their surgery and other post-operative treatment than donors from the city.

Health Workforce Capacity

Bonded Medical Places Scheme

The Bonded Medical Places Scheme is designed to help ease the shortage of doctors in outer metropolitan, rural and remote areas of Australia. In return for a medical school place at university, students agree to work for up to six continuous years in a district of workforce shortage, once they have qualified and attained Fellowship of a specialist college (including General Practice). There are currently more than 5,400 medical students and doctors participating in the Scheme. The allocation of places under the Scheme to participating universities constitutes 25 per cent of the total of commencing Commonwealth Supported Places each year. This Scheme is funded through the Department of Education.

Commonwealth Medical Internships

In the 2013-14 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook statement, the Australian Government provided \$40.0 million over four years from 2013-14 for the Commonwealth Medical Internships initiative, to support additional medical internships in private hospitals. This gave effect to a 2013 election commitment.

Under this initiative, priority is given to positions and rotations outside of metropolitan areas to bolster the medical workforce in rural and regional areas. As States and Territories guarantee internships for domestic medical graduates the initiative is available only to full-fee paying international graduates of Australian universities.

In 2014, 76 positions were filled under this programme. In return for a funded intern position, interns agree to work for a period of 48 weeks in regional and rural areas within five years of commencing their internship. Funded interns are currently based

in Mackay, Bundaberg and Townsville (Queensland). Interns based in Brisbane and Perth will have access to rotations in Mandurah (Western Australia), Tweed Heads (New South Wales), Kingaroy, Noosa, Hervey Bay, Bundaberg and Mt Isa (Queensland).

Dental Relocation and Infrastructure Support Scheme

This scheme encourages and supports dentists to practise in regional, rural and remote communities. It provides scaled relocation and infrastructure grants to dentists who elect to move to areas more remote than where they have practised in the previous 12 months, based on the Australian Standard Geographical Classification – Remoteness Areas categories 2-5.

Diagnostic Imaging – Enhancing the Rural and Remote Workforce Scheme

This Scheme aims to support the rural diagnostic imaging workforce. It provides a minimum of 10 postgraduate scholarships annually valued at up to \$15,000 per year and a minimum of 10 Professional Development Year scholarships valued at up to \$10,000 per year.

GP Procedural Training Support Programme

This Programme aims to improve access to maternity services for women living in rural and remote communities by supporting GPs to attain procedural skills in obstetrics or in anaesthetics.

The Programme targets existing GPs in rural and remote areas. For the 2014 training year, 26 obstetrics scholarships and 15 anaesthetics scholarships have been awarded to rural and remote doctors. Scholarship recipients commenced training from 1 January 2014.

HECS Reimbursement Scheme

This Scheme encourages medical graduates to pursue a career in rural medicine and aims to increase the number of doctors working in rural and regional areas. Under the Scheme, eligible medical graduates can have a portion of their HECS fees reimbursed for each year of training undertaken or service provided in regional and remote areas of Australia.

Medical Rural Bonded Scholarship Scheme

This Scheme aims to increase the number of doctors practicing in rural and remote areas of Australia. The Scheme provides 100 additional graduate and undergraduate medical school places each year to Australian medical students. In return for a scholarship while they are studying medicine at university, students agree to work for up to six continuous years in a rural or remote area of Australia, once they have qualified and attained Fellowship of a specialist college (including General Practice). There are currently more than 1,200 participants in the Scheme.

National Rural and Remote Health (Stakeholder Support) Initiative

This Initiative supports the rural and remote health workforce through programmes such as the Bush Support Services (Bush Crisis Line), which provides access to trained counsellors for remote health workers and their families. This measure also encourages health service providers in remote areas of Australia to network and engage in professional development.

Northern Territory Medical Programme

This Programme addresses medical workforce shortages and retention issues in the Northern Territory by providing a full four year graduate entry medical course in the Northern Territory. It supports medical education for up to 24 students (in each year of study) as part of Flinders University medical degree programme.

The Programme is aimed at recruiting Northern Territory residents and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. It trains medical graduates capable of working in remote areas and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Nursing and Allied Health Scholarship and Support Scheme

This Scheme provides scholarships for nurses, midwives and a range of allied health professionals to support undergraduate and postgraduate study, continuing professional development activities and rural clinical placements. The selection and eligibility criteria for scholarships have a rural weighting, in recognition of the need to improve access to health professionals in these areas.

One component of the Scheme provides over 100 scholarships to support allied health students undertaking a rural or remote clinical placement during their degree, with the aim of improving the future recruitment of allied health professionals to rural areas by introducing increased numbers of students to rural clinical practice during their university training.

International Recruitment Strategy

The International Recruitment Strategy aims to increase the supply of appropriately qualified overseas trained doctors to districts of workforce shortage throughout Australia. The Strategy has four components:

- recruitment and resettlement support for overseas trained doctors;
- the Five Year Overseas Trained Doctors Scheme;
- the Additional Assistance Scheme; and
- the Rural Locum Relief Programme.

In 2014-15, this programme will be combined with a similar programme targeting the recruitment of nurses and allied health professionals that is currently managed by Health Workforce Australia (HWA), following the transfer of HWA's functions to the Department of Health.

Remote Vocational Training Scheme

This Scheme supports doctors practicing in some of Australia's most remote locations to undertake vocational general practice training. It delivers structured distance education and supervision to doctors completing GP vocational training, while they continue to provide general practice medical services to remote and/or isolated communities. The training includes weekly tutorials through video and teleconferences, twice yearly education workshops, remote supervision and individualised training advice.

The Scheme supports 22 new training places each year. In 2014 a new cohort of 10 registrars training in Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services commenced training under this Scheme.

Rural and Remote General Practice Programme

This Programme supports the recruitment and retention of GPs in rural and remote areas. Rural Workforce Agencies, located in each State and the Northern Territory receive funding under the Programme to deliver a range of services to help communities to recruit GPs, find appropriate placements for GPs who want to relocate to rural Australia, assist with the costs of relocation, support their families with fitting into a new community and help GPs to access the necessary infrastructure, support and training.

Rural Australia Medical Undergraduate Scholarship Scheme

This Scheme assists selected students with a rural background to study medicine at university, with the aim of attracting more rural and remote Australians to study medicine.

Because students from rural areas can face financial barriers, particularly the costs of moving and living away from their home and family support, scholarship holders

receive \$10,000 a year to assist in meeting travel, accommodation and living costs incurred while studying medicine.

Under the programme, up to 140 new scholarships are awarded each year.

Rural Health Continuing Education Programme

Rural health professionals can sometimes face difficulties in accessing professional development services. This Programme provides funding for education and training activities for rural medical specialists, and allied health professionals, nurses, GPs and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health workers.

Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Programme

Rural training encourages the next generation of health professionals to consider rural careers and enhances the capacity of health services to meet community needs. Involvement in education and training also reduces professional isolation for existing rural practitioners, enhancing workforce retention and sustainability.

This Programme includes four sub-programmes that support undergraduate clinical training of medical, nursing and allied health students in rural and remote Australia and that support existing rural health professionals, alleviating the shortage of adequate health care services in rural areas:

- the Rural Clinical Training and Support Programme;
- the University Departments of Rural Health Programme;
- the Dental Training Expanding Rural Placements Programme; and
- the John Flynn Placement Programme.

Rural Locum Education Assistance Programme

This Programme allows urban GPs to access a grant to undertake emergency medicine training in return for a commitment to undertake a four week locum placement in a rural location. In 2014-15, a total of 49 doctors will receive up to \$6,000 to reimburse the cost of their emergency medicine training.

Rural Locum Scheme for Allied Health Professionals

This Scheme supports around 100 locum placements a year to enable rural allied health professionals to take leave and enables organisations to back-fill their positions to support ongoing service delivery. It encourages interested allied health professionals to experience rural based practice through a locum placement.

Rural Locum Scheme for Nurses

This Scheme supports around 750 nursing locum placements each year to enable rural nurses to take leave and enable organisations to back-fill their positions to support ongoing service delivery. It encourages nurses to remain working in rural areas and is

also designed to encourage interested nurses to experience rural based practice through a locum placement.

Rural Obstetrician and Anaesthetist Locum Scheme

This Scheme provides the regional and remote obstetric and anaesthetic workforce with subsidised locum support.

Rural Other Medical Practitioners Programme

This Programme recognises the value of services provided by non-Vocationally Registered (non-VR) medical practitioners in rural and remote areas and provides higher financial benefits for their patients. The programme also provides an incentive to encourage non-VR medical practitioners (both Australian and overseas trained) to provide general practice services in eligible rural and remote locations.

Rural Procedural Grants Programme

This Programme enables procedural GPs in rural and remote areas to access a grant to attend training and up skilling in emergency and procedural medicine.

Scaling Incentive for Overseas Trained Doctors

The scaling incentive for Overseas Trained Doctors (OTDs) and foreign graduates of an accredited medical school (FGAMS) applies to a range of programmes. The effect of scaling is to ensure that benefits will be significantly greater for doctors choosing to live and work in more remote areas of Australia.

Scaling is a non-cash incentive offering OTDs and FGAMS opportunities to reduce the 10 year moratorium restriction period for access to the Medicare system. Time reductions are significantly greater for doctors who choose to work in more remote areas. (See the Australian Standard Geographical Classification – Remoteness Areas (ASGC-RA) table below.)

RA Classification	RA Category	Scaling discount (%)	Restriction period reduced to
RA 1	Major Cities	Nil	10 years
RA 2	Inner Regional	10%	9 years
RA 3	Outer Regional	30%	7 years
RA 4	Remote	40%	6 years
RA 5	Very Remote	50%	5 years

Scaling Rural Workforce Communications – Go Rural Programme

The aim of this Programme is to encourage Australian trained doctors and medical students to consider a career in rural practice through a range of multimedia, communication and information sessions, including the use of rural ambassadors. Events are co-ordinated by Rural Workforce Agencies in each State and the Northern Territory.

Specialist Training Programme

This Programme increases the capacity of the private and community health care sector to provide high quality training opportunities for trainee medical specialists. In 2014 and 2015, 900 training places are being funded. Over 50 per cent of training posts have an element of training in regional and rural areas.

Sport and Recreation

Direct Athlete Support Grants

This initiative provides direct financial assistance to world-class athletes, selected on the basis of medal potential and individual need, to support their training requirements and preparation for benchmark events or competitions that are of significance to Australians.

Athlete funding is allocated based on results at benchmark events, such as Olympic/Paralympic Games and World Championships with athletes in Tier 1 (top 1 to 5 benchmark competition result) receiving a minimum of \$12,000 per six month period and athletes in Tier 2 (top 6 to 10 benchmark competition result) receiving a minimum of \$6,000 per six month period.

In late 2012-13, the initiative was expanded to support medal-potential athletes for the 2014 and 2018 Commonwealth Games with Tier 3 (top 1 to 3 Commonwealth ranking) receiving a minimum of \$4,000 per six month period and Emerging Athletes receiving a minimum of \$1,500 per six month period.

In 2013-14, to date, 18 per cent of grant recipients were based in regional areas, with the initiative supporting many elite regional Australian athletes who have relocated to urban centres.

From 2014-15, an extra \$1.6 million will be allocated to the programme and a new category for our top ranked emerging talents will be included, ensuring that around 200 additional athletes across the Olympic and Paralympic disciplines will be eligible for direct grants.

Local Sporting Champions

This initiative provides financial assistance to young athletes, coaches and officials to participate in recognised sporting championships. Applicants must reside further than 125 kilometres from the nominated competition to be eligible. Successful individual applicants receive \$500.

In 2013-14, to date, 48 per cent of the recipients supported by this initiative were young sportspeople located in regional Australia.

HUMAN SERVICES

The Human Services portfolio supports regional communities by providing easy access to a range of Australian Government services in flexible and convenient ways.

People living in regional areas can access services through the Department of Human Services' service centres, including remote service centres, agents and access points. The Department of Human Services also provides outreach services through remote servicing teams and mobile service centres.

The Department of Human Services provides customers with access via nationally networked call centres that include specific services for regional customers. With the implementation of a new telecommunications contract in 2012, customers are able to call certain Centrelink numbers free of charge from a landline or Telstra mobile.

Convenient self-service options are available to customers to claim a payment or concession, update personal details and advise changes in circumstances. The Department of Human Services has launched a range of mobile applications allowing customers to complete simple transactions using smartphone or tablet devices. This allows customers to interact at a time and place that suits them. These arrangements can be of particular benefit to customers located in regional areas.

A range of Express Plus Apps, for Android and Apple compatible devices are now available for many Centrelink transactions, including recording and reporting income, claiming an advance payment and updating address and contact details. Additional functions for both Centrelink and Medicare transactions have been launched progressively throughout 2013-14.

NEW INITIATIVES

Drought coordinators

As part of the social and community support component of the Australian Government's drought assistance package announced on 26 February 2014, the Department of Human Services is deploying drought coordinators to drought-declared regions of Queensland and northern New South Wales (refer also page 12).

Drought coordinators are a component of the Government's overall investment of \$10.7 million to enhance social and community support services for drought-declared areas. Drought coordinators ensure services are linked, making it easier for farm families and their communities to access the necessary support and receive the full benefit of the support services that are in place.

The role complements additional funding provided to social support programmes through the Department of Social Services (refer also page 133).

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Child Dental Benefits Schedule

The Child Dental Benefits Schedule commenced on 1 January 2014 and provides financial support for basic dental services for eligible children. Benefits cover a range of services including examinations, x-rays, cleaning, fissure sealing, fillings, root canals and extractions.

In 2014, benefits for basic dental services are capped at \$1,000 per child over two consecutive calendar years.

To be eligible, a child must be aged between two and 17, be eligible for Medicare and in receipt of certain government payments for at least one day of the calendar year.

The Department of Human Services has been allocated funding of approximately \$15 million in 2014-15 to administer this measure (refer also page 79).

Mobile Service Centres

The Department of Human Services has two mobile service centres. These fully equipped mobile offices travel on pre-determined itineraries in regional areas delivering services tailored to community needs. The mobile service centres focus on reaching an estimated 500,000 people who live in the 6,000 or more communities located more than 50 kilometres from a service centre.

Mobile service centres are an important part of the Department of Human Services' emergency response service delivery capability. Mobile service centres delivered essential services to people affected by the 2013 New South Wales bushfires. They were also a critical part of the Australian Government's response to drought in New South Wales and Queensland in early 2014.

Rural Smart Centre Services

Smart centres provide a dedicated rural phone service which is designed specifically to meet the needs of Centrelink customers in dedicated catchment areas in rural Queensland and South Australia. Customer service officers handling the calls have knowledge of local regional concerns and assist with issues including geographic isolation and the impact of changing circumstances, such as drought or flood, on farmers and their families.

More than 298,000 calls to the rural phone service were answered in 2012-13.

Co-location

The Department of Human Services continues to co-locate services across Australia and implement its national network of one-stop shops. The one-stop-shop approach brings together services from different departmental programmes, most notably Medicare and Centrelink services, into a single location to enhance access and convenience for all customers including customers living in regional Australia.

The one-stop shop approach provides a platform for the co-location of other Australian Government, State and Territory agencies, such as the Australian Taxation Office, Department of Veterans' Affairs and State housing agencies in various locations.

Express Plus Apps

The Department of Human Services' Express Plus smartphone apps continue to be popular with people wishing to engage with government services. The Express Plus Apps for Android and Apple compatible devices allow customers to complete many common transactions quickly and easily from any location, without having to call or visit an office.

Since August 2012, the Department of Human Services has launched Express Plus Apps for Medicare, Students, Job Seekers, Families, Seniors and the Express Plus Lite multilingual app which is delivered in three major community languages - Arabic, Chinese and Vietnamese. Express Plus Apps have been downloaded more than two million times.

Online Services

The Department of Human Services' website humanservices.gov.au is a convenient way for regional Australians to access information and to undertake their government business online. The website has approximately eight million visitors every month.

The Payment Finder tool makes it easier for people to discover payments and services relevant to them. More than 260,000 people use Payment Finder on humanservices.gov.au each month.

The online service channels are a convenient and secure way for people to make a claim for payment and to view and update important information. Customers are also able to receive letters via their online accounts.

Co-design

The Australian Government continues its engagement with Australians in regional and remote communities through co-design activities aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of government service delivery. By working with key stakeholders through community engagement forums, regional and remote perspectives are represented in the design of future services. This initiative

commenced in 2010 and continues to give Australians a greater say in shaping the services they access.

Face-to-Face Service Delivery via videoconferencing pilot

The Face-to-Face Service Delivery via videoconferencing pilot contributes to the e-Government and the Digital Economy policies. This service provides opportunities to enhance face-to-face service delivery and access to Australian Government services, particularly for people with intensive support needs and mobility issues who live in regional areas.

An allocation of \$5.5 million enables the Department of Human Services to conduct pilots with six customer cohorts in eight service centres across Australia until June 2015. Customers participating in the pilot utilise high-definition videoconferencing to access Australian Government services, including Centrelink, Medicare and Child Support. The first phase of the pilot evaluation is underway with the overall evaluation to be finalised in 2015.

Agents and Access Points

Agents and access points play a vital role in the delivery of services to communities and customers in regional and remote Australia.

Access points are contracted services that provide access to free self-help facilities including telephone and facsimile, photocopier, printer and, in some sites, an internet enabled computer for Departmental related business. Access point staff can also certify proof of identify documents required by the Department of Human Services.

Agents are contracted to deliver services and programmes on behalf of the Department of Human Services in communities that need more than access point services. In addition to self-help facilities, agents provide a face-to-face general information service and assist customers to use self-service tools.

Electronic Claiming of Medicare benefits

Electronic claiming options reflect the Australian Government's commitment to offer choices based on community needs. These options make it convenient for customers to lodge claims for Medicare benefits without the need to travel to a service centre.

The Australian Government is actively working with medical practitioners, software vendors, financial institutions, health insurers and members of the public to increase the availability and use of electronic claiming of Medicare benefits.

Services accessed by Health Professionals

The Health Professional Online Services is a service offered by the Australian Government which provides access to online services for health professionals across Australia through a single entry point.

This service also provides health professionals access to information on eligibility for Medicare services necessary for the processing and payment of claims.

Early Release of Superannuation Benefits on Specified Compassionate Grounds Programme

The Early Release of Superannuation Benefits on Specified Compassionate Grounds Programme supports many members of the Australian public in obtaining an early release of superannuation benefits. The Programme supports early releases for mortgage assistance, medical treatment, modifications to a home or car to accommodate a disability, as well as funeral and palliative care arrangements. Families and individuals who are required to travel long distances from regional areas for medical treatment may also be able to obtain an early release of benefits under this Programme.

The Programme works closely with social workers in supporting customers in regional areas who are in difficulty.

Reliance Framework – myGov

The Reliance Framework is a fast, simple way for Australians to access services including in regional Australia. MyGov became available in May 2013 as a secure online account with one user name and password which can be used across several Australian Government services.

With a myGov account, people can link to a range of Australian Government services, make claims and view their payment histories. Digital mail is sent to myGov users' accounts from Centrelink, Medicare, and Child Support. In the future, users will be able to advise participating member services of changes to name, contact details and addresses.

There are 2.5 million existing active myGov accounts and approximately 5,600 new accounts created each day.

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION

The Immigration and Border Protection portfolio is committed to supporting rural and regional communities in Australia. A number of the portfolio's programmes specifically target regional Australia, encouraging migrants and humanitarian entrants to settle in regional areas.

NEW INITIATIVES

Migration Programme – allocation of places for 2014-15

The Migration Programme allocation of places for 2014-15 makes a positive impact on regional Australia through the supply of skilled migrants that are needed in regional areas. In particular, there will be a shift of 1000 places from the Skilled Independent category to the Employer Sponsored category which includes the Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme (RSMS) whereby regional employers can sponsor skilled migrants.

The Migration Programme allocation of places for 2014-15 will continue to provide concessions for regional employers to sponsor migrants under RSMS, with the highest priority processing afforded to this cohort. This will benefit employers in regional Australia through more places being available under the RSMS as part of the Employer Sponsored category. RSMS, on average over the last three years, has made up around 35 per cent of the Employer Sponsored category.

In addition, the State/Territory and Regional Sponsored categories, which are being maintained at 28,850 places, will continue to benefit regional areas experiencing labour market shortages. State Migration Plans for skilled and business migration, which are tailored to the individual requirements of each State and Territory further provide states and territories with the flexibility to address specific skill shortages and labour market needs within their jurisdictions, particularly in regional areas.

2014-15 Humanitarian Programme

The 2014-15 Humanitarian Programme maintains its positive impact for regional Australia through the continuation of Humanitarian Settlement in regional areas. It is to be noted that due to Machinery of Government changes, the 2014-15 Humanitarian Programme continues to be a part of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, however, the Humanitarian Settlement Programme has moved to the Department of Social Services.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Seasonal Worker Programme

The Seasonal Worker Programme commenced on 1 July 2012. The demand driven programme allows employers to recruit citizens of Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu to work in the horticulture sector and, on a three year trial basis, the accommodation, aquaculture, cane and cotton sectors in selected regions.

In addition to meeting seasonal labour shortages, the programme also contributes to participating countries' economic development objectives.

This Programme is delivered in conjunction with the Department of Employment (refer also page 54).

The Second Working Holiday Visa Initiative

Introduced on 1 November 2005, the second Working Holiday (subclass 417) visa initiative provides short term seasonal labour for the agriculture, mining and construction sectors across regional Australia. Under the initiative, eligible participants can acquire a second Working Holiday visa by undertaking three months 'specified work' in regional Australia while on their first Working Holiday visa. Specified work includes employment in the agriculture, mining and construction sectors.

The initiative has proven popular. In 2012-13, there were 38,862 second Working Holiday visa grants, and the initiative is growing at a rate of 22.5 per cent (based on the comparison of three quarter period (July to March) between 2012-13 and 2013-14 financial years) to 31 March 2014.

The Immigration and Border Protection portfolio is committed to supporting rural and regional communities in Australia. A number of the portfolio's programmes specifically target regional Australia, encouraging migrants and humanitarian entrants to settle in regional areas.

INDUSTRY

The Industry portfolio has a broad regional presence with services delivered through a number of networks and agencies, including AusIndustry, the National Measurement Institute (NMI) and portfolio agencies such as the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO). The Department of Industry works with firms and institutions whether they are in metropolitan, regional or remote locations.

The Department of Industry's vision is to enable growth and productivity for globally competitive Australian industries. The Department of Industry is working with industry, employers, workers and other stakeholders to achieve this vision through building skills and capability, supporting science and innovation, promoting investment, improving regulation and building a high performance organisation.

Globally competitive Australian industries are important to contribute to economic growth and productivity. In recent years the rising cost of doing business, including the high Australian dollar, has placed pressure on our trade-exposed manufacturing and services industries. However, the rise of Asia, including the significant growth of middle class consumers, presents a range of opportunities for Australian firms. The Department of Industry is working with stakeholders to address these challenges and capture these opportunities by enabling growth, productivity and competitiveness through:

- developing the skills of the Australian workforce and enhancing workplace productivity;
- supporting science and innovation and promoting the growth of industries of the future;
- encouraging private sector investment and creating new jobs; and
- improving regulation and reducing the burden and costs on businesses, including energy costs.

In particular, there is a focus on simplifying and streamlining industry support to help boost business productivity and increase competitiveness across the economy. The new Entrepreneurs' Infrastructure Programme and Industry Skills Fund will be delivered through a Single Business Service initiative, which is a new simplified and streamlined model for Australian industry to interact with government. The Entrepreneurs' Infrastructure Programme will offer market and industry information, business management advice and skills from experienced private sector providers, access to researchers and innovators to re-engineer business operations, products and services, connections with supply chains and potential markets, and commercialisation advice through specialist sector expertise. Australia's future productivity and competitiveness depend on a highly skilled and trained workforce and under the new Industry Skills Fund businesses will receive the timely support and training they need so they can seize opportunities as they emerge, like the opening of new markets in Asia from trade agreements. Trade Support Loans will also provide support for

current apprentices to complete their skills training and provide a stronger incentive for young Australians to become an apprentice and complete their apprenticeship.

Australian manufacturing needs to move from traditional manufacturing to knowledge-intensive competitive industries in areas of global growth such as: food and agribusiness; mining equipment, technology and services; medical technologies and pharmaceuticals; oil and gas; and advanced manufacturing. The Manufacturing Transition Grants Programme will support Australian manufacturing transition itself into areas of higher value-added activities and become more outwardly focussed. The Growth Fund will help industry transition from car manufacturing to the higher-value manufacturing sectors of the future. Recognising the importance of the resources sector in attracting private sector investment, creating jobs, supporting local communities and earning export revenue, the Exploration Development Incentive will help small mineral exploration companies raise capital to explore for new mineral deposits. The Energy White Paper will focus on energy policy that supports economy wide reforms, including reducing cost pressures, reforming regulation and improving workforce productivity.

Science and research is a key requirement for economic growth and better targeting of science and research endeavours in partnership with industry to deliver commercial outcomes is an important focus area. The Australia-China Science and Research Fund will provide support for tightly-focussed international collaborations in manufacturing innovation, advanced services, agriculture and mining. A flexible workforce with strong science, technology, engineering and mathematics skills and science literacy is crucial to developing globally competitive industries. Science for Australia's Future will promote national and international interest and investment in Australian science, encourage young people to pursue science-related studies and careers and deliver new activities that will better prepare the Australian population for a science-led innovation-driven economy.

Together these initiatives will deliver a new direction for industry policy by working more closely and strategically with businesses and enterprises to help them prosper in a rapidly changing global economy.

NEW INITIATIVES

Entrepreneurs' Infrastructure Programme

The Australian Government is investing \$484.2 million in the Entrepreneurs' Infrastructure Programme and putting in place a new streamlined Single Business Service initiative to commence on 1 July 2014. The Programme will offer market and industry information, business management advice and skills from experienced private sector providers, access to researchers and innovators to re-engineer business operations and products, connections with supply chains and potential markets, and commercialisation advice thorough specialist sector expertise. The new Single Business

Service will deliver the Entrepreneurs' Infrastructure Programme and reduce business costs through streamlining access to government information and services.

Growth Fund

The Australian Government has established a \$154.6 million Growth Fund, to which it is contributing \$100.6 million, to generate the jobs of the future for employees and supply-chain businesses in Victoria and South Australia affected by the closure of local automotive manufacturing operations. The Fund includes a \$29.8 million Regional Infrastructure Programme to support investment in non-manufacturing opportunities in affected regions.

Industry Skills Fund

The Industry Skills Fund is a new \$476.0 million skills programme that will streamline training and better position Australian industry to succeed in a rapidly changing global economy. The Fund will commence on 1 January 2015 and deliver approximately 200,000 targeted training places and support services designed to quickly fill skills gaps.

Trade Support Loans

The Australian Government is committing \$439.0 million to the Trade Support Loans programme that will encourage more young people to take up a trade with loans of up to \$20,000 to assist them complete their apprenticeship training. Apprentices who successfully complete their training will receive a 20 per cent discount on their loan. The programme will start on 1 July 2014.

Science for Australia's Future

Science for Australia's Future is a \$28.0 million initiative that will promote science and reward scientific excellence through programmes like National Science Week, the Prime Minister's Prizes for Science and Questacon educational campaigns. The initiative will also deliver programmes that will increase access to Questacon's resources across rural and regional Australia.

Economic Growth Plan for Tasmania

Tasmanian Major Projects Approval Agency

As part of the Australian Government's Economic Growth Plan for Tasmania, the Tasmanian Major Projects Approval Agency (the Agency) will be delivered by the Department of Industry and is an Australian Government election commitment. The Agency will help project proponents navigate approval processes for projects that invest a minimum total of \$50.0 million in new capital within Tasmania by 2020. This Agency is expected to operate from 1 July 2014 for three years, based in Launceston. It will act as a single entry-point for proponents and improve business confidence and contribute towards attracting investment to Tasmania. In order to minimise potential for unnecessary delays, the Agency will work with various agencies to ensure

necessary assessments are completed in accordance with agreed timeframes. The Chair of the Agency will also be a member of the Joint Commonwealth and Tasmanian Economic Council.

Australian Government Innovation and Investment Fund

The Australian Government Innovation and Investment Fund will provide \$11.0 million over the three years from 2014-15 to 2016-17 to assist business investment projects leading to new jobs and growth in Tasmania. The Fund is a merit-based, competitive grants programme to be delivered by AusIndustry. It forms part of the Australian Government's \$106.0 million commitment to jobs and growth in Tasmania announced during the 2013 Federal election (refer also page 118).

Manufacturing Transition Grants Programme

The Manufacturing Transition Grants Programme (MTGP) is a \$50.0 million national programme which will assist manufacturers in Australia to transition their businesses in order to increase competitiveness and sustainability. The aim is to build scale and capability in higher value and more knowledge intensive activities within new or growing manufacturing sectors that will yield higher returns for the Australian economy. The MTGP was an Australian Government election commitment and is due to commence in July 2014.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Industry

AusIndustry Regional Managers Network

The AusIndustry Regional Managers Network (the Network), as part of Single Business Service, provides regional businesses with improved access to information and programmes. There are offices in 15 regional centres across Australia. The Network provides an important interface between regional businesses and government, with its strength being the 'face-to-face' delivery method. The Network is also helping to increase collaboration within regional communities, facilitating inter-business networks and relationships – a key factor in encouraging innovation.

Cooperative Research Centres

The Cooperative Research Centres (CRC) programme supports industry-led partnerships between researchers, industry, business and the community. CRC activities include research, education and training programmes and engagement with small to medium enterprises. Through the CRC programme new technologies and products and services are being developed; global markets are being accessed; and by investing in research and development, businesses are increasing their income, competitiveness and productivity.

Currently, there are 16 CRCs involved in research related to rural and regional Australia. These CRCs contribute to strengthening regional development in areas such as our agriculture and livestock industries, water security, farming systems and grain research. CRCs also contribute to increasing participation of remote Indigenous communities and improving health outcomes for Indigenous Australians. Of the 200 CRCs funded since 1991, there have been 82 rural-focused CRCs supported by \$1.7 billion in Australian Government funding.

Geelong Region Innovation and Investment Fund, Victoria

The Geelong Region Innovation and Investment Fund (GRIIF) was announced by the Australian Government and the Victorian Government on 23 May 2013, as part of a package of measures to support the regions affected by Ford Australia's decision to cease manufacturing operations in Australia from October 2016. A similar programme has also been established for Melbourne's north.

The GRIIF is a competitive, merit based grants programme that supports investment by business that leads directly to sustainable new jobs and economic diversification in the Geelong region. The \$24.5 million GRIIF comprises \$15.0 million from the Australian Government, \$4.5 million from the Victorian Government and \$5.0 million from Ford Australia. It operates over three years to 30 June 2016.

One funding round has been completed, with five companies receiving funding totalling \$8.4 million for projects that are expected to create 212 jobs and generate \$48.0 million in investment in the Geelong region.

A second round of GRIIF has been opened. It closes for applications on 29 May 2014.

National Measurement Services

The Department of Industry, through the National Measurement Institute (NMI), interacts with customers and businesses nationwide, including in regional areas, to provide analytical chemistry testing; and physical, chemical and biological measurement capabilities. Regional sectors that benefit from NMI activities include: health; environment; agriculture; manufacturing (including food); resources; energy; transport; and communications.

NMI also has national regulatory responsibility for trade measurement which ensures trade transactions based on measurement are accurate. NMI's trade measurement network includes laboratories in seven major capital cities and 18 regionally-based offices. Trade measurement activities are undertaken throughout Australia, including in regional Australia.

Research and Development Tax Incentive

The Research and Development (R&D) Tax Incentive is a key element of the Australian Government's support for Australia's innovation system. The R&D Tax Incentive provides support to eligible businesses, including those in regional areas, undertaking

R&D activities. The two key components of the R&D Tax Incentive are: a refundable tax offset for Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) with an aggregated turnover of under \$20.0 million; and a non-refundable tax offset for eligible larger firms. There is no cap for eligible R&D expenditures that can be claimed under the R&D Tax Incentive.

Small Business Support Line

The Small Business Support Line, as part of Single Business Service, provides small business owners across Australia, including those located in regional Australia, with a first point of contact to help them access information and referral services to improve their business sustainability and help better manage their business. The Small Business Support Line links into existing small business support mechanisms, including business licensing information and referrals, Business Enterprise Centres, and State and Territory Government small business programmes and services. Since being launched in September 2009 the Support Line has received over 110,000 contacts.

Small Business Advisory Services

The Small Business Advisory Service (SBAS) programme provides for delivery of low cost business advisory and support services to small businesses – including new start-up businesses and home-based businesses – to build sustainability, productivity and growth in the small business sector. Since 2008, the SBAS programme has provided over 434,000 business advisory services to over 221,000 small business operators and intenders. The SBAS programme has several elements, detailed below.

- The SBAS 2012 Round currently has fifty-three providers delivering sixty-one general small business advisory service projects, which are funded to 31 December 2014. Thirty-one of these providers are located in regional Australia.
- The Australian Government, through the SBAS Queensland Natural Disaster Assistance initiative, is providing funding of \$2.0 million over two years, 2013-14 to 2014-15, to enable service providers to deliver low cost business advisory services to small businesses in Queensland impacted by ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald. Ten service providers will each receive up to \$100,000 per annum over the period. Services commenced on 1 July 2013. Five providers supported under this initiative are located in regional Australia. The remaining five, which are located in metropolitan centres, service parts of regional Queensland.
- Three Business Enterprise Centres (BECs)—Advance Cairns, Penrith and District, and Southern Success—are receiving funding of \$200,000 each over two years to 31 March 2015, under the SBAS Business Coaching and Mentoring initiative. These BECs are providing business coaching and mentoring services to small businesses located in the regions of Cairns, Western Sydney and the City of Onkaparinga in southern Adelaide.

Resources and Energy

Working in Partnership

Working in Partnership supports and encourages cultural change taking place in relations between Indigenous communities and the mining industries, 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.

Science

Science, research and innovation are critical to understanding, preparing for and responding to Australia's economic, social and environmental challenges. The contribution of scientists and researchers is also critical to lifting Australia's productivity, creating jobs and building on our competitive advantage in key sectors.

Australian Astronomical Observatory

The Australian Astronomical Observatory (AAO) generates a variety of benefits for the people of Coonabarabran, the Warrumbungle Shire and regional New South Wales. These benefits are derived through the operations of the Anglo-Australian Telescope and the Schmidt Telescope, and through its outreach activities and community engagement.

The AAO employs 25 staff at its Siding Spring Observatory site. The AAO is a major drawcard for tourists to the region, with approximately 25,000 visitors each year.

The AAO is collaborating with the local community, regional councils, the Coonabarabran District Chamber of Commerce and the New South Wales Department of Planning and Infrastructure to develop a template Local Environmental Plan. The policy will ensure new developments in the region maintain the dark skies that are crucial to the Observatory.

Australian Institute of Marine Science

The Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) is Australia's Tropical Marine Science Agency. Based near Townsville, AIMS undertakes innovative, world class marine research that contributes to an improved understanding of the marine ecosystems across northern Australia. Through effective transfer of this knowledge, AIMS supports the sustainable use and protection of the tropical marine environment. Operating as an impartial trusted advisor, AIMS provides the information and tools for environmental managers; regulators; policy makers; and industry operators to work more effectively and make informed decisions. The offshore oil and gas, mining, agriculture, tourism and fishing industries have all benefited from AIMS' research. These industries make an important contribution to the regional economies of northern Australia and to the national economy. These are all high growth areas and Australia's

marine industries are projected to increase in value to approximately \$100 billion per year by 2025.

Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation

The Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) is one of Australia's largest public research organisations and the centre of Australia's nuclear expertise. ANSTO is also a major employer in the Illawarra region of New South Wales. This expertise is applied to nuclear medicine production and research into areas of national priority including health, materials engineering and water resource management as well as helping Australian industries solve complex problems.

ANSTO is the primary supplier of radiopharmaceuticals in Australia, producing approximately 550,000 patient doses of life-saving nuclear medicines each year. These medicines are used in the diagnosis of heart disease as well as a range of cancers and will be required by one in two Australians during their lifetime. These medicines are distributed right across Australia, including to 35 regional hospitals and medical practices. The remainder of regional areas are supplied from isotopes ANSTO supplies to radio pharmacies.

Australian Square Kilometre Array Pathfinder and Square Kilometre Array Radio Telescopes

The Australian Square Kilometre Array Pathfinder (ASKAP) is being built by CSIRO at the Murchison Radioastronomy Observatory located in Western Australia's Mid-West. Once fully operational in 2015, the \$188.0 million ASKAP will help answer fundamental questions about the universe.

ASKAP is a pre-cursor to the international multi-billion dollar Square Kilometre Array (SKA) radio-telescope. The SKA will also be co-located in the Mid-West and will be the world's largest and most sensitive radio-telescope. Local communities and businesses are expected to benefit from the construction and operational phases of these two projects.

Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation

The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) has 22 sites across regional Australia, delivering scientific expertise and research capability and linking with the local innovation infrastructure. Some key CSIRO achievements which have regional applications include the following:

- CSIRO's nationally significant Flinders and Gilbert Resource Assessment, funded by the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, was completed in December 2013. The study identified opportunities for water and agricultural development in the Flinders and Gilbert catchments, and developed rapid assessment methods which can be applied across northern Australia. The Assessment provides valuable insights for policy makers

considering development options in the north. In addition, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Warren Truss MP, released two CSIRO reports commissioned by the Office of Northern Australia on 4 March 2014: the Livestock Industry Logistic report, which details the creation and application of tools designed to reduce the risks and costs associated with beef industry logistics for all of northern Australia; and an assessment of sustainability and potential for Mosaic Irrigation for the Northern Australian beef industry.

- Australia's north-west could create billions of dollars in export earnings from oil and gas. CSIRO is working with industry to ensure safe exploration, extraction and processing. CSIRO is working with Geoscience Australia on characterising gas shales from the Georgina Basin to underpin the development of this globally significant basin.
- CSIRO research has indicated significant potential for the development of large-scale, saltwater pond aquaculture in coastal regions of the Northern Territory (~528,000 hectares), north Queensland (~594,000 hectares) and northern Western Australia (~516,000 hectares). Research has also shown that significant advances in environmental management technology have reached a point where socially, economically and environmentally sustainable marine (saltwater) aquaculture in northern Australia could play a much more significant role in responding to the huge demand for high quality seafood from Asian markets.
- CSIRO has developed a telemedicine system called Remote-I to bring specialist eye care to those living in underserviced rural and remote locations. Remote-I provides clinical decision support for primary care providers and nurses to make appropriate health assessments enabling referral to a specialist in a timely manner to avoid disease complications. The system is being validated and used in the Pilbara to manage patients remotely by an ophthalmologist in Perth.

Geoscience Australia

Geoscience Australia (GA) is the Australian Government's national geoscience agency, applying geoscience to Australia's most important challenges. GA provides geoscience information, services and capability to the Australian Government, industry and State and Territory governments. The agency delivers a range of products that address important and significant national issues and contributes information to decision makers.

Outlined below is a summary of the work and activities that GA undertakes that covers or impacts on regional Australia.

- GA attracts exploration investment to Australia by building a prospectus of minerals and energy resource potential. This work includes supporting the acreage release programme, greenfields drilling projects in Western Victoria and on the New South Wales–Queensland border and various seismic and airborne surveys in regional Australia to help identify mineral potential.

- GA provides information, assessments and advice to develop the full potential of Australia's groundwater resources. GA provides advice on the potential and actual groundwater impacts of proposed and operational mining and extraction projects. The agency also works in partnership with CSIRO, the Bureau of Metrology and the Department of the Environment to deliver the Australian Government's Bioregional Assessment Programme. The Programme assesses the potential and cumulative impacts of coal seam gas and coal mining developments on water resources above and below ground. The Programme is currently focusing on areas in central and southern Queensland; northern South Australia; northern New South Wales; and south-eastern Victoria.
- GA contributes to the understanding of natural hazard and disaster exposure and supports Australia's capability to manage natural hazards and disaster risk. This includes engagement with State and local governments to undertake: natural hazard risk assessments; vulnerability surveys to validate risk assessments and models; and numerous mapping services in relation to natural hazard and disaster issues such as flooding and bushfires. Some examples of this work in regional Australia include a multi-hazard study for the Rockhampton council and a Busselton storm surge and inundation model for the Western Australia Department of Industry.
- GA provides information and advice to support the sustainable development of marine resources and conservation of key ecosystems. GA is currently working on a collaborative research programme with the Northern Territory Government to map seabed environments of Darwin Harbour and surrounding shelf and coastal areas.
- GA is also undertaking marine biodiversity surveys as a part of the Australian Government's National Environmental Research Programme. This activity will generate new information describing marine biodiversity patterns and ecosystem processes for the Commonwealth marine estate, with a focus on northern Australia. This information will be used to support the management plans for the Commonwealth Marine Reserve network.
- GA is the authority on fundamental national information about the geographies of Australia and ensures geoscientific and geospatial data, information and collections are managed and made accessible to all users. This includes coverage of regional Australia. Additionally, GA acquires satellite imagery and positioning data from observatories in places such as Yarragadee in Western Australia and Alice Springs near Dongara.

IP Australia

IP Australia grants intellectual property (IP) rights aimed at helping Australian businesses secure their innovation capacity. IP Australia operates a 1300 (cost of a local call) service to provide access to callers anywhere in Australia. In 2012-13, 159,231 enquiries were answered by the service. IP Australia also recently launched an online enquiry form developed to support strong customer demand for online services.

A key strategic priority for IP Australia is to enable Australians to derive maximum value from the IP system through effective public education and awareness programmes. IP Australia maintains relationships with industry bodies and regional chambers of commerce to promote the value of IP, and provide information to the business communities on how to protect and value their work.

IP Australia has state-based staff who regularly visit regional areas and distribute information products, conduct training and hold awareness raising seminars on IP issues.

Questacon

Questacon is Australia's award-winning National Science and Technology Centre located in the Parliamentary Zone of the national capital. Questacon attracts over 430,000 visitors annually, including those from regional Australia.

Questacon National Outreach Programmes

Questacon runs a suite of outreach programmes—including travelling exhibitions—to make science and technology programmes accessible to communities throughout Australia, with a focus on regional areas. In 2012-13 there were over 116,000 visitors to the outreach programmes from 867 schools and other venues in regional and remote communities.

Shell Questacon Science Circus is in its 29th year of operation. This world class outreach programme has a significant impact on engaging regional Australia with science. In 2012-13 over 77,300 people experienced the Shell Questacon Science Circus with 370 schools visited.

Questacon Digital Programme presents interactive workshops via video conference to schools in regional areas. The Questacon Digital Studio is developing the use of digital and online activities to further engage individuals and communities in regional Australia in science communication. In 2012-13, 1,792 visitors from 48 venues took part in digitally-facilitated activities.

The Questacon Travelling Exhibitions Programme delivers engaging interactive touring exhibitions to regional and metropolitan venues across Australia. These exhibitions range from portable, self-installing to larger more complex exhibitions. Questacon exhibitions encourage visitors to explore scientific concepts through interpretive and stimulating experiences accessible to audiences of all ages. In 2012-13 there were over 363,000 visitors to travelling exhibitions in eleven venues.

Vocational Education and Skills

Adult Migrant English Programme

The Adult Migrant English Programme (AMEP) helps eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants to settle and participate in Australian society by providing up to

510 hours of free English language tuition to improve their foundation English language skills.

The AMEP is delivered at over 250 locations nationally, including regional and rural Australia. Distance learning is available to clients as an alternative to classroom-based tuition. This is particularly beneficial for clients in regional and rural areas who may otherwise be unable to participate in the Programme.

Australian Apprenticeship Centres

Australian Apprenticeships Centres (AACs) are contracted by the Australian Government to deliver Australian Apprenticeships Support Services. Working in close cooperation with the State and Territory Training Authorities, AACs provide a streamlined arrangement for the provision of information, marketing and administration of the Australian Apprenticeships initiatives, to enable employers and Australian Apprentices to access quality Australian Apprenticeships and support them through to successful completion. The Australian Government holds 72 contracts with 23 organisations, currently in approximately 330 locations across Australia, to provide support services to employers and Australian Apprentices worth over \$200 million per annum.

Australian Apprenticeships Incentives Programme

The objective of the Australian Apprenticeships Incentives Programme (AAIP) is to contribute to the development of a highly skilled and relevant Australian workforce that supports economic sustainability and competitiveness. The Government provides incentive funding to employers to encourage them to take on apprentices and trainees, with funding targeted to areas of training required for the economy.

Payments under the AAIP are available Australia-wide and are targeted at specific areas, for example, the Rural and Regional Skills Shortage incentive aims to boost training in rural and regional Australia.

Further information is available at: www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au.

Skills for Education and Employment

The Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) Programme (previously known as the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme) seeks to improve eligible job seekers' language, literacy and/or numeracy skills with the expectation that such improvements will enable them to participate more effectively in training or employment. SEE is delivered nationally by Registered Training Providers both face-to-face and via distance delivery, ensuring that those in regional Australia can access this important training.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Australian Government recognises the vital importance of Australia's regions to our national prosperity and the unique contribution regional Australians make to our national character.

The Infrastructure and Regional Development portfolio contributes to the wellbeing of all Australians by assisting the Australian Government to plan and invest in infrastructure and foster an efficient, competitive, safe and secure transport system. The portfolio also ensures stronger communities through effective local government and external Territories administration and regional development.

The Australian Government has put in place an unprecedented lift in investment in infrastructure throughout Australia. The National Stronger Regions Fund alone will invest \$1.0 billion to promote economic development through small-scale infrastructure projects at a local level. Other major investments, such as the Infrastructure Investment Programme, Roads to Recovery, and the Regional Aviation Access Programme will build connections between regions, helping them to diversify their economic base, and strengthen their ability to tap into national and international markets.

NEW INITIATIVES

National Stronger Regions Fund

The Australian Government has committed \$1.0 billion over five years from 2015-16 for the National Stronger Regions Fund. The Fund will promote economic development through investment in small-scale infrastructure projects at a local level.

It will provide funding for the construction, expansion and enhancement of infrastructure with a focus on regions with low socio-economic status or higher than average unemployment. These investments will create greater economic opportunities for people living in regions.

The Fund will provide up to half the cost of projects, with remaining contributions from local government, State governments, communities and the private sector.

Roads to Recovery Programme

The Australian Government is providing \$2.5 billion from 2013-14 to 2018-19 to local councils through the Roads to Recovery Programme, including an additional \$350.0 million in 2015-16 committed in this Budget. Of this, more than 75 per cent (\$1.9 billion) will be provided to local councils in rural and regional areas.

The Roads to Recovery Programme provides funding directly 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 the life of the programme.

Black Spot Programme

The Black Spot Programme provides \$564.5 million from 2013-14 to 2018-19 for road safety works such as roundabouts, crash barriers and street lights at places where there have been serious crashes or where serious crashes are likely. This includes an additional \$200.0 million across 2015-16 and 2016-17, committed in this Budget.

This investment is helping to make roads safer for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. Each State and Territory receives a share of the total funding, based on population and crash data, with around half of Black Spot funds in each state (except Tasmania) reserved for projects in non-metropolitan areas.

National Highway Upgrade Programme

The Australian Government has committed \$228.7 million for a new National Highway Upgrade Programme. The Programme will provide funding for improvements to Australia's key national highway networks through works such as shoulder and centreline widening, ripple strips and wire rope barriers, overtaking lanes, turning lanes and pavement improvements.

Outback Way (Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia)

The Australian Government has committed \$33.0 million from 2014-15 to 2018-19 to upgrades of sections of the Outback Way to improve safety and access to remote areas. The project will unlock the potential benefits of the Outback Way, benefitting Indigenous and remote communities and the Australian economy, particularly in the areas of tourism, mining and freight.

Norfolk Island

To address Norfolk Island's current financial situation, the Australian Government will provide support in 2014-15 for the continuation of air services, assist in improving governance and administration processes and to meet the Norfolk Island Government's budget deficit.

Indian Ocean Territories – Additional Services Package

The Australian Government is providing an additional \$6.3 million in 2014-15 to continue delivery of essential services such as health and policing for the Christmas Island community and to continue underwriting air services to and from the Indian Ocean Territories. This will help meet the Australian Government's commitment that our external Territories enjoy the same level of services as equivalent State communities.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Infrastructure Investment Programme

The Australian Government has committed to infrastructure upgrades and the construction of safe and reliable roads with an investment of \$50 billion through to 2019-20. This investment will be made in partnership with State, Territory and local governments, as well as with industry, to ensure that the right projects are delivered at the right time.

The Infrastructure Investment Programme will build much-needed networks, support jobs and drive economic growth. The investment of \$50 billion will ensure there are sufficient resources for vital safety and capacity work.

The Infrastructure Investment Programme provides funding for a range of projects that specifically target road safety and productivity in regional areas. These include, but are not limited to:

Pacific Highway (New South Wales)

The Australian Government has committed \$5.6 billion from 2013-14 to 2018-19 to a package of projects which will bring major improvements in freight efficiency, an expected reduction in road trauma and benefits to regions made more accessible by the upgrade.

Bruce Highway (Queensland)

The Australian Government has committed \$3.6 billion from 2013-14 to 2018-19 to a package of projects to upgrade and maintain Queensland's major north-south transport corridor which links Brisbane and the regional centres to the north of the State. Over ten years this will increase, with investment reaching up to \$6.7 billion.

Cape York Region Package (Queensland)

The Australian Government has committed \$208.4 million from 2013-14 to 2018-19 to facilitate upgrades to infrastructure including improved road access into Cape York from the south. The projects will provide benefits to the Cape York local community and local industry, including the mining sector.

Anangu Pitjanjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands (South Australia)

The Australian Government has committed \$85.0 million from 2013-14 to 2018-19 to upgrades to sections of the 210 kilometres of main access road between the Stuart Highway and Pukatja, and improving up to 21 kilometres of community roads. This package of work will provide all weather access to airstrips in Pukatja, Umuwa, Fregon, Mimili, Indulkana, and to the Umuwa and Fregon homelands.

Midland Highway (Tasmania)

The Australian Government has committed \$400.0 million over 10 years from 2014-15, to improve safety and connectivity at targeted locations on this critical north-south road link in Tasmania. The highway is the main freight connection facilitating access from the southern region to the State's northern ports.

Regional Roads Productivity Package (Northern Territory)

The Australian Government has committed \$90.0 million from 2013-14 to 2016-17 to replace bridges on the Roper Highway, improve flood immunity on Port Keats Road, seal sections of the Santa Teresa Way, construct a new bridge over Rock Bottom Creek on Central Arnhem Road, strengthen, widen and seal sections of the Buntine Highway and install gravel on sections of Arnhem Link Road.

The Australian Government has also committed \$77.0 million from 2014-15 to 2016-17 for the strengthening and widening of road pavements, flood immunity improvements and fatigue management measures such as upgrading rest areas and intersection improvements through the Northern Territory Roads Package.

Inland Rail (Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland)

The Australian Government has committed \$300.0 million from 2013-14 to 2017-18 for preconstruction works, in preparation for construction of the Melbourne-Brisbane inland railway. An inland route, through Albury, Parkes, Moree and Toowoomba, will improve the reliability and availability of freight trains and shorten trip times by seven hours.

Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Programme

The Australian Government has committed \$248.0 million from 2013-14 to 2018-19 to deliver heavy vehicle safety and productivity projects for the heavy vehicle industry and other road users across Australia, including \$48.0 million in 2014-15.

Projects funded under the Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Programme are aimed at improving safety and productivity of the heavy vehicle industry through the construction of rest stops and parking bays, upgrading the capacity of roads (including bridges) and technology trials aimed at improving heavy vehicle productivity. Funding under Round Four of the programme is available from 2014-15.

Seatbelts on Regional School Buses

The Australian Government continues to support safe travel options for school children in regional and rural Australia. The Seatbelts on Regional School Buses programme subsidises the cost of installing seatbelts on school buses that are required to travel on high speed non-metropolitan roads. Under the programme guidelines, eligible bus operators can apply for funding of up to \$25,000 per bus to cover the cost of seatbelt fitment. The Australian Government is providing a total of \$1.0 million to fund the programme in 2014-15.

Bridges Renewal Programme

The Australian Government has committed \$300.0 million over five years from 2014-15 to 2018-19 under the Bridges Renewal Programme.

Funding will be provided following a merit-based process open to State, Territory and local governments for projects that can demonstrate improvements in productivity and/or community access. Funding for Round One is available from 2014-15.

Regional Aviation Access Programme

The Regional Aviation Access Programme (RAAP) has a 2014-15 Budget allocation of \$18.2 million. This funding will be used across the funding components of the programme, providing assistance for airstrip works projects and to subsidise essential flights to remote communities. In 2014-15 funding under RAAP has been allocated to the following funding components:

- the Remote Air Services Subsidy Scheme;
- the Remote Airstrip Upgrade Programme; and
- the Remote Aerodrome Inspection Programme.

Remote Air Services Subsidy Scheme

The Remote Air Services Subsidy Scheme subsidises regular, typically weekly, passenger and freight air transportation to communities that would otherwise have no regular access to transport. Flights under the Scheme serve 257 communities in remote locations across the Northern Territory, Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland and Tasmania.

Remote Airstrip Upgrade Programme

The Remote Airship Upgrade Programme provides grants for communities to improve the safety and accessibility of airstrips and facilitate the provision of non-commercial essential community air services. The airstrips support flights essential to remote communities such as those delivering fresh food, mail, transporting residents and emergency personnel, as well as the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Remote Aerodrome Inspection Programme

The Australian Government's Remote Aerodrome Inspection Programme provides aerodrome safety inspection services for 57 designated Indigenous communities.

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

The Airservices Australia En-route Charges Payment Scheme

The Australian Government will invest \$3.5 million to 2016-17 to introduce a new and better-targeted En-route Charges Rebate Scheme for regional commercial airlines to support low volume and new routes to small and remote communities.

Continuing funding of \$1.0 million per annum is allocated for aeromedical services to regional and remote areas under the Scheme. Eligible aeromedical service providers are reimbursed for en-route air navigation charges incurred, as levied by Airservices Australia.

Aviation Safety Review

The Australian Government has commissioned an independent review of aviation safety regulation. The review is considering the structures, effectiveness and processes of all agencies involved in aviation safety, and how well those agencies interact and work together. The review is also looking closely at the outcomes and direction of the regulatory reform process undertaken by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority. The review will analyse all aspects of aviation safety which includes regional airports. The Review is due to report in May 2014.

Community Development Grants Fund

The Australian Government's Community Development Grants Fund, supports much needed infrastructure that promotes stable, secure and viable local and regional economies. Funding of \$314.2 million from 2013-14 to 2016-17 will benefit regional communities in the long term by enhancing the social and economic well-being of communities and will create jobs during construction. A further \$21.8 million is being administered by other departments to complement the activities of the Fund and \$6 million has been transferred to the Tasmanian Jobs and Growth Package.

The Fund has provided funding for more than 290 regional initiatives including the Australian Government's 2013 election commitments and Australian Government selected uncontracted projects from the Regional Development Australia Fund and Community Infrastructure Grants Program.

An additional \$372.9 million has been provided from 2013-14 to 2016-17 to complete committed regional projects.

Regional Development Australia Committees

The Australian Government is committed to supporting a committee-based network of community leaders who foster strong communication between local communities and the Australian, State and Local governments and can assist in fostering economic development at a regional level. Arrangements for a new Regional Development Australia network will be announced later this year.

Northern Australia Sustainable Futures

The Northern Australia Sustainable Futures programme focuses on addressing key challenges in regional development, in cooperation with the Queensland, Western Australian and the Northern Territory governments. A key priority going forward will be supporting outcomes from the White Paper on the Development of Northern Australia that are supported by the Australian Government.

The programme addresses the need for a deeper understanding of opportunities and constraints to regional development across the north and is currently focused on developing:

- opportunities for the sustainable capture, storage and use of water resources across the north (surface water and groundwater), to support economic growth and improve the resilience of regional communities;
- opportunities to improve the viability and resilience of the northern beef industry, including productivity improvements in transport and logistics and the application of mosaic irrigation to intensify or diversify production;
- opportunities for the development of new food and fibre industries across the north and key infrastructure investment priorities; and
- enhanced Indigenous and community engagement in policy and planning and a deeper understanding of opportunities and constraints to new Indigenous business.

Tasmanian Jobs and Growth Package

Delivered by a number of departments, the \$106 million Tasmanian Jobs and Growth Package is an initiative which complements the Australian Government's Economic Growth Plan for Tasmania- a package of measures aimed at stimulating Tasmania's economy by supporting growth and employment. Funding of \$91.0 million from 2013-14 to 2016-17, administered by Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, is being provided for over 30 projects which support the economic development of Tasmania. Additional projects of the Package are being delivered by other departments including the Department of Industry (refer also page 103) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (refer also page 66).

Murray-Darling Basin Regional Economic Diversification Programme

The Murray Darling Basin Regional Economic Diversification Program will assist those communities that are most affected by the implementation of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. The Basin Plan provides a coordinated approach to water use across the Basin's four States and the Australian Capital Territory.

The objective of the Programme is to deliver economic development projects and diversification initiatives that broaden and support the economic base of regional communities likely to be affected by the implementation of the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

The Australian Government has committed total funds of \$97.5 million, over four years, for this Programme to be shared among the States: South Australia - \$25.0 million; Victoria - \$25.0 million; Queensland - \$15.0 million; and New South Wales - \$32.5 million.

Latrobe Valley Economic Diversification

The Australian Government continues to support economic diversification projects in Victoria's Latrobe Valley through the provision of \$10.9 million from 2013-14 to 2015-16, to upgrade the Warragul Station Precinct and revitalise the Moe Rail Precinct.

South Australia River Murray Sustainability Programme — Regional Economic Development

Administered with the Departments of Environment and Agriculture, the National Partnership Agreement on South Australia River Murray Sustainability Programme has committed \$265.0 million from 2013-14 to 2018-19 to the South Australian Government to support South Australia's contribution to a healthy, working Murray-Darling Basin through the delivery of three elements:

- South Australian River Murray Irrigation Efficiency;
- South Australia Government Water Purchase; and
- South Australian Regional Economic Development.

Delivery of \$25.0 million from 2013-14 to 2016-17, for the South Australian Regional Economic Development element is a joint effort between the Australian Government Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development and the South Australian Department of Primary Industries and Regions. This element will deliver a redevelopment of the Loxton Research Centre, a programme of industry led research and a Regional Development and Innovation programme.

Local Government Financial Assistance Grants

The Local Government Financial Assistance Grants (FAGs), established under the *Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995*, provides financial assistance to local governments across Australia to enable them to meet local priorities. The Australian Government is continuing the FAGs programme which will provide an estimated \$9.3 billion to local government over the period 2014-15 to 2017-18 - approximately \$2.3 billion per year.

The funding is untied and consists of two components:

- a general purpose component which is distributed between the States and Territories according to population; and
- an identified local road component which is distributed between the States and Territories according to fixed historical shares.

Services to Territories

The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development administers the Territories of the Ashmore and Cartier Islands, Christmas Island, the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, the Coral Sea Islands and Jervis Bay, and manages national interests in the Australian Capital Territory, the Northern Territory and Norfolk Island.

The objective of this work is to assist the Territories to establish and maintain good governance and manage their own futures by providing services and advice on ongoing administration for the non-self-governing Territories. The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development delivers services, provides funding support and undertakes capital works with the objective of ensuring that Territory communities have access to similar services as equivalent mainland communities.

State of Australian Cities reports

These annual publications include data and analyses for Australia's largest cities, including ten regional cities. The analysis contained in the reports informs the planning undertaken by the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development for both regional development and transport, and is a valuable resource to regional stakeholders.

Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics

Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics contains a dedicated regional research team that provides economic and social analysis for Australia's regions, to inform Australian Government policy development and, through publication, wider community understanding. Since its introduction in 2002, the regional research team has covered a range of issues with a goal of supporting evidence-based policy making in the field of regional development. For example, a recent publication, *The evolution of Australia towns*, provides an analytical assessment of the key processes contributing to the current structure of the nation's settlement pattern.

Civil Aviation Safety Authority

The Civil Aviation Safety Authority's (CASA's) primary function is to conduct the safety regulation of civil air operations in Australia and the operation of Australian aircraft overseas. It is also required to provide comprehensive safety education and training programmes, cooperate with the Australian Transport Safety Bureau, and administer certain features of Part IVA of the Civil Aviation (Carriers' Liability) Act 1959. In addition to offices in each capital city, CASA has regional offices in Cairns, Townsville, and Tamworth.

Airservices Australia

Airservices is a government-owned organisation providing safe, secure, efficient and environmentally responsible services to the aviation industry. Airservices manage air

traffic operations for over 90 million passengers on more than four million flights every year and operate 29 towers at international and regional airports.

Australian Maritime Safety Authority

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) is a statutory authority. AMSA's principal functions are:

- promoting maritime safety and protection of the marine environment
- preventing and combating ship-sourced pollution in the marine environment
- providing infrastructure to support safety of navigation in Australian waters
- providing a national search and rescue service to the maritime and aviation sectors.

AMSA currently manages an extensive network of approximately 500 visual and electronic aids to navigation at approximately 400 sites, around Australia's coastline assisting mariners to make safe and efficient passages. The majority of these sites are in regional Australia. The network consists of traditional lighthouses, beacons, buoys, radar transponder beacons, Differential Global Positioning System (DGPS) and Automatic Identification System (AIS) stations and met-ocean sensors such as broadcasting tide gauges, wave rider buoys, current meter and a weather station.

Search and rescue operations and support for maritime safety training features heavily in AMSA's regional activities. A current priority for AMSA is enhancing maritime safety and environment protection in the waters off the north-west coast of Australia and in the Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait, in response to a projected increase in shipping and off-shore activity.

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau

Australians travel vast distances by air, sea, rail and road. Transport activity grows as the economy grows and all sectors rely on transport to move products and provide services. Although Australia has an impressive safety record, as transport activity increases, so does the risk of accidents and incidents. The Australian government, State and Territory governments, local governments, industry and other stakeholders work collaboratively on transport safety.

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) is Australia's national transport safety investigator. The ATSB's function is to improve safety and public confidence in the aviation, marine and rail modes of transport.

The ATSB's accident investigation role is a fundamental part of Australia's transport safety framework. Lessons arising from the investigations conducted by the ATSB are used to reduce the risk of future accidents and incidents through the implementation of safety action by industry and the Government.

PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET

On 18 September 2013, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet became the responsible agency for the majority of targeted Indigenous programmes and related service delivery.

The transfer will address some of the structural and logistical problems faced when Indigenous programmes and services are delivered through multiple agencies.

The Australian Government is committed to a new engagement with Indigenous Australians. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet will work in partnership with remote Indigenous communities to implement practical local action that is tailored to local need in the Australian Government's priority areas of increasing school attendance, getting adults into work and ensuring communities are safe and the ordinary law of the land is observed.

This will be achieved by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet through a new, less bureaucratic Remote Community Advancement Network, to be headed by a National Director who will focus on delivering outcomes in these key priority areas. The key performance measures for the National Director, and a Deputy Director for Northern Australia, will be to deliver demonstrable improvements in school attendance, employment and community safety. Local staff will report to the National Director through regional offices, rather than state offices, to ensure quicker decisions.

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet will use its role as the Australian Government's lead agency in Indigenous Affairs to ensure mainstream programmes and services continue to focus on Indigenous Australians and to drive coordination among all Commonwealth Government agencies. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is responsible for national leadership and coordination in relation to the Council of Australian Government's commitment on Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage.

The majority, or more than two-thirds, of Indigenous Australians live outside the major cities with around one-quarter living in remote and very remote locations.

NEW INITIATIVES

Indigenous Advancement Strategy

The Australian Government will consolidate more than 150 Indigenous-specific programmes and activities transferred to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, into five flexible programmes.

These new programmes will reduce programme duplication and fragmentation, reduce delivery costs, be easier to understand and more clearly link activity to outcomes. A more streamlined approach will also facilitate a place-based approach to

service delivery through more flexible programme arrangements with delivery tailored to specific circumstances.

Service providers will benefit from significantly reduced red tape and reporting requirements.

The five new programmes are:

- Indigenous Advancement - Jobs, land and economy: getting adults into work, fostering Indigenous business and assisting Indigenous people to generate economic and social benefits from effective use of their land, particularly in remote areas;
- Indigenous Advancement - Children and schooling: getting children to school, particularly in remote areas, improving education outcomes and supporting families to give children a good start in life. This programme includes measures to improve access to further education;
- Indigenous Advancement - Safety and wellbeing: ensuring the ordinary law of the land applies in Indigenous communities, particularly remote Indigenous communities, and that Indigenous people enjoy similar levels of physical, emotional and social wellbeing enjoyed by other Australians;
- Indigenous Advancement - Culture and capability: supporting Indigenous Australians to maintain their culture, participate equally in the economic and social life of the nation and that Indigenous organisations are capable of delivering quality services to their clients, particularly in remote areas; and
- Indigenous Advancement - Remote Australia strategies: strategic investments in local, flexible solutions based on community and government priorities and support for remote housing strategies.

An Evaluation and Performance Improvement Strategy will be developed to drive a stronger focus on outcomes by supporting improved programme design so that results are clear and measurable.

More targeted priorities within these programmes include the following.

Indigenous Advancement - Safety and Wellbeing programme

Permanent Police Presence in Communities

Funding of up to \$54.1 million over four years will be provided to deliver police infrastructure to support a permanent police presence in some larger remote Indigenous communities. Targeted communities will primarily be located in the Northern Territory, Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia.

Community Engagement Police Officers

Funding of \$2.5 million over four years will be provided to the Northern Territory Police to engage up to eight Community Engagement Police Officers in 2014-15 and four from 2015-16. The Community Engagement Police Officers will assist

Northern Territory Police to facilitate operational and cultural change as part of a new remote policing model that started in July 2013.

Child Abuse Taskforce

Funding of \$3.8 million over four years will be provided to extend Commonwealth support for the Northern Territory Child Abuse Taskforce.

Indigenous Advancement - Remote Strategies programme

Outback Power

Funding of \$10.6 million over four years will be provided for the repair and maintenance of around 250 existing solar energy systems in over 200 remote Indigenous communities in Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

Indigenous Advancement - Children and schooling programme

Sporting Chance Programme Clontarf Foundation Academy Expansion

The 2014-15 Budget includes \$13.4 million to be provided over four years for an additional 3,000 places for Indigenous boys for the Clontarf Foundation's operations. The ongoing funding amounts will allow the Clontarf Foundation to maintain its capacity to deliver an expanded number of student places on an ongoing basis.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

The following section summarises current initiatives which entail spending in 2014-15, mapped against the five new programmes under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy.

Indigenous Advancement - Jobs, land and economy

Getting more adults into employment, fostering Indigenous business and assisting Indigenous people benefit socially and economically from the use of their land are essential to delivering the Australian Government's commitment to improve the lives of Indigenous Australians. In regional and remote Australia, jobs, land and economic development are key to meeting the Australian Government's target to end the employment disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet also supports a range of environmental initiatives that make a direct contribution to jobs, land and economy outcomes. The benefits that flow from these activities reach far beyond conservation and natural resource management. The establishment of ranger jobs supports the Australian Government's objective of improved employment outcomes for Indigenous people, but also contributes strongly to improved education and community health outcomes.

Improving employment services in remote Australia

In November 2013, the Australian Government introduced changes to the Remote Jobs and Communities Programme to overcome problems with the design and implementation of the Programme. These changes include:

- re-opening access to the Indigenous Employment Programme in remote areas to support employers;
- engaging people, who are not in a job or training, in meaningful activities with robust compliance measures; and
- funding providers to run rewarding activities, particularly in the weakest markets.

The \$1.5 billion Remote Jobs and Communities Programme operates in 60 remote regions across Australia replacing four previous employment services. It provides services to 34,900 job seekers, most of whom are Indigenous.

Demand-led employment model

The Australian Government has committed \$45.0 million over two years for a national network of Vocational Training and Employment Centres (VTECs) to provide up to 5,000 Indigenous job seekers with training leading to a guaranteed job.

VTECs are driven by a demand-led employment model that is focused firmly on training Indigenous Australians for specific jobs. VTECs are being established where employer demand is greatest, including in regional and remote regions in North and Central Queensland, the Pilbara and Kimberley in Western Australia, the Northern Territory, and Western and North Coast New South Wales. Three VTECs have been established to date – Boystown in outer Brisbane, Marist Youth Care in Western Sydney and atWork in Perth.

Indigenous Business Australia

Indigenous Business Australia (IBA), an agency within the Prime Minister and Cabinet portfolio, provides services and benefits to regional Australia, by providing home ownership, business development, and commercial investment activities for Indigenous Australians.

The majority of IBA's customers and investments are located in regional Australia where IBA's activities and related businesses contribute to local economies, provide employment, and enhance wealth creation. These activities supported 1,200 jobs in 2013, and its assets of \$1.1 billion provided concessional loans and equity to businesses and home owners.

In 2014-15, IBA anticipates providing:

- approximately 540 new concessional home loans to eligible low and middle income Indigenous families to assist buying their first home; and

- Eighty five business loans, 500 business supports, and 30 economic and business development projects to assist eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to start up, acquire, or grow a successful small-to-medium sized business.

Indigenous Land Corporation

The Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) is an independent Australian Government statutory authority that assists Indigenous Australians to acquire land, and manage Indigenous-held land, 'so as to provide economic, environmental, social or cultural benefits for Aboriginal persons and Torres Strait Islanders'. Established under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act (Commonwealth) 2005*, the ILC has two programmes to support its purpose – Land Acquisition and Land Management. While the ILC has a national focus, it has extensive engagements in regional Australia.

Land

The Australian Government will continue to support the recognition of traditional ownership and Indigenous interests in land through native title processes and Commonwealth land rights legislation, especially in the Northern Territory.

The Australian Government provides funding for Native Title Representative Bodies and Aboriginal Land Councils in the Northern Territory.

The Australian Government is also working with the States, the Northern Territory and Indigenous land owners in remote Australia on how to use their land to create economic opportunities by introducing changes to land tenure.

Indigenous Rangers

The Australian Government currently supports Indigenous rangers to deliver environmental outcomes and address Indigenous disadvantage by providing jobs to Indigenous people. It is expected that at least 730 Australian Government-funded Indigenous rangers, mostly in remote and regional areas, will be trained and employed in land and sea management by July 2015.

Indigenous Protected Areas

Indigenous Protected Areas now make up more than 51 million hectares, or approximately 38 per cent, of the National Reserve System, Australia's network of protected areas. There are 64 declared Indigenous Protected Areas and a further 20 Protected Area consultations underway.

Indigenous Advancement - Children and schooling

The Australian Government provides financial assistance to support Indigenous children and their schooling. These programmes target Indigenous students, their families and their communities, with many having a strong focus on regional areas.

Improving education is essential if we are to significantly address entrenched disadvantage.

The Australian Government's key educational priority is improving school attendance for Indigenous children as a foundation for improving educational attainment through to year 12 attainment, and higher education. There is a particular focus on remote parts of Australia where Indigenous school attendance is particularly poor. For example in very remote parts of the Northern Territory 75 per cent of all Indigenous students attend school less than 80 per cent of the time.

Funding is provided to all four educational sectors; early childhood, schooling, vocational education and training and higher education.

Remote School Attendance Strategy

The Remote School Attendance Strategy provides, as a two-year temporary measure, a community-based model to provide targeted assistance to improve school attendance in around 70 remote communities with long-standing school attendance issues in the Northern Territory, Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales.

Under the Strategy, driven by local communities, \$46.5 million will be committed from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2015 to employ School Attendance Supervisors (SAs) and School Attendance Officers (SAOs). Duties for the SAs/SAOs on the ground have been adapted to the needs of each community and target gaps in existing areas of service provision.

In Stage One of the Remote School Attendance Strategy, some schools have seen rises in attendance rates of nearly 20 percentage points compared to term 1 2013.

Other examples of how the Australian Government's priorities for improving Indigenous education outcomes in regional areas have been achieved include:

- scholarships for regional and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to attend high performing schools, boarding schools and boarding facilities;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from rural and remote areas undertaking tertiary studies are assisted with the costs of travel where students are required to travel away from their permanent home for short periods to undertake approved course related activities;
- improving access and participation in higher education by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from low socio-economic status backgrounds and regional and remote areas, by assisting with the costs associated with education and relocation—the total value of scholarships allocated for 2014 is approximately \$15 million;
- using sport and recreation as a vehicle to increase the level of engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in their schooling, with projects

being delivered across Northern Territory, Western Australia, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales and 83 per cent of projects in regional and remote locations;

- funding selected organisations to employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remote schools and pre-schools in positions such as assistant teachers, Indigenous education workers, school participation officers, attendance officers, grounds and maintenance staff and cleaners;
- supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities to become more involved in their children's education, including helping them build relationships with principals and teachers; supporting them to help children and young people to learn at home; and helping parents overcome the barriers to sending children to school; and
- delivering early intervention, prevention and diversionary initiatives in the Northern Territory for young people who are at risk of: substance misuse, suicide or intentional self-harm, entering or re-entering the criminal justice system and disengaging with education, training or employment.

Clontarf Foundation Expansion

The Clontarf Foundation is one of a number of programmes that have been funded to improve Indigenous student attendance, learning and retention to Year 12 using sport and recreation as an incentive to participation. The projects aim to help Indigenous students to make informed decisions about post-school pathways and to promote greater parental and community involvement with schools and students' learning. They target Indigenous students who are 'at risk' and typically have low attendance rates, literacy and numeracy issues, social or behavioural concerns and who are more likely to drop out of school and not complete Year 12.

Projects are being delivered across Northern Territory, Western Australia, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales with 83 per cent of projects in regional and remote locations.

Indigenous Advancement - Safety and wellbeing

Ensuring the ordinary law of the land is observed in Indigenous communities to create environments where children can go to school and adults go to work is a key priority for the Australian Government. In many regional and remote Indigenous communities, Indigenous Australians' contact with the criminal justice system is high.

Alcohol related harm and other forms of substance misuse in regional and remote Indigenous communities not only limit the productive capacity of individuals, but also place them at increased risk of offending and victimisation.

The Australian Government supports a range of activities to drive improvements in Indigenous people's safety and wellbeing, including:

- culturally appropriate legal services, providing assistance on a range of matters including family violence, sexual assault, family law, tenancy issues, and consumer rights;
- prisoner rehabilitation, youth diversion and community based mediation services;
- community night patrols;
- interpreter services;
- services that reduce acceptance of family violence, provide support and early intervention activities to improve children and family outcomes especially for those at risk of abuse or neglect and help transition children to school;
- safe houses for women and children impacted by violence, support for families, developing solutions to local issues such as education and training, employment, workforce development, mental health, family violence, youth and substance abuse; and
- alcohol supply, demand and harm minimisation strategies.

Child Abuse and Trauma (Northern Territory)

Culturally-safe child abuse trauma counselling and support is provided to Aboriginal children and their families who live in remote Northern Territory and are affected by trauma associated with child abuse including sexual abuse. Training is also provided to the Northern Territory remote primary health care and community care workforce in identifying and developing appropriate responses to child abuse and related trauma.

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory

The Stronger Futures package is intended to tackle the unacceptable levels of disadvantage still experienced by too many Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

The Stronger Future in the Northern Territory National Partnership which is a broad package of measures comprising a total investment of \$3.4 billion and involving nine separate Implementation Plan in the Northern Territory. It is the key mechanism for Indigenous specific investment in the Northern Territory.

In order to ensure that Stronger Futures funding is being used effectively to make a real and lasting difference to the lives of Aboriginal people. The Australian Government and the Northern Territory Government will be reviewing and renegotiating the package to ensure a greater focus on achieving results and reducing unnecessary administration and red tape. Funding should be going to programmes and services on the ground to benefit Aboriginal people and to support getting children to school, adults into work and making communities safer.

Alcohol and substance misuse

In order to ensure that children are going to school, adults are working and people are living in communities that are safe, the Australian Government recognises it is necessary to address underlying issues that impact on the safety and wellbeing of many Indigenous people and which may prevent them from working or going to school.

Petrol Sniffing Strategy

The Petrol Sniffing Strategy (PSS) is a comprehensive approach to reduce petrol sniffing and improve community safety and the health and wellbeing of individuals in regional and remote Australia. Funding has been provided for the PSS since 2005.

There are 134 sites supplying low aromatic fuel with plans to expand its availability to northern Australia during 2014-15. New bulk storage facilities are being established in Darwin and north Queensland, enabling low aromatic fuel to be supplied to at least 39 new sites in the Top End of the Northern Territory, the East Kimberley and Gulf Region of Queensland.

Youth diversion activities are delivered in regional and remote areas at risk of petrol sniffing across the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia. The PSS also contributes to the operation of the Substance Abuse Intelligence Desk in South Australia and Western Australia.

Other safety and wellbeing initiatives targeting youth justice and treatment also support the objectives of the PSS.

Indigenous Community Links

Across urban and regional Australia a network of providers is working to facilitate Indigenous people's access to community services and programmes through the provision of information and supported referrals. Families are connected to a range of mainstream and Indigenous specific services in areas such as social support, employment, family violence, health (including drug and alcohol services), legal aid, child care and housing. Individual service providers in a particular area are encouraged to develop relationships with other community services to promote access and pathways for Indigenous people.

Sixty five providers are funded a total of \$14.6 million in 2014-15 to deliver services across 88 locations, reaching more than 180 communities. Seventy four service locations are in regional and remote Australia. Since July 2009, nearly 225,000 people have been assisted with information and referrals.

Indigenous Advancement - Culture and capability

The Australian Government is extending the reach and quality of Indigenous interpreting services under its culture and capability priority investment stream.

Funding supports training and employment of Indigenous people as Indigenous interpreters in the Northern Territory, Kimberley, Pilbara, Ngaanyatjarra and Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands. The funding will also assist the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) to pilot broadcast ABC Northern Territory radio news in two Indigenous languages.

Regional and remote Indigenous radio stations receive funding support and are a source of employment in remote and regional communities. Indigenous broadcasters also contribute to community safety by carrying warnings and safety directions to the local population in times of natural disasters, often in local languages.

Stolen Generations

There are an estimated 10,625 people who directly experienced the trauma generated by forcible removal, an estimated 25,844 children (second generation) who have been living with parents affected by forcible removal, and an estimated 40,612 grandchildren who continue to experience the effects of their grandparents' removal. Services are provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including those living in regional areas, affected by past governments' removal policies with priority given to members of the Stolen Generations. These services include:

- family tracing and reunions provided through a network of Link Up Services;
- mental health and social and emotional wellbeing counselling largely provided through Aboriginal Community Controlled services nationally;
- support and training to the social and emotional wellbeing workforce; and
- national projects to support capacity building and effective service delivery.

Indigenous Advancement - Remote Australia strategies

Indigenous people in remote communities generally suffer from a higher level of disadvantage resulting from the impact remoteness has on access to standard services and opportunities for economic development. Specific strategies by government, developed with community members and leaders, are required to address this and to ensure that Indigenous people in these communities can share in the benefits that come from actively participating in the economy. The Australian Government's priority areas to address this issue is increasing school attendance, getting adults into work and ensuring communities are safe and the ordinary law of the land is observed.

Housing

Housing is a key contributor to the Australian Government's priorities of getting children to school, adults in to work and providing for safe communities where the rule of law applies. The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) commenced in 2008 and includes all states except the Australian Capital Territory. The National Partnership aims to reduce severe overcrowding, homelessness and poor housing conditions in remote Indigenous communities.

Under NPARIH, funding is provided for capital works, specifically new and replacement houses, and the refurbishment or rebuild of existing public housing. Through the programme, ambitious targets were set which, over the past five years, have been exceeded in some jurisdictions. As at 31 March 2014, 2,406 new houses have been constructed under NPARIH against a target of 4,200, with a further 6,420 houses refurbished or rebuild against a target of 4,876.

The Australian Government will work with the individual States and the Northern Territory to strengthen bilateral agreements under the NPARIH. Resetting the focus of NPARIH is essential to allow the partnership to deliver on key priorities such as increasing Indigenous home ownership, improving access to public housing for those seeking to move from remote areas for employment and education, and prioritising new house allocations where land tenure provides for homeownership. Remote Indigenous people should have the same options that others in Australia enjoy, including a regularly functioning housing market with good standards in public housing.

Renegotiation of the housing element of Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory (SFNT) package to ensure that it supports achievement of the government's priorities will occur in the context of the overall negotiation of the SFNT National Partnership Agreement referred to above.

Remote Australia – other initiatives

The level of need for Indigenous people in remote Australia continues to be high including for infrastructure and essential services.

Funding will be provided for around 260 full-time, properly paid, sustainable Indigenous employment positions in municipal and essential services roles in remote communities in Queensland, Western Australian and the Northern Territory.

The Australian Government will also provide telecommunication support through the maintenance of 545 community telephones to ensure access to emergency and other medical and support services as well as to family and friends. In 2014-15, 301 of these phones will have public Wi-Fi activated enabling community members to participate in the digital economy. In addition, the Australian Government will continue working with participating State and Territory governments to provide internet access and training to more than 32,000 Indigenous Australians in remote communities.

The long standing partnership with the Australian Army, the Army Aboriginal Community Assistance program, will continue to improve the environmental health and living conditions for Indigenous people in remote Australia (refer also page 36).

SOCIAL SERVICES

The Department of Social Services is a critical source of social policy advice for the Australian Government. It works in partnership with other government and non-government organisations, particularly with the Department of Human Services, to ensure the effective development, management and delivery of a diverse range of policies, programmes and services that are focused on improving the lifetime wellbeing of people and families in Australia, particularly those who are vulnerable or from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Many of the Department of Social Services' responsibilities have a direct impact on people living in regional and remote Australia including assistance and support to address the needs of local communities. The Department of Social Services' focus is to work with the community sector to encourage innovative strategies and provide support for local solutions. This will promote self-reliance and economic participation while encouraging the long-term sustainability of community organisations.

A number of programmes provide additional support to address locational disadvantage including financial exclusion and the impact of drought. These programmes aim to provide targeted assistance to support the wellbeing, employment and financial circumstances of families and individuals living in regional and remote locations. Aged care services aim to contribute to the accessibility and delivery of services in regional Australia, including capital funding for services in areas of high need. Reducing Indigenous disadvantage remains central to the regional and remote initiatives with specific services targeted to address the needs of Indigenous Australians.

NEW INITIATIVES

Support to Drought Affected Farmers

The Australian Government is providing up to \$10.7 million in 2013-14 and 2014-15 to extend social support services in drought-affected areas, to particularly focus on farmers, farm families and rural communities. Providers under the former Family Support Program and Community Mental Health Program will be funded to enhance services available in identified drought-affected communities in New South Wales and Queensland (refer also page 13).

This funding is part of the Drought Assistance Package announced by the Prime Minister, the Hon Tony Abbott MP, and the Minister for Agriculture, the Hon Barnaby Joyce MP, on 26 February 2014 (refer also page 12).

The Social and Community Support measure aims to provide support to families dealing with mental illness and family relationship issues, provide referrals to people

needing services, and build community resilience. Services will also enhance community understanding of mental health issues, assist with finding help and reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues.

Stronger Relationships trial

In 2014-15, the Australian Government will implement the 12-month Stronger Relationships trial to help strengthen relationships and improve personal and family wellbeing, and help reduce the social and economic costs of divorce and relationship breakdown. The trial will provide up to 100,000 eligible couples with a \$200 towards relationship education or counselling.

From 1 July 2014, couples will be able to register online for the \$200 and use it to access at least four hours with a relationships educator or at least two hours of counselling to help them work through any problems they may be experiencing in their relationship. Both education and counselling may cover parenting, financial management or conflict resolution.

The 12-month trial will be open to all couples in a committed relationship, including engaged, married, de-facto and same-sex couples.

National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness — extension

In 2014-15 the Australian Government will provide up to \$115.0 million, to be matched by States and Territories, to ensure that critical homelessness initiatives continue to support some of Australia's most vulnerable people. This is a one-year Agreement for 2014-15 to provide support to homelessness service providers through matched Commonwealth and State funding, to enable the continuation of National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) funded service delivery for another year to provide time for discussions on the future of homelessness arrangements. This will also give the Australian Government time to look at what improvements can be made to more effectively respond to the causes of homelessness and achieve lasting reductions in the number of homeless Australians.

Discussions with the States and Territories on the 2014-15 NPAH are now in progress to ensure service delivery in regional and remote areas is maintained under the new agreement.

Young Carer Bursary Programme

Balancing caring responsibilities can present a critical barrier for young carers to complete their education and transition to employment. Many young carers miss out on opportunities to further their education and undertake part-time work, due to the emotional and financial pressures they face in caring for a loved one. The new \$3.0 million Young Carer Bursary Programme will help young carers continue their study and reduce the associated financial burden.

The Young Carer Bursary Programme will support young carers aged 25 years and under who look after people with disability, people with physical or mental health issues, or older people in need of care. It will provide around 150 bursaries valued up to \$10,000 annually over three years, from January 2015.

The programme will provide each carer with financial support to meet educational and caring expenses including traveling costs, respite, text books, and unexpected costs that could otherwise exclude them from study. This would provide an incentive for young carers to remain engaged in their education leading to improved employment opportunities and long term finances.

The programme will have a positive impact on regional Australia. Approximately 30 per cent of young carers live in regional and remote Australia. Rates of caring are found to be generally higher in regional and remote areas which also tend to be associated with the highest levels of disadvantage for young carers regarding household income, education and employment. The programme will target young carers living in regional Australia under strict eligibility criteria currently being developed. As the eligibility criteria to be developed will target those young carers in greatest need, it would be expected that young carers residing in a regional or remote location would be captured.

Community Business Partnership – re establishment

The Australian Government is providing \$6.0 million over four years to re-establish the Community Business Partnership (the Partnership). The Partnership, to be chaired by the Prime Minister, will bring together leaders from the community and business sectors. The Partnership will advise Australian Government on practical strategies to foster a culture of philanthropic giving and volunteering in Australia and help build a strong civil society.

Regional Australia will benefit from more diverse sources of funding for community programmes, reinforcement of the already strong volunteering culture and innovative strategies to strengthen social capital.

Increasing the Viability Supplement in aged care

From 1 July 2014, payments through the Viability Supplement to eligible regional, rural and remote providers will increase by 20 per cent. This increase will support providers of all eligible Australian Government funded residential and home care services, Multi-Purpose Services and services funded through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Programme. It is expected to provide an additional \$12.2 million in 2014-15. This increase is to recognise the additional challenges and costs associated with attracting and training staff, and in providing services in these areas.

Longer term funding agreements for critical Family and Children's Activities

New five-year funding agreements will be offered to crucial Families and Children's Activities Family and Children's services including Family and Relationship Services, Communities for Children (CfC), Facilitating Partners (FP's) and Family Law Services; and significant improvements will be made to funding arrangements that will ease regulatory, reporting and administrative burdens for providers. Approximately half of the CfC FP sites are in regional areas.

Eighty four organisations that deliver Family and Relationship Services across 643 outlets in Australia as well as many of the 65 Family Relationships Centres, the flagships of Family Law Services, operate in regional areas.

Community Development Financial Institutions Pilot Project — one year extension

Through the Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) trial, the Australian Government is providing \$1.5 million in 2014-15 to three established CDFIs (Many Rivers Microfinance, Foresters Community Finance and Fair Loans Foundation), to enable them to provide access to affordable credit to low-income individuals and families, including those in regional areas. In addition, the CDFIs provide financial literacy advice to strengthen the capacity of borrowers to manage their money.

Consumers in regional areas have been identified as more likely to experience financial exclusion as a result of a range of factors related to locational disadvantage.

The trial is expected to benefit around 2,400 financially excluded people Australia-wide, also targeting individuals and families in regional areas.

CDFIs participating in the trial provide services in several regions including Grafton, Moree, Kurri Kurri, Condobolin, South Hedland, Karratha, Kununurra, Cairns, Gladstone, Bundaberg and Broome.

The trial is expected to directly assist around 300 people in these areas. Indirect effects are also expected for local and regional economies, which benefit from the increased financial inclusion which CDFIs facilitate.

Income Management — one year extension and expansion to Ceduna, South Australia

Income management is part of the Australian Government's commitment to reforming the welfare system so that income support payments are spent in the best interests of children and families. The programme ensures that money is available for life's essentials such as food, clothing and housing, and provides a tool to help people budget. Income management is designed to help people stabilise their lives, so they can care for their children, and join or return to the workforce.

Income management will be rolled out to the Ceduna region of South Australia from July 2014 for one year, and will be available in the Ceduna Local Government Area, Oak Valley, Yalata, Scotdesco, Bookabie, Penong, Fowlers Bay, Coorabie, Nundroo and Nullarbor.

Income management will also continue in the other income management trial sites of the Northern Territory, Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands of South Australia, metropolitan Perth, Peel and the Kimberley, Laverton Shire and the Ngaanyatjarra Lands (including Kiwirrkurra) in Western Australia for one year until 30 June 2015, through a \$101.1 million Australian Government investment.

Income management will also continue through existing funding as a key component of Cape York Welfare Reform until 31 December 2015 and continues in Logan and Rockhampton in Queensland, Shepparton in Victoria, Bankstown in New South Wales, and Playford in South Australia, under the Building Australia's Future Workforce initiative, until 30 June 2016.

Strengthening Communities Activity

The Australian Government is providing funding under the new Strengthening Communities Activity to help build more socially cohesive, resilient and responsive communities. The Strengthening Communities Activity provides funding to organisations to develop solutions and deliver responsive and integrated services that meet local community needs to support inclusion and participation of disadvantaged people.

The Activity comprises three sub-activities: Community Development and Participation (formerly Community Investment Programme), Volunteering, and Multicultural Affairs. These sub-activities aim to build the capacity of communities and organisations to identify and address local community needs, facilitate partnerships that result in better services and service integration, assist volunteers and encourage volunteering, develop strategies to increase awareness of access to services, and support organisations in the delivery of services to individuals and organisations. The Multicultural Affairs component of this activity will address racism and prejudice; and will raise awareness, promote understanding, respect, fairness and a sense of belonging for all Australians.

The Strengthening Communities Activity will empower local organisations in regional communities to provide targeted solutions that meet local need.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Household Organisation Management Expenses Advice Programme

The Household Organisational Management Expenses (HOME) Advice Programme assists families who face difficulty in maintaining tenancies or home ownership due to personal or financial circumstances. The programme uses a range of approaches such

as brokerage, practical support, financial counselling and advocacy to assist families to stabilise their housing situation.

The HOME Advice Programme is in eight locations throughout Australia - one in each State and Territory. Of the eight HOME Advice providers, seven deliver the programme in regional areas. A total of \$13.6 million has been spent on the HOME Advice programme since 2004.

Youth Homelessness Programme – Reconnect

The Australian Government will provide more than \$70.0 million over three years for the Reconnect programme from 2013-14. This funding will support the continuation of key support services delivered by over 100 Reconnect service providers throughout Australia to provide community-based early intervention services for young people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, and their families.

A range of tools such as brokerage, practical support, mediation, counselling and mentoring assist the young person stabilise their living situation, achieve family reconciliation, and improve their engagement with work, education, training and the community.

Thirty-five service providers deliver the Reconnect programme in regional areas and nine in remote areas. These services include the Waitja Reconnect service in Alice Springs, the Nambucca Bellingen Reconnect service. A total of \$10.0 million was provided to regional and remote Reconnect services in 2014-15.

Families and Children Activity

The Australian Government is providing \$383.0 million in 2014-15 for the Families and Children Activity which provides integrated services for families to strengthen relationships, improve child well-being and development, and improve family safety and family functioning, including after separation. There are currently family support services in more than 2,622 locations, with many of these in regional or remote areas.

Financial Wellbeing and Capability Activity

The Australian Government's Financial Wellbeing and Capability Activity helps people who are struggling to balance their household budgets or are in financial crisis to recover and build longer-term skills. The Programme includes emergency relief, financial counselling, money management services and financial literacy programmes. Almost half of the 876 organisations providing Financial Management Programme services are in regional areas.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme

The Australian Government is committed to the full nationwide roll-out and implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) while accepting that it will be a complex and challenging venture.

The NDIS will give people with significant and permanent disability the care and support they need over their lifetimes, and give them more choice and control over the supports they receive. In 2019-20, in its first year of full implementation, the NDIS is projected to cost around \$22 billion and provide support to over 460,000 people with significant and permanent disability. Around half of this funding will be provided by the Australian Government.

Trials of the NDIS will commence across the Australian Capital Territory, the Perth Hills area of Western Australia, and the Barkly region of the Northern Territory from 1 July 2014. Trials in Tasmania, South Australia, the Barwon area of Victoria, and the Hunter area in New South Wales commenced from 1 July 2013. More than 31,000 people with disability, their families and carers will benefit from these trials. Around 4,000 people will also benefit from the Western Australia *My Way* disability trial in the Cockburn/Kwinana and Lower South West regions.

Regional Settlement

The Australian Government directly settles humanitarian entrants in all capital cities as well as several regional locations, primarily located in the eastern States of Australia. Regional settlement of humanitarian entrants only occurs with the support and involvement of the local and State Government, service providers and agencies as well as the local community. Several factors are taken into account when settling clients in regional Australia; these include the availability of suitable accommodation and services, employment opportunities as well as opportunities for new arrivals to feel safe and connect with a welcoming community.

Settlement Services (formerly Settlement Grants Programme)

Settlement Services, formerly the Settlement Grants Programme assists eligible people to become self-reliant and participate equitably in Australian society as soon as possible after arrival. Funding for services to new arrivals in regional areas helps to reduce secondary migration to metropolitan areas. A growing regional population can create more employment opportunities in regional areas. Where available in regional areas, employment opportunities and community support can help to make regional areas attractive destinations for new migrants.

Settlement services are currently being delivered in regional areas such as Albury, Dubbo, Hamilton, Alice Springs, Gympie, Nambour and Launceston.

National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022

Women in rural and regional areas can face challenges in escaping violence and accessing support. National Plan initiatives that seek to reduce and respond to violence against women and their children, including in regional, rural and remote parts of Australia, include:

- 1800RESPECT, a 24 hour free, national, professional telephone and online counselling service for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Assistance is also available to family and friends of people at risk of violence, workers in isolated services and frontline workers; and
- The DV-alert programme, which provides nationally accredited training to support health professionals to better identify and respond to domestic and family violence. In addition to online training, priority is given to holding courses in rural and remote locations. Financial assistance is available for workers from rural and remote locations to participate.

The National Plan is being delivered through a series of three-year action plans. Australian, State and Territory governments are working together, in partnership with civil society, to develop the Second Action Plan, which is due for release in mid-2014.

Community Investment Programme – Community Capacity Building Projects

The Community Capacity Building Projects under this programme strengthen communities and promote social inclusion and participation of disadvantaged people in community life through the provision of grants to not-for-profit organisations to develop solutions and deliver responsive and integrated services that meet local community needs. In 2013-14, 49 per cent of Community Capacity Building Projects funding will support regional Australia.

Volunteer Grants

Volunteer Grants recognises the significant contribution of Australia's volunteers in building strong and cohesive communities, in particular the support provided to individuals and families who are most in need. In 2013-14, 60 per cent of Volunteer Grants were allocated to community organisations located in regional Australia. Funding is available for the purchase of small equipment items, to contribute to the reimbursement of volunteers' fuel costs, and assist with the cost of volunteers training courses and background checks.

The Australian Government is committed to supporting and encouraging volunteering.

Volunteer Management Programme

The Volunteer Management Programme supports and encourages volunteering by funding activities and services that provide on-the-ground support and information to volunteers and organisations reliant on volunteers or actively promote and encourage effective and supportive volunteering. In 2013-14, 64 per cent of Volunteer Management Programme funding was provided to 32 Volunteer Resource Centres servicing the volunteering needs of regional Australia.

Broadband for Seniors

Broadband for Seniors provides a service to seniors wanting to learn how to use computers and the internet, ensuring they have the skills and confidence to connect their families, friends and communities through the internet. Around 1,600 Broadband for Seniors kiosks currently provide seniors with free access to computers, the internet and training to ensure they are able to share in the social and economic benefits of the digital age. In 2013-14, more than half of kiosks are located in regional Australia.

Residential Aged Care Viability Supplement

The Residential Aged Care Viability Supplement is paid to eligible providers operating in rural and remote areas, providers with small numbers of residents and providers that specialise in the care of homeless older people. The aim of this supplement is to assist providers of aged care homes to operate viable businesses particularly in areas where it is difficult to do so. The amount of viability supplement paid to an aged care home depends on where the service is located, the number of places in the service, and the proportion of care recipients with special needs.

Home Care Viability Supplement

The Home Care Viability Supplement is paid to eligible home care providers operating in rural and remote areas. This supplement provides support for the higher operating costs (such as wages, fuel and training) associated with providing care in rural and regional locations.

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Programme

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Programme funds organisations to provide culturally appropriate aged care to older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people close to home and community. Flexible aged care services funded under the Programme can deliver a mix of residential and community services in accordance with the needs of the community. These services are mainly in remote and very remote areas.

Multi-Purpose Services Programme – Aged Care Subsidies

The Multi-Purpose Service Programme is a joint initiative of the Australian Government and State and Territory governments, which aims to deliver flexible and integrated health and aged care services for small regional and remote communities. Multi-Purpose Services receive Australian Government funding for aged care and State and Territory Government funding for a range of health services. As at 30 June 2013, there were 143 Multi-Purpose Services providing 3,483 aged care places in regional and remote areas Australia-wide.

Aged Care Service Improvement and Healthy Ageing Grants Fund

The Aged Care Service Improvement and Healthy Ageing Grants Fund has a specific priority to support services providing aged care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people living in remote areas. The aim is to improve access to aged care services and infrastructure for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people living in remote areas by providing access to capital funding to support the construction of aged care services.

Rural, Regional and Other Special Needs Building Fund

Capital grants assist providers, including those in rural, regional and remote areas, with the cost of capital works including land acquisition, building new, altered or extended premises, and acquiring furniture and fittings. Grants do not have to be repaid, but are only available where the provider has demonstrated a lack of capacity to meet the full cost of capital works through other funding sources.

Indigenous Aged Care Workforce – Employment

Indigenous specific Aged Care employment initiatives provide funding to enable aged care services, mainly in regional and remote areas, to employ permanent, part-time staff from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

Aged Care Workforce Fund – Indigenous Traineeships and Training

Indigenous Remote Service Delivery Traineeships delivered through the Aged Care Workforce Fund provide funding for trainees' wages and on-costs, and covers accommodation and travel expenses associated with their training. It also includes funding to deliver culturally appropriate, targeted and accredited aged care training, on-site within rural and remote communities.

Australian Disability Enterprises

The Australian Government will provide over \$200.0 million in 2014-15 to the Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) to continue supporting more than 20,000 workers with disability across Australia.

ADEs are commercial enterprises that enable people with disability, who need substantial ongoing support to maintain their employment, to engage in a wide variety of work with the same working conditions as the general workforce. This funding will assist 303 outlets operated by 193 organisations. Fifty-six per cent, or 170 ADEs are in regional areas.

Helping Children with Autism and Better Start for Children with Disability

The Helping Children with Autism (HCWA) package and Better Start for Children with Disability initiative provide up to \$12,000 to children with eligible disabilities for intensive early intervention services. Under these programmes, families living in

outer-regional, rural and remote areas can apply for an additional \$2,000 to help meet some of the costs of accessing services.

Other support services are also available under these programmes to support regional and remote communities including:

- The National Rural and Remote Support Services project which aims to help increase early intervention service coverage in rural and remote locations by offering support to existing and potential HCWA and Better Start Early Intervention Service Provider Panel members in those areas; and
- The HCWA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officer project which aims to increase Indigenous families' access to HCWA services such as Autism Advisors, Early Intervention, Early Days Workshops and PlayConnect Playgroups.

Funding for Community Mental Health

In 2014-15 the Australian Government will provide over \$225.0 million for community mental health services, with around 40 per cent of funding directed to regional areas. These services continue to provide early intervention and other support through community-based initiatives for people with mental illness, their families and carers so they can develop their capabilities, increase their wellbeing and actively participate in community and economic life.

TREASURY

The Treasury portfolio, through the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), administers a range of subsidies and personal benefits. These initiatives are not designed specifically for regional or urban areas, but rather to assist people and organisations that satisfy the eligibility criteria regardless of their location.

Several of these programmes deliver other government agencies' outcomes, with the ATO acting as a service delivery agency.

Total grant and transfer expenditure of around \$9 billion has been estimated for the 2014-15 financial year. Prior year data suggests approximately 50 per cent of this amount will be distributed to regional areas. However, due to location/address issues and the inability to specifically identify some expenditure as regional or non-regional, it is possible that the actual amount will differ.

NEW INITIATIVES

Exploration Development Incentive

The government has introduced in the 2014-15 Budget a new incentive to encourage mining exploration, to apply to activity from 1 July 2014. Exploration activity will be almost exclusively carried out in regional areas. The initiative has capped funding of \$100 million over the three years 2014-15 to 2016-17, delivering on the government's 2013 election commitment. The purpose of the scheme is to encourage investment in junior mineral exploration companies. This will boost green-fields mineral exploration activity. Eligible companies will be able to distribute exploration credits to their shareholders, based on relevant expenditure rules. Australian resident shareholders will then be entitled to a refundable tax offset for the exploration credits they receive.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Regional Tax Assistance Programme

Currently, the ATO has a Regional Tax Assistance Programme which is an initiative committed to improving compliance within Australia's regional communities, and works with small businesses, individuals and intermediaries to build and sustain willing participation in the tax and superannuation systems. The programme has around 65 staff based in regional centres around Australia who work to build and maintain strong relationships in their communities.

Working collaboratively with other government agencies, the programme has contributed to Australian Government Mobile Service visits, and created opportunities for taxpayers in regional areas to meet with service providers face-to-face. It also supports regional and remote centres to provide ATO products and publications for their local communities.

However, in response to drive for further efficiencies in its operation, the ATO is currently reviewing its leases in regional areas, and determining whether an ATO presence is still warranted, and if so, whether the ATO could retain a staffing presence without leasing its own premises.

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

The Department of Veterans' Affairs provides support to veterans, war widows and widowers, serving members, former defence force members and their families, and eligible members of the Australian Federal Police who have served overseas. Its client base is located across regional and metropolitan areas in Australia, as well as overseas.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs provides a comprehensive range of services to clients across the country. Clients can access support through Veterans' Access Network locations, outreach services and online. A range of programmes are available to help clients to access health and community services in regional locations.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs' vision is to be a responsive and flexible organisation, efficiently delivering high quality, connected services to all generations of veterans and the wider veteran community.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs strives to be efficient and responsive to the needs of the changing demographic of the veteran community. It is dedicated to helping clients, particularly contemporary veterans, to access vital support as early as possible to help with rehabilitation and recovery, as well as focusing on aged care for veterans and war widows and widowers.

In 2014-15 the Department of Veterans' Affairs will continue to prepare for and implement the Centenary of Anzac commemorations that will occur from 2014 to 2018. During this time the nation will remember not only the Anzacs who served at Gallipoli and on the Western Front, but all Australians who have served in uniform across a century of service. This will be a national commemoration and will encompass domestic, including regional areas, and international activities.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Anzac Centenary Travelling Exhibition

The Australian War Memorial is to deliver the Anzac Centenary Travelling Exhibition on behalf of the Australian Government as part of the Anzac Centenary programme of events. The project is being progressed utilising the \$10.0 million seed funding provided by the Australian Government.

The Travelling Exhibition will be based on an exhibition space within a purpose-designed pavilion that will be part museum, part experiential and provide a focus for commemoration of the Anzac Centenary and Century of Service. The Travelling Exhibition will tell the stories of Australians' experiences during the First World War using artefacts from the period, recreations and factually-based stories. The visitor experience will be enhanced through the use of digital technologies.

There will be a strong focus on local communities. A visit from the Travelling Exhibition will be a catalyst for local commemorative events and engagement. There will be scope for communities to add local content to personalise the visit. There will also be a strong focus on education and bringing the stories from 100 years ago to life for all.

Funded by the Anzac Centenary Public Fund the exhibition will tour by road to regional and urban communities in Australian States and Territories from late 2015 to late 2018. The Anzac Centenary Public Fund relies on contributions and gifts from the corporate sector and the public.

The Travelling Exhibition will give Australians a chance to engage in the stories of the First World War and the Century of Service, contribute to the shared journey and take something very special away from the experience.

***Saluting Their Service* Commemorations Programme Grants**

Saluting Their Service is the Australian Government's commemorations programme.

Under *Saluting Their Service* funding is available for projects, including events and activities that are directly commemorative of Australia's involvement in war, conflict and peace operations.

On average approximately 500 grants are approved each year in most electorates across Australia, many in regional areas (in 2012-13, 355 grants were provided to 116 of the 150 electorates across Australia).

Anzac Centenary Local Grants Programme

The Australian Government's Anzac Centenary Local Grants Programme assists and encourages communities across Australia to undertake their own Anzac Centenary projects that commemorate the service and sacrifice of Australian servicemen and women in the First World War.

The Programme was announced on 24 April 2012. The Department of Veterans' Affairs is responsible for administering the Programme.

The Anzac Centenary Local Grants Programme is a key element of the Australian Government's Anzac Centenary programme through which funding of up to \$125,000 is made available for each Federal Member of Parliament to support projects in their electorate commemorating the First World War. This funding includes the additional \$25,000 allocated to each electorate as part of the current government's election promise.

Guidelines and application forms are available from www.anzaccentenary.gov.au

Honouring Our War Dead

The Australian Government allocated \$8.1 million over the period July 2012 to June 2014 to support the refurbishment of Australian official commemorations for war dead and other eligible veterans' memorials in Australia and overseas as part of the Anzac Centenary Programme.

As part of this measure, funding will be provided to refurbish official graves and plaques in cemeteries, crematoria and Gardens of Remembrance; undertake structural works to war cemeteries; and repair associated infrastructure. The funding will allow the Office of Australian War Graves to ensure that these places of commemoration, including the additional official commemorations, are maintained to a high standard.

Many of the individual graves and plaques to be refurbished within this proposal are located in rural and regional Australia. The Office of Australian War Graves is responsible for maintaining over 308,000 official commemorations located in over 2,000 sites cemeteries around Australia, including 72 Commonwealth War Graves Commission war cemeteries and war plots.

