

Regional Australia – A Stronger Economy
Delivering Stronger Regions
2018-19

Statement by

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8 May 2018

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ISBN: 978-1-925531-48-0

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Printed by CanPrint Communications Pty Ltd

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FOREWORD

With a third of Australians living, working and raising their families outside our capital cities, regional Australia is at the forefront of this Government's agenda. And with more people calling regional Australia home each year, it is clear that the growth of our nation will not all happen in the capital cities, but in our towns and regional cities.

Regional Australia has long been the engine room of the economy with around 30 per cent of our annual GDP generated by our regions. Rural and regional Australia is home to the highest quality food, fibre and resources in the world and these make up 61 per cent of the goods Australia sells on the global market. Most of our iconic tourist attractions are in regional Australia and 43 cents out of every dollar spent by a tourist in Australia goes to a regional business.

Australia is in its 27th year of economic growth, which has seen 415,000 jobs created in 2017. Around a third of these jobs were created in the regions. This is a great result, but we need to keep working with local communities to ensure they continue to thrive.

The Liberal and Nationals Government is delivering on our vision for regional Australia. We are continuing to grow our regional economies, creating new and better paying jobs and giving families the opportunity to keep living and working in our regional communities.

Your access to world-class healthcare, high-quality education, 21st Century communications and transport connections should not be limited by your geographic location. This Government is increasing our investment in rural and regional Australia to help level the playing field between the regions and cities.

The 2018-19 Budget includes more than 500 initiatives, including over 100 new programs focused on creating jobs and supporting economic growth in Australia's regions.

With this Budget the Australian Government is continuing to back Australian business growth and investment across the nation. Reducing the tax burden on businesses will help them invest, grow, employ more Australians and pay higher wages. To further support small businesses and improve their cash flow, the Australian Government will extend the \$20,000 instant asset write-off for a further 12 months to 30 June 2019.

For the first time, the Government has committed to a decade-long \$75 billion Infrastructure Investment Pipeline for new and upgraded transport infrastructure projects, with the aim of increasing productivity, boosting local communities, connecting our regions and cities, and creating local jobs.

Of crucial significance is our investment in rail infrastructure, including the \$9.3 billion in equity and grant funding for Inland Rail, which will connect our farmers and our regional businesses, through the ports in Melbourne to Brisbane, to the world. During its construction, which is scheduled to commence in mid-2018, this project will support around 16,000 jobs. Once operational, it will provide faster, more efficient and more reliable connections for our regions to get their products to market and take advantage of the tremendous opportunities offered throughout Asia and beyond.

Through the Pipeline, we are making major commitments to road projects. Key investments include: \$3.3 billion to continue to improve safety, capacity and flood immunity on the Bruce Highway in Queensland and further improvements to the Pacific

Highway, including \$971 million towards the construction of a bypass of Coffs Harbour. The Coffs Harbour Bypass will increase amenity in this regional centre and enable safer and more efficient freight movements along the New South Wales north coast.

Our investment builds on existing commitments, including \$160 million to continue upgrading the Outback Way, which crosses Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland and new projects to address regional freight constraints, including \$155 million towards a new bridge across the Shoalhaven River at Nowra Bridge in New South Wales, and \$160 million for the Joy Baluch Bridge in South Australia. Other Pipeline projects in regional Australia include \$560 million to construct the Bunbury Outer Ring Road in Western Australia, \$180 million for the Central Arnhem Road and \$100 million for the Buntine Highway upgrades in the Northern Territory, and \$132 million to complete the Princes Highway East duplication from Traralgon to Sale in Victoria.

The Pipeline also includes an investment in Roads of Strategic Importance (ROSI). Under the ROSI scheme, we will invest \$3.5 billion to support upgrades to key road freight corridors in regional Australia.

ROSI will support a range of upgrades to important regional roads, including in Northern Australia, Tasmania and connections from regional New South Wales into the Australian Capital Territory. Investment in these routes will support our regional economies by better connecting farmers and regional businesses with new and existing domestic and international markets, while assisting our regional workforce to get to their jobs on time and home safely to spend time with their families. As these routes are also major tourist roads, upgrades will support the growing visitor economy in regional Australia.

The Government's investments in our regional communities build confidence, encourage private-sector investment and create jobs. That is why, in this Budget, the Australian Government has announced a further \$200 million to deliver a third round of the Building Better Regions Fund, bringing the total commitment for this program to \$641.6 million between 2017-18 and 2021-22. Recognising the importance of tourism infrastructure as a key driver of economic development, the Government will earmark up to \$45 million for tourism-related infrastructure projects in our regions.

This increased investment in the Building Better Regions Fund is complemented by the ongoing roll-out of the \$272.2 million Regional Growth Fund, which will unlock economic opportunities in our regions. An additional \$22.5 million will also be provided to deliver a fourth round of the Stronger Communities Programme, which has been successfully delivering new equipment and improved facilities for local organisations in our regions.

Our Government is committed to a practical, planned decentralisation agenda supporting the growth of our regional areas and connecting government agencies with the communities and citizens that they serve. A significant number of Australian public sector jobs are already being located in regional areas and, as part of its Decentralisation Agenda, the Government is continuing to move positions from Canberra, central Sydney and Melbourne. The Government will continue to identify and announce options for further decentralisation throughout 2018-19. Government investment in decentralisation is just one part of the puzzle and we continue to provide the conditions that encourage private sector businesses to take advantage of the wonderful opportunities outside our capital cities by relocating to the regions.

The 2018-19 Budget is also focussed on building Australian agriculture as the sector aims to grow towards its aspirational goal of being a \$100 billion industry by 2030. This Government has committed \$51.3 billion over four years to ensure Australia's continued growth and competitiveness in agriculture and food exports. These resources will help farmers and exporters seize opportunities in global food chains and build on our success in negotiating trade agreements with China, Japan and Korea, as well as the 11 nations that have signed-on to the Trans Pacific Partnership.

Access to secure water is critical to the productivity and sustainability of our primary industries and the communities which depend on them. Through the \$580 million National Water Infrastructure Development Fund and the \$2.0 billion National Water Infrastructure Loan Facility, the Government has committed \$614 million to build new water infrastructure, including in loan funding, which will provide secure and affordable water. This investment has seen construction commence on the Macalister Irrigation District modernisation, South West Loddon Pipeline projects in Victoria and the Northern Adelaide Irrigation Scheme in South Australia. We look forward to seeing work start on the \$394 million Myalup-Wellington project in Western Australia, the \$352 million Rookwood Weir in Queensland and the \$51 million Scottsdale Irrigation Scheme in Tasmania.

Reliable and affordable energy is of paramount importance across Australia, including in our regions. The Government is investing in nation-building infrastructure projects in the energy sector including Snowy 2.0 which will expand the original Snowy Mountains scheme with an additional 2,000 megawatts (MW) of capacity and 350,000MW hours of storage. It is expected to create up to 5,000 jobs and, by producing enough storage to power 500,000 homes for a week, it will assist in ensuring the affordability and stability of our electricity market.

Thriving modern economies depend on good communications infrastructure which is why the Government is continuing to roll out the National Broadband Network and fix mobile black spots across Australia. Through NBN Co, the Government will provide 2.5 million regional premises with fixed-line broadband, 600,000 premises with access to fixed wireless services and 400,000 premises with access to improved satellite services. In addition, the \$220.0 million Mobile Black Spot Program is continuing to better connect regional communities and businesses by building 765 new base stations in places with poor or no coverage.

As well as investing in better infrastructure, the Government is working to improve services in regional Australia. A key theme in this year's Budget is the commitment to enhancing access to education and health services for people in regional and rural Australia.

The Stronger Rural Health Strategy will deliver the most comprehensive rural health package which will improve access to doctors, nurses and other health care services for all Australians, especially those in the regions.

As part of this strategy, the Government will establish a Murray-Darling Medical School Network to support end-to-end training in the regions and improve the distribution of the medical workforce. The Network will be comprised of six university medical schools in the regions to ensure more Australian-trained doctors will be able to train and practice in regional areas.

To further support the supply of doctors in rural and regional areas, the Government will provide \$793.9 million over four years from 2018-19 to the Rural Health and Multidisciplinary Training Program. The program funds a network of 18 rural clinical schools, 15 University Departments of Rural Health, six dental schools which support extended rural placements and 26 regional training hubs.

The Australian Government is providing \$28 million to expand the availability of sub-bachelor (including enabling) places to allow greater access to higher education for rural and regional students. Around 500 additional Commonwealth-supported places will be provided to regional institutions from 2019. The Government will also provide \$14 million for an additional 500 places for students at regional study hubs by 2022.

Further, the Government will provide an additional \$123.5 million for additional Commonwealth supported places at the University of the Sunshine Coast, the University of Tasmania and Southern Cross University.

An additional 2,300 rural, regional and remote students will benefit thanks to easier access to Youth Allowance for tertiary education announced in the 2018-19 Budget. The Government is expanding the number of regional students eligible to be considered 'independent' under the regional workforce participation rules.

Under the Quality Schools reform package, the Government is implementing a new needs-based funding model. Commonwealth funding for students in regional and remote Australia will grow from \$3.9 billion in 2017 to \$6.8 billion in 2027 – an increase of 75 per cent. Per student annual funding for regional, rural and remote students will grow by 4.9% over that period.

In order to ensure regional and rural students have access to better educational opportunities in the communities in which they live, the Government is providing funding to develop alternative employment-based pathways for high achieving graduates from a variety of fields to become teachers. This measure is aimed at increasing the number and distribution of quality teachers in Australia.

The Government is supporting communities and addressing inequalities in regional Australia by creating more job opportunities and ensuring better services are available. The 2018-19 Budget is investing \$18.4 million in Regional Employment Trials to commence in ten selected regions on 1 October 2018. Under these trials, employment facilitators will work with local stakeholders to design and implement employment solutions specific to local problems. To assist with this task, \$1 million in grant funding will be available in each region to support projects which help job seekers connect to and prepare for local employment opportunities.

We are also supporting employment opportunities for our regions through targeted programs such as the \$10.3 million Stronger Transitions package. This intensive assistance package will support workers in industries and regions significantly impacted by structural change to help them transition to future jobs from 1 July 2018.

The Liberal and Nationals Government will deliver childcare reform by investing an additional \$2.5 billion to provide more support for families around Australia. The centrepiece of the new package is the new Child Care Subsidy, which will commence from 2 July 2018. Support for rural and remote families is an important feature of these reforms.

In addition, our \$1.2 billion Child Care Safety Net aims to give the most vulnerable children a strong start. An equivalent of the \$61.8 million allocation under the Budget Based Funded (BBF) program is being set aside for transitioning BBF services, which predominantly operate in rural and remote communities.

Looking after our older Australians is a priority for this Government. We will invest around \$40 million in capital grants over four years from 2019-20 for aged care facilities in regional, rural and remote Australia and to improve access for older people living in these locations. Funding will support critical upgrades and expanding existing aged care facilities. Eligible aged care providers will be able to apply for a one-off grant in late 2018-19.

The Liberal and Nationals Government is committed to delivering the infrastructure and services regional Australians need. The depth and range of measures in the 2018-19 Budget reflects this Government's commitment to support sustainable regional communities where our children and grandchildren want to live, learn and work. It demonstrates the Government's determination to maximise social and economic opportunities for all Australians, wherever they live. Our regional plan is focused on building and connecting local communities, boosting local economies and creating local jobs.

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KEY AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA BY PORTFOLIO

AGRICULTURE AND WATER RESOURCES

The Agriculture and Water Resources portfolio includes the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources and nine portfolio bodies. The portfolio works with national and international governments and industry partners to grow the value of agricultural trade, enhance productivity and to reduce risk to the agriculture sector.

The Agriculture and Water Resources portfolio has a diverse role as a policy adviser to government, researcher, program administrator, market access negotiator and regulator. The portfolio's work contributes to increasing, improving and maintaining market access for our primary producers, encouraging agricultural productivity in our primary industries, and supporting sustainable resource management to benefit primary producers and the community.

Australian agriculture, fisheries and forestry are multi-billion dollar industries that benefit from our regulation, research, policies and programs to improve their productivity, competitiveness and sustainability.

We manage biosecurity risks to the environment and to human, animal and plant health by ensuring the safe movement of millions of people, vessels and aircraft in to and out of Australia. We support Australia's ability to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from pest and disease incursions.

Australia's water is critical to the future of agriculture and the wellbeing of the environment and our communities. We work to improve the health of rivers and freshwater systems, to ensure the sustainable, efficient and productive management and use of water resources. We lead the Australian Government's contribution to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and support regional economies and the environment through large-scale investment to improve returns to irrigators and the community, while providing water for the environment.

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources has a strong presence in regional Australia, with more than 11 per cent of its employees based in regional areas. These officers undertake a range of functions in support of agricultural industries, including biosecurity services, plant and animal pest and disease monitoring, surveillance and management of water programs.

In 2018-19, the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority will continue its transition to its new location in Armidale, following moves by AgriFutures Australia, the Fisheries and Grains Research and Development Corporations, and the Murray Darling Basin Authority. These moves are an important element of the Australian Government's agenda to better support regional Australia by relocating agencies outside of the capital cities so they are closer to the communities they serve.

NEW INITIATIVES

Enhancing Australia's Biosecurity System

The 2018–19 Budget includes \$101.6 million over four years for Australia's national biosecurity system. This forms part of the Australian Government's commitment to implementing the recommendations of the Dr Wendy Craik's report, *Priorities for Australia's biosecurity system: An independent review of the capacity of the national biosecurity system and its underpinning intergovernmental agreement*. This investment will deliver four key initiatives to help protect our favourable pest and disease status:

- trialling new detection technologies at the border
- strengthening priority pest and disease planning and response
- improved targeted assurance, verification and enforcement for biosecurity and imported food

By doing this work Australia's agricultural industries, global trade markets and our unique environment and way of life will be better protected from the world's worst pest and diseases.

Growing Australian Agricultural Exports

The 2018–19 Budget includes \$51.3 million over four years to ensure Australia's continued growth and competitiveness in agriculture and food exports. The funding will extend five agricultural counsellor positions in Vietnam, Malaysia, the Middle East, China and Thailand and fund a further six positions in key export markets. The funding will expand the overseas network to 22 positions in total.

These resources help farmers and exporters seize opportunities in global food chains through growing exports and accessing new markets. Effort will also be focused on maintaining and improving current market access arrangements for our agricultural products in an increasingly complex, competitive and evolving trading environment.

The program will build on gains made through the *Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper*. The funding will ensure that improvements in trade arrangements and access into a large number of markets continues to be achieved through free trade agreements and subsequent work to gain technical market access by providing science based assurances to importing countries about the food safety, pest and disease status of Australia's exported agricultural products and efforts to reduce non-tariff barriers (licensing, labelling and registration requirements).

National Forestry Industry Plan

The 2018–19 Budget includes \$20 million over four years to deliver on the Prime Minister's commitment to establish a National Forestry Industry Plan to underpin growth in Australia's renewable timber and wood-fibre industry.

The plan will include actions that encourage growth in the forestry industry which support jobs in regional and rural Australia. This in turn will assist industry to maintain its competitiveness, continue to adapt and respond to pressures and seize opportunities arising from globalisation, transformative technologies and evolving market preferences.

The program will positively impact on the forestry, forest products and wood fibre industries across Australia, and the value chains and regional communities that rely on these industries. Small forest growers will be supported with both research and advice, while corporate forest growers and the processing industry will be supported with additional research.

Managing Fruit Fly in Tasmania

The 2018–19 Budget includes \$20 million to assist with the management of the fruit fly outbreak in northern Tasmania. The funding is part of the Australian Government’s efforts to eradicate fruit fly from Tasmania and protect vital industries and local jobs. The investment will enable the Tasmanian Government to undertake further work as part of the biosecurity response, including surveillance and work to prove areas are fruit fly free.

The fruit industry in Tasmania directly employs over 1,000 people and accounts for nine per cent of people employed in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sector. Tasmania’s fruit fly Pest Free Area status is integral to its ability to export fruit to international markets.

This investment will help safeguard the state, industries, businesses and community from the impact of fruit fly and other serious biosecurity pests.

Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) – Digital Transformation

The 2018–19 Budget includes \$10.1 million over three years to deliver modern, digital business systems to transform the APVMA into an efficient and effective regulator in regional Australia. It will also ensure that Australian farmers can have faster access to safer and more effective agricultural and veterinary chemicals, resulting in improved international competitiveness, productivity and agricultural outputs.

The proposal will support relocation of the APVMA to Armidale and will facilitate the establishment of a Centre of Agricultural Excellence. It will improve APVMA client experiences through better communications tools, online submissions and end-to-end management of applications. It will provide certainty in application and registration processes, improve timeframes for registering products and reducing the time taken to get products to market, improve transparency across the registration process with new, streamlined business systems, and deliver efficient, predictable and transparent assessments.

Established Pest Animals and Weed Management

The 2018–19 Budget will invest up to \$6.6 million in 2019–20 in research, development and extension, national coordination and key infrastructure to help better manage priority established pest animal and weed species. This will build on the Australian Government’s *Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper* funding to improve the management of established pest animals and weeds.

The program will provide Australian farmers with access to the most advanced technologies and practices to farm smarter and reduce the impact of pests and weeds. This funding will also continue to promote a shared responsibility and encourage co-investment from state and territory governments into research, development and extension activities for better pest animal and weed control and management.

Investment in innovative strategies to reduce the impact of pests and weeds will build on the foundations for a stronger Australian agriculture sector and regional economy, minimise impacts on local and regional communities, improve productivity and profitability on farms and help maintain and improve access to global markets.

Improved Access to Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals

The 2018–19 Budget extends the established program to improve access to agricultural and veterinary medicines that commenced in 2014–15.

The Budget provides a further \$6.3 million over two years for collaboration between farmers and chemical industries, for a grant scheme and support Australia’s involvement in international chemical access activities. This initiative seeks to address systemic barriers to ongoing chemical access.

This initiative will improve grower access to agricultural chemical technology to support farm business transformation (through diversification in crops) and strengthen farm business growth. A lack of access for Australian farm businesses to chemical pest control technology for speciality crops and emerging commodities (‘minor uses’) denies them the ability to benefit from changes in consumer wants (such as a more diversified diet) and growth possible through international trade. Improved access will also allow Australian trade to grow in these industries.

Seasonal Agricultural Labour Demand and Supply

The 2018–19 Budget will deliver improved understanding and data on seasonal agricultural labour needs. Access to reliable sources of appropriately skilled and seasonal labour in the agriculture and food industries is critical to the future competitiveness of Australia’s rural and regional economies. Better understanding the changing needs of the agricultural labour force will better inform targeted policy responses by government. This will support regional businesses gain access to the workers they need to grow.

Backed by \$4.7 million in new funding, an expanded supplementary survey by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) will collect data on labour expenditure, number and type of people employed on-farm, the mix of skills required by farm businesses (including seasonal and skilled workers) across different agricultural industries, as well as the challenges in recruiting and retaining employees. This analysis will help to inform employment and labour market programs and efforts to ensure rural and regional businesses can access the appropriate mix of seasonal and skilled workers to meet their future labour needs.

Indonesia-Australia Red Meat and Cattle Partnership

The 2018–19 Budget includes \$3.6 million to extend the Indonesia-Australia Red Meat and Cattle Partnership grants program for a further five years. The program will ensure the Partnership can continue to fund mutually beneficial projects for the Australia-Indonesia red meat and cattle sector. The program forms part of Australia’s broader long-term strategy with Indonesia, working to underpin Australia’s trade interests and increase Australia’s ability to influence Indonesian policy development and promote the liberalisation of trade and ease of trade restrictions across the sector.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Regional Investment Corporation

From 2018–19, the Regional Investment Corporation will deliver up to \$2.0 billion in Commonwealth farm business concessional loans and the \$2.0 billion National Water Infrastructure Loan Facility.

Establishing the Regional Investment Corporation will have a positive impact on regional Australia. The Regional Investment Corporation will streamline administration of farm business loan arrangements, to ensure they are delivered in a nationally consistent and efficient manner, as well as providing loans to state and territory governments for the construction of nationally significant water infrastructure.

Red Imported Fire Ants Eradication Program

Red Imported Fire Ants (RIFA) are one of the world's worst invasive species due to their devastating economic, environmental and social impacts. If RIFA were to establish in Australia, it would create costs for the public health system, schools, parks and wildlife, transport and roads, sport and recreation and industries at the local, state and federal level. Regional biodiversity and ecosystems would also be irreparably damaged and quality of life in communities lowered.

From 2017–18, the Australian Government is investing an additional \$212.5 million (indexed) over ten years in the south east Queensland RIFA eradication program. This funding is in addition to resourcing already provided through the National Partnership on Pest and Disease Preparedness and Response Programs and will intensify current RIFA eradication efforts with the aim of full eradication over 10 years.

Centre for Invasive Species Solutions

This program delivers on the Australian Government's election commitment to invest \$20 million over five years from 2017–18, for research, development and extension activities aimed at the management of invasive species, by transitioning the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre to a new Centre for Invasive Species Solutions.

The program provides continuity for and builds on the key work the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre undertook in invasive species management, following the conclusion of Cooperative Research Centre Program funding, through the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science in June 2017. The \$20 million investment under this proposal is expected to leverage up to \$70 million cash and in-kind from universities, state governments, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation and industry partners.

Immediate Assistance Fund

Preventing or stamping out new and emerging threats is easier and more cost-effective than managing a pest, weed or disease that has established and spread.

Under the *Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper*, the Australian Government is investing \$50 million over four years from 2015–16 to respond rapidly and effectively to eradicate potentially devastating pests, weeds and diseases. This includes an ongoing Immediate Assistance Fund that, in the event of an incursion, can assist affected

jurisdictions and industry by delivering experts and equipment on the ground as soon as possible.

National Partnership on Pest and Disease Preparedness and Response Programs

The Australian Government will continue to support the eradication of exotic animal and plant pests and diseases that, if allowed to establish and spread, would have serious economic and environmental impacts. Through the National Partnership on Pest and Disease Preparedness and Response Programs, the Australian Government will provide up to \$161.5 million over five years from 2017–18 to support nationally agreed eradication responses. The Australian Government is involved owing to the potential implications for biodiversity, market access for agricultural production and the need to protect nationally significant environmental assets.

Livestock Exports Global Assurance Program

The Australian Government is contributing \$8.3 million from 2017–18 over four years to its election commitment to support the development by industry of the Livestock Exports Global Assurance Program. This program will be an assessment and certification assurance system that enables livestock exporters to meet their existing regulatory requirements under the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS) through a third-party in a more effective and cost-efficient way.

National Landcare Program

The Australian Government is investing \$1.1 billion over seven years from 2016–17 in the next phase of the National Landcare Program (Landcare). Landcare will continue to improve natural resource management to protect Australia's iconic places, plants and animals, secure agricultural productivity gains and farm-gate returns and strengthen regional economies. The funding will ensure the valuable work of Landcare groups and Indigenous communities delivering on-ground biodiversity and sustainable agriculture outcomes continues.

Landcare includes \$134.0 million over six years from 2017–18 for the Smart Farms program, which includes:

- Smart Farming Partnerships, under which \$60.0 million is available over six years from 2017–18, with grants ranging from \$250,000 to \$4.0 million to support the development, trialling and implementation of new and innovative tools that protect and improve the condition of natural resources, in particular soils and vegetation.
- Smart Farms Small Grants, under which \$50.0 million is available over six years from 2017–18, with grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$100,000 to develop and extend new tools and technologies to support small community and industry groups. These grants will be implemented to increase land managers' awareness, knowledge, capability and adoption of tools and management practices that will deliver more productive and profitable agriculture, fishing, aquaculture and forestry industries.
- Building Landcare Community and Capacity, under which \$24.0 million is available over six years from 2017–18 for Landcare Australia and the National Landcare Network, to support the sharing of knowledge and achievements in natural resource management and promote community leadership.

The National Landcare Program also includes \$450.0 million over five years from 2018-19 for Regional Land Partnerships. This component of the program will be delivered jointly by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources and the Department of Environment and Energy to deliver national priorities at a regional and local level.

Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper

The *Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper* was launched on 4 July 2015. From 2015–16, the Australian Government has been investing \$4.0 billion in our farmers and delivering on the 2013 election commitment. White Paper measures focus on five key areas:

- a fairer go for farm businesses
- building 21st century water, transport and communication infrastructure
- strengthening our approach to drought and risk management
- a smarter approach to farming
- accessing premium markets.

A Fairer Go for Farm Businesses

The Australian Government is helping farmers achieve a better return at the farm gate in the following ways:

- A total of \$11.4 million over four years from 2015–16 has been committed to boost the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission engagement with the agricultural sector. Since the establishment of an Agriculture Unit and the appointment of Commissioner Mick Keogh in February 2016, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has substantially increased its engagement with the sector. This will help encourage fair-trading and improved competition in agricultural supply chains and ensure issues are dealt with swiftly.
- The Australian Government delivered on its \$13.8 million commitment to a two-year pilot program to provide farmers with knowledge and materials on co-operatives and other forms of collaboration. This includes education tools and resources, customised expert support, and support to farmer groups working to get their collaborative project off the ground.
- The Productivity Commission has provided final reports to the Australian Government about their inquiries into reducing regulation in agriculture and in the marine fisheries and aquaculture industries.
- The Government has implemented improved country of origin labelling information, which commenced on 1 July 2016 with a two-year transition period for businesses to adjust. This will give consumers clearer information on the origin of their food.
- Changes have been made to the income tax averaging arrangements to allow primary producers to return to income averaging ten years after they opted out. Primary producers who previously opted out of income tax averaging for 2006–07, or an earlier financial year, were automatically reinstated into income tax averaging for the 2016-17 income year onwards.

- From 1 July 2016, farmers have been able to double their Farm Management Deposits to \$800,000 and banks have been permitted to allow farmers to use Farm Management Deposits to offset for their interest costs.
- Agricultural users of agricultural and veterinary chemicals will get access to newer, better farm chemicals more quickly than in the past, and will get improved access to new uses of existing chemicals. This will make their businesses more competitive by reducing costs and improve sustainability. See Better Regulation of Agricultural Chemicals and Veterinary Medicines for further detail.

Strengthening Our Approach to Drought and Risk Management

Drought is one of the biggest challenges farmers face and can have a significant impact on agricultural output, productivity and farm incomes. The Australian Government is planning ahead and thinking innovatively when it comes to water infrastructure. Government initiatives include:

- Farmers having more accurate, local and frequent seasonal forecasts to assist with making decisions as part of the Australian Government's commitment of \$3.3 million over four years from 2015–16 for improved seasonal forecasting.
- Eligible farm businesses being able to access a one-off rebate for the costs of obtaining independent and professional advice to apply for new insurance policies to assist with drought management and other production and market risks. Rebates are for half the costs incurred by eligible farm businesses, up to a maximum of \$2,500.
- Providing access to \$250.0 million each year in drought loans over ten years from 2016–17. See Farm Business Concessional Loans Scheme and Regional Investment Corporation for further detail.
- Farmers and their partners receiving the Farm Household Allowance receive additional assistance in their third year of payment through an increase in case management and the activity supplement. See Farm Household Allowance for further detail.
- Farmers being able to draw down their Farm Management Deposits within 12 months without losing their claimed taxation concessions if they have been affected by drought.
- Committing \$35.0 million over four years from 2015–16 to the Drought Communities Program, which is providing support to 23 drought-affected local shire councils across Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. This involves shovel-ready projects that have created job opportunities and provides short-term help in communities that are suffering economic downturn due to drought. This program is led by the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities.
- Providing \$25.8 million over four years from 2015–16, to help state and territory governments deal with the impact of feral animals and weeds in drought-stressed regions.

A Smarter Approach to Farming

The agriculture sector needs access to the most advanced technologies and practices to continue to 'farm smarter.'

The Australian Government has developed clearer farmer-oriented research, development and extension priorities that will direct levy funds to areas that will improve farm gate returns.

\$100.0 million has been provided from 2015–16 to extend the Rural Research and Development for Profit Program to 2021–22, meaning farmers will benefit from getting research out of the laboratory and onto the farm, which is key to productivity growth. See the Rural Research and Development for Profit Program for more detail.

A research boost over three years will be provided from 2016–17 to the export fodder industry to match the new agricultural production levy for exported fodder, as well as an increase in the matchable voluntary contribution rate for Forest and Wood Products Australia.

The Australian Government is providing support for research, development and extension in small industries through \$1.2 million over three years from 2016–17 for the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (trading as AgriFutures Australia).

The Australian Government will be better placed to tackle pest and disease incidents, and to enable future containment and eradication programs to be put in place, with \$50.0 million committed over four years from 2015–16 to boost Australia’s emergency pest and disease eradication and national response capability.

Farmers will have access to better tools and control methods for managing pest (including feral) animals and weeds, as well as support from the Australian Government for pest and weed management through a \$50.0 million commitment over four years from 2015–16, to manage established pest animals and weeds.

Accessing Premium Markets

Improving international trade will grow farm businesses and increase financial returns for farmers.

The Australian Government has committed \$30.8 million over four years from 2015–16 to break down technical barriers to trade, in turn helping farmers and food processors to achieve increased returns from increased security of existing and new market access. This has included appointing five new agricultural counsellors who have been working in Australia’s key export markets to assist farmers grow their markets.

Effective biosecurity protects our agricultural industries and the community from the impact of exotic pests and diseases, and supports our access to overseas markets. The Australian Government is investing almost \$200.0 million over four years from 2015–16 to improve biosecurity surveillance and analysis to better target critical biosecurity risks, including in northern Australia.

Sound traceability systems help to ensure markets remain open, thereby increasing access and returns to farmers. The Australian Government has committed \$12.4 million from 2015–16 over four years to modernise traceability systems, to verify integrity of products and improve access to overseas markets.

Beef Australia 2018 and Beef Week

The Australian Government has committed \$3.0 million from 2016–17 over three years to support the next Beef Australia event in May 2018. The event is Australia’s largest trade show for the beef and cattle industries, held once every three years in Rockhampton, Queensland. It showcases the Australian beef industry to domestic and international trading partners. The last event held in 2015 attracted over 30,000 visitors including over 1,000 international visitors. The event includes a series of industry based seminars, trade shows and cattle competitions. Through its Handshakes program it provides a business matching between Australian businesses and international customers.

This program is supported by Austrade, Meat and Livestock Australia, and Trade and Investment Queensland. The Australian Government has also committed \$1.0 million over four years from 2016–17 to support Beef Week, a celebration of the Australian beef industry held annually in Casino, New South Wales.

Biosecurity Integrated Information System and Analytics

The Biosecurity Integrated Information System and Analytics are *Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper* initiatives that will allow for the collection, collation and analysis of information to support biosecurity activities. The Australian Government has provided \$15.9 million from 2016-17 for four years for analytics and \$30.9 million from 2016-17 to 2019-20.

The two initiatives with a combined investment of \$46.8 million will improve the quality and completeness of the data collected by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources to support biosecurity activities and improve decision making. These initiatives will deliver new applications to improve the management of biosecurity risks through the development of an integrated biosecurity system for the collection, collation, storage and analysis of information. The funds will support the replacement of the functionality of some legacy border systems, improve the Department’s capabilities in biosecurity operations and the management of pest and disease threats. It will also develop an advanced analytics capability for biosecurity. The Biosecurity Integrated Information System and Analytics initiative will improve the identification and management of risks offshore, at the border, and during emergency responses onshore. It will support more responsive development of biosecurity policy and inform better decision making.

Australia’s favourable pest status underpins our ability to maintain or gain access to overseas markets for our agricultural produce. This investment will enable the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources to better demonstrate pest and disease status to support agricultural exports and the development of biosecurity and trade policy. This will ensure that Australia keeps pace with any changing requirements of our trading partners and support Australian exporters to take full advantage of new agricultural trade deals.

Commonwealth Water Functions

The Australian Government is providing \$398.0 million over three years to 2019–20 for statutory functions and institutions established by the *Water Act 2007* to implement the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and deliver on the Australian Government’s broader water reform agenda. The continuation of funding for Commonwealth water functions is

critical for the long-term viability of farmers and regional and rural communities in the Murray-Darling Basin and across Australia.

Ongoing funding has been provided for the Australian Government's contribution to Murray-Darling Basin joint programs and the work of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, which contributes to the sustainability of Murray-Darling Basin communities by investing in major water infrastructure and maintaining existing River Murray assets.

Funding for water policy functions within the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources is provided for the Murray-Darling Basin and in other areas where the Australian Government has an important role in water policy. These activities provide effective national management of water issues which underpin key economic activities, including water and food security and export capability and the ongoing health of ecological systems that protect biodiversity, river health and recreational industries.

Commodity Milk Price Index

The Australian Government is providing up to \$2.0 million over four years from 2016-17 to develop a Commodity Milk Price Index to provide greater transparency on domestic and global dairy prices to support dairy farmers.

The dairy industry provides employment for around 42,000 people Australia-wide and creates exports valued at \$3.0 billion. For regional Australia, the dairy industry is a key employer and contributor to regional economies and towns. The delivery of a milk price index will positively impact dairying regions by assisting in improving on-farm planning and decision making, which contributes to the profitability of farms.

Leadership in Agricultural Industries Fund

The Australian Government is providing \$5.0 million over two years from 2017-18 for the Leadership in Agricultural Industries Fund, a program that supports initiatives to develop leadership capacity and capability within agricultural industries. This is assisting farm leaders to advocate agricultural and rural issues to the Australian community, government and other stakeholders. The Leadership in Agricultural Industries Fund also works to build skills at the grass roots level, recognising the continuing need for leadership support and mentoring in the agriculture sector. It delivers grants to industry representative bodies under guidelines that allow applicants to describe their needs and outline how the grant could address those requirements.

National Institute for Forest Products Innovation

The Australian Government is providing \$4.0 million over five years from 2016-17 to support the establishment of a National Institute for Forest Products Innovation. This measure delivers on the 2016 election commitment to establish research hubs both at the University of Tasmania campus in Launceston and in Mount Gambier, South Australia.

Together with the Australian Government contributions, confirmed matching funding from the Tasmanian and South Australian Governments, as well as possible matching from industry, totals \$12.0 million over five years for new forestry research through the National Institute for Forest Innovation. This investment will help boost opportunities for jobs and growth in the forest products industry into the future. The National Institute for Forest Products Innovation will provide additional research and development across

Australia to investigate innovation in forest management, timber processing, wood fibre recovery, advanced manufacturing and the bio-economy.

Northern Australia Rice Industry

The Australian Government is providing \$4.0 million over four years from 2016–17 for investment in a research and development program to assist the development of the rice industry in northern Australia. The Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (trading as AgriFutures) is administering the program.

The *Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia* outlined the need for further investment in agricultural research and development in northern Australia to increase competitiveness and productivity, and meet export demand from growing Asian markets. The Northern Australia Rice Industry measure is delivering research and development that is tailored to growing conditions in northern Australia and is needed to help establish a productive and profitable northern rice industry.

Establishing a rice industry in northern Australia is expected to have positive economic and social impacts on businesses, community organisations and individuals across northern Australia. It will allow farmers to diversify and improve their ability to undertake productive, profitable and sustainable enterprises by providing a lucrative alternative crop to traditional northern crops like sugar. It will strengthen Australia's rice exports by allowing the Australian rice industry to meet the existing demand for Australian rice on international markets.

Support for Recreational and Commercial Fishing Peak Bodies

The Australian Government is committed to managing Australia's fisheries to ensure that both commercial and recreational fishers can sustainably access our shared fisheries resources. To deliver on its 2016 election commitment to strengthen the voice of recreational and Indigenous fishers, the Australian Government has introduced amendments to fisheries legislation that will improve opportunities for recreational fishers to contribute to the management of Commonwealth fisheries.

The Australian Government is also establishing a National Recreational Fishing Council to provide advice on policy development and implementation. A national recreational fishing survey in 2017, the first since 2001, has provided important socio-economic data on recreational fishing. The Australian Government has provided grant funding of \$0.5 million over four years to 30 June 2018, to the Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation, to develop and promote sustainable fishing practices.

Export and Regional Wine Support Package

The Export and Regional Wine Support Package will provide Wine Australia with \$50.0 million over four years from 2016–17 to fund a range of initiatives to promote Australian wine and Australian wine tourism both domestically and overseas.

The package includes four distinct programs:

- investment for marketing campaigns in the United States and China (\$32.0 million)
- building the capability and capacity of grape and wine businesses to capture export and tourism opportunities, including a wine exports grants scheme for current and new exporters to China and the United States (\$3.0 million)

- state-based and competitive grants to develop exciting wine tourism experiences and attract international tourists (\$10 million)
- transforming cider businesses by building knowledge of potential export markets and developing improved understanding for accessing these markets (\$0.5 million).

Wine Australia was provided with \$4.0 million to administer the package.

This package will directly benefit regional wine producers by improving domestic and international wine tourism. These activities, along with broader marketing and promotional opportunities, will help to drive exports of Australian wine and take advantage of recent free trade agreements in key markets.

Wine Tourism and Cellar Door Grants

The Wine Tourism and Cellar Door Grant will provide wine producers who exceed their wine equalisation tax rebate cap to access a grant of up to \$100,000 for their cellar door sales. The grant will be available from 2019–20 and the program will be capped at \$10.0 million per year. Wine tourism is an important part of many regional economies. The grant is expected to have a positive economic and social impact on wine producers and tourism operators in regional Australia. It will encourage producers to invest in and build winery cellar doors, which may lead to more investment in tourism opportunities.

Rural Research and Development for Profit Program

The Rural Research and Development for Profit Program provides \$180.5 million over eight years to 2021–22, to the rural research and development corporations for collaborative research to improve productivity and profitability at the farm-gate.

Grant funding of almost \$114.7 million has been provided to date, matched by almost \$170.0 million in cash and in-kind contributions from successful applicants and their partners. This includes grant funding of \$26.7 million for 12 projects under round one, \$52.2 million for 17 projects under round two and \$35.8 million for seven projects under round three. Round four is expected to open for applications in 2018.

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 is through the 15 rural research and development corporations. The Australian Government will provide over \$300.0 million in matching contributions to the rural research and development corporations in 2018–19. These investments are complemented by funding to Cooperative Research Centres, universities, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation and other departmental programs.

The 15 rural research and development corporations commission research for the benefit of the industries that they service and the Australian community in general. The research focuses on strategic priorities, such as 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 research and development corporations contributes significantly to the strengthening of the economic diversity of regional Australia. Each research and development

corporation has developed five-year strategic plans and, during 2018-19, each corporation will continue to advance their strategic goals.

Farm Business Concessional Loans Scheme

Under the *Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper*, the Australian Government made available \$250.0 million in loans each year over ten years, starting in 2016-17. As part of this measure, the Farm Business Concessional Loans Scheme opened on 1 November 2016 with \$250.0 million available in each of 2016-17 and 2017-18. The scheme offered two types of loans in 2016-17, which are also available in 2017-18:

- Drought Assistance Concessional Loans, which are available to assist eligible farm businesses in need of financial assistance to manage, recover from and prepare for droughts and maintain prospects for long-term commercial viability.
- Dairy Recovery Concessional Loans, which are available to assist eligible dairy farm businesses affected by the retrospective decisions of Murray Goulburn, Fonterra and National Dairy Products to reduce farm-gate milk prices towards the end of 2015-16.

Loans can be used for debt restructuring, or providing new debt for operating expenses, drought recovery and preparedness or for productivity enhancement activities. Loan terms are a maximum of 10 years. Loan amounts are limited to a maximum of \$1.0 million with conditions applying.

In 2017-18, the Australian Government extended the eligibility of the Farm Business Concessional Loans Scheme to include Business Improvement Concessional Loans. Business Improvement Concessional Loans are available to assist eligible Farm Household Allowance recipients who have, or will have exhausted their 1,095-days of entitlement on or before 30 June 2018 to continue to improve their farm businesses and become financially self-reliant. These loans are available for debt restructuring purposes only.

The Farm Business Concessional Loans Scheme will close for applications on 30 June 2018.

Farm Household Allowance

The Australian Government recognises that farmers may experience significant financial hardship for a range of reasons – not just during drought. The Farm Household Allowance is an uncapped, demand-driven program that provides eligible farmers and their partners who are experiencing financial hardship with assistance and support to improve their long-term financial position.

Through the Farm Household Allowance, eligible applicants can access household income support, paid at the same rate as Newstart Allowance (or Youth Allowance, if under 22 years of age). The Farm Household Allowance is administered by the Department of Human Services.

As part of this program, recipients have access to case management services and a financial supplement of up to \$3,000 to help them to undertake activities to improve their financial self-reliance. As announced in the *Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper*, from 1 July 2016 Farm Household Allowance recipients who are in their final (third) year of payment have access to an additional \$1,000 for high-value activities and

increased case management to assist their transition off payment before their entitlement ceases.

Rural Financial Counselling Service

The Australian Government is continuing the *Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper* measure to fund additional rural financial counsellors to meet increased demands on the Rural Financial Counselling Service, during periods of drought, at a cost of \$7.1 million over four years to 2019–20. This support is in addition to the Australian Government’s ongoing investment for the Rural Financial Counselling Service, which is \$14.7 million in 2017–18.

The Rural Financial Counselling Service provides free financial counselling to farmers, fishing enterprises, forestry growers and harvesters, and small, related businesses suffering financial hardship. There are 12 service providers across Australia that employ rural financial counsellors to assist clients in need. The Rural Financial Counselling Service is funded by the Australian Government and state and Northern Territory governments.

Drought conditions often lead to an increased number of people in rural areas in financial distress and this funding allows eligible clients to access prompt and individualised assistance to assess their business situation.

Encouraging Investment by the Clean Energy Finance Corporation in Agriculture

Through the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, the Australian Government is delivering on its election commitment to encourage investment by the Clean Energy Finance Corporation in the agriculture sector. Investment in suitable projects, which meet the Clean Energy Finance Corporation’s mandate to increase commercial investment in energy efficiency, renewable energy and low emissions technologies, can also provide opportunities for agricultural businesses to improve their energy efficiency, productivity, profitability and ultimately competitiveness at the farm gate.

Relocation of the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA)

The Australian Government is providing \$25.6 million over six years, from 2016–17 to relocate the APVMA from Canberra to Armidale, New South Wales. This measure will support the establishment of a Centre of Agricultural Excellence in Armidale, with the APVMA partnering with the University of New England and other specialist agricultural research centres to become an agriculture research hub.

The Australian Government is committed to boosting jobs and strengthening regional communities. Relocating the APVMA will deliver new local jobs, increase the availability of skilled employees and increase the diversity and resilience of the Armidale region’s economy. The move will reinforce the link between the regulator of agricultural and veterinary chemicals and the communities that use them. It also provides the opportunity for the APVMA to modernise its business processes to ensure the agency is best positioned to provide improved services into the future.

Better Regulation of Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals

In the *Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper*, the Australian Government committed to streamline the regulation of agricultural chemicals and veterinary medicines while retaining protections for the health and safety of humans, animals and the environment.

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources has conducted extensive consultation to inform the development of reforms and will continue to engage with stakeholders to identify longer-term reform opportunities. These will seek to provide a more modern, responsive and flexible regulatory environment that better aligns regulatory effort with risk.

The Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Legislation Amendment (Operational Efficiency) Bill 2017 was introduced to the Australian Parliament in 2017, to support the APVMA's operational efficiency, reduce unnecessary regulation, clarify ambiguities and remove redundant provisions.

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources is developing further amendments to primary legislation and regulations in consultation with the APVMA, industry and others. These amendments are expected to precede a comprehensive review of the agricultural and veterinary chemicals legislative framework.

These reforms will help provide farmers and other users with access to new agricultural chemicals and veterinary medicines more quickly, improving business productivity and sustainability.

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 the best returns in export markets. The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources 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
- engaging in bilateral and multilateral trade negotiations, including through Free Trade Agreements to remove barriers to trade and expand opportunities for Australian exports
- influencing international agricultural policies, management strategies, protocols and standards so that Australian exports are not disadvantaged in world markets.

National Carp Control Plan

Carp are the worst freshwater aquatic pest in south-east Australia. They dominate the Murray-Darling Basin, where they can make up 80-90 per cent of fish biomass, with significant detrimental effects on water quality and ecosystem health. The economic impacts of carp infestation have been estimated at up to \$500.0 million per year, with the majority of this impact felt in regional areas.

The Australian Government is providing \$15.0 million over three years from 2016–17 to support the development of the National Carp Control Plan for the potential release of the carp virus as a biological control agent for common carp. This funding will deliver the scientific research, operational planning, community engagement and communications activities. The aim is to deliver a plan that delivers maximum impact on carp populations with minimum disruption to industries, communities and the environment for government consideration.

The Fisheries Research and Development Corporation is leading the development of the National Carp Control Plan, working in conjunction with governments and other stakeholders. Should a decision be made to proceed, successful implementation of the plan will provide an opportunity to dramatically improve the health of our inland waterways, bringing substantial benefits to regional communities and water users, including farmers, recreational fishers and tourism operators. This will be a matter for consideration by all jurisdictions.

National Partnership on South Australian River Murray Sustainability Program

This program supports Murray-Darling Basin water reforms by contributing to a healthy working river system, strong communities and sustainable food and fibre production, while providing certainty for affected communities and water users.

The Australian Government is providing \$120.0 million over six years from 2013–14 to deliver a grants program to improve the productivity of South Australia's irrigation industries.

National Partnership for Mechanical Fuel Load Reduction Trials

This program of trials are investigating whether there are operational and economic advantages in the mechanical removal of fuels or thinning of forests in addition to, or as an alternative to, planned burning.

The trials are targeting peri-urban areas where smoke and air quality issues impact on the ability to undertake planned burning and also on areas with specific conservation values where use of fire may not be appropriate.

The Australian Government is providing \$1.5 million for the trials. The trials will be completed by end June 2019, following delayed burns resulting from dangerous fire weather.

Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Program

The Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Program is a national program investing in rural water use, management and efficiency. It is the key mechanism to 'bridge the gap' to the sustainable diversion limits under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and consists of three main components: irrigation infrastructure projects, water purchases, and supply measures.

The Australian Government has a preference for recovering water through investment in infrastructure. The majority of the funds under the Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Program 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. Australian Government investments outside the Murray-Darling Basin include \$201.8 million over 11 years from 2008–09 to 2018–19 in Tasmania to support the construction of dams and backbone irrigation infrastructure, and an \$8.0 million investment for the Interim Great Artesian Basin Infrastructure Investment Program.

All Murray-Darling Basin state governments have agreed to arrangements that allow for 650 gigalitres of Sustainable Diversion Limit adjustments to be achieved through supply measure projects which offset the need for water to be acquired. An amendment has been made to the Basin Plan to give effect to this agreement. The amendment is now law but is subject to disallowance in Parliament. The Australian Government is committed to delivering the Basin Plan to provide a healthy river system and provide certainty to communities and farmers, and will continue on the Council of Australian Governments agreed pathway to implement the Basin Plan in full by 2024.

The Australian Government has legislated to limit purchase of surface water entitlements across the Murray-Darling Basin to 1,500 gigalitres. As at 31 December 2017, 2,106.4 gigalitres of surface water has been recovered toward the target specified in the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. Of this, 1,224.0 gigalitres contributes toward the 1,500 gigalitre limit. The limit on purchases helps provide Murray-Darling Basin communities with more certainty that the Australian Government will ensure a balance between agriculture, the environment and the socio-economic wellbeing of communities.

Water for the Environment Special Account

The Australia Government is providing a special appropriation of \$1.775 billion through the Water for the Environment Special Account, including \$1.575 billion over a 10 year period from 2014-15 to 2023-24 for efficiency measure projects to deliver 450 gigalitres of additional environmental water under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. The additional water can only be recovered in ways that ensure socio-economic outcomes for Basin communities are maintained or improved. A pilot project is currently underway in South Australia. Funding of \$200.0 million has been allocated for easing or removing constraints on the ability to deliver environmental water to the environmental assets of the Murray-Darling Basin. Basin state governments have been provided with funding to develop business cases for constraints measure projects being implemented as part of the Sustainable Diversion Limit adjustment mechanism.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S

The Attorney-General's portfolio comprises the Attorney-General's Department and 14 portfolio bodies. The portfolio delivers programs and policies to maintain and improve Australia's law and justice framework. This work spans a range of significant areas and affects the lives of many Australians, including those in regional and remote communities.

The Attorney-General's portfolio engages the perspectives of regional Australians to inform its work. The Australian Human Rights Commission has been funded by the Australian Government to deliver the Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) Project to give voice to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls' perspectives on the critical factors impacting on their access to and enjoyment of human rights. In addition, the Attorney-General's portfolio is leading work to protect human rights, including those of individuals in detention in regional Australia through the implementation of the *Optional Protocol on the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment* (OPCAT), and the rights of older Australians through Elder Abuse Service Trials, including in some regional and remote communities.

The Attorney-General's portfolio manages alternative pathways and access to formal legal processes to provide greater access to justice for Australians in regional communities. The Family Relationships Services Program delivers a range of post-separation services to families in regional communities. The Commonwealth Courts Portal and the Federal Circuit Court's eFiling service similarly improves regional access to legal processes by providing Federal Court, Family Court and Federal Circuit Court resources online and enabling online lodging of divorce applications. The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner provides assistance with privacy and freedom of information matters via telephone and online services to ensure regional Australians can access regulatory assistance.

The Australian Government remains committed to funding for legal assistance services for regional Australia under the National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services 2015-2020, delivering \$1.3 billion to community legal centres and legal aid commissions over five years to 2020.

The Australian Government supports the provision of access to services for marrying couples by ensuring that marriage celebrants who live remotely are exempt from paying the annual registration charge and aspiring celebrants are exempt from paying the once-off application fee. The remoteness exemptions are designed to support the retention of access to celebrancy services in remote and very remote areas of Australia.

As part of the Australian Government's National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022, the Women's Safety Package will also provide integrated duty lawyers and family violence support services in 10 remote and regional locations throughout Australia. Specialist domestic violence units, including those in regional locations, have also had their funding extended to 30 June 2019. These pilots will also be expanded to up to six new locations with an additional \$3.4 million being provided in last years' Budget.

NEW INITIATIVES

Preventing mistreatment in Australian Places of Detention

The Australian Government ratified the *Optional Protocol on the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment* (OPCAT) on 21 December 2017. OPCAT implementation will improve inspection and oversight of all places of detention under Australia's jurisdiction and control, including prisons, youth detention facilities and police cells in regional Australia. Better oversight will assist in preventing mistreatment in places of detention. The Attorney-General's portfolio is leading work with states and territories to ensure OPCAT is effectively implemented. The Australian Government has provided funding to the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman through the 2018-19 Budget to undertake a policy and coordination role for inspectorates across Australia.

Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) Project

On 28 June 2017, the Minister for Indigenous Affairs commissioned the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Ms June Oscar AO at the Australian Human Rights Commission, to undertake a project to give voice to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls' perspectives on the critical factors impacting on their access to and enjoyment of human rights. The project funding is \$1.3 million over two years to hold a national conversation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls through face-to-face engagements in urban, rural and remote locations across Australia's states and territories and a web-based presence and online submissions process.

The project's key objectives are to:

- capture the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls with respect to their cultural, socio-economic and personal security, their key priorities and the principles they believe would contribute to long-lasting change
- elevate the voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls through a human-rights-based process which is accessible and relevant to their lived reality and contributes to their empowerment
- provide credible evidence and set out clear guidance for governments to improve their capacity to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls as active citizens and positive change makers, and best-practice considerations that need to be incorporated into government policies and programs.

Issues specifically facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls in regional, rural and remote Australia will form part of the Australia Human Rights Commission's reporting by 30 June 2019. Findings will inform the development of a positive Australian Government agenda to support the safety and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls and inform key policies and programs such as the Closing the Gap, future investment under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy and development of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children.

Elder Abuse Service Trials

The Elder Abuse Service Trials progresses the Australian Government's 2016 election commitment, *'Our Plan to Protect the Rights of Older Australians'*, and to address key findings of the *Australian Law Reform Commission Report 131: Elder Abuse - A National Legal Response* (ALRC Report). The Elder Abuse Service Trials establish demonstration projects for three types of specialist services:

- specialist elder abuse units
- health justice partnerships
- case management and mediation services.

The Australian Government will provide \$22.0 million in funding over four years from 2018-19 to 2021-22 to tackle elder abuse. The new services will address gaps in Australia's frontline services' response to elder abuse by significantly expanding the practical support on offer to help older Australians and their families affected by elder abuse, including some in regional areas.

The Australian Government will work with state and territory governments to develop a transparent approach to identifying locations for the service trials with funding allocated via a restricted competitive funding round.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Register of Security Interests in Personal Property

The Australian Financial Security Authority (AFSA) administers the Personal Property Securities Register (PPSR), used by the general public and business sector to register security interests over personal property, assess financial risk and make informed financial decisions.

The PPSR is an online service available to consumers and businesses in metropolitan, regional and rural areas at any time. In areas with limited internet, the service can also be accessed by phone.

The PPSR offers important consumer protection. Consumers and businesses can check whether any valuable goods are free from existing financed debt and safe from possible repossession, before they purchase.

Businesses that sell on retention of title or consignment, or hire or lease out goods for more than two years, can register to protect their security interest in case a customer becomes insolvent. Businesses can also use their assets as collateral to raise finance.

The PPSR covers goods and assets that are not land, buildings or fixtures, such as motor vehicles, boats, crops, livestock and other items.

Searching the PPSR through www.ppsr.gov.au costs \$3.40. A registration costs from \$6.80.

Personal Insolvency and Trustee Services

Australia's personal insolvency system is administered by the Australian Financial Security Authority (AFSA). There are a number of informal and formal options for people who have unmanageable debt or are owed money. Information on these options, downloadable resources and some transactional services, are available at www.afsa.gov.au to people in metropolitan, regional and rural areas at any time. In areas with limited internet, this information is also available via phone.

Domestic and Family Violence – Initiatives to Break the Cycle of Violence

Since 2015, the Government has invested in three key packages to support families experiencing family violence.

The 2015 Women's Safety Package provided \$100 million to a range of services, including \$15.0 million over three years provided to the Attorney-General's portfolio to administer grants for specialist domestic violence units and health justice partnerships.

In 2016, a further \$100 million was committed to support implementation of the Third Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022, with the Attorney-General's portfolio administering \$29.6 million over three years from 2016-17 for front-line legal assistance and family law services, including:

- \$18.5 million for legal aid commissions to establish integrated duty lawyer and family violence support services in family law court registries
- \$6.2 million for eight Family Relationship Centres to pilot enhanced models of legally-assisted and/or culturally appropriate family dispute resolution to vulnerable families, particularly Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse families
- \$4.9 million to extend funding for the specialist domestic violence units and health justice partnerships under the Australian Government's Women's Safety Package by an additional year until 30 June 2019.

In the 2017-18 Budget, a further \$26.8 million was committed specifically for family law services, and \$55.7 million for legal assistance services. This funding included \$10.7 million over four years to support additional family consultants in the Family Law Courts, and a further \$3.4 million over two years (2017-18 and 2018-19) to expand the specialist domestic violence program to additional locations.

The integrated duty lawyer and family violence support services have been established by legal aid commissions at 14 family law court registries across Australia and two local courts in the Northern Territory. Regional and remote service locations include Cairns, Katherine and Townsville. Services are also being delivered in regional circuit courts in Albany, Broome, Bunbury, Burnie, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie and Mount Gambier. These services assist clients with complex needs to ensure that their legal and non-legal needs are identified and appropriate support provided.

Eighteen specialist domestic violence units have been established across all states and territories, including 10 in regional and remote areas. Five health justice partnerships, including one as part of a domestic violence unit in Alice Springs, are being supported to deliver legal training and support for health professionals and to provide on-site legal advice at partner hospitals or health centres.

State/Territory	Region	Funded Service Provider	Funding
<i>Specialist domestic violence units with health justice partnership (2015-19)</i>			
Northern Territory	Alice Springs	Central Australian Women's Legal Service	\$1.8 million
<i>Specialist domestic violence units (2015-19)</i>			
New South Wales	Dubbo	Western New South Wales Community Legal Centre	\$1.5 million
Victoria	Mildura	Murray Mallee Community Legal Centre	\$1.4 million
Queensland	Townsville	North Queensland Women's Legal Service	\$1.4 million
Western Australia	Kununurra	Kimberley Community Legal Service	\$1.6 million
Tasmania	Launceston (2017-19) and Burnie	Women's Legal Service Tasmania	\$1.6 million
<i>Specialist domestic violence units (2017-19)</i>			
Northern Territory	Tennant Creek	Central Australian Women's Legal Service	\$525,000
New South Wales	Central Coast	Legal Aid New South Wales	\$600,000
Victoria	Online model servicing Latrobe, Horsham, Benalla, the Southern Grampians and the Central Goldfields	Women's Legal Service Victoria	\$525,000
Queensland	Rockhampton	Legal Aid Queensland	\$525,000

National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services 2015-2020

The National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services 2015-2020 commenced on 1 July 2015. The Australian Government is delivering \$1.3 billion in funding to legal aid commissions and community legal centres over five years. Under the National Partnership Agreement, people residing in rural or remote areas are priority clients to be considered as part of planning and targeting of legal assistance services.

Legal Aid

The Australian Government is providing \$1.1 billion over 2015-20 to legal aid commissions under the National Partnership Agreement.

There are approximately 80 Legal Aid Commission offices across Australia, with around 58 per cent of offices located in regional areas. In 2016-17, 5,179 (14 per cent) of legal aid grants for Commonwealth matters were received by persons who reside in rural and remote areas.

Community Legal Centres

The Australian Government is providing a total of \$235.0 million from 2015 to 2020 to community legal centres under the National Partnership Agreement.

Approximately 30 per cent of community legal centres are located in regional Australia. In 2016-17, 1,118 (6.5 per cent) of community legal centre representation services were received by persons who reside in rural and remote areas.

Community Legal Services Program

The Community Legal Services Program is a nationally focused discretionary grants program, supporting the provision of legal assistance to the community by funding national service delivery projects, innovative pilot programs and program support activities. The Australian Government will provide \$10.2 million to the Community Legal Services Program in 2018-19 and includes funding under the Women's Safety Package, funding for the Parent Management Hearing Pilot Program and the Family Advocacy and Support Services Pilot Program.

Under the Community Legal Services Program, funding is also provided to three national community legal centres (the National Children's and Youth Law Centre, the Arts Law Centre and the Financial Rights Legal Centre) who deliver specialised information, legal advice and representation to disadvantaged individuals across Australia. Services are delivered through an innovative mix of telephone, email, video conferencing and face-to-face client contact to reach those most in need in all metropolitan, rural and remote areas of Australia.

The Community Legal Services Program also delivers a national Self-Representation Service (SRS) that provides assistance to unrepresented people in the Federal Court and Federal Circuit Court. The SRS ensures that self-represented parties, who do not have access to legal assistance and advice through other sources, are provided with legal assistance and referrals to alternative dispute resolution. The SRS is delivered to rural and remote areas through telephone, email and video conferencing facilities.

Indigenous Legal and Native Title Assistance

The Indigenous Legal Assistance Program funds Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) to deliver culturally appropriate, accessible legal assistance and related services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians so that they can fully exercise their legal rights as Australian citizens. There are seven ATSILS nationally which deliver services from 72 permanent locations in regional and remote areas, as well as court circuits, bush courts and outreach locations.

The table below sets out funding from 2017-18 to 2020-21.

	2017-18 Revised estimate	2018-19 Forward estimate	2019-20 Forward estimate	2020-21 Forward estimate
Indigenous Legal Assistance Program (\$'000)	74,463	74,365	75,202	70,104

Of the total legal assistance services provided in 2016-17, 66 per cent was delivered to regional and remote areas.

Region	Legal assistance services provided in 2015-16
Metropolitan	65,307
Regional	84,700
Remote	43,673
Total	193,680

The Native Title Respondent Funding Scheme provides assistance for individuals or groups, including pastoralists, graziers and fishers, to have equitable access to legal representation in the resolution of native title proceedings where their interests are likely to be affected. Funding for the Native Title Respondent Funding Scheme in 2018-19 is \$1.7 million.

Family Relationship Services Program

In 2018-19, the Australian Government is planning to provide \$168.5 million for the Family Relationships Services Program, \$161.2 million of which will be provided for a range of post-separation family law services under the Families and Communities Program, administered by the Department of Social Services.

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
- supporting children after separation
- counselling.

These services provide alternatives to formal legal processes and assist families which are separated, separating or in dispute to resolve disputes in a way that is in the best interests of children. The services are located throughout Australia, including regional areas. Information and resources are also available online through Family Relationships Online, in a way that is accessible to regional Australia.

Federal Court of Australia – Digital Files

The introduction in 2014 of the Electronic Court File (ECF) in the Federal Court of Australia and Federal Circuit Court of Australia (general federal law) saw significant savings in time and money, improved case management for litigants, practitioners and the Court, portability of the Court files and ease-of-access. The benefits of a portable Court file have been primarily significant in Native Title proceedings heard on country.

Following the merger of the corporate services of the Federal Court, Family Court of Australia, Federal Circuit Court and the National Native Title Tribunal, it followed that the Digital Court File (DCF) would be introduced across all jurisdictions. The project to introduce the DCF in family law jurisdictions is advanced with an expected implementation date in late 2018. In order for the DCF to work well, the family law eFiling platform is also being improved to allow for easier and broader capabilities for the filing of documents electronically from any location across Australia. The implementation of the DCF gives the Court the flexibility to better allocate its resources nationally to where it is needed most, including remote locations.

Federal Court of Australia – Digital Litigation

The Electronic Court File (ECF) and the Digital Court File (DCF) are not the solution to digital litigation - this is the Courts' next step. The introduction of digital hearings, together with the upgrades to the technical infrastructure in courtrooms such as videoconferencing facilities, would allow people to appear and run hearings from both metropolitan and regional areas of Australia electronically.

In addition, with the establishment of the Courts' Artificial Intelligence (AI) Committee, there are significant areas where access to justice could be improved by driving AI solutions and making it cheaper and easier to resolve disputes through online dispute resolution and predicting outcomes to matters before they have even been filed. The development of an AI solution for the Courts would combat accessibility issues to parties and legal representatives in remote locations.

Federal Circuit Court of Australia – Commonwealth Courts Portal

The Commonwealth Courts Portal was launched in July 2007, to provide free web-based access to information about cases that are before the Federal Court, Family Court and Federal Circuit Court. The Commonwealth Courts Portal also allows parties to file documents electronically, pay fees online and view outcomes, orders and future court dates in certain matters.

In July 2016, the Federal Circuit Court commenced roll-out of electronic filing for divorce applications, and now has a fully electronic divorce file. The introduction of eFiling for divorce applications has improved access for litigants in regional Australia who cannot attend a registry to lodge documents or are required to rely on Australia Post. Litigants can now lodge applications outside traditional registry hours via the online services without the need to travel to a registry.

The Federal Circuit Court has not mandated the requirement to eFile, noting that some litigants have limited access to technology, particularly in rural and regional areas. Despite this, the number of litigants choosing to eFile has increased to over 70 per cent.

Federal Circuit Court of Australia – Administered Fund

The Court utilises a dedicated administered fund to provide private property mediations. Its major focus is to provide services to litigants, particularly in rural and regional areas of Australia, in support of the Court's circuit work. The fund enables the Court to deliver improved access to justice and creates assistance to litigants by providing:

- property mediation where the external provider is located in the same area as the litigants and in a position to offer more timely interventions
- services that would otherwise be limited to Registrar circuits or require the parties to travel to capital cities
- timely services that provide an opportunity for the early resolution of matters.

The use of the fund in this manner also enables the Court to reduce the cost of Registrars travelling to circuit locations. The fund is an innovative way of delivering access to justice to litigants in rural and regional Australia where Court-based services are limited.

National Archives Touring Exhibition Program

The National Archives maintains a national footprint, with offices in every state and territory, including in Tasmania and the Northern Territory. The National Archives Touring Exhibition Program began in 1993 and aims to make the collection of the Archives accessible to audiences throughout the country. It is the most active national touring program of the national cultural institutions, with continued strong interest and positive feedback from hosting and partner institutions and the Australian community. It is supported through the Australian Government's Visions of Australia and National Collecting Institutions Touring and Outreach (NCITO) programs, as well as partnerships with Australian Government agencies, including the Department of Home Affairs and the Department of Social Services. Funding for the Touring Exhibition Program for 2018-19 is \$500,000 and will be used to tour the following four Archives exhibitions to regional and remote locations around Australia:

- *SPY: Espionage in Australia*: this will begin its tour at the Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga, New South Wales. Featuring records and objects from the Archives' collection and loan items from the Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) and other security agencies. The exhibition explores the personal experiences of secret agents and the curious history of espionage and counter-espionage in Australia, from Federation to the present day.
- *A Ticket to Paradise?*: this will tour to the Western Australian Museum venues in Kalgoorlie, Geraldton, Albany and Fremantle. This exhibition delves into the rich diversity of the nation's migrants and their experiences, and looks at promotional campaigns which presented a utopian view of Australia as a welcoming country full of opportunity. It features archival film footage, audio recordings, and many images of migrants taken between the 1940s and 1990s, and a special interactive globe featuring personal stories of migration.
- *Without Consent*: this will tour to two Queensland venues - Qantas Founders Museum, Longreach, and Hervey Bay Regional Gallery. This important social history exhibition explores both the personal and public narratives of the forced adoptions period. Personal experiences of a mother losing a child through a forced adoption or an adopted person struggling to find their identity are put in the context of social and legislative histories, illustrating the evolution of the 'perfect storm' that contributed to the practices.
- *A Place to Call Home?*: this will finish its tour in 2018 at the Alfred Deakin University Library, Geelong, Victoria. This exhibition features vivid photographs of life in Australia's migrant hostels. The images are part of a collection of around 22,000 photographs taken by government photographers documenting the experiences of post-World War II migrants to Australia. Known as the Immigration Photographic Archive, the images were used to encourage relocation to Australia to prospective migrants and to help local Australians welcome new migrants into the community.

COMMUNICATIONS AND THE ARTS

The Communications and the Arts portfolio is committed to improving communications services to regional and remote Australia, and making government services simpler and more accessible, through the increased availability of digital services. The Communications and the Arts portfolio also supports the achievement of a culturally rich Australia by supporting arts and cultural activities in regional and remote Australia.

Regional communities across Australia are benefiting from a number of Australian Government initiatives, including:

- providing high-speed broadband at affordable prices, and at least cost to taxpayers as soon as possible through the rollout of the National Broadband Network
- improving mobile phone coverage in black spot areas through the Mobile Black Spot Program
- providing funding support for national and community broadcasting services
- reforming media regulation to remove outdated media control rules and strengthening local content provisions on regional commercial television
- providing support for digital television services
- providing the regional and small publishers innovation and jobs package which will support news coverage in regional areas
- providing support to strengthen the online safety of all Australians and improve the digital literacy of older Australians
- delivering tailored programs to support artistic and cultural expression, and participation and access to cultural experiences.

People living in regional areas of Australia have been the first to benefit from the National Broadband Network (NBN), with NBN Co Limited having completed network rollout to more than 81 per cent of homes and businesses outside major urban areas as at mid-April 2018. This includes Sky Muster satellite services for eligible premises across the country, completion of over three quarters of the fixed wireless network nationally, and the brownfields fixed line rollout with more than 76 per cent complete outside major urban areas.

As at mid-April 2018, more than 3 million premises outside major urban areas were in NBN ready for service areas (including new developments). Rollout to many regional areas will be essentially complete by the end of 2018 with the entire network on track to be completed by 2020.

The Australian Government has committed \$220.0 million through the Mobile Black Spot Program to invest in telecommunications infrastructure to address mobile black spots across Australia. Rounds 1 and 2 of the Mobile Black Spot Program are delivering 765 new base stations into regional Australia. The Australian Government commitment includes \$60.0 million to the Priority Locations round, which is delivering new and improved mobile coverage to 125 targeted priority locations, including 23 that are being addressed under round 2 of the program, an alternative Government program or through carriers' own commercial investments.

The Australian Government has announced that the Communications and the Arts portfolio will undertake a program of work to develop a new Universal Service Guarantee (USG), which will ensure all Australians have ongoing access to voice and broadband services, regardless of where they live or work, once the NBN is completed. The USG will aim to better reflect changing consumer preference in communications.

The Australian Government has committed to providing new funding of \$14.2 million over four years from 2018-19 to support the expanded remit of the Office of the eSafety Commissioner (eSafety Office). This funding will enable the eSafety Office to deliver new and existing programs that are designed to foster the safe and confident use of online technologies for education, social interaction and entertainment. These programs will positively impact the online safety of all Australians, including people living in regional and remote areas.

The Communications and the Arts portfolio also delivers programs which encourage the protection, development, production, celebration and exhibition of artistic and cultural expression.

NEW INITIATIVES

Online Safety Proposals to be delivered by the Office of the eSafety Commissioner

On 23 June 2017, the *Enhancing Online Safety for Children Amendment Act 2017* expanded the Office of the eSafety Commissioner's (eSafety Office) remit from online safety for children, to online safety for all Australians, resulting in an increased workload and associated funding pressures. The Australian Government will provide new funding of \$14.2 million over four years from 2018-19 to support the increased workload. The additional \$4.0 million allocated in 2018-19 to the eSafety Office will build on its existing funding of \$17.2 million in 2018-19. Australian Government funding will enable the eSafety Office to continue delivering existing programs and expand its ability to address emerging eSafety pressures.

The new and existing programs delivered by the eSafety Office will have a positive impact on the online safety of all Australians, including persons living in regional centres. Extension of the eSafety Women and Certified Provider's programs will ensure online safety support is available in regional centres. The materials developed to combat cyber abuse will be available on the eSafety Office's website and will be readily accessible to individuals in both metropolitan and regional areas. These programs are designed to enable Australians to safely and confidently take advantage of the benefits of online technologies for education, social interaction and entertainment.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

National Broadband Network

The Australian Government is committed to completing the National Broadband Network (NBN) and ensuring all Australians have access to high-speed broadband. The Australian Government has invested \$29.5 billion in equity in the NBN Co Limited (nbn) and is providing a commercial loan for up to a further \$19.5 billion to nbn.

Delivering high-speed broadband to remote and regional Australia is a key priority. By mid-April 2018, services were already available or construction underway to over 91 per

cent of remote and regional homes and businesses through fixed line, fixed wireless and satellite infrastructure. High speed broadband will be available to around 3.6 million remote and regional premises (excluding new developments) by 2020.

Universal Service Obligation

The Australian Government contributes \$100 million per annum to the delivery of public interest telecommunications services. This includes the provision of fixed line voice and payphone services in regional, rural and remote Australia under the Universal Service Obligation (USO). The USO is central to ensuring people in regional, rural and remote Australia have ongoing access to these important services.

Australian Broadcasting Corporation – Operational Funding

The 2018-19 financial year is the last year of the triennium funding period for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). Over the course of the current triennium period (2016-17 to 2018-19) the Australian Government will have provided the ABC with \$3.1 billion in base funding.

The ABC will have received a further \$41.4 million over three years from 2016-17 to supplement local news and current affairs services, particularly those located outside the capital cities. The continuation of base funding will enable the ABC to maintain its expanded presence and continue to deliver quality news and current affairs services on television, radio, digital and mobile platforms.

Australian audiences in these areas will continue to benefit from this funding, which strengthens reporting within local communities and enables local stories to be shared with national audiences.

The Government is committed to supporting broadcasting services to rural and regional Australia. In October 2017, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Amendment (Rural and Regional Measures) Bill 2017 was introduced into the Senate. The aim of the Bill is to support the provision of broadcasting services by the ABC that meet and reflect the needs of rural and regional Australia.

Special Broadcasting Service – Operational Funding

The 2018-19 financial year is the last year of the triennium funding period for the Special Broadcasting Service Corporation (SBS). Over the triennium period (2016-17 to 2018-19), the Australian Government will have provided the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) with \$811.0 million in base funding over three years, and an additional \$8.3 million over three years, to maintain its commitment to multilingual, multicultural and Indigenous media services. The Australian Government has further agreed to provide \$30.3 million to replace advertising revenue that SBS had been unable to realise across four years from 2016-17.

This funding will enable SBS to continue connecting Australians in regional and rural areas with stories that celebrate Australia's rich cultural and linguistic diversity. As part of the SBS family, National Indigenous Television (NITV) seeks to inform, educate and entertain Australians about Indigenous issues, by showcasing Indigenous culture, languages and talent. Each month, NITV is watched by more than two million Australians, with many located in remote areas.

Part of this funding ensures that stakeholders and filmmaking talent in regional and remote areas, which have previously included Darwin, Alice Springs, Yuendumu, Lajamanu, Rockhampton, Dubbo and Gulkula, are able to share local stories with national audiences through NITV.

Supporting Regional Post Offices

The post office network provides important services to regional, rural and remote communities. Over 1,600 post office licensees in these communities continue to benefit from postal regulatory reforms implemented from January 2016 to help support the sustainability of the postal network.

The reforms have helped to boost payments made to regional, rural and remote licensees to an estimated \$185.5 million in 2017-18, up almost 48 per cent from payments in 2012-13.

Telecommunications Reform Package

The Australian Government's Telecommunications Reform Package comprising the Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Competition and Consumer) Bill 2017 and the Telecommunications (Regional Broadband Scheme) Charge Bill 2017 will reset carrier separation rules, create a statutory infrastructure provider regime and establish a Regional Broadband Scheme (RBS).

These reforms will establish an explicit statutory requirement on NBN Co Limited, and other carriers as appropriate, to ensure that all Australians are able to order a high-speed broadband service regardless of where they live.

They will also ensure that all high-speed fixed line network owners (including NBN Co Limited) contribute funding, proportionate to the size of their networks, to the costs of providing essential broadband services to regional and remote Australia.

Mobile Black Spot Program

Rounds 1 and 2 of the Mobile Black Spot Program are delivering 765 new base stations across regional and remote Australia – comprising 114 Optus, 577 Telstra and 74 Vodafone base stations. The first round 1 base station was activated in December 2015. The first round 2 base station was activated on 8 March 2017. As at 3 May 2018, a combined total of 491 base stations have been activated across Australia under rounds 1 and 2 of the Program.

The Australian Government has committed \$160.0 million to rounds 1 and 2 of the program since 2015-16. Together rounds 1 and 2 are investing almost \$600.0 million in new mobile infrastructure in regional and remote parts of Australia, including contributions by the carriers and co-contributions from state and local governments, and third parties.

The Australian Government commitment to the program includes \$60.0 million for a Priority Locations round from 2017-18 to 2019-20. The full outcomes of the Priority Locations round tender were announced in April 2018, with the rollout commencing in 2017-18. The funding is delivering a total of \$82.8 million in new investment by the Australian Government and carriers, and all 125 targeted priority locations will be receiving new and improved mobile coverage.

Media Reform – Regional and Small Publishers Innovation Fund

The Regional and Small Publishers Innovation Fund is part of the Regional and Small Publishers Jobs and Innovation Package and will provide \$16.0 million in grants per year over three years from 2018-19 to support regional and small publishers to transition and compete more successfully in the evolving media environment. It will encourage news publishers to develop and trial sustainable models for the provision of public interest journalism. At least two thirds of total funding in any year must go to regional publishers and not less than 25 per cent for non-regional publishers. One of the core objectives of the Regional and Small Publishers Innovation Fund will be to support these publishers to put themselves on a sustainable commercial footing to develop new business models and practices.

Media Reform – Regional and Small Publishers Cadetship and Scholarship Programs

The Regional and Small Publishers Cadetship and Scholarship Programs are part of the Regional and Small Publishers Jobs and Innovation Package, which aims to enhance news coverage of issues of importance to local communities across the country, particularly in regional areas. The Package includes a Cadetship Program and a Journalism Scholarship Program targeted at regional students.

The Regional and Small Publishers Cadetship Program is a competitive grants program under which the Australian Government will provide \$4.0 million per year for two years to assist in creating employment opportunities in regional media. Funding will support a total of 200 cadetships over a two year period from 2018-19, with each cadetship valued at up to \$40,000. Of the 100 cadetships each year, 80 to 90 will be for regional publications and news media organisations.

Under the Regional Journalism Scholarship Program, the Australian Government will provide \$1.2 million per year over two years to support students and graduates in regional and remote areas of Australia by providing opportunities to study journalism. In total, 60 scholarships will be made available over a two year period from 2018-19, with each scholarship valued at up to \$40,000.

Media Reform – Additional local programming on regional television

The *Broadcasting Legislation Amendment (Broadcasting Reform) Act 2017* amended the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*. It repealed the '75 per cent audience reach rule' and the 'two out of three rule' and introduced changes to protect and enhance the amount of local television content in regional Australia.

To meet community concerns, stronger local programming obligations were introduced for regional commercial television broadcasters who, as a result of a change of control of their licences, become part of a television network that reaches more than 75 per cent of the Australian population.

In these cases, regional commercial licensees are required to commence broadcasting additional local programming six months after the change in control.

Regional communities also stand to benefit from a new points system which incentivises the local filming of news stories. The new points structure will strengthen the link between local programming and local communities.

Broadcasting Spectrum Pricing

The Australian Government has made changes to how commercial broadcasters are taxed through the *Broadcasting Legislation Amendment (Broadcasting Reform) Act 2017* and the *Commercial Broadcasting (Tax) Act 2017*. Instead of a revenue-based fee, commercial broadcasters will be paying a fee based on spectrum use. The new fees reflect significant discounts for broadcasters in regional Australia. This means that the vast majority of broadcasters in regional Australia will experience a decrease in fees. Despite such discounts, a small amount of regional licensees will experience an increase in fees. To respond to this, the Government will compensate these licensees over a period of five years from 2017-18 to enable transition to the new tax framework. The first compensation payments were made in December 2017, with subsequent payments being made at the start of each financial year.

Community Broadcasting Program

The Australian Government provides funding to support community broadcasting services throughout Australia via the Community Broadcasting Program. The Community Broadcasting Program is administered at arms-length from the Australian Government by the Community Broadcasting Foundation.

The Community Broadcasting Foundation allocates the Community Broadcasting Program funding to community broadcasters in metropolitan, regional and remote locations around Australia. Grants are allocated in various categories including content development, ethnic, Indigenous, radio for the print handicapped, training, and transmission support.

In the 2017-18 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO), the Government allocated an additional \$12.0 million over four years from 2017-18 for community radio broadcasting to be administered through the existing Community Broadcasting Program.

Digital Literacy for Older Australians

The Australian Government has allocated \$47.2 million over four years from 2016-17 to deliver the Digital Literacy for Older Australians initiative. The Digital Literacy for Older Australians initiative is a joint initiative of the Department of Social Services and the Office of the eSafety Commissioner (the eSafety Office) to provide older Australians across the country, including regional Australia, with the digital skills and online confidence needed to participate in an increasingly digital world. The initiative includes the current delivery of a National Network of more than 900 participating community organisations that deliver free training across Australia, and this support will increase to 2,000 community organisations by July 2018.

Of the \$47.2 million, \$16.9 million was allocated to the eSafety Office to develop a national senior's online portal and implement a national outreach program for Aged Care Support Workers and a Schools Mentor program. The eSafety Office's 'BeConnected' portal was launched in October 2017 and provides older Australians, their families, peers and community organisations, with a one-stop-shop for information, tools and training resources. The portal can be found at BeConnected.eSafety.gov.au.

National Broadband Network (NBN) Consumer Experience Improvement Package

The Australian Government is providing the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) with \$8.7 million over three years from 2017-18 to implement a package of new measures to improve the NBN consumer experience. The package will empower consumers to make informed decisions about their NBN plan and help ensure they get the level of service they expect from their retail service providers as they transition to the NBN. This package will assist all Australians using the National Broadband Network, including people living in regional centres.

The package includes requirements on retail service providers to perform line tests on new connections to ensure a working service, temporarily reactivate a disconnected service where the NBN is unable to be connected in a reasonable time, and provide consumers with a critical information summary for NBN services to explain speed tiers when signing a new contract.

In addition to these measures, the ACMA will collect and publish complaints statistics from major retail service providers to help consumers differentiate between providers based on the quality of their customer service. The ACMA will also conduct a study into the quality of modems, potentially leading to the introduction of technical standards or a modem performance rating scheme.

The new measures will ensure greater transparency by retail service providers, and mean that consumers are better informed about NBN services and experience less disruption when transitioning to a new NBN service.

Viewer Access Satellite Television

The Viewer Access Satellite Television (VAST) program provides funding from 2010-11 to 2019-20 to broadcasters to deliver digital free-to-air television services direct to home satellite users. The VAST service provides free-to-air digital channels from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), Special Broadcasting Service Corporation (SBS) and the commercial broadcasters. The VAST service also includes dedicated news channels carrying nightly bulletins from regional commercial television broadcasters.

Anzac Centenary Arts and Culture Fund

The Anzac Centenary Arts and Culture Fund has provided \$4.0 million in funding over four years from 2014-15 to support the development, production, presentation, exhibition or performance of arts and culture projects that enhance our understanding of the Anzac legacy. Projects supported through this fund are providing opportunities throughout Australia, including regional locations, for Australians to create and share activities that commemorate Australia's century of service and acknowledge experiences of conflict at home and abroad. Projects supported by the Anzac Centenary Arts and Culture Fund will conclude in November 2018.

Australia Council

The Australia Council provides significant support to the arts in rural, regional and remote Australia with grants for individuals, groups and organisations, national touring programs, and strategic national development and capacity building programs.

This includes supporting a range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultural activities in regional and remote areas. The Australia Council also supports artists and arts organisations based in metropolitan areas to deliver projects, tour and engage with regional communities.

Every year the Australia Council invests in artistic activities in regional Australia, increasing access for audiences, fostering the vitality of artists and arts organisations in regional and remote communities, and strengthening the mobility of diverse and excellent Australian work. In 2016-17, these activities reached 2.1 million people in regional areas through attendance at a performance, exhibition, schools activity or workshop.

Bundanon Trust

The Bundanon Trust is a wholly owned Australian Government company limited by guarantee, established in 1993 to own and manage the properties and art collection donated by Arthur and Yvonne Boyd “as a means of a gift to the nation”.

The Bundanon Trust supports arts practice and engagement with the arts through a diverse range of programs such as its artist in residence, education, performance and environmental programs which have long-term cultural, economic and social benefits for the Shoalhaven region and beyond. In 2018-19, the Australian Government will provide \$1.5 million to the Bundanon Trust.

Community Heritage Grants

The Community Heritage Grants Program will receive \$490,000 of Australian Government funding in 2018-19, along with support from the National Library of Australia, National Film and Sound Archive, National Museum of Australia and National Archives of Australia. The Program will deliver grants of up to \$15,000 to community groups, including historical societies, regional museums, public libraries and Indigenous and migrant organisations, to support the preservation of publicly accessible heritage collections which are locally owned and nationally significant.

These collections contain a wide range of materials including artefacts, letters, diaries, maps, photographs and audio visual material. First-time recipients also receive expert preservation and archival training at support workshops provided by the National Library of Australia, the National Archives of Australia, the National Film and Sound Archive and the National Museum of Australia. Since 1994, 1,352 projects across Australia have received over \$6.5 million in funding, almost half of which has gone to regional organisations.

Creative Partnerships Australia

Since its creation in 2013, Creative Partnerships Australia has delivered capacity-building and mentoring programs that assist artists and cultural organisations to diversify their revenue streams through philanthropy, sponsorship and fundraising. Creative Partnerships Australia also delivers matched funding programs for artists and arts organisations, and manages the Australian Cultural Fund, a fundraising platform that facilitates tax-deductible donations from arts supporters.

In 2018-19, the Australian Government will provide \$4.5 million to assist Creative Partnerships Australia to build the capacity of artists and arts organisations across Australia, including in the regions, to secure revenue from private sector giving.

Festivals Australia

Festivals Australia provides communities in regional Australia with access to a diverse range of high quality, innovative arts projects that grow audiences at festivals. In 2018-19, approximately \$1.2 million will be provided to support arts projects that encourage partnership and collaboration across the arts sector and community participation in arts activities at festivals in regional and remote areas.

Indigenous Languages and Arts Program

The Australian Government is keeping cultural identity strong within regional and remote Indigenous communities, and enhancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's wellbeing by supporting Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and arts. Indigenous languages and arts enrich Australia's cultural life, make a valuable contribution to our national economy and help promote Australia to international audiences.

The Indigenous Languages and Arts program has around \$20.0 million available annually to support a diverse, professional and community-driven network of 22 Language Centres and a range of specific language projects across regional and remote Australia. It also supports organisations that contribute to ensuring the sustainability, vitality and strength of Indigenous communities through showcasing, preserving and encouraging participation in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artistic expression. The vast majority of projects supported through this program are in communities across regional and remote Australia.

In addition, as part of the Australian Government's commitment to closing the gap, the Australian Government agreed to provide an additional \$10.0 million over four years from 2016-17 for Protecting, Preserving and Celebrating Indigenous Languages. The focus of this additional funding is to engage and consult nationally, support digital solutions and partnerships for the ongoing capture and teaching of language, and support career pathways for Indigenous language workers and linguists.

In 2018-19, almost \$25.8 million will help revitalise and celebrate Australia's many Indigenous languages, and support and promote both traditional and contemporary Indigenous artistic expression.

Indigenous Repatriation

This program facilitates the return of Australian Indigenous ancestral remains in overseas collections, and Australian Indigenous ancestral remains and secret sacred objects held in seven state and territory museums and the National Museum of Australia, to their communities of origin. Many of these communities are located in regional Australia.

Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support Program

The Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support Program supports a professional, viable and ethical Indigenous visual arts industry, with strong participation by, and employment for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In 2018-19, the Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support Program will contribute \$20.0 million to the operations of around 80 Indigenous-owned art centres, most in very remote areas, as well as a number of art fairs, regional hubs and industry service

organisations that are at the heart of Australia's internationally renowned Indigenous visual art movement. Together these organisations enable the development, production and marketing of Indigenous visual art, and provide opportunities for more than 7,000 Indigenous artists and over 300 Indigenous arts workers to generate income and participate in the nation's economy.

Maritime Museums 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 program which collects, conserves and exhibits Australia's rich maritime heritage by helping these groups undertake this important role. The program targets smaller collecting institutions in regional Australia.

The scheme will receive \$105,000 of Australian Government funding in 2018-19, along with support from the Australian National Maritime Museum through donations and own source revenue. The scheme provides grants of up to \$15,000 to cultural institutions and community organisations for collection management initiatives, including documenting and caring for collections; and presentation projects, including education programs and workshops. It also supports staff or volunteers, from regional or remote organisations, to spend time learning specific skills and making valuable connections.

National Arts Training Organisations

Our seven national arts training organisations have a national reach as centres of excellence, which sees regional and remote Australians participate in and contribute towards our nation's artistic vibrancy. These organisations include: the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA); the Australian National Academy of Music; the National Institute of Circus Art; the Australian Youth Orchestra; the Australian Ballet School; the National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association; and the Flying Fruit Fly Circus.

As leaders in elite arts training, the organisations accept students from all states and territories and conduct annual auditions, including in regional areas. Those unable to attend auditions due to geographic distance are invited to submit postal applications and show reels. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students auditioning for the National Aboriginal Islander Skills Development Association (NAISDA) Dance College can seek support from Abstudy towards travel and accommodation expenses, ensuring students from remote and regional communities have equal access to auditions.

Many of the arts training organisations tour nationally and run extensive outreach programs in regional Australia. For example, NIDA runs short courses in all states and territories. This year, the Flying Fruit Fly Circus will tour its production, JUNK, to regional centres across Victoria and New South Wales.

A number of the arts training organisations host national training programs that provide students from regional and rural Australia access to the world-class facilities and elite trainers of the organisations for short, intensive periods. For example, the Australian Ballet School's Interstate Training Program provides the opportunity for talented young dancers from regional areas to access regular training.

Many of the arts training organisations also conduct activities in remote Australian communities. Students at the NAISDA Dance College attend cultural residencies in the Torres Strait and Far North Queensland.

National Collecting Institutions Touring and Outreach Program

Engagement with rural and remote communities is a longstanding priority for all the cultural and collecting institutions. The national collecting institutions provide a variety of initiatives through a combination of on-site offerings, as well as physical and virtual outreach activities.

The National Collecting Institutions Touring and Outreach program provides funding of \$1.0 million per annum to assist the National Collecting Institutions to develop and tour exhibitions of their collections.

The program aims to make Australian and overseas cultural material accessible to all Australians, especially those in regional communities. It also aims to promote international awareness of Australia's cultural heritage through overseas tours.

Regional Arts Fund

The Regional Arts Fund provides support for sustainable cultural development in regional and remote Australia. The program provides funding for a mix of quick response grants and community grants for arts projects, professional development for artists and arts workers, and community capacity building projects. The program also funds high priority strategic projects.

In 2018-19, the Australian Government has allocated \$3.5 million to the Regional Arts Fund. The program is delivered on behalf of the Australian Government by Regional Arts Australia and organisations in each state and territory.

Visions of Australia Program

The Visions of Australia program improves access for Australians particularly in regional and remote areas to Australian cultural material held in a wide variety of national and local collections.

The Visions of Australia program will provide \$2.4 million in 2018-19 to cultural organisations towards the costs of developing and touring exhibitions of cultural material that has historic, scientific, design, social or artistic significance.

The program also encourages partnerships between organisations, particularly collaboration across the collections sector, to form curatorial partnerships and deliver professional development.

DEFENCE

The Department of Defence (Defence) and the Australian Defence Force (ADF) make a significant contribution to the development of regional Australia.

The Defence regional workforce develops significant partnerships with local communities, business and government. As at 1 March 2018, the total number of Defence personnel in regional centres across Australia was 26,986. The regional workforce equates to 27 per cent of the total 99,058 Defence personnel.

The Defence estate consists of 400 properties and 351 leases including bases (72 major bases), training areas and ranges, research facilities and office accommodation. Figure 1 depicts the Defence footprint across Australia.

The construction and presence of Defence facilities in regional areas has significant flow-on effects to local economies through increased business to local suppliers and service providers. Defence recognises that there are clear benefits to drawing support from local contractors and suppliers, where there is the capacity and capability available in the local market. The Defence footprint also provides considerable economic, social and environmental support to regional communities through employment, industry, community involvement, childcare facilities, housing, training activities, cooperation on heritage issues and the economic activity of Defence members and their families.

Defence supports regional communities through a range of programs including various Defence Community Organisation programs that build the capacity of local communities to provide support services to Defence member families. These programs include financial support to not-for-profit organisations providing local services for Defence families, support to schools to provide additional activities for Defence children, Defence managed child care centres and support for Defence partners seeking employment opportunities in new locations.

Figure 1: Location of major Defence facilities across Australia

Estate and Infrastructure Group Zones

NORTHERN & CENTRAL ZONE

Northern Territory

Bradshaw Field Training Area
 Defence Establishment Bertimah
 Delamere Range Facility
 HMAS COONAWARRA
 Larrakeyah Barracks
 Mt Bunday Training Area
 RAAF Darwin
 RAAF Tindal
 Robertson Barracks
 Shoal Bay Receiving Station

Queensland

Army Aviation Centre – Oakey
 Borneo Barracks Cabarlah
 Canungra Training Area
 Cowley Beach Training Area
 Damascus Barracks Meeandah
 Gallipoli Barracks Enoggera
 Greenbank Training Area
 HMAS CAIRNS
 HMAS MORTEN
 Joint Defence Establishment – Thursday Island

EAST & WEST ZONE

New South Wales

Beecroft Weapons Range
 Beersheba Barracks Tamworth
 Bullecourt Barracks Adamstown
 Defence Business Centre – Raymond Terrace
 Defence Establishment Orchard Hills
 Defence Plaza Sydney
 DSTG Redfern
 Garden Island Precinct
 – Fleet Base East
 – Garden Island
 – HMAS KUTTABUL

HMAS ALBATROSS

HMAS CRESWELL

HMAS PENGUIN

HMAS WATERHEN

HMAS WATSON

Liverpool Military Area

– Holsworthy

– Moorebank

Mulwala

Myambat

RAAF Williamtown

Jungle Training Wing (Tully)
 Kokoda Barracks Canungra
 Lavarack Barracks
 Mount Stuart Training Area
 Porton Barracks
 RAAF Amberley
 – Evans Head Air Weapons Range
 RAAF Scherger
 RAAF Townsville
 Rockhampton
 Ross Island Barracks
 Shoalwater Bay Training Area
 Townsville Field Training Area
 Victoria Barracks Brisbane
 Wide Bay Training Area

South Australia

Cuitana Training Area
 DSTG Edinburgh
 Hampstead Barracks
 Keewick Barracks
 Murray Bridge Training Area
 Proof & Experimental Establishment
 Port Wakefield
 RAAF Edinburgh
 Warradale Barracks
 Woodside Barracks
 Woomera

ACT REGION

Australian Capital Territory

Australian Defence College
 Australian Defence Force Academy
 Brindabella Park Offices
 Campbell Park Offices
 HMAS HARMAN
 HQ JOC Bungendore
 Majura Range
 Fairbairn
 RMC Duntroon
 Russel Offices



RAAF Glenbrook
 RAAF Richmond
 Randwick Barracks
 Singleton Military Area
 Victoria Barracks Sydney
 Wollongong Hydrographic Office

Victoria

Benalla

Western Australia

Campbell Barracks
 Fleet Base West – Garden Island
 Harold E Holt
 Irwin Barracks
 Leeuwin Barracks
 Palmer Barracks
 RAAF Curtin
 RAAF Learmonth
 RAAF Pearce
 YampI Sound Training Area

SOUTH EAST ZONE

New South Wales

Blamey Barracks Kapooka
 Defence Service Centre – Cooma
 RAAF Wagga

Tasmania

Anglesea Barracks
 Buckland Military Training Area
 Derwent Barracks
 DSTG Scottsdale
 Fort Direction
 Stony Head Training Area

Victoria

Defence Plaza Melbourne
 AGO Bendigo
 DSTG Fishermans Bend
 Fort Queenscliff
 Gaza Ridge Barracks North
 Bandiana

Gaza Ridge Barracks
 South Bandiana
 HMAS CERBERUS
 Latchford Barracks Bonegilla
 Maygar Barracks
 Oakleigh Barracks
 Puckapunyal Military Area
 RAAF East Sale
 RAAF Williams Laverton/Point Cook
 Simpson Barracks
 Victoria Barracks Melbourne
 Wadsworth Barracks East Bandiana

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Australian-Singapore Comprehensive Strategic Partnership — Military Training and Training Area Development in Australia

The Joint Agreement on a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between Australia and Singapore announced that the two governments would jointly develop training areas and facilities in Australia. The Memorandum of Understanding allows for up to 14,000 Singapore Armed Forces personnel to undertake unilateral training on Australian Defence training areas for up to 18 weeks annually once the initiative is in a mature state.

The initiative will see the delivery of enhanced military training areas in Central and North Queensland, which will benefit the Australian Defence Force, provide significant local economic opportunities, and enhance Australia's bilateral defence relationship with Singapore.

The Singapore Government will provide \$2.25 billion to implement the initiative, which will result in an estimated \$50 million spent in Queensland annually during the construction phase. Construction will occur in Central and North Queensland in parallel from 2019.

United States Force Posture Initiatives

The governments of Australia and the United States are implementing the 25 year Force Posture Agreement, which provides a framework for how the two nations will collaborate on force posture initiatives. The Agreement covers two initiatives which will provide strategic benefits for the Australia-United States Alliance and economic benefits for Northern Australia:

- Marine Rotational Force – Darwin: this initiative consists of annual rotations of United States Marines and accompanying equipment and vehicles through Northern Australia.
- Enhanced Air Cooperation: under this initiative there will be increased short-term rotations of United States aircraft through Northern Australia.

Approximately \$2 billion is being invested to expand and upgrade Defence infrastructure and facilities in Northern Australia. Both the United States and Australian Governments have committed to a package of infrastructure and facilities works concentrated at Robertson Barracks, RAAF Base Darwin, RAAF Base Tindal and training areas across the Northern Territory. Subject to national and bilateral approvals, construction is expected to start in 2018-19 and continue through to the mid-2020s. The United States and Australian Governments will fund required works separately.

Defence Assistance to the Civil Community

Defence Assistance to the Civil Community is the mechanism by which Defence provides both emergency and non-emergency support to the civilian community. Where the scale of the emergency or disaster exceeds or exhausts the response capacity and capabilities of a state or territory, or where resources cannot be mobilised in time, Australian Government assistance may be sought through Emergency Management Australia, including from the Australian Defence Force.

Emergency Defence Assistance to the Civil Community provides support where immediate action is necessary to save human life or alleviate suffering, prevent widespread loss or damage to property, or prevent extensive loss of animal life. Examples of recent Defence Assistance to the Civil Community include support to state and local services for natural disasters such as Cyclone Debbie in 2017, which caused significant damage and flooding in regional Queensland, and bushfires in the Hunter Valley region in 2018.

Defence Community Organisation

Defence is committed to building the capacity of local urban and regional communities to provide support services to Defence member families.

Defence, via the Defence Community Organisation, delivers community capacity building outcomes through:

- building strategic partnerships with service delivery organisations at local, state and national levels
- a range of online and community based networking events, workshops, programs and services
- working in collaboration with local agencies to develop initiatives to address gaps and limitations in community resources that Defence member families may require
- providing personalised advice and ongoing communication to Defence member families on available community resources and actively linking families to the resources they require.

The Defence Community Organisation has offices in the following locations:

- Brisbane, Townsville, Amberley, Darling Downs and Cairns (QLD)
- Sydney, Williamtown, Holsworthy, Wagga Wagga, Nowra, Richmond, Singleton and Albury (NSW)
- Canberra (ACT)
- Melbourne, East Sale, Cerberus and Puckapunyal (VIC)
- Darwin and Tindal (NT)
- Rockingham, Leeuwin Barracks and Pearce (WA)
- Adelaide (SA)
- Hobart (TAS).

The Defence Community Organisation fosters community linkages through programs such as:

- Australian Defence Force (ADF) Transition Support Services (coordinated by the Defence Community Organisation) work with ADF members and their families transitioning from the ADF and provide information on educational, financial,

rehabilitation, compensation and other government services to facilitate sound transition planning. ADF Transition Support Services are delivered through 13 ADF Transition Centres nationally.

- Defence Childcare Program provides 17 childcare centres and three out-of-school hours childcare centres nationally.
- Defence School Transition Aide Program minimises the impact of mobility on Defence children's education. The Defence Community Organisation supports 229 schools and over 12,500 Defence children nationally.
- Community Support Coordinator Program supports 27 paid Defence Community Centre Coordinators nationally.
- Family Support Funding Program supports 51 incorporated not-for-profit community based organisations.

Indigenous Engagement

Indigenous Recruitment

Defence has extensive engagement with Indigenous communities in remote, urban and regional Australia. In addition to direct entry into Defence employment, Defence offers a range of pathway programs for Indigenous Australians seeking a career in Defence as an Australian Defence Force (ADF) member or Australian Public Service (APS) employee.

Navy and Army Indigenous Development Programs - these programs focus on language, literacy, and numeracy training; military skills; physical fitness; vocational education and training, cultural appreciation; leadership and character development. The programs provide Indigenous Australians from all regions an opportunity for a Defence career. Programs are conducted up to a six-month period in Cairns (QLD), Batchelor (NT) and Kapooka (NSW).

The Indigenous Pre Recruit Program - this program is aimed at Indigenous Australians who meet the current general entry recruiting standards for medical, education and aptitude, however need to develop their confidence, resilience and/or improve their physical fitness to enable them to succeed during recruitment and initial employment training. In 2018, the six-week program will be conducted at the Army Recruit Training Centre, Kapooka (NSW), Her Majesty's Australian Ship Cerberus (VIC) and Royal Australian Air Force Base Wagga Wagga (NSW). Indigenous Australians from all over Australia can participate.

Army's Regional Force Surveillance Group (responsible for the provision of 'situational awareness and understanding on prescribed threats to Australia's national interest through the conduct of remote area, land and littoral, reconnaissance and surveillance operations; community engagement; and support to whole-of-government initiatives') - contributes positively to Indigenous Engagement & Development in the North and North West of Australia via:

- the provision of meaningful employment opportunities within the Regional Force Surveillance Units, enabling Indigenous Australians to contribute to the protection of the nation and their traditional lands

- access to ongoing training, education and development to support career opportunities and personal growth both within Army and the community (for Part-Time members)
- delivery of the Army Indigenous Development Program Northern Territory by Indigenous Development Wing as a pathway program supporting full-time career opportunities in Army
- delivery of the Regional Force Surveillance Unit Education & Development Course by Indigenous Development Wing as a pathway program supporting part-time career opportunities in the Regional Force Surveillance Units via the Regional Force Surveillance List
- community Engagement and liaison in support of Defence, Army and whole-of-government initiatives.

Air Force Indigenous Reserves - the Air Force recruited eight Indigenous Reserve members from local Indigenous communities into the Woomera Test Range Compliance Monitoring Team in South Australia in 2017. In order to recruit more members of local Indigenous communities to work with Air Force in location, Air Force will look to use this approach in 2018-19 for the Delamere Air Weapons Range in the Northern Territory, and also in East Sale, Victoria.

Specialist Recruiting Team – Indigenous - Defence Force Recruiting has 15 ADF members in a Specialist Recruiting Team – Indigenous. This team mentors Indigenous candidates and engages with Indigenous community leaders and members in order to promote the ADF as an attractive employer for Indigenous candidates. Members of the Specialist Recruiting Team – Indigenous are located in most capital cities as well as Townsville, Cairns, Newcastle and Wollongong.

Australian Public Service Indigenous Traineeships and Apprenticeships - offer Indigenous Australians entry-level APS employment. Defence endeavours to employ Indigenous trainees and apprentices in their current location, or in close proximity, where Defence localities and operational requirements allow.

Engagement with Indigenous Communities

Defence has established or contributes to a number of other programs that engage with regional Indigenous communities:

- The Navy, Army and Air Force have established and filled Regional Indigenous Liaison Officer roles in each state or territory assisting commanders to better understand and engage with local Indigenous communities throughout Australia.
- Since 1997, the Army has delivered a range of housing, infrastructure, essential services (power, water and sewerage) and other benefits to selected remote Indigenous communities through the Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Program (AACAP). The aim of the program is to improve the primary health, environmental health and living conditions of Aboriginal people. Over the past 20 years, AACAP has been delivered to 42 communities. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Australian Army have undertaken a review of the program to examine the objectives and outcomes with a view to broadening the benefits of the program. The review was completed in June 2017 and endorsed by the

Minister for Indigenous Affairs in November 2017. AACAP 2018 will be held in Yalata, South Australia.

- Under Exercise Kummundoo, Air Force's Combat Support Group provides dental specialists to serve for several weeks within remote communities in order to provide dental services. The Exercise is a collaboration between Air Force and the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation. The program will be run again in September 2018.
- The Jawun Program operates in nine regions around Australia, including urban, regional and remote Indigenous communities. This program adopts a partnership model across different sectors and emphasises working with Indigenous people, rather than simply providing services. The program matches individuals skill sets (within corporations and government) with the needs of an Indigenous community or organisation throughout Australia. Project work is allocated based on this need and is completed over a six-week placement working with the Indigenous community or organisation. Defence has been a participant of Jawun since 2012. To date, 69 Defence employees have participated across various locations.
- The Defence Work Experience Program hosted 234 Indigenous Australians in Defence work experience activities in 2017-18 across Australia, with the majority in Western Australia, Northern Territory and North Queensland. Defence will continue to offer such opportunities this year, including the Air Force Indigenous Youth Program being conducted at Royal Australian Air Force Base Williamtown, and Royal Australian Air Force Base Richmond, New South Wales, for up to 30 secondary school students, an Indigenous-specific program in Townsville, Queensland and continued activities with students linked to Indigenous organisations such as the Clontarf Foundation and the Girls Academy.

These programs contribute to positive outcomes for Indigenous Australians, predominantly through adult employment. They are aimed at increasing enlistment and participation rates into the ADF and the APS by assisting Indigenous applicants and candidates to transition into full and part-time employment. There is also a recognised benefit to both program participants and communities, when participants return to their community with the skills and knowledge to become leaders and role models.

Engaging People with Disability – Defence Administrative Assistance Program; Inclusive Employment Program and Dandelion @ Defence

Defence has built strong partnerships with Australian Disability Enterprises and Disability Employment Services Providers to support Defence disability employment programs. Defence offers a range of entry level employment programs for people with intellectual disabilities, aimed at enhancing Defence capability and directly contributing to Defence' s cultural reform efforts.

- **Defence Administrative Assistance Program** supports regional communities through partnerships with local Australian Disability Enterprises to provide people with intellectual disability the opportunity to engage in meaningful work. This program operates at the following sites: RAAF Base Amberley, Gallipoli Barracks Enoggera and Lavarack Barracks Townsville (QLD); HMAS *Stirling* (WA); Holsworthy Barracks (NSW); Victoria Barracks, Melbourne (VIC); RAAF Base Edinburgh (SA); and Robertson Barracks, Darwin, (NT). Since 2016, 99 participants have been engaged under the Program.

- **Inclusive Employment Program** increases the participation of people with disabilities in the ongoing Defence Australian Public Service workforce. This program creates a pathway for people with intellectual disability to begin their work journey and build a career in Defence. Since 2014, 19 individuals have been recruited into the organisation on an ongoing basis.
- **Dandelion@Defence Program** - employs high-functioning individuals diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Defence currently employs nine individuals who have a remarkable eye for detail, accuracy and consistency, a logical and analytical approach to detecting irregularities, pattern matching skills and a high tolerance for repetitive mental tasks - all of which are crucial skills in handling real world cyber security operations.

Defence seeks to be an employer of choice for all Australians through the creation of an inclusive workplace for people with disability. By increasing the representation of people with disability and encouraging a greater level of participation in Defence we are building an organisation where diversity is respected and valued.

Defence Force Recruiting Support to Regional Australia

The Defence regional footprint includes a number of Defence Force Recruitment Centres in the following locations:

- Newcastle, Wollongong and Albury (NSW)
- Cairns, Robina (Gold Coast), Maroochydore, Toowoomba and Townsville (QLD).

These recruitment centres are in addition to the Defence Force Recruitment Centres established in capital cities.

Defence Industry Development

Australia's defence industry plays a vital role in supporting Defence and delivering leading edge technologies and capabilities required to generate and sustain the future force. Established in 2016, the Centre for Defence Industry Capability (CDIC) is a \$23 million a year initiative that provides advisory and facilitation services and grants to eligible small and medium enterprises (SMEs) across Australia to assist them to be better positioned to support Defence.

Currently, the CDIC is delivering a national program of 'Introduction to the Defence Market' seminars in all capital cities and regional centres to provide information to businesses that are seeking opportunities in defence markets.

The recently released Defence Export Strategy provides strong support to increase defence exports and maintain and grow employment in the defence industry sector. The Strategy includes \$4.1 million in additional funding to support businesses of all shapes and sizes across Australia to increase their export competitiveness.

The Next Generation Technologies Fund also includes a range of opportunities for small and medium enterprises, including the Small Business Innovation Research for Defence initiative.

The Australian Industry Capability (AIC) Program is the major lever for Australian industry involvement in supporting defence capability and applies to every materiel

procurement of \$20 million and above. The AIC has been strengthened with tenderers now required to more explicitly demonstrate how they have maximised opportunities for Australian industry as part of their proposed capability solution and what value add work is proposed to be undertaken in Australia.

Defence is piloting a new requirement for a Local Industry Capability Plan on six major capital facilities projects. Under the pilot, tenderers for major capital facilities projects must develop a local industry capability plan that outlines how local industry will be engaged under the proposed tender, including how the proposed work will be undertaken by local industry. The results of this pilot will inform the development of a Defence Industry Participation Policy, which will be released in the first half of 2018. The policy will provide a more consistent approach to maximising Australian and local industry involvement in Defence procurement of \$4 million and above.

In April 2018, the Australian Government released the Defence Industrial Capability Plan which outlines the Australian Government's ten-year vision and plan for growing the defence industry, including identifying our Sovereign Industrial Capability Priorities. Defence will also release a Defence Industry Skilling and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Strategy to match demand for defence industry capability with the workforce and skills required.

The Defence Innovation Hub was launched on 5 December 2016 as part of the Government's \$1.6 billion investment in Defence innovation to build the innovation capabilities of Australian industry and research organisations, and to deliver innovative solutions for Defence capability. Funded at \$640 million over the decade, the Defence Innovation Hub manages a portfolio of Defence innovation investments. It brings together Defence, industry, academia and research institutions from across Australia and New Zealand to collaborate on innovative technologies that can be developed into advanced capability for Defence.

The Defence Innovation Hub has awarded three innovation contracts totalling over \$3.0 million with organisations based in regional Australia:

Organisation & Location	Contract Description	Contract Value
University of Newcastle (Newcastle, New South Wales)	To explore the development of enhanced resilience training for Australian Defence Force personnel through a set of virtual reality based training sessions involving controlled exposure to adverse environments.	\$2.2 million
Armor Composite Engineering (Newcastle, New South Wales)	To explore the development of a body armour system that could be used by Australian Defence Force personnel in close protection roles.	\$618,000
Trang Imagineering (Orange, New South Wales)	To explore the development of three-dimensional (3D) sensors that have been used in the mining industry for potential use by the Australian Defence Force for threat monitoring in conflict zones.	\$218,000

Management of Per-and Poly-Fluorinated Alkyl Substances (PFAS) at Defence Bases

Defence will continue to implement a program of PFAS environmental investigations at 23 Defence establishments across Australia to:

- better understand the nature and extent of PFAS contamination originating from Defence establishments
- provide communities with information on investigation outcomes and management responses which support these affected communities to live in a manner consistent with the health advice.

Defence will also continue to provide affected residents with alternative sources of drinking water as a precautionary measure. To manage the extent and nature of contamination, Defence will establish a drinking water program in communities surrounding Army Aviation Centre Oakey and RAAF Bases Williamtown, Tindal and Pearce. These treatment activities will assist in mitigating the impact of PFAS contamination in the surrounding communities. Additionally, Defence will continue to work with Australian industry to identify effective remediation technologies to treat contaminated water and soils at its investigation sites.

The Government has also committed to funding a research program to be led by the Australian Research Council to identify innovative technologies to treat PFAS contamination.

Environmental Management Policies

Defence environmental management policies support regional communities through:

- promoting sustainable environmental management at Defence facilities
- contributing to relevant regional environmental initiatives.

The 2016-2036 Defence Environmental Strategy continues to support the Defence environmental vision to be a leader in sustainable environmental management. The environment and its ongoing sustainable management is a critical enabler to Australian Defence Force capability.

Defence has updated its suite of pollution prevention policy documents into a new Pollution Prevention Management Manual (PPMM) which is available from external Defence websites. The PPMM provides practical pollution prevention guidance for management of existing Defence estate infrastructure and activities to support regulatory compliance. A key element of the PPMM relates to management of Fire Fighting Foam. This aligns with Australian Standards for chemical management and other international guidelines for best practice firefighting foam management.

Defence has engaged the Australian Wildlife Conservancy in a trial partnership to improve the biodiversity management of the Yampi Sound Training Area in the West Kimberley through managing pests, weeds, bushfire and threatened species. Yampi Sound possesses outstanding conservation values as well as large and varied training environments for the Australian Defence Force. The Australian Wildlife Conservancy works in cooperation with the Dambimangari traditional owners and provides employment. This investment by Defence benefits the broader Australian

community through supporting national biodiversity targets as well as benefiting the local community through increased economic activity.

Defence continually works to better integrate its bushfire management activities with those of the state and territory governments. Defence invested \$14 million dollars in 2016-17 for bushfire mitigation activities including fuel reduction works to protect communities and the environment across Australia. In 2017, Defence entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the New South Wales Rural Fire Service detailing how the agencies interact in mitigating and responding to bushfire emergencies. This includes mechanisms for the provision of airfield and other support services to the Rural Fire Service during a bushfire.

The newly launched Defence Estate Renewable Energy Program will provide alternate energy to support fixed electricity supplies for the Defence estate, and offer added energy security measures, such as access and supply.

Defence Housing Australia

Defence Housing Australia (DHA) provides housing and related services to members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and their families in accordance with the *Defence Housing Australia Act 1987* and service agreements with Defence.

DHA has 20 offices that deliver customer services to ADF members and their families and investors. They are supported by four telephone contact centres that are the first point-of-contact for housing services, maintenance services and the allocation of on-base Living in Accommodation, as well as a head office in Canberra and an office in Sydney's central business district. Thirteen DHA offices are located in regional Australia, four of which are on regional ADF bases for Defence personnel only. Two of DHA's telephone contact centres are in regional Australia.

DHA manages approximately 18,800 properties worth \$11 billion in all capital cities, major regional centres and some remote locations where the ADF has a presence. Approximately 30 per cent of these properties are located in regional and remote Australia.

DHA manages a multi-million dollar rolling capital program to meet its provisioning obligations to Defence and maintain the currency and quality of its property portfolio. DHA buys land, constructs properties and purchases and leases new and established properties, as required. DHA also provides on-base regional and remote housing services to Defence.

DHA has five residential development projects in progress in regional Australia. These projects are located in Newcastle (NSW), Sale (VIC), Ipswich and Townsville (QLD). The estimated value of the projects on completion is \$520 million. Subject to receiving the necessary planning approvals, DHA will undertake a further five residential development projects in regional Australia. These projects are in Newcastle (NSW), Toowoomba (QLD), Hastings (VIC) and Rockingham (WA). The estimated value of the projects on completion is \$337 million.

DHA also manages a multi-million dollar Defence-funded upgrade, construction and redevelopment program. DHA is managing six projects in regional Australia. They are located in Katherine (NT), Alice Springs (NT), Woonona (NSW), Port Wakefield (SA), East Sale (VIC) and Canungra (QLD). The estimated value of the projects on completion is \$34 million.

DHA actively engages suitably qualified local businesses and tradespeople through tender processes to undertake construction and maintenance work. In doing so, DHA contributes to and supports local economies and job creation.

Defence Base Service Contracts

Defence has a number of base service contracts that support the management of the Defence estate and the daily activities of Defence bases across Australia. Where services are delivered to bases located in regional and remote areas, the base services contractors generally draw their workforce from local employment areas as well as accessing local business suppliers. The services provided include estate maintenance, hospitality and catering, range and training area support, living accommodation and housekeeping, transport, access control, waste management services, land and environment management, pest and vermin management, firefighting, airfield operations and aircraft refuelling.

The Base Services Contractors are required to demonstrate a commitment to Indigenous employment, including the use of Indigenous business suppliers. Base services contractors must have a current Indigenous Training, Employment and Supplier Plan.

Cairns Marine Precinct Upgrade

The Australian Government has committed \$24 million over three years from 2016-17 to 2018-19 to the Cairns Marine Precinct upgrade, to be implemented by 2020.

The Cairns Marine Precinct upgrade will modernise shipyards within the precinct and improve the capability and capacity of the existing maritime infrastructure to support marine maintenance and sustainment requirements, both Government and commercial.

Defence Infrastructure/ Estate Projects

The Australian Government is investing approximately \$8.6 billion over four years from 2018-19 in facilities and infrastructure projects. Defence facilities and infrastructure investment are funded by the Defence Integrated Investment Program via Defence's existing annual appropriation. Approved regional Major Capital Facilities projects include the following:

New Air Combat Capability (Air 6000 NACC) (various locations)

This \$1,477.0 million project will provide new and upgraded facilities and infrastructure to support the introduction of the Joint Strike Fighter at RAAF Base Williamtown Newcastle (NSW) and RAAF Base Tindal, Katherine (NT) with support facilities and infrastructure provided at Defence Establishment Myambat (NSW) and seven Forward Operating Bases. The project is scheduled for completion by mid-2020.

Maritime Patrol Aircraft Replacement (AIR 7000 Phase 2B) (various locations)

This \$707.9 million project will provide new and upgraded facilities and infrastructure to support the introduction of the P-8A aircraft at RAAF Base Edinburgh (SA), RAAF Base Townsville (QLD), RAAF Base Pearce (WA) and RAAF Base Darwin (NT) as well as additional explosive ordnance facilities at HMAS *Stirling*. The project is scheduled for completion by late 2020.

HMAS Cerberus Redevelopment (Victoria)

This \$463.1 million project will provide engineering services upgrade, consolidation of Living In Accommodation and Mess Facilities, co-location of Clothing Store with Naval Store, School of Survivability and Ship Safety upgrade, Gym upgrade, Armoury, Explosive Ordnance and Weapons Storage Facility upgrade, and demolition. The project is scheduled for completion in 2025.

Air Traffic Control Complex Infrastructure Project and Fixed Base Defence Air Traffic Management Control System (AIR 5431 Phases 2 and 3) (various locations)

This \$409.9 million project will provide facilities across 13 bases in support of replacement Air Traffic Management Surveillance, Command and Control Systems under AIR 5431 Phases 2 and 3, incorporating the replacement of aged and degraded Air Traffic Control Towers. The project is scheduled for completion by early 2023.

Battlefield Airlifter Facilities (AIR 8000 Phase 2) (Queensland)

This \$370.4 million project will provide facilities at RAAF Base Amberley, Queensland, to accommodate and support the operation of the new C-27J Battlefield Airlifter (BFA) aircraft. The project is scheduled for completion by mid-2019.

HMAS Stirling Redevelopment Stage 3A (Western Australia)

This \$366.8 million project will provide upgrades and refurbishment of existing critical shortfalls to infrastructure and facilities. The project is scheduled for completion by early 2020.

Growler Airborne Electronic Attack Capability Facilities (AIR 5349 Phase 3) (Queensland)

This \$348.6 million project will provide the necessary working accommodation, maintenance, warehousing and training facilities at RAAF Base Amberley (QLD) to support the introduction of the Growler Airborne Electronic Attack Capability. The project is scheduled for completion by early 2021.

Pilot Training System Facilities (AIR 5428 Phase 1) (various locations)

The \$329.8 million project will provide fit-for-purpose facilities to support the modern joint training system being delivered by AIR5428-1 Capability Project, with the facilities planned to be delivered at RAAF Base East Sale (VIC), RAAF Base Pearce and Gin Gin (WA), RAAF Base Williamstown (NSW), and RAAF Base Edinburgh (SA). The project is scheduled for completion in late 2020.

LAND 121 Stage 2 (Phases 3 and 4) (various locations)

This \$276.5 million project will provide facilities across nine bases to sustain the B-vehicle fleet in accordance with the Basis of Issue for Army, RAAF and Joint Logistics Command. These facilities will maintain (workshops and repair parts storage), support (fuel points, loading ramps, wash points and weight bridges) and sustain (shelters and hardstand) the vehicles from vehicles acquisition Phase 3A (G-Wagon), Phase 3B (Light/Light Weight and Medium/Heavy) and Phase 4 (Protected Mobility Vehicles Light). The project is scheduled for completion by early 2020.

RAAF Base Williamtown Redevelopment Stage 2 (New South Wales)

This \$274.0 million project will sustain and improve the functionality and capability of RAAF Base Williamtown (NSW), including upgrades or replacement of critical ageing infrastructure to meet future requirements. The project is scheduled for completion by late 2021.

Explosive Ordnance Logistics Reform Program (various locations)

This \$230.9 million project will address explosive ordnance storage capacity shortfalls through delivery of new and enhanced explosive ordnance facilities at 12 Defence sites. The project is scheduled for completion by mid-2020.

C-17 Maintenance Facility, Aircraft Apron and Associated Infrastructure (AIR 8000 Phase 3) (Queensland)

This \$219.4 million project will provide a maintenance facility, working accommodation, an aircraft apron and associated facilities at RAAF Base Amberley (QLD). This project is scheduled for completion by early 2019.

JP 157 Ph1 Replacement Aviation Refuelling Vehicles (various locations)

This \$40.4 million project will provide new/upgraded facilities to support a new fleet of aviation refuelling vehicles to be procured by JP157 Phase 1 at 15 Defence sites. The Capability Acquisition and Sustainment Group project involves procurement of larger (semi-trailer), medium (rigid frame) and smaller hydrant cart tankers, for distribution across Australian Defence Force airfields nationally and to RMAF Butterworth. The project is scheduled for completion by late 2019.

Defence Terrestrial Communications Network Facilities Upgrade (JP 2047 Phase 3) (various locations)

This \$131.1 million project will provide upgraded and new communications infrastructure and supporting facilities at multiple Defence owned and leased sites across Australia. The project will support the introduction into service of the new Defence Terrestrial Communication Network. The project is scheduled for completion by late 2018.

Airfield Capital Works (Curtin, Tindal and Townsville) (various locations)

This \$95.3 million project will resurface asphalt pavement and replace airfield lighting at RAAF Base Curtin (WA), RAAF Base Tindal (NT) and RAAF Base Townsville (QLD). The project is scheduled for completion by mid-2019.

Space Surveillance Telescope (JP 3029 Phase 2) (Western Australia)

This \$79.0 million project will provide facilities and infrastructure to support the operation of the Space Surveillance Telescope, which will enable Australian Defence Force space surveillance capability, enhanced global surveillance capability, and an increased ability to track space debris. The project is scheduled for completion by late 2018.

Delamere Range Facilities Redevelopment (Northern Territory)

This \$74.4 million project will redevelop key range facilities and infrastructure to enable Growler and Mobile Threat Training Emitter Systems capability at Delamere Air Weapons Range (NT). The project is scheduled for completion by late 2018.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Education and Training portfolio's mission is to create opportunities for all Australians to access high quality education from the early years, through schooling and tertiary settings. The Australian Government, through the Education and Training portfolio, wants to be acknowledged for the global reach of our research and internationally recognised for the quality of our education system.

By creating and strengthening access to quality education for all Australians and for international students, the Education and Training portfolio maximises opportunity through learning. Through such opportunity, individuals, families and communities are encouraged to reach their potential, participate in the social and economic wellbeing of their communities, and contribute to national and global prosperity.

The Education and Training portfolio, through its range of programs, supports Australians living in regional and rural communities. For example, new initiatives in response to the *Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education* will provide greater access to higher education for rural and regional students by increasing the number of Commonwealth supported sub-bachelor (including enabling) places as well as providing an additional 500 Commonwealth supported bachelor places for students studying in regional study hubs. The High Achieving Teachers Program will fill hard-to-staff teaching positions in rural and remote schools, and build skills in regional communities that are desired by employers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics industries.

NEW INITIATIVES

Government Response to the Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education

As part of its 2016 election commitments, the Australian Government commissioned an independent review into regional, rural and remote education to consider factors that impact on student learning outcomes and identify innovative and evidence-based approaches to help students succeed at school and in their transition to further study, training and employment.

In response to the review, the Australian Government is providing \$96.1 million over four years.

The Government will provide \$28.2 million over four years from 2018-19 to expand the availability of sub-bachelor (including enabling) places to allow greater access to higher education for rural and regional students. It is estimated that approximately 500 additional commencing sub-bachelor (including enabling) Commonwealth supported places annually from 2019 will be provided to institutions that operate in regional areas. The Australian Government is also providing \$14.0 million over four years from 2018-19 to fully support an additional 185 commencing Commonwealth supported bachelor places from 2019 (rising to 500 in 2022) for students studying in regional study hubs.

The Department of Social Services is providing funding through Improved Access to Youth Allowance (YA) for Regional Students. The Parental Income cut-off for the regional workforce independence criterion will increase from \$150,000 to \$160,000, plus an additional \$10,000 increase to the cut-off for each additional child in the family.

Additional Commonwealth supported places for the University of the Sunshine Coast, University of Tasmania and Southern Cross University

The Australian Government will provide an additional \$123.6 million from 2017-18 to 2021-22 for additional Commonwealth supported places at the University of the Sunshine Coast, University of Tasmania and Southern Cross University.

The funding will support the universities' expansion into regional areas.

- University of the Sunshine Coast will receive funding for an additional 1,200 ongoing bachelor places in 2020, growing to 3,600 ongoing places in 2022. These places will be utilised at a new campus in Moreton Bay.
- University of Tasmania will receive funding for an additional 500 sub-bachelor places in 2018 and 1,000 ongoing places from 2019. These places will be utilised to support the Northern Tasmanian Transformation Project.
- Southern Cross University will receive funding for an additional 105 ongoing places in 2019 and 210 ongoing places in 2020. These places, which are expected to grow to 315 ongoing places by 2021, will be utilised in allied health courses at a new campus in Coffs Harbour.

Quality Schools Reforms

Under the Quality Schools reform package, the Australian Government is implementing a new needs-based funding model for schools that delivers a consistent Commonwealth approach for schools in all states and territories, adjusted on the basis of need.

Under these arrangements, the Australian Government will grow its record level of recurrent funding for schools from \$17.5 billion in 2017 to \$29.5 billion in 2027, bringing total investment to \$243.5 billion from 2018 to 2027. Of this, an estimated \$56.9 billion will benefit students in regional and remote schools. Commonwealth funding for students in regional and remote Australia will grow from \$3.9 billion in 2017 to \$6.8 billion in 2027 – an increase of 75 per cent. On average over that period, per student funding for students in regional areas will grow by 4.9 per cent per year.

The new funding arrangements retain the Schooling Resource Standard, which comprises a base funding amount for all students and loadings to address disadvantage.

One of the loadings addresses school location, which recognises the additional costs of delivering education outside metropolitan areas. It is estimated the location loading will account for 2.3 per cent of Australian Government recurrent school funding expenditure in 2018. Funding for the location loading will grow, on average, by 5.8 per cent per year over the next decade.

Further, a school size loading, may benefit some regional schools, providing extra funding for medium, small and very small schools in recognition that they cannot achieve the same efficiencies of scale as a large school. It is estimated the size loading will account for 1.6 per cent of Australian Government recurrent school funding expenditure in 2018. Funding for the size loading will grow, on average, by 3.8 per cent per year over the next decade.

The Quality Schools package also provides additional support for government schools in the Northern Territory and support for literacy initiatives in Tasmania.

The Australian Government commissioned the *Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools*, chaired by Mr David Gonski AC, to provide advice on how increasing Australian Government funding should be used in Australian schools to improve education outcomes. The recommendations of this review will inform the development of a new national school reform agreement with states and territories.

The New Child Care Package

The Australian Government's childcare reforms are investing an additional \$2.5 billion to provide more support for families. The centrepiece of the new package is the new Child Care Subsidy, which will commence from 2 July 2018. The subsidy will be simpler than the current multiple payment system and will be paid directly to service providers. The new arrangements are designed to ensure that more financial support is targeted to the families who need it most to access child care.

Support for rural and remote families is an important feature of the reforms. The \$1.2 billion Child Care Safety Net aims to give the most vulnerable children a strong start. This includes specific funding in the Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) to assist vulnerable or disadvantaged families and communities. Budget Based Funded services are being supported to transition to the new subsidy. These services predominantly operate in rural and remote communities.

As part of the CCCF, the Connected Beginnings Program commenced in July 2016. The program provides for the integration of child care, maternal and child health, and family support services in schools where Indigenous communities are experiencing disadvantage.

Universal Access to Preschool Funding

The Australian Government has committed \$440.1 million to extend the *National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education* for a further year, providing Commonwealth support for preschool until the end of 2019. Preschool prepares children for school and is particularly beneficial for disadvantaged children. This measure will benefit approximately 348,000 children each year in the year before school, including approximately 100,000 in regional communities. The extension will provide governments with time to work collaboratively on preschool arrangements from 2020.

High Achieving Teachers Program

The Australian Government is taking steps to support alternative pathways into the teaching profession and support areas of workforce shortage. From 2018-19 alternative employment-based pathways will be provided into teaching to increase the number and distribution of high achieving teachers in Australia.

National Research Infrastructure Investment Plan — implementation of Government response

The Australian Government is investing an additional \$1.9 billion through the Department of Education and Training over 12 years from 2017-18 to implement the Research Infrastructure Investment Plan (the Plan), informed by the *2016 National Research Infrastructure Roadmap* (the Roadmap) to address priority National Research Infrastructure (NRI) projects.

Projects will be delivered through an expansion of the existing National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) and will bring the Government's investment in NRI projects under the Plan to \$4.1 billion over 12 years (indexed for inflation).

The Government has provided total funding of \$140.0 million to enable urgent upgrades to Australia's two peak high performance-computing facilities located at the Australian National University (announced in the 2017-18 MYEFO) and the Pawsey Supercomputing Centre hosted at the University of Western Australia provided through the Industry portfolio.

The NCRIS Program provides important infrastructure to the Australian research community and benefits rural and regional Australia through localised research infrastructure projects and facilities. Research in health and agriculture is directly supported by many NRI facilities, which also support industry and research collaborations on genomics and grain yields. Benefits will be realised for researchers in regional and remote areas through continued access to NRI through eResearch platforms.

Early Learning Languages Australia (ELLA)

The ELLA program is an innovative, digital play-based language learning initiative aimed at making language learning engaging and interesting to pre-schoolers. ELLA includes a series of interactive applications (apps), which are available on tablet devices that provides the opportunity to learn a language other than English, including Chinese (Mandarin), Japanese, Indonesian, French, Italian, Spanish, and Arabic. Modern Greek and Hindi were introduced in 2018.

The Australian Government has committed \$11.8 million over three years from 2018-19 to extend the highly successful ELLA program in up to 5,000 preschool services, and trial ELLA in Foundation to Year 2 in up to 300 schools. There will be further development of the ELLA apps into four new languages; Turkish, German, Korean and Vietnamese. Regional and remote Australia will benefit directly as the apps are designed so that preschool educators do not need the knowledge of the language being taught. This is particularly beneficial for use in regional and remote communities where access to qualified language teachers can be limited.

The Australian Government has invested \$15.7 million in the program from 2014 to 2018. In 2018, approximately 2500 services are participating in the program, which represents a reach of over 80,000 children.

National School Chaplaincy Program

The National School Chaplaincy Program aims to support the wellbeing of students and school communities through the provision of pastoral care services and other support services.

The Australian Government has committed to renew the program. While the program does not specifically target rural and regional communities, schools selected to participate in the program are eligible to receive up to \$20,000 per annum or up to \$24,000 for remote and very remote schools, to engage the services of a qualified school chaplain.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Regional Study Hubs

The Australian Government is providing \$16.7 million from 2018-19 to 2021-22 to improve access to higher education for students from rural and remote Australia by supporting the establishment and operation of regional study hubs. Such hubs typically support regional students to study courses locally delivered by distance from any Australian university by providing greater access to study support and infrastructure.

The measure will assist in the establishment and maintenance of up to eight community-owned regional study hubs across regional Australia.

Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships

The Australian Government is fulfilling its election commitment to provide \$24.0 million over four years from 2017-18 to 2020-21 for Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships, which will support 1200 regional and remote students to undertake science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) studies. The scholarships are for undergraduate, postgraduate and vocational education students, and aim to improve access to educational opportunities for regional and remote students.

School Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) initiatives

As part of the National Innovation and Science Agenda, the Australian Government has allocated over \$64.0 million to fund early learning and school STEM initiatives under the *Inspiring all Australians in Digital Literacy and STEM* measure. The initiatives support children and young people to embrace the digital age and increase their engagement with STEM education. Students who are most at risk of falling behind in the digital age, including those in regional communities, will be given opportunities to participate and engage. Support is also available for educators to increase their capacity to teach STEM subjects in preschool programs and in schools.

This funding is in addition to \$12.0 million provided to restore the focus on, and increase the uptake of, STEM in all Australian primary and secondary schools, under the *Restoring the Focus on STEM* measure of the Industry Innovation and Competitiveness Agenda. A total of \$5.0 million was also provided under the Australian Maths and Science Participation Program to continue existing science programs.

Teach for Australia

The Teach for Australia program fast-tracks high calibre, non-teaching graduates (known as Associates) into disadvantaged secondary schools through two years of intensive teacher training that leads to a Master of Teaching.

The Australian Government is supporting 10 cohorts of the Teach for Australia program, providing more than \$77.0 million in funding through past and present contracts spanning 2008-09 to 2020-21. The program has placed 676 teaching Associates in more than 155 rural, remote and metropolitan schools in Victoria, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory, the Northern Territory and Western Australia, filling hard-to-staff teaching positions, including in STEM subjects. Over 40 per cent of Associates have been placed in regional, rural and remote communities, while the remainder are in disadvantaged metropolitan schools.

English Language Learning for Indigenous Children (ELLIC) Program

The Australian Government is providing \$5.9 million from 2017–18 to 2020–21 to trial English learning applications (apps) to improve literacy outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children for whom English is a second language. The trial will take place over 2019 and 2020 in at least 20 preschools and is based on the successful Early Learning Languages Australia program.

The trial will further support the Australian Government’s commitment to Closing the Gap in literacy achievement between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and non-Indigenous children. Children will access the apps on tablet devices in preschool, supported by educators trained on how to integrate ELLIC into the preschool’s learning program. The selection of preschools for this program will focus on regional and remote areas, which will be identified through consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Supporting More Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Careers: Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute (AMSI) – National Research Internship Program

The Australian Government is providing \$28.2 million from 2016–17 to 2019–20 to support more women in STEM careers. The AMSI National Research Internship Program will support 1,400 new industry-based internships, with a particular focus on women researchers, through a nationally expanded PhD internships program run by AMSI. The national program will be open to all universities, including those in rural and regional areas, and will ensure participation by regional students. The internships will provide an opportunity for PhD students to train and build their research skills in an industry environment, and to develop their entrepreneurial skills and work-readiness.

Learning for Life Program

The Australian Government is providing \$48.0 million over four years, from 2016–17 to 2019–20, to expand The Smith Family’s Learning for Life program, which will support an additional 24,000 disadvantaged students.

The Learning for Life program provides financial, practical and emotional support to disadvantaged students to encourage them to stay at school, complete Year 12 (or its equivalent) and successfully transition from school to work or to further education and training. The program is delivered in over 90 communities across every state and territory, approximately half in regional and rural areas.

Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools Pilot (P-TECH)

The Australian Government is providing \$5.1 million from 2016 to 2021 to pilot the P-TECH model as part of its strategy to improve Australia’s Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) capability.

Current P-TECH sites classified as regional include Geelong and Ballarat, Victoria; Townsville, Queensland; Burnie, Tasmania; Wyong and Heatherbrae, New South Wales; and Darwin, Northern Territory.

The pilot involves establishing partnerships between the education and industry sectors to support young people to make a successful transition from school to further education, training and work.

Jobs and Growth in Tasmania – University of Tasmania campuses in Launceston and Burnie

The Australian Government has committed funding of \$150.0 million to the University of Tasmania to improve its critical infrastructure through the relocation and expansion of its Launceston and Burnie campuses. This initiative aims to address critical economic and community challenges facing the North and North-West of Tasmania by providing better access to quality higher education.

Commonwealth Grant Scheme

The Australian Government provided \$7.0 billion in 2017-18 through the Commonwealth Grant Scheme to subsidise students' higher education costs. This is an increase in funding of 69 per cent since 2009. The subsidy supports domestic students undertaking a range of sub-bachelor, bachelor and postgraduate courses at public universities. Some students enrolled in other course types or with private higher education providers may also be eligible for the subsidy. Under the Commonwealth Grant Scheme, eligible universities with regional campuses will receive funding of \$73.1 million in 2018-19 in regional loading to help meet the costs associated with higher education delivery in regional areas.

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) provides specialised tertiary education opportunities for students, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from remote parts of northern Australia. In recognition of BIITE's important role, it will receive over \$30 million over the next four years (2018-19 to 2021-22) through the National Institute Grant, along with funding through the Research Support Program and Research Training Program to support its research activities.

Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP)

HEPPP provides funding to universities to improve access to undergraduate courses for people from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds, and improve their retention and completion rates. This includes assisting students from regional and remote Australia who are from low SES backgrounds. The Australian Government will provide \$650.4 million in funding to public universities under the HEPPP over four years from 2018-19 to 2021-22.

Reading Writing Hotline

The Australian Government is providing \$0.6 million in 2018-19 to TAFE New South Wales (Sydney Institute) to support the continued delivery of the Reading Writing Hotline. This important referral service supports adults to improve their reading, writing and numeracy skills. It is delivered nationally, with targeted marketing to regional communities across Australia, where there is often a high need for services.

Skilling Australians Fund

The Skilling Australians Fund is an important part of the Government's commitment to growing the number of apprenticeships and traineeships and working with state and territory governments to achieve this goal. The focus on apprentices and trainees recognised that they are a national training priority area and that they are the flagship of the Australian Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector.

The Fund will be managed through a new project based National Partnership Agreement, requiring state and territory governments to commit matched funding and develop projects focused on support for apprenticeships and traineeships across a range of agreed priority areas, including rural and regional areas. Each project will also require engagement with, and support from, employers and industry. The Government is confident that more people will be able to choose and succeed in an apprenticeship pathway, and that more employers will be able to gain the skilled workers they need to drive innovation and growth.

Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)

The Australian Government is providing \$303.6 million in 2018-19 for the AMEP, which provides up to 510 hours of free English language tuition to eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants, within the first five years of their arrival in Australia. This helps them to successfully settle, and participate socially and economically in Australia. Additional tuition is also available under the Special Preparatory Program, the Settlement Language Pathways to Employment and Training Program, and Adult Migrant English Program Extend.

AMEP is delivered nationally in metropolitan, rural and regional areas, including through classroom-based and distance e-learning.

Vocational Education and Training Student Loans (VSL)

In the six months to 31 December 2017, the Australian Government supported approximately 35,000 students, including 1,900 rural and regional students, to study higher level vocational qualifications aligned to workplace and economic need through the new VSL program. VSL commenced on 1 January 2017 and replaced the VET FEE-HELP scheme, which closed to new students on 31 December 2016.

Skills for Education and Employment Program

Since 2002, the Skills for Education and Employment Program has provided training to assist job seekers to build skills necessary to gain employment or participate in further training. In 2018-19, the Australian Government is providing funding of \$93.2 million for this national program to provide 17,250 eligible job seekers with language, literacy and numeracy training. Clients receive free accredited training through registered training organisations. Training is delivered to meet both client and industry needs. Services are available nationally through face-to-face and distance delivery.

Australian Apprenticeships Incentives Program

Eligible employers in rural and regional Australia who want to take on apprentices will continue to benefit from the Australian Government's 2018-19 investment of \$392.1 million in the Australian Apprenticeships Incentives Program. The program provides additional assistance for employing apprentices in regional areas experiencing skills shortages or drought. Apprentices may also be eligible for the Living Away from Home Allowance.

Higher Education Loan Program (HELP)

The Australian Government HELP provides loans to students, including many from regional and rural areas, to help them with the cost of their tuition. Eligible students do

not pay any of their tuition fees up-front and are not required to start repaying the loan until they earn over the minimum compulsory repayment threshold.

Research Block Grants

The Australian Government has provided \$1.9 billion in 2017-18 to universities to support research and research training through a number of performance-based schemes. Research block grants are provided to all Australian public universities and help to support regionally-based researchers and research students. Universities are key to the economic and social growth of many regions, through the employment they provide and the students they attract, as well as their role in innovation systems.

Research block grant funding arrangements for universities support success in industry and other end-user engagement and drive greater research industry collaboration.

Industry Specialist Mentoring for Australian Apprentices (ISMAA)

The Australian Government announced the ISMAA program in the 2017-18 Budget, committing \$60.0 million over two years to support over 40,000 Australian Apprentices.

ISMAA complements existing apprenticeship support mechanisms by delivering industry specific mentoring services to apprentices in industries undergoing structural change. The support is focused on apprentices who are in the first two years of their training and will help to address particular careers and skills development concerns related to the apprentice's industry.

The support provided to apprentices is through regular one-to-one contact by highly skilled mentors with skill sets appropriate to service the targeted cohorts. The support will particularly benefit apprentices who were previously retrenched, have experienced long-term unemployment, are mature aged, or are from regional areas.

ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

The Environment and Energy portfolio advises on and implements environment and energy policy that supports the Australian Government in achieving a healthy environment, strong economy and thriving community, now and for the future. The portfolio's work delivers a range of environmental and economic benefits to regional Australia by protecting and improving the natural assets that communities rely on and ensuring reliable, affordable and sustainable energy.

Effective environmental management, including of our Commonwealth national parks, Australian Marine Parks and World Heritage Areas, helps to protect the country's most iconic natural destinations, Indigenous culture, unique ecosystems, biodiversity and threatened species. This supports continued growth in nature based tourism sectors, which contribute more than \$23 billion to the Australian economy each year. Much of this flows to regional economies and communities.

Under the National Landcare Program, the Australian Government is continuing its commitment to environment conservation and sustainable land management. The program is supporting communities across Australia to deliver on-ground projects that address national environmental, agricultural and Indigenous priorities and provide local and regional economic and social benefits.

The Emissions Reduction Fund supports Australian businesses, farmers and landholders to take practical and direct action to reduce emissions. Around 80 per cent of all contracted emission reductions under the fund are from the land sector. Participants, including farmers, landholders and Indigenous communities, receive a stable diversified income stream, and incentives to implement new and better practices.

The Bureau of Meteorology provides world class essential weather information, forecasts and warnings Australia-wide. The Bureau's services support planning, risk management and decision making in many sectors of the economy including agriculture, aviation, construction, tourism, transport and mining. The Bureau's warnings provide critical information for emergency services during severe weather events and natural disasters which help save lives and minimise property damage.

The portfolio has a strong presence in regional Australia through the Department of the Environment and Energy, the Bureau of Meteorology, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and the Director of National Parks.

NEW INITIATIVES

Great Barrier Reef 2050 Partnership Program

The Australian Government is investing \$557.8 million over seven years from 2017-18 and \$10.2 million ongoing from 2024-25 to support implementation of the joint Australian and Queensland Government Reef 2050 Plan - the primary framework for management of the Great Barrier Reef out to 2050. This investment includes the \$57.8 million funding boost to Reef protection measures agreed in the 2017-18 Mid-Year and Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

This investment will deliver actions that protect the Great Barrier Reef and continue first rate management of this global natural icon. Key initiatives delivered by the Environment and Energy portfolio with this funding include:

- \$443.3 million in 2017-18 to support a ground-breaking Reef Trust partnership with the Great Barrier Reef Foundation. Combined with funding from philanthropic and other sources, the partnership will deliver water quality improvements, crown-of-thorns starfish control, science for reef restoration, community engagement and improved monitoring.
- \$36.6 million over two years from 2017-18 to the Reef Trust to build on the success working with farmers to improve land-use practices to stop soil, pesticide and nitrogen runoff from damaging the Reef. This measure will be complemented by activities delivered by the Great Barrier Reef Foundation.
- \$27.2 million over five years from 2017-18 and \$10.2 million ongoing from 2022-23 to boost investment in the Great Barrier Reef Joint Field Management Program and put more field officers on the water, improve compliance, provide early warning of further bleaching and strengthen reef and island management.
- \$10.4 million over two years from 2017-18 for an all-out assault on coral-eating crown-of-thorns starfish, increasing the number of control vessels on the water to control outbreaks. This will be complemented by measures to be delivered by the Great Barrier Reef Foundation.

The Australian Government's investments are helping to protect and preserve the Great Barrier Reef and to maintain environmental health, sustainable agricultural practices and tourism activities in regional Queensland.

Australian Heritage Grants Program - Establishment

The Australian Government is reforming existing heritage grants programs to ensure the Commonwealth's investments are best placed to support the management of nationally protected heritage places. From 2018-19, funding of \$5.3 million per year will be delivered through the new flagship Australian Heritage Grants Program. The program will support management, conservation and promotion activities for places in Australia recognised for their nationally significant heritage values. Many of the eligible heritage places are found in regional Australia. The program will support owners and managers of heritage places, along with community groups and other non-government entities, to protect and promote the heritage values for which places are listed.

Powering Forward – Delivering more affordable, reliable and sustainable energy

The Australian Government has committed \$41.5 million over seven years from 2017-18 to support efforts to ensure secure, reliable, and affordable energy. Australia's energy system is transforming due to changes in technology, consumer preference and environmental factors. The Government is taking action to ensure this transition occurs smoothly. The package of measures will help Australians, including those in regional communities, get a better deal on their energy bills and access more secure, reliable and affordable power.

The package includes:

- \$18.7 million over four years from 2017-18, to implement the *Independent Review into the Future Security of the National Electricity Market* (the Finkel Review), and develop the National Energy Guarantee recommended by the Energy Security Board. The Finkel Review recognised the increasing risks extreme weather events pose to the security and reliability of Australia's energy system. This funding will provide improved climate data and extreme weather information to help guide planning and investment decisions in the system.
- \$7.5 million over two years from 2018-19 to fund the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Energy Council's work program.
- \$12.8 million over six years from 2018-19 and \$4.9 million every three years from 2024-25 to deliver energy security assessments.
- \$2.5 million over two years from 2018-19 to improve the functioning of the gas market.

Snowy Hydro Limited Acquisition

The Australian Government has reached an agreement with the New South Wales and Victorian Governments to take full ownership of Snowy Hydro Limited, Australia's energy generation and retailing company that owns, manages, and maintains the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme. The Government will provide \$4.2 billion to New South Wales and \$2.1 billion to Victoria (less dividends received), reflecting their respective shareholdings. New South Wales and Victoria have broadly committed to invest the proceeds in productive infrastructure projects.

In addition, Snowy 2.0 pumped hydro project, located in southern New South Wales, is scheduled to proceed to final investment decision by the end of 2018. Snowy 2.0 is the plan to expand the original Snowy Mountains scheme with an additional 2,000 megawatts of capacity and 350,000MW hours of storage, creating up to 5,000 jobs and producing storage to power 500,000 homes for a week.

Bureau of Meteorology – improved security and resilience for ICT systems – Tranche Two

The Australian Government provided additional funding to improve the Bureau's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) systems and its network of weather stations and radars. This investment will support the Bureau's continued provision of information and services critical to the profitability and productivity of Australian agriculture. The Bureau's information on streamflow, storages, soil water, water use and

markets, and water forecasts is essential for farmers, irrigators and rural water agencies, and supports Australia's international competitiveness and community well-being.

Australian Antarctic Science

The Department of the Environment and Energy is working with the Industry and Education portfolios to reform current governance arrangements for Antarctic Science funding. Antarctic Science funding is supported by two measures announced in the 2018-19 Budget including \$8.0 million per year from 1 January 2020 to 30 June 2027 for a new Special Research Initiative in Excellence in Antarctic Science and \$5.0 million per year from 2019-20 for a new 10 year Antarctic Science Collaboration Initiative grants program. These measures, together with the Government's significant investment in the Australian Antarctic Strategy and 20 Year Action Plan through the Department of the Environment and Energy, will have a positive impact on the Antarctic Science Community and the Australian Antarctic Program, benefiting the Tasmanian economy.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

National Landcare Program

The Australian Government is investing around \$1 billion over six years from 2017-18 in the next phase of the National Landcare Program. The Program is administered collaboratively by the Department of the Environment and Energy, the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Under the Regional Land Partnerships component, \$450 million is allocated to protect, conserve and provide for the productive use of Australia's water, soil, plants, animals and the ecosystems in which they live. Service Providers will work in partnership with communities to design and deliver on-ground environment and agriculture projects at a regional scale that support national priorities for natural resource management.

The program is providing \$15 million to expand Indigenous Protected Areas, in addition to \$93 million to continue existing Indigenous Protected Areas. This investment delivers benefits to our environment and our local communities by safeguarding the biodiversity of the nation's remote areas for present and future generations; protecting the cultural heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their region; and providing employment, education and training opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remote areas.

National Environmental Science Program

The National Environmental Science Program assists decision-makers to understand, manage and conserve Australia's environment by funding world-class biodiversity and climate science. The Program supports on-ground scientific research across regional Australia delivered through six research hubs:

- The *Marine Biodiversity Hub* is researching Australian oceans and marine environments, including temperate coastal water quality and marine species, based in Hobart.
- The *Northern Australia Environmental Resources Hub* is supporting the sustainable development of our northern landscapes, based in Darwin.

- The *Threatened Species Recovery Hub* is supporting the recovery of threatened species and the management of threats and improving recovery of threatened species, based in Brisbane.
- The *Tropical Water Quality Hub* is researching coastal water quality and coastal management focused on the Great Barrier Reef and other tropical waters, based in Cairns.
- The *Clean Air and Urban Landscapes Hub* is supporting environmental quality in urban areas, based in Melbourne.
- The *Earth Systems and Climate Change Hub* is increasing our understanding of the drivers of Australia's climate, based in Melbourne.

Director of National Parks

The Director of National Parks manages Australia's six Commonwealth national parks, the Australian National Botanic Gardens, and Australia's network of Australian Marine Parks. The Director of National Parks employs around 200 staff in regional Australia. The majority are located at Booderee in New South Wales, Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta national parks in the Northern Territory, and in Hobart. There are also small offices in the remote locations of Norfolk Island, Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

In Kakadu, Uluru-Kata Tjuta and Booderee national parks, the Aboriginal owners lease their land to be managed jointly with the Director of National Parks, to be protected as national parks to be enjoyed by all Australians. In addition to Aboriginal staff, trainees and apprentices, the parks provide service delivery agreements with local Aboriginal organisations and businesses. Trainee programs are designed to provide employment pathways for local people through on-the-job training in various aspects of park management, and the completion of nationally accredited certificates in conservation and land management.

Australian Marine Parks

The Australian Government is providing \$56.1 million over four years from 2016-17 to implement new management arrangements for Australian Marine Parks. The funding will support the commercial fishing sector to adjust to changes and provide more opportunities for engagement with recreational fishers, community groups and dive operators. It will promote local growth in tourism and protect our unique aquatic assets. This investment will have a positive impact on regional Australia through targeted investments that support local marine businesses and increase regional engagement in marine park management.

Commonwealth Water Functions – Commonwealth Environmental Water Office

The Commonwealth Environmental Water holdings are managed so that increased flows of water are provided to protect and restore water dependent ecosystems throughout the Murray-Darling Basin. The Australian Government is providing ongoing funding from 2017-18, including \$136.3 million over three years to 2019-20 to support the management of the Commonwealth's environmental water holdings. As at 31 January 2018, a total of 7,999 gigalitres of Commonwealth environmental water had been delivered to rivers, wetlands and floodplains of the Basin, contributing to the sustainability and amenity of these unique regional landscapes. Early results of the long-

term intervention monitoring program indicate that Commonwealth environmental watering has already made contributions to key environmental objectives in the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. This includes re-establishing populations of iconic fish species (including Murray Cod) following the millennium drought and supporting the completion of water bird breeding events at internationally important wetlands such as Barmah and Millewa Forests. The Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder has recruited six local engagement officers working within the Basin, to assist members of the community participate in environmental water planning and decision making.

Strengthening science underpinning regulation of Unconventional Gas and Large Coal Mining Development

The Department of the Environment and Energy continues to support the Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development, which provides advice to Australian governments on the water-related impacts of coal seam gas and large coal mining development proposals.

The Department is addressing critical gaps in the scientific understanding of impacts on water and the environment posed by developing coal and unconventional gas resources. This includes the \$30.4 million commitment in the 2017-18 Budget to continue to deliver targeted geological and bioregional assessments in three regions in South Australia, Queensland and Northern Territory that are prospective for shale and tight gas development.

Emissions Reduction Fund

The Emissions Reduction Fund creates positive incentives for Australians to adopt smarter practices and technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In less than three years, the Emissions Reduction Fund has achieved outstanding results. Funding of \$2.3 billion has been committed under contract, involving 438 projects to deliver around 191 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emission reductions.

Regional Australia is benefiting from the Fund, with a large proportion of projects outside capital cities. This includes projects that will allow native forests to regrow, store carbon in the soil and reduce methane emissions from the intensive livestock industry. In addition to reducing emissions and diversifying income streams, these projects have other social, economic and environmental benefits. For example, farmers are using revenue generated through the sale of carbon credits to invest in new and innovative farm practices. Savannah fire management projects in Northern Australia deliver significant emission reductions and reduce late season wild bushfires. Of equal importance is that these projects improve the protection of cultural and environment values, allowing Indigenous people to remain living on country and actively manage important cultural sites.

Improving Your Local Parks and Environment

The Australian Government is providing over \$22 million over four years from 2016-17 through the Improving Your Local Parks and Environment Program to support communities across Australia to revitalise, maintain and improve local parks, nature reserves, rivers, coastal areas and community facilities, ensuring better and more accessible green spaces.

Clean Energy Finance Corporation

The Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) is working to mobilise capital investment in renewable energy, low emissions technology and energy efficiency in Australia through commercial loans, equity investments and limited loan guarantees. More than half of the CEFC's investments support projects in regional Australia, including many in the agriculture sector. These projects include 20 large-scale solar projects across regional Australia, making the CEFC Australia's largest solar investor.

The CEFC and the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources are working together to support increase investment in the agribusiness sector. The CEFC has committed \$100 million to the agricultural platform of Macquarie Infrastructure and Real Assets. This investment will contribute to on-farm energy efficiency and sustainability and the CSIRO will contribute expert analysis to enable clean energy learnings to be shared across the farming sector.

The Reef Funding Program is making up to \$1 billion available over 10 years in investment finance for clean energy projects located in the Great Barrier Reef catchment region that support delivery of the Reef 2050 plan. Target sectors include agribusiness, tourism, property and infrastructure.

Australian Renewable Energy Agency

The Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) has a long-standing focus on delivering energy innovation in regional Australia. The Agency supports research and development and is focusing on investments which increase the affordability and reliability of energy for Australians, including those in regional communities.

Since its establishment in 2012, ARENA has committed more than \$1.3 billion to projects, many of which are in regional Australia. Some of these projects support communities, mines and businesses to use renewables to displace diesel and improve energy supply and security at the fringes of the grid, and include the Lakeland solar and storage project north-west of Cairns and the Barcaldine solar farm in central Queensland. Projects in remote locations away from electricity grids have also been supported, such as the Degruessa solar and storage project at a copper mine in Western Australia and projects supplying energy to Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory.

Around \$400 million of this funding has supported development of large-scale solar photovoltaic projects across Australia from Collinsville in Queensland to Emu Downs in Western Australia.

ARENA is working to bring the next generation of renewables to market through pilots, trials and studies in regional Australia. Examples include a hybrid wind, solar and storage facility at Kennedy Energy Park in Queensland and, the battery of the nation suite of projects in Tasmania.

National Wind Farm Commissioner and the Independent Scientific Committee on Wind Turbines

The National Wind Farm Commissioner receives and refers complaints about wind farms from concerned community residents. The Commissioner is improving transparency of information and promotes best practice for industry and government to adopt in relation to proposed and operating wind farms.

The Independent Scientific Committee on Wind Turbines - an independent, multidisciplinary, expert group - is improving science and monitoring of the potential impacts of sound from wind turbines (including low frequency and infrasound) on human health and the environment.

Australia's Presence in Antarctica

Australian Government funding for Antarctic science and environmental management continues to boost the Tasmanian economy, as Australia's operational work for Antarctica out of Hobart contributes to employment and local investment. The Australian Government is well progressed on the implementation of key priorities in the Australian Antarctic Strategy and 20 Year Action Plan. This includes the investigation of options to deliver year-round aviation access from Hobart as well as the establishment of new inland traverse capability to support the retrieval of a million year ice core.

The construction of a new world-class icebreaker named RSV Nuyina, to support the Australian Antarctic Program has commenced. The RSV Nuyina will be home-ported in Hobart.

Funding for the Australian Antarctic Program has flow on benefits for the Tasmanian economy. Sustainable funding for the Australian Antarctic Program ensures that the critical functions that support Australia's presence and scientific research activities in Antarctica are maintained, and that Australia retains its influence in the Antarctic region. The Antarctic sector largely centres around the activities of the Australian Antarctic Division in Kingston and represents a significant element of Tasmania's knowledge-based economy (including through employing and retaining staff in highly skilled jobs in scientific and research fields, and local specialised service industries). The Australian Antarctic Science Program is contributing to employment and investing locally through purchases for Antarctic program operations.

Macquarie Island Research Station

The Australian Government is providing \$49.8 million over 11 years from 2016-17 to build new scientific facilities on Macquarie Island and replace the existing research station. Macquarie Island is located in the Southern Ocean around 1,500 kilometres southeast of Tasmania. The island's location makes it important for Australia's contribution to a range of international scientific monitoring and Southern Ocean research programs. The Australian Government's continued operation of a year-round research station will ensure that high priority scientific, monitoring and management programs conducted on Macquarie Island continue. This includes continuing meteorological observations at Macquarie Island, which contribute to international climate science programs.

The construction and ongoing operation of a new research station on Macquarie Island, including the provision of Hobart-based logistics support, will bring economic benefits to Tasmania. It will contribute to the development of Hobart and its surrounding area as the premier logistics gateway and scientific research hub for East Antarctica and the Southern Ocean.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE

The Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio works to advance Australia's interests internationally. The portfolio delivers positive impacts for regional Australia by helping regional businesses identify and pursue international commercial opportunities, promoting foreign direct investment to drive regional growth, and implementing initiatives with a presence in regional areas.

Openness to trade and investment is central to Australia's economic prosperity, including in regional Australia. The *Foreign Policy White Paper*, launched in November 2017, underscores the importance of international engagement. In an increasingly complex and uncertain international environment, Australia will need to work harder to sustain our influence and secure our interests. Proactive engagement, especially in the Indo-Pacific, will help to create more Australian jobs, drive regional economic growth and deliver gains for regional areas.

In line with this, the Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio assists businesses in regional areas to pursue international commercial opportunities. Where there is a gap in private financial markets, the portfolio provides working capital, insurance and other financial solutions to help regional businesses take advantage of overseas export and commercial investment opportunities. Australia's free trade agreements provide a competitive edge to our agricultural producers and complement the Australian Government's efforts to secure and maintain access for many of our agricultural products under other countries' technical and biosecurity regulations.

The portfolio works to drive regional growth by promoting foreign direct investment where it is in the national interest. Australia has a clear comparative advantage in agribusiness, resources and energy, all largely based in regional areas. In northern Australia, the portfolio works to attract investment through 'gateway' infrastructure projects to link northern Australia with the Indo-Pacific region. These projects improve the ability of regional businesses to trade and access international markets.

The portfolio also delivers programs that benefit regional areas. This includes the New Colombo Plan, which provides opportunities for students, including those from regional areas, to study in the Indo-Pacific region; and the Pacific Labour Scheme, which supports widespread efforts to help regional Australia benefit from labour mobility. The Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio also works in partnership with state and territory governments, industry and commercial partners to build tourism demand, visitor numbers and spending in regional areas.

The Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio has a significant presence across Australia, including offices in each state and territory capital city and a number of regional centres. These offices ensure the Australian Government is in touch with the needs of local communities and business, including in regional areas. In addition, over 1,600 Australia Post outlets deliver passport services to Australians across the country.

NEW INITIATIVES

2017 Foreign Policy White Paper

The Australian Government released a *Foreign Policy White Paper* in November 2017. Its purpose was to establish a strategic framework to guide Australia's international engagement over the next decade.

The *Foreign Policy White Paper* provides a framework for our interests, values and priorities at a time of uncertainty and change. It affirms that an outward-looking Australia, fully engaged with the world, is essential to our future prosperity and security, including that of regional areas.

The *Foreign Policy White Paper* is based on five core pillars:

- promoting an open, inclusive and prosperous Indo-Pacific region in which the rights of all states are respected
- delivering more opportunities for our businesses globally and standing against protectionism
- ensuring Australians remain safe, secure and free
- promoting and protecting the international rules that support stability and prosperity and enable cooperation to tackle global challenges
- stepping up support for a more resilient Pacific and Timor-Leste.

The White Paper includes a number of initiatives, many of which support the Government's 'Agenda for Opportunity'.

New Posts in the Indo-Pacific

The Australian Government has allocated \$19.2 million from 2018-19 to 2021-22 to open a Consulate-General in Kolkata (India) and a High Commission in Funafuti (Tuvalu).

Subject to agreement by the Government of India, Australia's new Consulate-General in Kolkata will boost trade and investment opportunities for regional Australia. It will provide regional Australian businesses with an important gateway into India's expanding economy and help them unlock commercial opportunities in India's growing mining and resources sector. The High Commission in Tuvalu will facilitate improved uptake of the Pacific Labour Scheme, which will provide regional Australian employers with access to a pool of Pacific workers in regional growth industries.

These new posts build on posts opened in 2017-18, including new embassies in Rabat (Morocco) and Bogota (Colombia), and a Consulate-General in Surabaya (eastern Indonesia).

Australia's Participation in Expo 2020 Dubai

The Australian Government will fund Australia's participation in Expo 2020 Dubai. Australia's participation in Expo 2020 will maximise trade and investment benefits with the UAE, our largest trade and investment partner in the Middle East and a gateway to Australian exports to the region. The Australian pavilion will promote Australia as an attractive place to visit, study, invest and do business. This will benefit regional

Australian businesses, especially in the agriculture and tourism sectors, where there is potential to attract further trade and investment.

Business Engagement Activities

The Australian Government will provide \$15.0 million from 2018-19 to 2021-22 to enable stronger community outreach on the benefits of trade and investment; reinforce dialogue with business on foreign policy and strategic issues; address non-tariff barriers; boost the competitiveness of Australian services exports, including for regional businesses; and enhance our economic and commercial diplomacy efforts to better support Australian business. These activities directly respond to concerns raised by Australian business, including in rural and regional areas, during the *Foreign Policy White Paper* consultation process.

As a result of these new initiatives, regional businesses will benefit from improved support in addressing barriers to exports. Improved outreach in rural and regional areas will also create better connections between the Australian Government, business and regional communities.

A new nation brand

The Australian Government has committed \$10.1 million over four years from 2017-18 to 2020-21 to the development of a stronger nation brand for Australia. Regional Australia will benefit from the nation brand as it will reinforce Australia's reputation as an internationally competitive investment destination, a great place to visit, a quality provider of education and a trusted exporter of premium quality goods and services.

The initiative was announced in the *Foreign Policy White Paper* in response to numerous business and industry submissions which raised the importance of having a strong, unified nation brand for Australia.

A stronger nation brand for Australia will boost economic growth, and support the delivery of the Australian Government's trade and investment priorities, including in regional Australia.

Promoting Australian Capability in International Markets

The Australian Government is increasing its efforts to position Australia as a global leader to an international audience of prospective buyers, partners and investors.

To unlock global opportunities, and the economic and social benefits that these opportunities bring, there is a need for stronger and coordinated promotion of Australian industry capabilities in key international markets, particularly those in high potential and growing sectors such as food and agriculture, health and bio/medtech.

Complementing the development of Australia's new nation brand, the Australian Government will invest \$0.5 million over four years to amplify Australia's impact in international markets. A strategy and suite of shared messaging for use in overseas markets will be developed to better promote Australian solutions and suppliers to international customers and investors.

This measure will complement the Australian Government's existing efforts and positively impact Australian businesses of all sizes in sectors of competitive advantage, including those in regional Australia which are well placed to seize global opportunities.

Pacific Labour Scheme

The Australian Government has agreed to allocate \$48.6 million over four years to fund a new Pacific Labour Scheme. This Scheme will provide rural and regional Australian employers with access to a pool of Pacific workers in regional Australian growth industries such as accommodation and food services, health care and social assistance, and non-seasonal agriculture, forestry and fishing. The Scheme will commence in July 2018 with an initial intake of up to 2,000 workers, building on the success of the Pacific Microstates-Northern Australia Worker Pilot Program.

The Scheme will be labour-market tested and will enable Australian employers to address labour shortages in towns and farms where there are not enough local Australian job seekers to meet demand, while providing workers with skills and savings not available in their home countries. The Scheme will also contain protections to safeguard against worker exploitation. Kiribati, Nauru and Tuvalu will be a priority focus for the Scheme, with access to be extended to other Pacific countries over time based on need and impact.

The Australian Government will establish a new Pacific Labour Facility in 2018 to connect Australian employers with Pacific workers and support the administration of the Pacific Labour Scheme. The Facility will increase the quality of training and supply of workers to Australia, provide pastoral care services for workers, and monitor the impact of labour mobility programs both in Australia and in Pacific economies.

The Facility will also provide targeted support to Australia's Seasonal Worker Programme, led by the Department of Jobs and Small Business. This includes a range of new measures to support participation in the Seasonal Worker Programme and to improve uptake, such as increasing Australian industry engagement, piloting additional support to reduce up-front costs for approved employers, strengthening training, improving visa arrangements, and providing additional assistance for seasonal workers to access their superannuation and pastoral care in Australia.

Defence Export Facility

The Export Finance and Insurance Corporation (Efic) will administer a new Defence Export Facility on behalf of the Australian Government. The Defence Export Facility will have a maximum aggregate exposure of \$3.8 billion over ten years. The Facility will help Australian exporters in the defence sector, including many based in regional areas, to get the finance they need to underpin the sales of their goods and services overseas. It will provide confidence to the industry to identify and pursue new export opportunities, knowing Efic's support is available where there is a market gap for defence finance.

Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP-11)

The Australian Government signed the TPP-11 Agreement on 8 March 2018, along with other signatories Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, New Zealand, Singapore and Vietnam. The TPP-11 Agreement, through its ambitious levels of trade liberalisation, shapes new and contemporary rules to underpin the process of economic integration in our region.

On entry into force, the TPP-11 Agreement will deliver immediate economic and commercial benefits to regional Australia. Australian exporters of goods and services will benefit from valuable new market access opportunities brought by the elimination of 98 per cent of tariffs in the TPP-11 area. The TPP-11 boosts existing levels of market

access with Australia's existing FTA partners, and opens up new opportunities in Canada and Mexico with which Australia does not have FTAs. For instance, for Australian farmers, the deal eliminates tariffs on more than \$4.3 billion of their dutiable exports to TPP-11 countries, and secures preferential access on dutiable exports worth a further \$2.1 billion.

There is also potential for the TPP-11 to bring further investment into regional Australia. The Agreement promotes growth and diversification in investment from TPP-11 countries in Australia by liberalising the Australian Government's screening threshold for foreign investment in non-sensitive sectors from \$261.0 million to \$1.1 billion for all TPP-11 countries, while retaining the Australian Government's measures to screen investment in sensitive sectors. Proposed investments by foreign governments will continue to be examined and lower screening thresholds of \$15.0 million and \$57.0 million will apply to investment in agricultural land and agribusiness respectively.

The Australian Government is working towards early ratification of the TPP-11, so that Australian businesses can benefit from the deal as soon as possible.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Supporting Jobs and Growth

The Australian Government is providing \$16.6 million over four years from 2016-17 to 2019-2020 for several new initiatives to support jobs and growth through trade and investment, including across regional Australia. As part of these initiatives, the Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio is helping connect regional Australian producers to global export markets by: working towards the establishment of a single window for international trade (supporting the Department of Home Affairs); pursuing the recognition of professional qualifications internationally; and expanding the portfolio's outreach activities to explain free trade agreements to the community.

Helping Business Make the Most of Australia's Free Trade Agreements

Australia's 10 free trade agreements – including with China, Japan and the Republic of Korea – provide Australian businesses with preferential access to markets and a legally guaranteed framework for trade and investment, for the benefit of regional producers and service industries. Free trade agreements deliver benefits to a wide range of Australian exporters and investors by giving them an immediate and longer-term competitive advantage over competitors including: significant elimination and cuts to import tariffs, including for Australian beef, dairy, horticulture, wine, resources and energy, and manufacturing sectors; and enhanced services market access in priority sectors such as education, professional and telecommunications services. Regional Australia also benefits from reduced import costs for businesses and consumers.

To help regional Australian businesses connect with global markets, the Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio conducts free trade agreement information seminars in rural, regional and metropolitan locations. The 100th seminar was held in the Gold Coast in April 2018. In 2018, the seminars will include information about how to take advantage of Australia's new free trade agreements with Peru and the TPP-11, once these agreements enter into force. The seminars complement the Free Trade Agreement Training Provider Grants program, which enables organisations across Australia to provide training to small and medium enterprises on using the free trade agreements.

In addition to the free trade agreement information seminar series and grants program, the portfolio works closely with other relevant agencies, industry groups, business

associations and firms to gain information on barriers to trade and investment which is factored into free trade agreement negotiating strategies, and to help promote free trade agreements to business stakeholders to encourage them to utilise the benefits of the agreements.

The Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio has enhanced the Australian Government's award winning online Free Trade Agreement Portal by extending it to goods commitments in all ten of Australia's free trade agreements. The Australian Government has begun expanding the Portal to include commitments made by our free trade agreement partners on services. This process will conclude by the end of the 2017-18 financial year. Information on new free trade agreements, such as Peru, the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus, and the TPP-11, will be added to the Portal upon entry into force of those agreements (expected in the 2018-19 financial year). Importantly, the Portal enables business to compare the possible benefits of overlapping free trade agreements to help them choose the free trade agreement that provides the best market access.

Efforts to promote usage of Australia's free trade agreements are having a real impact. A PricewaterhouseCoopers study commissioned by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade found that free trade agreement utilisation by Australian business of available preferential tariff rates under Australia's North Asia free trade agreements was generally very strong, and has trended upwards in the period since entry into force of the agreements.

Bilateral, Regional and Plurilateral Trade Negotiations

The Australian Government is committed to further opening new markets and pursuing trade liberalisation and reforms globally. A core priority is to secure new market opportunities and greater certainty over operating conditions in sectors of particular importance to regional Australia, notably agriculture and food, resources, and services.

The Australian Government attaches a high priority to the conclusion of bilateral free trade agreement negotiations with Indonesia, along with negotiations for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (which involves the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), China, Japan, India, the Republic of Korea, Australia and New Zealand); Hong Kong; and the Pacific Alliance (which involves Mexico, Colombia, Chile and Peru).

Free trade agreement negotiations with India are also ongoing and we are seeking the resumption of negotiations with the Gulf Cooperation Council. Steps have been taken toward the launch of free trade agreement negotiations with the European Union, and discussions on a possible future free trade agreement are underway with the United Kingdom.

Parallel to our free trade agreement negotiations with India, we are also looking for other ways to advance trade and investment links. The India Economic Strategy, due for release mid-year, will identify practical measures to increase trade and investment with India out to 2035, looking beyond immediate market access challenges. The Strategy aims to match areas of Australian competitive advantage with India's economic and reform priorities.

In addition, the Australian Government is pursuing built-in work programs and negotiations under existing free trade agreements. Australia and China have commenced a review of services and investment commitments in the China-Australia

Free Trade Agreement. A General Review of the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement is already underway, with recommendations to be delivered to Ministers in the second half of 2018.

World Trade Organization (WTO)

The Australian Government continues to support the WTO multilateral trade rules system, including as the primary mechanism for resolving disputes. The Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio is actively seeking to achieve outcomes that will generate benefits for economies in the Indo-Pacific, notably in the area of agriculture where Australia has led the Cairns Group coalition of countries for more than 30 years in support of agricultural trade reform. While free trade agreements open new markets, only in the WTO can disciplines be agreed to address trade-distorting measures such as subsidies.

Over the next two years, in the lead up to the next WTO ministerial meeting in December 2019, Australia will work with others, including the Cairns Group, to continue to press for further reforms in key sectors that will support open world trade and compliance with WTO rules. Despite being unable to achieve substantial progress at the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires in December 2017, Australia continues to highlight the unique value of globally-agreed trade rules to other WTO Members.

Australian initiatives at the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference have helped set the agenda to take forward important work for Australian commercial interests and to support the multilateral trading system. One excellent example is in electronic commerce where – with the support of 69 other WTO Members – Australia launched an initiative to work towards negotiating new international rules. This group will set the groundwork for future negotiations on electronic commerce, potentially updating international trade rules to ensure they keep pace with technological change. Australian exporters, including regional start-ups, could benefit from new global rules in the area of digital trade to reduce red tape when operating in foreign markets, helping them to grow their exports.

Implementation of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation, which came into force in 2017, will free up the movement of goods across international borders and will deliver practical benefits to regional Australian businesses who import or export, as well as to Australian consumers, through reduced costs.

The Australian Government also continues its efforts to accede to the WTO Agreement on Government Procurement. The Australian Government will also be ready to recommence negotiations on the Environmental Goods Agreement and the Trade in Services Agreement, once trading partners are ready to re-engage. The Trade in Services Agreement is a services-only negotiation covering around 70 per cent of world services trade, which will benefit regional services suppliers. Through the WTO, Australia is also continuing to press for new disciplines in the WTO on domestic regulation in services – to address behind the border barriers that are holding back our services exporters.

Advancing Economic Reforms and Regulatory Coherence Globally and Addressing Non-Tariff Barriers

The Australian Government is pursuing a more open and predictable business environment, by engaging in discussions to promote economic reforms, regulatory coherence and structural reforms in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Codex and the World Customs Organization. These organisations establish or influence standards and norms that can impact Australia's commercial interests.

The Australian Government is active in addressing non-tariff barriers, which are a growing concern for many Australian exporters. Our free trade agreements and WTO processes provide avenues for doing this. WTO rules are designed to ensure that Members apply regulations in a manner that is not more trade restrictive than necessary to fulfil a legitimate policy objective. Australia regularly raises concerns about the WTO consistency of particular non-tariff barriers through various WTO committees. We are also negotiating enhanced cooperation mechanisms in our free trade agreements to help deal with non-tariff barriers more effectively.

TradeStart

TradeStart delivers Austrade's export advisory services in partnership with local public sector, business chambers and industry groups throughout Australia. The prime objective of the TradeStart network is to assist export ready small and medium enterprises to develop international markets for their products and services.

TradeStart advisers provide practical export advice to around 1,500 export-ready companies throughout Australia each year, and work closely with the portfolio's international network to facilitate assistance for these exporters in overseas markets.

Of the 28 TradeStart locations, 23 are in regional areas, providing greater access to export advisory services for businesses in these regions. Ongoing investments in IT platforms will allow regional businesses, through TradeStart, to digitally connect to Austrade's global network.

Attracting Investment into Northern Australia

The Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio is working to attract investment into major infrastructure and other projects that open up the development of northern Australia, help link the north to the Indo-Pacific region, and improve Australia's ability to access international markets.

The Australian Government has now hosted the Northern Australia Investment Forum twice. The first forum in Darwin in November 2015 introduced approximately 80 international companies to opportunities north of the Tropic of Capricorn, while the second, held in Cairns in November 2017, allowed approximately 100 international companies to further refine those opportunities by linking with experts in agribusiness, tourism infrastructure and resources and energy, with a focus on Indigenous engagement and research.

The Australian Government, cooperating with the Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australian Governments, will work with these and other investors over the next two years to translate opportunities into investments. As part of this, the portfolio continues to support international investors with information about the various forms of land tenure and native title across northern Australia within the context of geospatial

information that can inform investment opportunities. Austrade has also worked with Indigenous landholders to develop a set of case studies outlining successful engagements between traditional land owners and investors.

Promoting Foreign Direct Investment

The Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio will continue to build on its investment promotion work, which was strengthened in 2015–16 with new funding of \$30.0 million over four years. To drive economic growth and employment, Austrade leads a national approach to trade and investment promotion, focusing on priority sectors of resources and energy, major infrastructure and urban development, services and technology, tourism and regional investment, agribusiness and food, advanced manufacturing and defence, international health and international education.

The Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio will continue to promote Australia's credentials and develop our position as a preferred investment destination. The portfolio will work to promote and facilitate greater foreign investment, including through supporting an attractive investment environment in Australia for foreign investors; international advocacy and the negotiation of investment commitments as part of our free trade agreements.

Promoting International Education

The Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio continues to work closely with the Department of Education and Training to promote opportunities for regional Australia under the *National Strategy for International Education 2025* and *Australian International Education 2025 (AIE2025)*, including by working with education institutions and regional providers to internationalise their business.

For example, Austrade is leading on a range of projects under the AIE2025 to better support education providers, including those in regional Australia. This includes the development of a new online tool to provide improved market opportunity insights and analysis of global trends in education; a strategic messaging framework and toolkit; a digital engagement review; and a social media campaign to promote regional Australian education destinations outside of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane to international students.

The *Future Unlimited* education brand launched in 2011 for promoting Australian education internationally is available for use by regional providers – demonstrating the positive outcomes of an Australian education. Austrade also continues to maintain the *Study in Australia* website, the official Australian Government platform which provides information for existing and potential international students and showcases regional study locations in each jurisdiction.

EficDirect

Efic has an online platform that allows Australian small and medium enterprises to apply for export finance entirely online. This is in line with the Australian Government's focus on making it easier for small and medium enterprises to do business. The platform – called 'EficDirect' – has a quick, simple and efficient application process, which can be completed in as little as 30 minutes and a loan could be provided within nine business days. Online access is particularly beneficial for small and medium enterprise exporters that are based in remote areas of Australia.

Export Market Development Grants Scheme

The Export Market Development Grants scheme is an Australian Government financial assistance scheme which encourages small to medium-sized export-ready businesses to increase international marketing and promotional expenditure to achieve more sustainable export sales.

The Export Market Development Grants scheme reimburses up to 50 per cent of eligible export promotion expenses above \$5,000 provided the total expenses are over \$15,000. Subject to available funds, the maximum grant for eligible applicants is \$150,000.

Of the 2,999 applicants that received grants in 2016–17, 16 per cent were from rural and regional Australia, providing \$16.8 million in financial support to 485 businesses.

International Agricultural Research

The Australian Government is committed to improving agricultural productivity and profitability throughout the Indo-Pacific region, with significant flow-on benefits for regional Australia in areas such as biosecurity, innovation, technology, research capabilities and trade.

The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) is Australia's specialist international agricultural research for development agency. An independent statutory authority within the foreign affairs portfolio, ACIAR's mission is to achieve more productive and sustainable agricultural systems for the benefit of developing countries and Australia through international agricultural research partnerships.

ACIAR is working with partner countries to identify research priorities to achieve food and nutrition security, poverty reduction and better human health in ways that also improve biosecurity, water and energy security, while reducing net greenhouse emissions and adapting to more difficult climates.

ACIAR's research programs provide rich learning opportunities for Australian researchers at all levels, many of whom are in regional centres, and help to build and maintain agricultural, forestry and fisheries research capability in Australia.

New Colombo Plan

The Australian Government's New Colombo Plan gives undergraduates from around Australia the opportunity to participate in study and internship programs in the Indo-Pacific region, helping build institutional and people-to-people links. Since 2014, close to 20 per cent of New Colombo Plan scholarship recipients have been from regional and remote areas. The numbers of student grants provided to regional universities under the New Colombo Plan increased by 42 per cent in 2017. The Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio will continue to promote the benefits of the New Colombo Plan in deepening relationships between Australia and the region, both at the individual level and through expanding university, business, people-to-people and other links.

Australia Week Events

The Australian Government will continue to create opportunities for businesses to build and expand their business ties overseas. The Australia Week events are business-focused missions in key markets to showcase Australian capabilities and investment opportunities and promote Australia as a world-class tourism destination and education partner. They build on the success of Australia Week events in China (2014 and 2016), Indonesia (2015 and 2017), India (2015 and 2017) and the United States (2016).

Tourism

Tourism remains a key contributor to many regional economies as a significant source of income. Australia's Tourism 2020 national tourism strategy aims to achieve \$140 billion in overnight visitor expenditure by the end of the decade. It includes initiatives such as Tourism Employment Plans and Major Project Facilitation. These programs will help regional communities grow jobs and diversify their economic base.

Practical initiatives, including Tourism Employment Plans, help regional businesses build a skilled tourism workforce through recruitment, retention and up-skilling. Pilot plans have been completed in eight 'hot spot' regions, including Broome, Red Centre, Mornington Peninsula-Phillip Island, Kangaroo Island, Tropical North Queensland, Canberra, Sydney, and in the North West and West coast of Tasmania.

In 2018-19 Tourism Australia's marketing activities will entice high yield international travellers to visit Australia and disperse throughout the country. Regional Australia features prominently in Tourism Australia's marketing activities, including in the new Dundee campaign. Tourism Australia will continue with its *Aquatic and Coastal* and *Restaurant Australia* campaigns. It will also support campaigns focused on business events, youth and working holidaymakers, and Indigenous tourism experiences, all of which resonate strongly in regional Australia.

Regional Tourism Infrastructure Investment Attraction Strategy

Austrade and Tourism Australia have also developed a five-year *Regional Tourism Infrastructure Investment Attraction Strategy* that will better coordinate efforts to attract foreign direct investment into regional tourism infrastructure.

Tourism in regional Australia is on an upward trajectory with visitors increasing on average by 4.1 per cent per annum over the past five years. Abundant with natural attractions, Australia boasts a significant domestic tourism market, supported by record inbound growth. Coupled with its proximity to Asia and its thriving middle class seeking unique and authentic travel experiences, Australia is well placed to further capitalise on this opportunity.

Increased dispersal of visitors, current investor and reinvestor interest in exploring opportunities beyond Australian cities, and record visitor demand for high-end tourism products has created an opportunity to pursue coordinated investment attraction and regulatory reform.

The strategy is a coordinated investment attraction and regulatory reform approach to support facilitation of new product supply and additional experiences in regional Australia to encourage increased overnight visitation. This approach will help Australia realise the full economic and social benefits of the growing visitor economy, while contributing to the sustainable growth of Australia's tourism industry into the future.

The strategy will initially target iconic tourism regions where the visitor economy is showing signs of growth, but has witnessed lower levels of investment. Each State and Territory government has selected a region for the strategy.

Landing Pads in Innovation Hot Spots

Australian Landing Pads provide market-ready Australian start-ups and scale-ups, including those located in regional Australia, with access to some of the world's most renowned hubs in San Francisco, Tel Aviv, Shanghai, Berlin and Singapore. Landing

Pads participants have access to: an up-to-90 day residency in a co-working space; introductions to networks of investors, mentors and strategic partners; access to a dedicated Landing Pad Manager; and, a community that supports Australian entrepreneurs and business advice to help them grow their business.

HEALTH

The Australian Government is committed to supporting Australians to live healthy, independent and active lives, wherever they live across Australia.

Location should not be a barrier to accessing high quality health care. A range of measures and assistance are designed to improve the quality of, and access to, health and aged care services for people living outside metropolitan areas.

The Government has worked to improve health outcomes in regional areas and is committed to continuing this effort. 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.

Assistance is provided through general health programs, and programs 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 assistance is provided to states and territories through various specific purpose payments, with a significant amount directed towards people living in regional Australia.

The Government continues to provide targeted initiatives and incentives to improve service delivery and the health workforce in rural, regional 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
- improvements to workforce coverage and distribution.

The establishment of the National Rural Health Commissioner is an integral part of the Government's broader agenda to reform rural health in Australia. Emeritus Professor Paul Worley was appointed Australia's first ever National Rural Health Commissioner on 11 November 2017. His first priority is to develop and define the new National Rural Generalist Pathway. The National Rural Health Commissioner will work with rural, regional and remote communities, the health sector, and across all levels of government to champion the cause of rural practice and better target and address the health needs in rural and remote Australia.

NEW INITIATIVES

A Stronger Rural Health Strategy

The Australian Government will provide \$83.3 million over five years from 2017-18 to achieve stronger rural, regional and remote health outcomes by aligning the distribution of the health workforce to areas of greatest need and building the capability of Australia's medical practitioner workforce. In addition, the Stronger Rural Health Strategy will provide greater opportunities for Australian doctors through better teaching, training, recruitment and retention.

The distribution of the workforce in rural, regional and remote areas will be improved by:

- establishing a Murray-Darling Medical Schools Network to support an end-to-end training continuum for students to study medicine in the region
- creating a new Junior Doctor Training program with a strong focus on supporting training in rural settings, integral to the development of a National Rural Generalist Pathway by the National Rural Health Commissioner
- expanding the *Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program*
- updating the geographic eligibility criteria for rural bulk billing incentives
- a Workforce Incentive Program to provide incentives for general practice to employ allied health professionals and for doctors to practise in non-metropolitan areas
- improving the return of service obligations under bonded medical training programs
- better monitoring and planning for future workforce needs
- supporting the medical training pipeline and better targeting training places to rural Australia.

Measures will be implemented to improve the capability of the health workforce and provide greater opportunities for Australian doctors by:

- introducing new fee arrangements that recognise the additional qualifications of vocationally registered General Practitioners (GPs) and to provide support for existing non-vocationally registered GPs to upgrade their qualifications
- streamlining the GP training arrangements to be provided through the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine for non-vocationally registered GPs to gain vocational recognition
- providing 100 additional vocational training places through the *Australian General Practice Training Program* from 1 January 2021
- strengthening the role of the nursing workforce in team-based and multidisciplinary primary care service settings and reviewing the nursing curricula used to develop the nursing workforce
- continuing and expanding support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professional organisations.

The Government will also improve the delivery and availability of dental, mental health and emergency aeromedical services in rural and remote areas by providing additional funding to the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Guaranteeing Medicare – Medicare Benefits Schedule Review (Renal Medicine Items)

This component of the measure, *Guaranteeing Medicare – Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) Review - response to Taskforce recommendations*, implements recommendations from the MBS Review and introduces a new MBS item to fund the provision of dialysis services in very remote regions (defined by Modified Monash Model (MMM) 7). It is anticipated that approximately 470 patients will benefit from this at an estimated cost of \$34.8 million over four years from 2018-19. Access to dialysis services is limited in these extremely remote areas. The financial impacts of relocation on the patient, family and health services are currently unquantified, but it has undeniable social, economic and health consequences. Introduction of the new MBS item is expected to have a significant net benefit to Australians living in remote areas, through improved health outcomes and an associated reduction in the economic impact of end-stage kidney disease.

Indigenous health services – improved primary health care

The Australian Government will improve Indigenous health outcomes by introducing a more transparent primary care funding model based on patient numbers, episodes of care, remoteness and need. Greater transparency of funding will make it easier to identify areas of need to achieve stronger health outcomes.

The funding model has been developed in close consultation with the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and will not affect overall funding. It will be gradually implemented from 1 July 2019 in consultation with the Indigenous health sector to ensure resources are directed to areas of greatest need.

Continuation and expansion of support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Professional Organisations

The Australian Government is supporting the work of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Professional Organisations (ATSIHPOs). The Government's investment in ATSIHPOs is increasing by around \$1.6 million a year and enables these organisations to continue and expand activities to meet increased demand for their services. Priorities include training and mentoring, developing leadership, strengthening cultural safety, and engaging and supporting students. This benefits Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people currently working in health, or studying to take up a career in the health sector. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will get better access to appropriate, culturally safe health care across the health system, including in regional and remote areas.

A Stronger Rural Health Strategy – guaranteeing rural and remote access to dental, mental health services and emergency aeromedical services through the Royal Flying Doctor Service

The Australian Government will provide an additional \$84.1 million to the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) for four years from 2018-19 to increase the availability of dental care, mental health services and emergency aeromedical services to Australia's rural and remote communities. Additional funding for dental outreach services is extended beyond 2019, and from 1 January 2019, a new Mental Health Outreach Clinic program will provide professional mental health services to areas where there are currently few or none. The measure also increases the Australian Government contribution to ensuring ambulance services are available from RFDS bases.

Patients in rural and remote areas will benefit from increased access to services through this measure.

Supporting Activity in Older Australians

This measure will implement a competitive community grants program to improve access and increase participation in physical activity among Australians aged 65 years and older to improve their overall health and wellbeing. The community grants program will support Australian national sporting organisations, and non-government organisations to develop and implement local, community-based activities which promote physical activity among older Australians.

Activities will specifically encourage older Australians who do not currently participate in regular physical activity including women, Indigenous Australians, people with a disability, and people from rural and remote regions.

Older Australians, particularly those outside metropolitan centres, can find it difficult to access relevant and appropriate physical activities. Leveraging the reach of sporting organisations and other physical activity providers, this measure will improve the connectedness as well as the physical and mental health of older Australians, including in our regional communities.

Increasing Participation in Sport and Physical Activity

The Australian Government will invest \$229.9 million over five years from 2017-18 in a suite of sport and physical activity programs to get more Australians more active more often. This will include initiatives for: water and snow safety; grants to sports and physical activity providers to increase participation in physical activity; an expansion of the Local Sporting Champions program; training and resources for community-based sports organisations to improve the safety of sports participation by children; and for the continuation of the collection of quality data nationwide regarding how active Australians are and what motivates them to move. These initiatives will complement a similar physical activity program for older Australians.

One of the key elements will be a competitive funding program open to sport and physical activity organisations, to develop and implement community-based activities across Australia which focus on getting the inactive active and contribute to chronic disease prevention.

Another key element of this measure is the expansion of the Local Sporting Champions grant program which provides support to elite young athletes to help with costs related to competing at a state, national and international level. Young athletes in the regions have greater barriers to attend such sporting competitions. The Local Sporting Champions program will see 3,000 additional young athletes receiving support to attend events, with more support for young athletes in the regions given their greater travel costs. This support will create more opportunities for children in regional areas and will reduce the financial burden on their families in these areas.

This initiative will be delivered in partnership with national organisations capable of delivering to rural and remote locations, where people are less likely to be as active as other Australians. Sport and physical activity can deliver a range of health, social and economic benefits, particularly in rural and regional areas, where clubs and sporting organisations play a vital role in connecting individuals and communities.

Community Sport Infrastructure

The Australian Government is providing \$29.7 million in 2018-19 to establish a competitive community sport infrastructure program to fund small to medium-scale projects to improve existing sport facilities. Infrastructure grants will be available in amounts from \$10,000 to \$500,000.

The program aims to ensure more Australians have access to quality sporting facilities throughout the nation, encouraging greater community participation in sport and physical activity. Accessible, safe, inclusive and sustainable sporting and physical activity infrastructure is essential to getting Australians to be more physically active. In many regional locations sports venues are under-utilised due to poor lighting, disrepair or inadequate facilities such as female change rooms and toilets.

In many communities, particularly in regional areas, sport plays an important role in promoting social connectedness. Relatively simple improvements to community infrastructure – such as lighting towers and expanded change room and toilet facilities, particularly for girls and women – will greatly increase participation opportunities. This project will support short-term community-led projects in regional and urban communities, complementing existing Government investments through regional development programs.

Extension of Sporting Schools

The Australian Government will continue funding the Australian Sports Commission-managed Sporting Schools Program for the calendar year 2019 with \$41.7 million of investment. The program will expand delivery to 500 secondary schools from the 300 secondary schools currently involved, and continuing to provide funding for 5,200 primary schools each year. This extension reflects the success of the existing program and will incentivise schools to embed sport and physical activity into their daily routines.

The program will have a strong commitment to improving sustainable sport and physical activity participation in regional and remote communities, with equity of access a key principle. The program will provide a platform for children in regional and remote areas to participate in regular sport and physical activity that is otherwise not achieved due to reduced access to community sporting clubs and structured physical activity opportunities in these areas.

The Sporting Schools Program has set targets for engaging rural and remote communities, reflecting the distribution of schools nationwide.

Water and Snow Safety Program

The Australian Government will provide an additional \$15.5 million over five years from 2017-18 to support the water and snow safety organisations, Surf Life Saving Australia, Royal Life Saving Society Australia, AUSTSWIM, Laurie Lawrence Swimming Enterprises and the Australian Ski Patrol Association to deliver the Water and Snow Safety Program. This program delivers a range of activities and interventions aimed at reducing the incidence of water and snow-related injury and drowning in Australia.

The 2017 Royal Life Saving National Drowning Report indicated that the highest proportion of drownings occurred in a river, creek or stream at 23 per cent, much higher

than the second highest location of beaches at 17 per cent. Recognising this important data, the program includes significant investment for inland, regional and rural waterways. It provides funding for water safety education, the river black spot identification program and promoting access to accredited swimming and water safety teachers in rural and regional areas. Funding continues to be provided to Laurie Lawrence Swimming Enterprises for his educational material, aimed at children under five and includes a book about water safety on the farm.

Keeping Children Safe by Reducing Childhood Injuries

The Government will provide \$0.9 million over three years from 2018-19 to develop a new National Injury Prevention Strategy that provides a policy platform to support interventions that reduce the risk of injury amongst the Australian population. Children will be a key focus within the Strategy. Noting both the higher rates and the greater level of impact that preventable injury has in rural and regional communities, the Strategy will include rural and remote populations as a key investment area.

Epilepsy Action Response Service

The Australian Government will provide \$1.3 million over three years from 2018-19 for the establishment of the national Epilepsy Action Response Service to provide access to high quality information and expertise on epilepsy, especially in rural and remote areas in Australia.

More Support for Rural, Regional and Remote Aged Care

The Australian Government is investing \$144.9 million over four years from 2018-19 (plus \$5 million in 2022-23 for capital grants) to enhance the viability of aged care providers in rural, regional and remote Australia and improves access to aged care services for older people living in these locations. This will enable older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to stay close to their family, home or country and receive culturally appropriate aged care services. This measure has two components:

1. Funding for building improvement and urgent maintenance, and infrastructure expansion
2. Expanding the existing National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program to improve access to culturally safe aged care services in remote Indigenous communities.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

National Rural Health Commissioner and the development of a Rural Generalist Pathway

The Government is providing \$4.6 million over four years from 2018-19 to establish a National Rural Health Commissioner to provide advice on opportunities to reform rural health services, including the development of a National Rural Generalist Pathway for the training of rural doctors. The Commissioner will work with regional, rural and remote communities, the health sector, universities and specialist training colleges and across all levels of government to improve rural health policies and champion the cause of rural practice.

The establishment of the Commissioner is an integral part of the Government's broader agenda to reform rural health in Australia. His first priority is to develop and define a new National Rural Generalist Pathway. In February 2018, the Commissioner landed a historic agreement between the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners to work together to develop a national framework for a Rural Generalist medical speciality.

The rural health workforce and communities located in rural and remote areas will benefit from the introduction of the Commissioner who will place rural and remote issues at the forefront of government decision making.

Block Funding for Small Rural and Regional Hospitals

The Australian Government is providing approximately \$4.0 billion over four years from 2017-18 in block funding contributions to states and territories to support services provided by small, rural and regional hospitals. This funding ensures rural and regional communities continue to have access to vital public hospital services.

Commonwealth funding of \$188.9 million will also be provided for vital hospital upgrades in Western Australia including:

- \$158.0 million towards the Joondalup Health Campus expansion
- \$10.6 million towards the Osborne Park Hospital expansion
- \$20.3 million towards the refurbishment of the Royal Perth Hospital.

Rural Health Workforce Support Program

The Australian Government will provide funding to Rural Workforce Agencies (one in every state and the Northern Territory) to support the rural health workforce in three priority areas:

1. **Health Workforce Access:** to improve access and continuity of access to essential primary health care, particularly in priority areas identified by the Department of Health and through the Health Workforce Needs Assessment process involving a jurisdictional Health Workforce Planning Stakeholder Group.
2. **Improving Workforce Quality:** to build local health workforce capability with a view to ensuring communities can access the right health professional at the right time; and ensuring health practitioners have the right skills and qualifications for their positions.
3. **Building a Sustainable Workforce:** to grow the sustainability and supply of the health workforce with a view to strengthening the long-term access to appropriately qualified health professionals, with consideration of continuity and growing the sustainability of the health workforce.

Rural Locum Assistance Program

The Australian Government will support the health workforce in rural locations by enabling eligible allied health professionals, obstetricians and anaesthetists to access continuing professional development or to take leave for recreation purposes. The Rural Locum Assistance Program also provides an opportunity for urban General

Practitioners to experience regional and rural practice by enabling them to undertake emergency medicine training in return for a commitment to undertake a locum placement in regional and rural Australia.

Remote Area Workforce Support

Remote Area Workforce Support supports the remote and isolated health workforce through the Bush Services Support Line, which provides 24-hour access to trained counsellors for remote health workers and their families. CRANApplus also provides educational and professional development programs for the remote and isolated health workforce.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Pharmacy Workforce Program

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Pharmacy Workforce Program supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the pharmacy workforce, which in turn provides improved culturally appropriate pharmacy services to better meet the needs of Indigenous communities and patients. It is preferred that applicants for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pharmacy Scholarship Scheme are from rural or remote localities, although, this is not mandatory. Sixteen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pharmacy Assistant traineeships are offered annually, with up to \$10,000 available to a community pharmacy that employs and supports a trainee through the course of their studies (up to two years). Three undergraduate or post graduate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pharmacy scholarships of up to \$15,000 per annum are offered annually. The normal course length is four years (students can access up to \$60,000 over the period of their degree).

Rural Pharmacy Workforce Program

The Rural Pharmacy Workforce Program 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. There are 30 Rural Pharmacy Scholarships offered annually of up to \$10,000 per annum. The normal course length is four years (students can access up to \$40,000 over the period of their degree).

Rural Pharmacy Maintenance Allowance

The Government is providing \$16 million annually (until 30 June 2020) for the Rural Pharmacy Maintenance Allowance, which 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.

Streamlining Health Workforce Scholarships

The Government is providing funding to deliver greater flexibility and consistency in targeting scholarships to areas of need by streamlining a number of existing scholarship programs into one – the Health Workforce Scholarship Program.

Additionally, a rural return of service obligation is associated with some scholarship types to provide a greater return on the investment. Obligations under the scholarships

ensure exposure to practices in rural settings, and to the lifestyle and types of work available, to encourage these healthcare professionals to continue to work in rural areas.

Support for Outreach Health Services

The Rural Health Outreach Program is providing \$112.0 million over four years from 2018-19. This program 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:

1. maternity and paediatric health
2. eye health
3. mental health
4. support for chronic disease management.

Services are provided directly to communities by specialists, general practitioners, nurses and allied health professionals. The Rural Health Outreach Program commenced in 2013-14 following the consolidation of five previous rural outreach programs.

The Government is providing \$243.1 million over four years from 2018-19 to the Royal Flying Doctor Service to deliver primary aeromedical evacuations, primary health clinics, remote consultations and medical chests containing pharmaceutical and medical supplies to remote locations.

Medicare Benefits Schedule – Listing of Photography with Non-Mydriatic Retinal Cameras

Retinal Photography with non-Mydriatic Retinal Camera (RP-NMRC) was listed on the MBS on 1 November 2016 following recommendation by the Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC), to encourage uptake in rural and remote settings.

NMRCs are portable and easily transported to rural or remote settings for use by accredited non-medical staff. Photographs can be interpreted remotely, via electronic link/telemedicine, by an optometrist, ophthalmologist or trained reader. MSAC considered listing of RP-NMRC testing for Diabetic Retinopathy (DR) would improve access to eye health services for patients with limited (or no) ability to access local services. MSAC noted the less intrusive nature of the procedure could encourage uptake and early intervention, and access to eye-care services for Indigenous people is likely to improve if services can be delivered within culturally appropriate settings. Further, provision of RP-NMRC within these communities could increase compliance with recommended screening for DR, and also reduce unnecessary travel for those in whom DR is not detected

Two MBS items are available for RP-NMRC - 12325 for Indigenous patients and 12326 for non-Indigenous patients. These items are consistent with National Health and Medical Research Centre guidelines regarding recommended frequency of repeat testing in persons of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent and the general population. In 2017 there were 881 services claimed for 12325 and 632 services for 12326.

Bulk billing of item 12325 was 100 per cent, while bulk billing of item 12326 was 87 per cent. Uptake increased since distribution of NMRCs commenced to Aboriginal

Medical Services and mainstream health services with large Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patient bases. The Department continues to work with relevant stakeholders promoting utilisation of the service.

Medicare Benefits Schedule - Support for Rural and Remote Registrars

This program enables general practice registrars training on the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine Independent Pathway to claim Medicare benefits (at the A1 level 1) for the services they provide whilst training. Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine is one of two colleges accredited by the Australian Medical Council for setting professional medical standards for training, assessment, certification and continuing professional development in the specialty of general practice. Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine Fellows receive full vocational recognition for A1 Medicare rebates and may practise unsupervised anywhere in Australia (A1 is a consultation type where there is personal attendance by a practitioner. The personal attendance of the medical practitioner upon the patient is necessary before a consultation may be regarded as a professional attendance).

This program has a positive impact on regional Australia, as registrars training on the Independent Pathway are likely to be providing services in rural and regional areas during their training. The program also leads to Fellowship of the College; the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine advises that most of their Fellows choose to practise in rural and remote communities so that they can fully utilise the scope of clinical skills and knowledge they have gained through the Fellowship program.

Investing in Medical Research - Medical Research Future Fund – Advanced Health Research Translation Centres and Centres for Innovation in Regional Health

The Government is providing \$75.0 million over four years from 2017-18 to extend the Rapid Applied Research Translation program that supports Advanced Health Research Translation Centres and Centres for Innovation in Regional Health (CIRHs). The CIRHs will ensure a concerted focus on regional Australian Health needs and service improvements. A key element of the investment is improving the health of vulnerable groups, including those experiencing health inequities due to location, cultural or socio-economic disadvantage.

National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) recognises and promotes leading collaborations between health care organisations, academia and research institutions, through the designation of CIRHs. In 2017, NHMRC recognised the first two CIRHs-the Central Australia Academic Health Science Centre and New South Wales Regional Health Partners.

The CIRHs encourage leadership in health research and translation of direct relevance and benefit to regional and remote areas of Australia. The initiative provides NHMRC recognition (not funding) for Centres that are exemplars of collaboration in health and medical research, research translation and research-infused education, training, and health care in a regional and/or remote setting. These collaborations will increase the translation of research into better clinical practices.

Primary Health Networks

Primary Health Networks (PHNs) are a national network of 31 independent, regionally based, primary healthcare commissioning organisations, established to improve efficiency and effectiveness of medical services for patients, particularly those at risk of poor health outcomes and to improve the coordination of care. Seventeen PHN regions have populations where the MMM is classified at six or seven, the most remote areas. All 31 PHNs have populations with regional areas classified between MMM2 (large regional) and MMM7 (very remote). The PHNs are currently contracted for \$3.5 billion (from 2015 to 2020).

- PHN functions include planning, integrating and coordinating primary health care services, and the commissioning of services, across their regions.
- PHNs receive funding which includes loading for rurality, Indigenous population and low population density.
- The commissioning model provides opportunities to identify and implement iterative and innovative solutions to local and remote problems, and work within the unique circumstances of different communities.
- PHN Boards are supported by General Practitioner-led Clinical Councils and by Community Advisory Committees. In rural areas some PHNs have established multiple branches of Clinical Councils and Community Advisory Committees to appropriately reflect the diversity of their regions.
- PHNs are aligning planning and designing activities with other funded stakeholders in their regions (for example, Rural Workforce Agency and Royal Flying Doctor services).

Practice Incentives Program

The Government is providing around \$1.5 billion over four years from 2018-19 to the Practice Incentives Program (PIP) to support general practice activities that encourage continuing improvement and quality care, enhance capacity and improve access and health outcomes for patients. There are currently 11 incentives under the PIP that focus on eHealth, teaching, Indigenous health, asthma, cervical screening, diabetes, quality prescribing, general practitioner aged care access, procedural services, after-hours access and rural health. A rural loading is paid in recognition of the difficulties of providing care, often with little professional support, in rural and remote areas and to provide access to services which are available through other means to patients in metropolitan and other urban areas.

The rural loading ranges from 15 to 50 per cent (depending on the remoteness of the practice location) and is applied to the incentive payments of practices in rural and remote areas.

After-Hours Primary Health Care Arrangements

The new after-hours primary health care funding model commenced on 1 July 2015 to ensure access for all Australians to primary health care services during the after-hours period. This included:

- a Practice Incentives Program (PIP) after-hours incentive payment to eligible accredited general practices registered for PIP
- funding to Primary Health Networks to support locally tailored after-hours services, including support for 'at risk' populations such as those in rural and remote areas (\$287.2 million over four years from 2015-16)
- an after-hours general practice advice and support line for all Australians who do not have access to face to face general practice services in the after-hours period (\$42.1 million over four years from 2015-16).

The Closing the Gap - Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme Co-Payment Program

This program is providing around \$40 million annually to improve 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. This program lowers or removes the patient co-payment for PBS medicines.

Quality Use of Medicines Maximised for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People Program

The Quality Use of Medicines Maximised for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People Program, funded under the Sixth Community Pharmacy Agreement, complements the Closing the Gap PBS Co-payment Program by funding a range of Quality Use of Medicine support services, pharmacy services and education for consumers and staff of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services located in urban and rural areas.

Section 100 Remote Area Aboriginal Health Service Program

The Remote Area Aboriginal Health Service Program, established under section 100 of the *National Health Act 1953*, aims to address geographic, financial and cultural barriers experienced by people living in remote areas of Australia in accessing essential medicines through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

The program allows for clients of eligible remote area Aboriginal Health Services to obtain medicines directly from the Aboriginal Health Service at the time of consultation, without the need for a normal PBS prescription, and without charge.

Section 100 Remote Area Pharmacy Support Allowance

The section 100 Remote Area Pharmacy Support Allowance, funded under the Sixth Community Pharmacy Agreement, 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 Program. The visits assist in improving health outcomes for clients of remote area Aboriginal Health Services by supporting quality use of medicines at those services.

Improving Access to Medicines – Maintaining Remote Area Aboriginal Health Services Pharmaceutical Dispensing

From 1 January 2018, arrangements were established to enable eligible pharmacists providing PBS medicines that are labelled for individual clients of Remote Area Aboriginal Health Services, to claim an additional payment for this service from the Department of Human Services.

Improving Maternity Services in Australia – General Practitioner Procedural Training Support Program

The Government will provide \$8.2 million over four years from 2018-19 for the General Practitioner Procedural Training Support Program, which aims to improve access to maternity services for women living in rural and remote communities by supporting general practitioners to attain procedural skills in obstetrics or in anaesthetics.

The General Practitioner Procedural Training Support Program targets existing general practitioners in rural and remote areas.

Remote Vocational Training Scheme

The Government is providing \$26.9 million over four years from 2018-19 to the Remote Vocational Training Scheme. The 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 general practice 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. Since 2015, an annual cohort of 10 registrars has commenced training in Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services under the Scheme.

Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program

The Government is providing \$793.9 million over four years from 2018-19 to the Rural Health and Multidisciplinary Training Program. The program is designed to encourage the recruitment and retention of rural and remote health professionals by:

- providing effective rural training experiences for health students
- developing an evidence base for the efficacy of rural training strategies in delivering rural health workforce outcomes
- supporting rural health professionals to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health
- increasing the number of rural origin health and medical students
- maximising the investment of program funds in rural, regional and remote areas for the maintenance of well-supported academic networks to enhance the delivery of training to students to support the provision of medical services to communities.

The program supports a network of 18 rural clinical schools, 15 University Departments of Rural Health, six dental schools that support extended rural placements and 26 regional training hubs. The regional training hubs are part of the Integrated Rural Training Pipeline Initiative and are responsible for better connecting the various stages of medical training - from undergraduate through to prevocational and vocational training - in rural communities. The program also incorporates funding support for the Northern Territory Medical Program and the Indigenous Transition Pathways to Medicine Program.

Funding is also provided for the National Rural Health Student Network, a national, rural health focused, multidisciplinary student network representing more than 10,000 medical, nursing, and allied health students and supporting 28 university rural health clubs around Australia.

John Flynn Placement Program

The Government is providing \$15.8 million over four years from 2018-19 to the John Flynn Placement Program. The program is designed to enable medical students to form a long-term relationship with a community and to gain a better understanding of rural or remote medical practice and non-metropolitan health services. The program supports participating medical students to undertake vacation placements in the same rural, regional or remote community each year over a four-year period.

Strengthening Medicare – Rural Procedural Grants Program

The Government is providing \$75.0 million over four years from 2018-19 to the Rural Procedural Grants Program. This program enables procedural general practitioners in rural and remote areas to access grants to attend training and up-skilling in emergency and procedural medicine.

National Health and Hospitals Network – Workforce Training Specialist Doctors

The Government will provide \$717.1 million over four years from 2018-19 to the Specialist Training Program. This program, which commenced in 2010, increases the capacity of the private, rural and community health care sectors to provide high quality training opportunities for trainee medical specialists. In 2015 and 2016, 900 training full time equivalent places were funded, this increased to 950 places in 2017 and 1,077 places in 2018, following the announcement of funding for 100 new dedicated rural training places in December 2015 and the program's consolidation with the Emergency Medicine Program. Around 45 per cent of current training places include a rural component.

National Partnership Agreement on Rheumatic Fever Strategy – continuation and expansion

The Government is providing funding of \$18.8 million over four years from 2017-18 to the Rheumatic Fever Strategy. The strategy supports the prevention and management of acute rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease in Indigenous communities, including those in regional and remote areas, through:

- the continuation of state-based register and control programs to improve detection, monitoring and management of acute rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease in the Northern Territory, Western Australian, Queensland and South Australia

- new, focused prevention activities in high-risk communities, to prevent the initial incidence of acute rheumatic fever.

This measure also continues the focus on activities aimed at improving clinical care and secondary prevention, such as education and training through RHD Australia at Menzies School of Health Research. It also strengthens the data collection system through its transfer to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

Elimination of Trachoma in Indigenous Communities – extension

The Government is providing funding of \$20.8 million over four years from 2017-18 to affected states and territories for the elimination of trachoma in Indigenous communities. Trachoma continues to be a significant problem in hotspots in remote Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia. Continued investment in these jurisdictions supports screening and treatment of children and provides an increased focus on health hygiene and efforts to improve environmental conditions. Monitoring will continue in Queensland and New South Wales.

Trial of Health Care Homes

This measure will support the Stage one trial of Health Care Homes in up to 200 general practices and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services across Australia, including rural and remote regions. A total of \$21.3 million has been allocated to support this measure from 2016-17 over four years to better support patients with chronic and complex illnesses, reducing the risk of hospitalisation. This is in addition to \$93.3 million in re-directed funding from the Medicare Benefits Schedule for three years from 2017-18. Participating practices are located across 10 Primary Health Network regions, including rural and remote areas.

With many aspects of the Health Care Homes model already in place in regional and remote general practices and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services across the country, this measure will support them to formalise their approach and build on local innovative solutions.

An evaluation of the impacts of the trial will be conducted and an interim report considered in 2019, with a final report due in 2020.

The Australian Government's Response to the National Ice Taskforce Final Report

In response to the findings of the National Ice Taskforce, the Government is providing an extra \$298.2 million over four years from 2016-17 towards a number of measures aimed at reducing the impacts associated with ice and other drugs to individuals, families and communities. This funding will strengthen responses across education, prevention, treatment, support and community engagement.

A number of these measures focus on empowering local communities, including those within regional areas, with the establishment of a new online portal of information for parents, teachers and community organisations, the implementation of Local Drug Action Teams to bring together community groups to reduce drug related harms, with a focus on ice, and support for community sporting clubs to deliver prevention messages about ice with a focus on rural, regional, remote and Indigenous communities.

This additional investment also includes \$241.5 million for Primary Health Networks (PHNs) to commission more alcohol and other drug treatment services, with a focus on ice, including \$78.6 million for Indigenous specific services, based on what is necessary and appropriate to the needs of their local communities. PHNs are well placed to fund local services according to agreed evidence and based on population planning, to ensure the coordination of services across the continuum of care.

Home Medicines Review Program

The Home Medicines Review Program aims to improve the quality use of medicine by a patient and reduce the risk of medication misadventure. Patients receive in-home reviews of their medication by an accredited pharmacist, following referral from their general practitioner.

The program also includes a Rural Loading Allowance to provide support to pharmacists to enable patients in rural and remote locations to access this program. This allowance is up to \$125 (excluding GST), to contribute towards travel costs incurred by pharmacists to conduct the interview in a patient's home.

Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal investment – Health component

The health component of the National Partnership on Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment is providing \$26.4 million over four years from 2017-18 to reduce the incidence and severity of ear and oral disease in Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory, with a focus on remote areas. The Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment commenced in 2015-16, continuing the ten-year commitment to this activity which commenced in 2012-13 under the National Partnership on Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory.

Indigenous Australians' Health Programme

The Government is providing \$3.8 billion over four years from 2018-19 to the Indigenous Australians' Health Programme. Through this program, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to effective health care services in areas of need (including medical outreach to rural and remote areas), targeted initiatives to improve prevention and primary health care management of chronic diseases, and maternal and child health activities. In 2018-19, continued implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan will ensure that regional investments are made in priority areas in consultation with the Indigenous health sector.

Prioritising Mental Health – Improving Telehealth for Psychological Services in Regional, Rural and Remote Australia

The Government will provide \$9.1 million over four years from 2017-18 to remove barriers to telehealth through enabling better access to psychological services in rural and regional Australia via a range of telehealth delivery channels. This measure will increase access to psychological services for those living in rural and remote areas who would otherwise have limited access to those services. Access via telehealth will allow appropriate health professionals to connect with patients sooner than otherwise might have been the case, and without the time and expense involved in travelling to major cities or larger regional centres.

Prioritising Mental Health – Suicide Prevention Support Programs

This measure provides \$11.1 million over three years from 2017-18 to help prevent suicide in high risk locations. The Australian Government will work with states and Territories to deliver small infrastructure projects to reduce incidences of suicide and self-harm at identified hotspot sites in regional and metropolitan locations across Australia.

Headspace – Strengthening Mental Health Care in Australia

The Government is providing an additional \$28.9 million over three years from 2017-18 for an additional 10 headspace centres across Australia by 2019. These additional headspace services will assist to increase access for young people aged 12-25 years living in regional and remote areas, increasing headspace services from 100 to 110.

Of the 10 new headspace services, two will open in 2017-18, with headspace Grafton (New South Wales) officially opened on 18 December 2017, and headspace Whyalla (South Australia) was officially launched on 19 April 2018. The remaining services are due to be operational by 2019.

A regional trial of headspace services has also been announced for the Pilbara (Western Australia). The Pilbara trial will explore how the headspace model can be applied in more remote location, particularly where there is a dispersed youth population.

Funding will be provided to Primary Health Networks as the commissioners of headspace services to promote integration and regional approaches in the delivery of headspace services for young people.

New Investment in Digital Technologies for Mental Health – Strengthening Mental Health Care in Australia

The Government is providing an additional \$32.4 million over three years from 2016-17 to support a new investment in digital technologies which will support regional access to services. Funding will enable Project Synergy, which has been trialed as an online system of care, to continue as a research and capacity building project. Synergy will trial customised IT-based solutions, and develop the next generation of digital mental health services and apps. Funding will also enable Lifeline Australia to trial a new text service for crisis support and suicide prevention.

Alcohol and Drug Foundation – Good Sports Program

The Government will provide additional funding of \$10.0 million over two years from 2018-19 to the Alcohol and Drug Foundation for the continuation of the Good Sports Program. The program supports community sporting clubs to reduce harmful alcohol consumption through grassroots prevention and health promotion activity. The Good Sports Program will reach more than two million Australians through 10,000 participating sporting clubs, across 70 sporting codes with a focus on clubs in rural and remote Australia.

Project Agreement on Healthcare and Disease Prevention in the Torres Strait Islands – Schedule A: Addressing Blood Borne Viruses and Sexually Transmissible Infections

This agreement provides funding of \$4.5 million over four years from 2016-17 and aims to address rising rates of blood borne viruses and sexually transmissible infections (STI). One of the elements of the Blood Borne Viruses and Sexually Transmissible Infections Prevention Program is the delivery of STI reduction programs targeted towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priority populations in regional and remote settings. This element of the program 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.

Project Agreement on Healthcare and Disease Prevention in the Torres Strait Islands – Schedule B: Managing Torres Strait / Papua New Guinea Cross Border Health Issues

This agreement provides funding of \$19.0 million over four years from 2016-17 for the management of Torres Strait/Papua New Guinea cross border health issues. Under this agreement, the Australian Government contributes funding to the Queensland Department of Health for the treatment of Papua New Guinea nationals who travel through the Torres Strait Treaty Zone and access health facilities in the Torres Strait and elsewhere within the Queensland Health hospital network.

Project Agreement on Healthcare and Disease Prevention in the Torres Strait Islands – Schedule C: Mosquito Control and Cross Boarder Liaison in the Torres Strait Protected Zone

This agreement provides funding of \$3.0 million over three years from 2017-18 for the Torres Strait Health Protection Strategy – mosquito control and cross border liaison in the Torres Strait Protected Zone. This agreement supports surveillance, control and elimination, if possible, of *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes in the Torres Strait, and to prevent the spread and establishment of *Aedes albopictus* from the Torres Strait to mainland Australia. The agreement also supports the employment of a Torres Strait Communications Officer to coordinate improved data sharing with Papua New Guinea on communicable diseases and health issues arising from cross border movements in the Torres Strait Protected Zone.

National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre

The Government provides funding of \$63.5 million over four years from 2015-16 to the Northern Territory Government to support its continued operation of the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre based in Darwin. The centre is equipped and ready to assist in response to large scale emergencies and disasters in Australia and the region. Beneficiaries of the program include regional Australians, particularly during times of emergency when an event has the potential to overwhelm or exhaust a state's or territory's health resources. The location of the centre also supports a positive regional impact by attracting health expertise and infrastructure to the Northern Territory.

Supporting Living Organ Donors – continuation and expansion

The Government is providing funding of \$4.1 million over four years from 2017-18 to ensure that cost is not a barrier to living organ donors to donate.

The Supporting Living Organ Donors Program is a continuation and expansion of the Government's Supporting Leave for Living Organ Donors Program that ceased on 30 June 2017.

The program now provides:

- financial contribution to employers to either replenish an employee's leave or contribute towards reimbursing an employer who has made a payment to their employee in place of income lost due to organ donation
- funding of up to \$1,000 directly to the donor to meet some of the out-of-pocket expenses incurred as a result of the donation.

From 1 July 2017, the program has been expanded to allow donors to claim reimbursement for some out-of-pocket expenses, enabling donors who are not employed to participate. As transplant units are based in major metropolitan hospitals, providing for some out-of-pocket expenses will particularly assist living donors from rural or regional Australia.

Management of Per- and Poly-Fluorinated Alkyl Substances at Defence bases

The Government is providing \$14.0 million over four years from 2016-17 to undertake human health related initiatives to support communities in Williamstown New South Wales (classified as MMM1 and MMM2) and Oakey Queensland (MMM5) affected by Per- and Poly-Fluorinated Alkyl Substance (PFAS) contamination. These initiatives include:

- an epidemiological study that will look at potential causes and patterns of health effects in the Williamstown and Oakey communities
- a Voluntary Blood Testing Programme for those who have lived or worked in the Williamstown and Oakey investigation areas
- additional dedicated mental health and counselling services in affected communities of Williamstown and Oakey
- a communication strategy focusing on human-health related aspects of PFAS contamination.

From 2017-18, the Government is providing \$5.7 million over four years to extend the above initiatives to include Katherine Northern Territory (MMM6) and provide support to the Katherine community affected by PFAS contamination.

Proposed Options for Communities Affected by Per- and Poly-fluoroalkyl Contamination

The Government is providing \$12.5 million over four years from 2017-18 to establish a national research program into the human health effects of prolonged exposure to per-

and poly-fluoroalkyl (PFAS) contamination. The program will be administered by the National Health and Medical Research Council, with grant funding to be delivered to researchers through a call for proposals. This funding also includes the establishment and administration of an expert health panel, with one of its roles being identifying priority areas for research.

PFAS contamination is a national issue which impacts both regional and metropolitan areas. This measure will help improve our understanding of the potential health effects of PFAS exposure, which will support regional communities that have been impacted by PFAS contamination.

Quality Assurance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Medical Services Programme

The Government is providing \$5.5 million over four years from 2017-18 to the Quality Assurance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Medical Services Pathology Program. The program supports the better diagnosis and 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. The program also includes training, technical support, quality assurance and a consultation program for community leaders to support program management on site.

As at 18 January 2018, a total of 194 active services were enrolled to participate in the program, with the majority of these located in rural and remote areas. A further 12 sites are anticipated to be enrolled once staffing issues are resolved.

Australian Government Hearing Services Program

The Government is expected to provide around \$2.3 billion over four years from 2017-18 to the Hearing Services Program to provide eligible people with access to a range of high quality hearing services and devices. Eligible clients in regional communities can access these services through two mechanisms:

1. the Voucher program uses a national network of approximately 280 contracted service providers, including Australian Hearing, with 118 service providers located at 1,350 regional sites across Australia; and
2. Community Service Obligations – Australian Hearing is funded to deliver specialist services from permanent, visiting and remote sites across Australia, to children and young adults up to the age of 26, and to other high risk groups such as eligible Indigenous Australians. Australian Hearing works closely with local services to deliver its Indigenous outreach program providing hearing services to more than 130 of Australia's most remote communities. In 2016-17, around 9,500 services were delivered at 238 outreach sites across Australia.

Visiting Optometrists Scheme

The Government is providing funding of \$20.7 million over three years from 2017-18 to provide outreach optometry services for people in rural, regional, and remote areas, who would not otherwise have access to eye health services.

Enhanced Response to the Syphilis Outbreak

The Government is providing \$8.8 million over three years from 2017-18 to progress the enhanced syphilis outbreak response in rural and remote areas. Funding will go towards:

- rapid point of care tests and treatment
- some additional staff and a short-term surge response to support states and territories to get on top of the issue
- assisting the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHO's) should additional support for the ACCHO's be required for the Test and Treat response
- development of communication and education materials
- enhanced surveillance.

Developing Northern Australia – Positioning the North as a Leader in Tropical Health

The Northern Australia Tropical Disease Collaborative Research Program is providing \$6.0 million, having commenced in January 2017 with an expected completion date of December 2020, to the Menzies School of Health Research to undertake innovative high quality research into the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of tropical diseases in Northern Australia.

This program strengthens partnerships with research institutions across Australia, by undertaking a research agenda that helps close the gap in Indigenous health disadvantage, protect Northern Australia from emerging infectious threats and engage regional neighbours.

A Northern Australian network is being established that will incorporate Indigenous engagement, mentoring and knowledge translation, and facilitate collaboration with southern partners.

This investment is part of a broader Government strategy to build Australia's primary research capacity and support the development of Northern Australia as outlined in the White Paper on Developing Northern Australia.

Residential Aged Care Viability Supplement

The Residential Aged Care Viability Supplement is paid to eligible residential providers operating in rural and remote areas. This supplement provides support for the higher operating costs associated with providing care in rural and regional locations.

Aged Care Provider Funding – Improving the Targeting of the Viability Supplement for Regional Aged Care Facilities

The Government is providing an extra \$102.3 million over four years from 2016-17 to increase and better target the viability supplement under the Modified Monash Model. Changes to residential care, home care and flexible care came into effect on

1 January 2017. Approximately 250 mainstream services benefitted from the new arrangements.

Aged Care Provider Funding – Addressing Growth in Residential Aged Care

To address any impacts from the changes to the Aged Care Funding Instrument, the Government announced on 6 December 2016 that eligible rural, remote and homeless service providers eligible under the 2017 scheme will receive an increase to the Viability Supplement. From 1 July 2017, the 2017 scheme of the Viability Supplement was increased by \$19.3 million over four years, through a flat rate increase of an additional \$2.12 per resident per day.

Multi-Purpose Services Program - Aged Care Subsidies

The Government is providing \$745.8 million over four years from 2017-18. The Multi-Purpose Services Program is a joint initiative of the Australian Government and state and territory governments, and provides integrated health and aged care services for small regional and remote communities. As at 30 June 2017, there were 179 Multi-Purpose Services delivering 3,636 aged care places through this program.

HOME AFFAIRS

The Home Affairs portfolio has policy and programmatic responsibility for:

- Commonwealth law enforcement and counter-transnational and serious organised crime
- counter-terrorism
- cybersecurity policy and coordination
- counter-foreign interference
- transport and civil maritime security
- emergency management and critical infrastructure protection
- border protection and the facilitation of trade and travel
- immigration and citizenship
- multiculturalism and social cohesion.

The portfolio brings together the Department of Home Affairs, the Australian Border Force (ABF), the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC), the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and the Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre (AUSTRAC). Subject to the passage of additional legislation, the portfolio will also include the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO).

The Department of Home Affairs includes the entirety of the former Department of Immigration and Border Protection and elements from the Attorney-General's Department relating to national security, critical infrastructure, emergency management and criminal justice; aviation and maritime security (previously the Office of Transport Security) from the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities; multicultural affairs from the Department of Social Services; and functions relating to counter-terrorism coordination and cyber policy from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The portfolio is structured to benefit from the collaboration and alignment of sustained joint agency effort. Through Home Affairs, the Australian Government is leveraging the very best of our agencies to ensure we continue to build the Australian economy, a united and socially cohesive society, and a safer and more secure country for all Australians.

NEW INITIATIVES

Border protection, seaports and airports

The protection of Australia's borders and ports of entry critically underpins the safety of all Australians, including from terrorism, foreign interference and illegal migration. The Home Affairs portfolio's work secures borders, seaports and airports throughout Australia, ensuring that regional communities remain connected to, and competitive in, a national and global network of trade, travel and tourism.

The Australian Government will provide funding of \$293.6 million over four years from 2018-19 for the new aviation security initiatives to improve the security of Australian airports and travellers – important infrastructure underpinning regional tourism and economies. These initiatives include improved screening at airports, strengthening airport precinct security and strengthening security outcomes in air cargo and mail.

Emergency management and critical infrastructure

Regional Australia is particularly and acutely affected by natural disasters, such as bushfires, floods, drought and cyclones and is reliant on critical infrastructure, such as roads, rail and electricity networks. The Home Affairs portfolio includes Emergency Management Australia and the Critical Infrastructure Centre; managing on average \$1 billion of contingent Commonwealth spending every year to supplement state and territory efforts to prepare for, mitigate and recover from natural disasters. This represents approximately 60 per cent of the total expenditure across all levels of government.

In this year's Budget, the Australian Government announced that the portfolio will bolster the resilience of regional Australia to the financial and economic impacts of natural hazards.

Combating crime at home and abroad

Home Affairs will broaden and intensify the fight against serious and organised crime. Criminal groups can cause extensive and lasting damage to regional communities, individuals and economies through a range of illicit activities including child exploitation, drug peddling, use and sale of illegal firearms and tobacco, and money laundering. For example, the escalating use of methamphetamines in rural areas has created a fertile environment for organised criminal elements, including outlaw motorcycle gangs, to profit and causes lasting harm to the community and increases the prevalence of violence and other crime.

Technology is creating new opportunities for criminal activity as well as enabling traditional crime. Home Affairs will broaden and intensify the fight against serious and organised crime, making our society and economy a hostile environment for criminal activity.

New initiatives within the portfolio include:

- Building a National Criminal Intelligence System to provide a national and unified picture of criminal activity (\$59.1 million over four years from 2018-19)
- Establishing the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation (\$68.6 million over four years from 2018-19)

Cyber Resilience for a connected society

In an increasingly globalised and digital world, technology connects even the most remote communities and individuals with others around the country and world. This not only contributes to social well-being and harmony, but prosperity – providing a platform for Australian enterprise.

The Home Affairs portfolio will strengthen the safety, security and confidence in our cyber systems. Cybercrime, including hacks, scams and identity theft is on the rise,

becoming more sophisticated, and can be conducted from anywhere in the world. The Home Affairs portfolio will coordinate national efforts to increase cyber security and protect Australians from cybercrime by closely aligning cyber policy with domestic security to deliver a safer internet and protected community.

Secure and Efficient Trade and Travel

The economic success of regional Australia depends on the fast and efficient movement of goods and people across our borders. Similarly, the integrity of our trade and travel processes protect Australians from criminal and terrorist threats, illicit travel, and prohibited imports such as drugs, asbestos and child pornography.

The Home Affairs portfolio is pursuing a future where government has a single, real-time view of the border, people and goods crossing in and out of Australia. Digital, intelligent and automated processes underpinned by data, biometrics and partnerships with industry and foreign governments will allow Australian's more facilitated, streamlined and competitive access to overseas markets.

This year, the portfolio will invest to:

- Lead the development of Australia's trade modernisation agenda to launch Australian industries and producers and tourism into the future.
- Scope the development of a single window for international trade (single window) to consolidate, align and centralise how traders interact with Australian Government agencies.
- Expand the Australian Trusted Trader program to provide greater benefits to participants and boost participation by trusted entities.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

The creation of the Home Affairs portfolio carries forward initiatives from previous Budgets across the range of departments and agencies. Along with the broader portfolio responsibilities and outcomes already outlined, specific Budget investment relates to federal law enforcement, transport security, criminal justice, emergency management, multicultural affairs, immigration, trade, travel and border-related functions to keep Australia safe, harmonious and prosperous.

Australian Trusted Trader

Australian Trusted Trader, a trade accreditation scheme, is improving the competitiveness and global-market access of Australian businesses including agribusiness, fisheries, mining and manufacturing. Independent economic modelling estimates that there will be significant household consumption and business investment increases over a ten-year period resulting from the trade facilitation benefits of Australian Trusted Trader.

Our North, Our Future – Business, Trade and Investment Gateway

Following the lead of the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science under the *Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia* the portfolio will attract more investment and international tourism to Northern Australia in the final year of a four year, \$26.9 million investment.

Emerging International Airports

The portfolio will continue to support emerging international airports as hubs for trade, tourism and investment in regional Australia. In the 2018-19 Budget context, the Australian Government will provide ongoing funding for border clearance services at the Avalon airport and will continue to support and fund the Townsville, Sunshine Coast and Canberra airports.

The Migration Program

Australia's migration program continues to support Australia's growth – stimulating economic growth, addressing skills shortages, and contributing to diversity and multiculturalism. In 2018-19, the portfolio will maintain 2017-18 levels (up to 190,000 places) with 128,550 places in the Skilled Stream, which will help to fill a range of needs in regional areas.

The migration program includes the Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme and Regional Nominated visa category that helps businesses in regional, remote or low population growth areas to manage and grow by recruiting skilled workers and addressing labour shortages.

Safe Haven Enterprise Visa

The Safe Haven Enterprise Visa encourages enterprise through work and study at an area designated as 'regional' by the relevant state government.

Seasonal Worker Program

The Seasonal Worker Program provides beneficial seasonal labour from Pacific Island countries and Timor Leste to meet Australian labour shortages. The portfolio will continue to provide visa training and facilitation to enable these outcomes.

Working Holiday Maker Program

The Working Holiday Maker Program allows young adults from partner countries to take extended holidays in Australia and support their travels with work. A participant can acquire eligibility for a second Working Holiday visa by undertaking three months of 'specified work' in regional Australia incentivising contributions to regional areas.

Temporary Skill Shortage Visa

The Temporary Skill Shortage Visa (that replaced the 457 Visa in 2018) targets genuine skills shortages, including in regional Australia, and helps train Australians to fill those skills gaps in the medium-term. To be eligible, applicants must be trained in a listed occupation, with regional Australia having access to an additional twenty-four occupations.

Humanitarian Program

The portfolio supports humanitarian settlement in regional Australia by working with the Department of Social Services, local and state government, community groups and service providers.

Disaster Resilience Australia Package

The Australian Government provides \$2.1 million funding each year to strengthen communities, individuals, businesses 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.

HUMAN SERVICES

The Department of Human Services is committed to ensuring all Australians, including those in remote and regional areas, have access to a range of high quality, flexible and convenient Australian Government services. The Department provides services to people living in regional areas through regional service centres, as well as agents and access points in remote locations. Further outreach services are provided by the Department's remote servicing teams and mobile service centres.

During 2016-17, mobile service centres visited over 381 towns, travelling more than 70,000 kilometres and helping over 11,000 people. Services for regional Australians are also provided through the Department's nationally networked call centres and certain Centrelink numbers can also be called free of charge from a landline or Telstra mobile.

The Department continues to expand its digital services. For example, faster and easier self-service options are now available for people to make claims for a payment or concession, update personal details and changes in their circumstances. The Department also provides a range of mobile applications allowing simple transactions such as reporting income to be done quickly and easily using a range of mobile devices. This allows people located in regional areas to engage with the Department without the need to travel to service centres.

The Department also delivers payments and services on behalf of the Australian Government across regional and remote Australia during natural disasters such as floods and bushfires. In 2017, the Department's Emergency Reserve members and mobile service centre teams worked alongside others assisting Queensland and New South Wales communities impacted by Tropical Cyclone Debbie. Additionally, in January 2018, the Department provided community support, along with the Northern Territory Government, to assist people evacuated from the Daly River Community due to flooding.

NEW INITIATIVES

Modernising the Health and Aged Care Payments System

From 1 July 2018, the Australian Government will invest \$106.8 million over four years as part of the first stage of work to stabilise, consolidate and secure the information and communications technology (ICT) systems that deliver health and aged care payments. At the same time, it will become easier and quicker for consumers, aged care providers and health professionals to transact with the Department.

This measure will support customers, health professionals and aged care providers that interact with Medicare and the aged care systems by ensuring the Department's systems are stable and secure, and make it easier and quicker to transact with the Department.

GovPass

GovPass is a whole-of-government initiative that will make it easier for people to prove who they are to government. Led by the Digital Transformation Agency and being delivered in partnership with the Department, the service will allow people to prove their identity online when conducting business with government, without having to present paper documents in person.

When delivered, GovPass will enable people in regional and remote areas to prove their identity and access government services in an identical manner to those people who live in metropolitan areas. The ability to complete identity verification online in a way that protects privacy and personal information will allow people accessing government services from regional and remote areas to be less reliant on mobile services, agents and access points, or having to travel to larger centres.

GovPass will complement existing online services by supporting end-to-end transactions to be completed online, at a time and place that suits an individual's needs.

Welfare Payments Infrastructure Transformation – Tranche Three

The Welfare Payment Infrastructure Transformation (WPIT) – Tranche Three measure builds on the success of the previous tranches and provides \$316.2 million in funding over four years to progress the overhaul of Australia's social payments system from July 2018.

When fully implemented, Tranche Three will provide regional and metropolitan Australians with further integrated delivery of payments and entitlements, simplified business processes, and smarter access to and re-use of information.

Regional Australians' access to and willingness to use digital services will be an important consideration for the program. Given this, consultation with the Digital Transformation Agency will be undertaken before and during the design and implementation of the program with a focus on user pathways.

Additionally, through the WPIT Program, the Department is leveraging the Digital Transformation Agency's Digital Marketplace and promoting it to small and medium-sized enterprises. The Digital Marketplace's purpose is to make it easier for smaller businesses, including those based in regional Australia, to compete for government expenditure on information and communications technology products and services.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Welfare Payments Infrastructure Transformation – Tranche Two

Tranche Two of the Welfare Payments Infrastructure Transformation (WPIT) Program has been focusing on developing new payment processes and services, starting with the administration and delivery of student payments. Tranche Two will not, itself, have a significant direct impact on regional Australia. However, when subsequent tranches of the WPIT program are fully implemented, building on foundational work completed in Tranche Two, Australians will benefit from the integrated delivery of payments, simplified processes and smarter access to services. The program will be underpinned by a digital service model and will enable the majority of transactions to be completed online and reduce the need for people in regional Australia to travel large distances to access face-to-face services.

Online Servicing

In 2016-17, over 68 million transactions were completed via online and the Express Plus mobile apps (compared to 61 million in 2015-16).

The Department's website (humanservices.gov.au) is a convenient way for regional Australians to access information and conduct their government business online. Every month the Department's website has over 2.1 million visitors.

The Payment Finder tool makes it easy for people to discover payments and services relevant to them. Payment Finder on humanservices.gov.au is used more than 340,000 times each month.

Once they have authenticated themselves, users can conduct many of their transactions with the Department online at a time and place convenient to them. In 2016-17, an average of more than 185,000 transactions were completed online each day.

A range of Centrelink payments are also claimable online, taking advantage of a streamlined claiming process which pre-populates the claim with already known information, and uses dynamic questioning to ensure that only necessary questions are asked. For some payments, the online process now accounts for 80 per cent of new claim activity.

myGov

The myGov digital service is a simple, secure way for all Australians to access services, including in regional Australia. For customers living in regional areas, the ability to access multiple government services online is a convenient way to do business and minimises the need to travel significant distances to regional service centres and multiple government agencies.

There are now over 12 million active myGov accounts providing people with secure access to a growing range of Australian Government online services using one username and password.

With a myGov account, people can link a range of Australian Government services to do their business online, including lodging claims and accessing correspondence, to updating contact details quickly and easily.

In 2017, 97.8 million digital messages and letters were sent to myGov. The myGov 'Update Your Details' function enables myGov account holders to choose to update selected contact information and share it with participating linked myGov member services in a single transaction from their myGov account. In 2017, one million updates were made using this service.

Through the National Innovation and Science Agenda, the Australian Government is committed to making services digital by default, and leading cultural and technological change in how those services are delivered. With the high volume of transactions made through the myGov digital service, the modernisation of myGov and its future direction is central to these efforts.

The Department considers myGov to be a critical enabler of service delivery, particularly to people in rural and regional areas. The Department continues to innovate and refine the myGov service to meet users' new and evolving needs.

In May 2017, myGov was modernised with the implementation of a redeveloped customer interface. The changes provided a service that was intuitive, highly accessible to customers of all abilities, and provided a mobile-first platform. This work also saw improvements to how customers create accounts and sign-in to their existing accounts.

In October 2017, mobile authentication improved to allow myGov member services to use the myGov authentication service for their mobile apps.

'myGov Access' is a mobile app that was released in December 2017 and provides a security code for myGov customers who choose to use two-factor authentication for signing into myGov. After its initial set-up, 'myGov Access' does not require an internet connection. This feature is particularly useful for customers travelling overseas or in rural or remote areas, where mobile phone range for SMS-based two-factor authentication can be problematic.

Express Plus Apps

The Department's Express Plus mobile apps continue to be popular with people wanting to access government services. The apps for Centrelink, Medicare and Child Support provide the option to complete many transactions on-the-go from any location, without having to call or visit an office. These mobile apps provide a convenient, flexible option to do business with the Department, including uploading documents, reporting income, claiming Medicare benefits, viewing balances and making Child Support Payments.

As at 31 January 2018, Express Plus mobile apps have been downloaded more than 12.2 million times. In 2016-17, over 14.6 million transactions were completed through the Centrelink Express Plus Mobile App. The Department continues to deliver enhancements to mobile apps to improve their effectiveness. In addition, the Centrelink Express Plus Lite version enables the reporting of earned income in English, Arabic, Chinese, Persian (Farsi) or Vietnamese.

Electronic Claiming of Medicare Benefits

Electronic claiming from point of service is the most convenient way for people to lodge claims for Medicare benefits.

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, including in regional areas.

Health Professional Online Services

Health Professional Online Services is a fast and secure service that enhances and improves the interaction between the Department and healthcare providers and their administrators (health professionals). It offers health professionals a single entry point to a range of health-related programs and online services. In the Health Professional Online Service, health professionals can do a range of business and administrative tasks, including submitting claims, managing provider details, retrieving statements and reports, verifying patient information, and authorising and managing delegations.

The Health Professional Online Services is now accessed using a Provider Digital Access account. Provider Digital Access is a secure online authentication system that replaces the use of Medicare Public Key Infrastructure certificates. It is a portable, digital end-to-end solution that requires no additional hardware or software, making it easier for the health professional to interact with Medicare when delivering services in regional and remote communities.

Prioritising Mental Health – Improving Telehealth for Psychological Services in Regional, Rural and Remote Australia

The Department implemented changes to the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) to allow mental health professionals including psychologists, social workers and occupational therapists to access Medicare benefits for video consultations with clients who live in rural and regional Australia. This initiative came into effect on 1 November 2017, and has increased access to psychological services for those living in rural and remote areas.

Improving Access to Medicines – Maintaining Remote Area Aboriginal Health Services Pharmaceutical Dispensing

Remote Area Aboriginal Health Services (RAAHS) are able to order and dispense medicines directly to patients at no cost as part of the Australian Government's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-2023. This ensures remote Indigenous Australians have access to the medicines they need, when they need them.

This measure, implemented on 1 January 2018, simplifies arrangements by enabling pharmacists who supply individually labelled and packaged medicines to RAAHS to directly invoice the Department for payment.

Agents and Access Points

The Department has 346 agents and 240 access points across rural and remote locations. They provide essential services to customers where accessing service centres is difficult.

Access points provide free self-help facilities where people can conduct their business with the Department. This includes services such as certifying proof of identity documents as well as access to phone, photocopying, fax and internet facilities.

Agents provide the same facilities as access points with the addition of staff who can support people to do their business with the Department, primarily through digital channels.

Government Remote Servicing – Continuation and Extension

Remote servicing ensures a person can access Australian Government payments and services, regardless of their location.

The Australian Government's investment of \$117.4 million over five years from 2015-16 supports the continued delivery of government payments and services in remote locations in Western Australia, Northern Queensland, the Northern Territory, South Australia and Tasmania. The Department continues to provide direct access to services through remote service centres, agents, access points and remote servicing teams.

Remote servicing is also a source of employment in remote communities, especially for Indigenous Australians. For example, the large majority of staff in the Department's Northern Territory remote service centres are Indigenous Australians.

Mobile Service Centres

The Department operates a number of mobile service centres that travel to rural and regional communities to provide information and access to Australian Government services.

These fully equipped mobile offices travel on pre-determined itineraries in regional areas to communities located more than 50 kilometres from a service centre. Mobile service centres are an important part of the Department's emergency response service delivery capability. In 2016-17, the fleet visited over 381 towns with the additional aim of partnering with other Australian Government agencies where possible to improve service delivery.

Remote Smart Centre Services

In April 2014, Remote Smart Centres were established to streamline processes and deliver effective and efficient services. As a result, there are more staff on hand for general enquiries, with many enquiries handled by specialist staff with training and experience in the complexities of Indigenous specific payments and programs.

The Department also offers deaf and hearing impaired customers the option to book in-person Auslan and sign language interpreter services in service centres.

Videoconferencing in Regional Locations

The Department is trialling delivery of limited specialist services such as Job Capacity Assessments and access to Financial Information Service Officers via video conferencing in a number of regional locations, including:

- Geraldton in Western Australia
- Port Lincoln and Whyalla in South Australia
- Dubbo, Bega and Griffith in New South Wales
- Swan Hill in Victoria.

Farm Household Allowance

The Department delivers the Farm Household Allowance payment. The Farm Household Allowance is a time-limited payment which can be paid for up to three cumulative years (measured as 1,095 days). Farm Household Allowance recipients are required to complete a Farm Financial Assessment and enter into a Financial Improvement Agreement to assist them to increase their financial self-reliance.

Since the commencement of the program in 2014 up until 2 March 2018, over 7,800 customers have been granted Farm Household Allowance.

The first group of recipients began exiting the program in late June 2017 when they had received their full entitlement of Farm Household Allowance payment. The Department has implemented a range of additional mechanisms to support recipients as they exit

the program. These include website updates and social media messaging promoting other support services, such as the Rural Financial Counselling Service.

An Operational Framework has also been agreed with the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources and the Rural Financial Counselling Service to strengthen and coordinate the support provided to people receiving the allowance. The Operational Framework will be implemented by 1 July 2018.

ABSTUDY

ABSTUDY provides financial support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from secondary school (including boarders) through to Masters and Doctorate studies.

The Department has significantly simplified the ABSTUDY claim process by removing the need for Indigenous students to complete and return paper claim forms.

Indigenous Students can now complete a binding verbal declaration, meaning that the entire claim process can be completed over the phone and more claims can be finalised faster. The trial actively supports the Australian Government's Closing the Gap commitments for Indigenous education outcomes.

Regional Citizenship Testing

The Department has been working with the Department of Home Affairs to make citizenship tests available in regional locations. Staff of the Department of Home Affairs previously visited regional centres to conduct tests, usually on a monthly or bimonthly basis. Since 2012, an average of 13,000 tests have been taken annually in regional areas, assisted by staff from the Department. Each week about 300 tests can take place across 33 service centres in regional areas across Australia, from Kalgoorlie in Western Australia to Mackay in Queensland.

National Indigenous Coalition

The National Indigenous Coalition is the Department's internal peak Indigenous forum. The National Indigenous Coalition is consulted to ensure the effective development of strategies that support and secure outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and employees.

Strategy, Innovation and Design

The Department's Innovation, User Experience and Design branch provides customer insights, research and design capability support through the engagement of customers via face-to-face interviews, small group conversations or large design sessions. The aim of the engagement is to seek customers' input into new processes, service delivery improvements and system design. In 2017-18, customer engagement activities were undertaken in many regional areas, including:

- city, central coast and far north Queensland
- New South Wales central coast
- mid and north South Australia
- city, Mornington and Bellarine Peninsula areas in Victoria

- city and regional areas in Tasmania
- urban and remote areas of Northern Territory and Western Australia.

The Department engages with customers in regional areas to ensure overall design and delivery meets the needs of all citizens, and recognises the unique requirements of regional Australians.

INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND SCIENCE

The Australian Government is building on our commercial and scientific strengths to capitalise on the opportunities of a modern economy and enable businesses to thrive and create jobs. The Department of Industry, Innovation and Science contributes to this vision by facilitating the growth and productivity of globally competitive industries.

Industry, Innovation and Science (part of the Jobs and Innovation portfolio) has a broad regional presence through its networks and agencies. The Department has 35 per cent of staff located outside Canberra in 31 locations across Australia.

The Department's policies and programs, such as the Industry Growth Centres Initiative and the Entrepreneurs' Programme, help regional businesses to build their capability, innovate and grow. Through the Office of Northern Australia and the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility, the Australian Government is helping to unlock the full potential of northern Australia through new opportunities that support regional job creation and economic growth.

The Australian Technology and Science Growth Plan, announced in the 2018–19 Budget, presents the Australian Government's investment in infrastructure to enable the generation and commercialisation of new ideas, and support businesses to grow and create new jobs. Key elements of the plan (highlighted below) will positively impact regional Australia by creating new economic opportunities and jobs.

The Australian Government's International Space Investment will underpin the long-term competitiveness of Australian businesses. Space-related products and services will support productivity growth in industry sectors including transport, logistics, mining and agriculture. For example, farmers can use nanosatellites to monitor environmental conditions to reduce crop failure and maximise profitability. In the mining sector, space technologies can be used to detect new viable mineral resources.

The SME Export Hubs program supports new industry-led consortia of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in regional areas to develop local, regional and Indigenous brands, and connect these businesses to global export markets. This will positively impact regions by driving SME growth and creating jobs.

NEW INITIATIVES

Better GPS for Regional Australia

The Australian Government is providing ongoing funding (\$160.9 million over the forward estimates), following a successful trial in 2016-17, for a Satellite-based Augmentation System (SBAS) which will deliver precise and high-integrity positioning, navigation and timing (PNT) data via satellite. SBAS will deliver a satellite positioning capability across all of Australia and its maritime zones, with an accuracy of 10cm. The ability to obtain precise positioning data will have numerous benefits across multiple industries. These benefits include:

- safer Australian aviation with research showing SBAS assisted aircraft approaches are eight times safer than those using ground-based navigation aids
- decreased likelihood that Australian aviation flights will be cancelled or diverted due to weather or multiple attempts at landing will be required
- safer and easier maritime navigation

- safer and improved traffic management of rail operations including systems that prevent train-to-train collisions and enforce speed restrictions
- enable automated driving and real-time road pricing applications
- safer and more efficient mining through vehicle tracking, automated operations and improved safety and environment protection
- improved management of livestock health and improved agricultural yield production
- enable virtual fencing technology on farms and reduction of chemical pollution.

SBAS, together with the Better GPS to support Australian business measure, will ensure Australia has a world class and comprehensive national positioning capability.

Better GPS to support Australian business

Better GPS to support Australian business provides ongoing funding (\$64.0 million over the forward estimates) for a national positioning, navigation and timing (PNT) data network. The National Positioning Infrastructure Capability (NPIC) relies on Global Navigation Satellite Systems and when augmented with a quality national ground station network, can deliver PNT data with 3–5cm accuracy in near real time.

NPIC will reduce existing barriers and improve coverage so private companies, public organisations, scientists and entrepreneurs in Australia can access national, standardised PNT data. This will drive productivity and encourage innovation in a number of industries – particularly automation and semi-automation in transport, agriculture, mining and construction. Examples of current applications include very high accuracy locations on smartphones, timing in energy and finance networks, multimodal logistics and self-steering machinery on farms, mining and construction sites. NPIC will also create opportunities for new products and innovation in emerging industries including autonomous parcel delivery.

NPIC, together with the Satellite-based Augmentation System, will ensure Australia has a world class and comprehensive national positioning capability.

World class satellite imagery to enable Australian businesses to grow

The 2018-19 Budget provides ongoing funding to Geoscience Australia's Digital Earth Australia (DEA) platform, which was funded for two years in the 2017-18 Budget.

The DEA platform translates over three decades of satellite imagery into insights about the health and productivity of the Australian continent and coastline. When prepared and analysed using high performance computing, this imagery provides a wealth of information for monitoring the environment, and increasing productivity in the agriculture and mining sectors.

DEA is already providing a range of tools and information of interest to regional Australia. For example, the Water Observations from Space product provides a national map of where water has been seen in Australia from 1987 to the present, and can be used to better plan water management strategies. Other DEA products can provide information about crop health, and pasture and livestock management decisions.

DEA also supports Australia's rapidly growing digital economy by lowering the costs associated with accessing and analysing vast volumes of satellite data. This creates opportunities for Australian industry, particularly small-to-medium and regional businesses, to develop new applications that can compete with offerings from much larger companies in the global market for spatial information and services. This market has already created around 4 million jobs worldwide and has the potential to increase productivity in sectors representing around 75 per cent of the global economy.

By providing ongoing funding, the Australian Government is expanding the capability to provide a greater range of product and services to industry and government.

International Space Investment

The Australian Government is investing \$26.0 million over four years from 2018-19 on establishing an Australian Space Agency. Funding of \$15.0 million over three years from 2019-20 is also provided to enable the Australian Space Agency to partner with international space agencies such as European Space Agency, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency on strategic projects. This investment will provide Australian businesses opportunities to be involved in established international space programs.

International investment by the Agency will act as a vehicle to drive greater participation by Australia in the global space economy. The Agency will consider investments in partnerships with other parties including potentially with states and territories. A rigorous evaluation approach will be applied by the Agency to ensure the investments have maximum impact with minimal outlay. This investment will generate additional high-technology manufacturing activity in regional areas as well as ongoing economic productivity such as transport, logistics, mining and agriculture.

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Export Hubs

Funding of \$20.0 million over four years is allocated to help Australian SMEs to grow and export by supporting the private sector to develop local and regional business collaborations (hubs) in areas of competitive strength. The hubs will help SMEs work together to develop local, regional and indigenous brands, and connect with new markets and global supply chains, by identifying export opportunities, creating scale and building on regional competitive strengths.

Hubs will collaborate with the Industry Growth Centres in the priority sectors – Advanced Manufacturing; Cyber Security; Food and Agribusiness; Medical Technologies and Pharmaceuticals; Mining Equipment, Technology and Services; and Oil, Gas and Energy Resources. Based on their national consultation across their respective sectors, Growth Centres' advice is that regions with a critical mass of advanced SMEs, firms and services have the potential for improved industry and innovation ecosystems and export performance, supporting local and regional economic growth and job creation.

Antarctic Science Collaboration Initiative

The Australian Government is supporting science jobs, strengthening Australia's national Antarctic interests and Hobart's role as an Antarctic hub and research city by providing funding certainty for Australia's Antarctic science program.

The Jobs and Innovation portfolio will provide \$50.0 million in grant funding over ten years, starting in 2019-20, to establish a new Antarctic Science Collaboration Initiative (ASCI) – a ten year collaborative science, research and innovation grant program.

The ASCI will make a significant contribution to Australia's overall investment in Antarctic science over the next decade, which is a cornerstone of our sovereign claim to the Australian Antarctic Territory.

The ASCI will provide funding certainty for critical Antarctic science jobs in Hobart that currently supported by the Antarctic Climate Ecosystems CRC (ACE CRC). The ACE CRC will cease operations on 30 June 2019 and transition staff to a new, ASCI supported, entity.

Research and Development Program for Reef Restoration and Adaptation: Design and Feasibility Phase

The Australian Government will be investing \$6.0 million over 18 months from 2017-18 to 2018-19 to fund a design and feasibility phase for a large-scale research and development program for reef restoration and adaptation, to promote the survival of corals on the Great Barrier Reef.

Regional communities will benefit from proximity to a globally significant innovation venture, including through increased global recognition of the participating research institutions and creation of new job opportunities in regional Australia. For example, a resulting reef restoration toolkit has the potential to create new job and export opportunities in the region for Australian manufacturers, engineers, scientists and environmental managers, as well as securing existing Reef-dependent jobs, including for Indigenous Australians who manage a third of the Reef's catchment areas.

Communities in the Great Barrier Reef region, which includes the regional centres of Cairns and Townsville, will benefit from plans to restore the resilience and strength of the Reef. Reef-dependent activities could potentially support 34,000 direct and indirect jobs and inject \$6.4 billion into the economy each year

Encouraging More Women to Pursue STEM Education and Careers

The Australian Government is investing a total of \$4.5 million of funding over four years to encourage more girls and women to study science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) and pursue STEM-based careers. There are three parts to this:

- A Women in Science Strategy, informed by a Decadal Plan for Women in Science, will provide a roadmap for sustained increases in women's science participation.
- A Women in Science Ambassador is a visible, full-time role model to help coordinate and promote action to reduce barriers to women's participation in STEM. The Ambassador will be a national advocate, building awareness and visibility of issues affecting women and girls in science, and how they can be addressed to achieve cultural change.
- A resource kit will help support the engagement and encouragement of school age girls into STEM study and careers.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Industry Growth Centres

The Industry Growth Centres Initiative has funding of \$232.0 million over six years from 2017-18 to support industry sectors of competitive strength or strategic priority. There are six such sectors currently involved in the Initiative:

- advanced manufacturing
- cyber security
- food and agribusiness
- medical technologies and pharmaceuticals
- mining equipment, technology and services
- oil, gas and energy resources.

The Australian Government has established these Industry Growth Centres in a long-term partnership with key industry leaders to improve the productivity and competitiveness of these sectors, help firms grow and prosper, and generate economic growth and employment. This will enable the Centres to build on their initial success and continue as broader industry and innovation ecosystem, with a view of establishing a hybrid funding model in the long-term.

Industry Growth Centres focus on four key areas: (1) improving management and workforce skills; (2) improving collaboration between industry and research to commercialise ideas; (3) improving access to international markets and global supply chains; and (4) optimising the regulatory environment.

Three of these Growth Centres in particular – food and agribusiness; mining equipment, technology and services; and oil, gas and energy resources – are sectors with significant operations in regional areas. Other Growth Centres such as advanced manufacturing and cyber security have impacts for both urban and regional areas.

Industry Growth Centres are helping align industry and innovation policy and programs, including the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation and Cooperative Research Centres, to contribute to improving the productivity, competitiveness and innovative capacity of their sectors.

Advanced Manufacturing Fund

The Australian Government has provided \$100.0 million over two years from 2017-18 to boost innovation, skills and employment in advanced manufacturing, an enabler for both urban and regional areas.

The Advanced Manufacturing Fund is an integrated set of policy initiatives that will help car-related businesses, including those in regional areas, move into other

industries; encourage further research; provide facilities to test new products; and develop business and engineering capabilities in advanced manufacturing.

Manufacturing continues to be a major contributor to Australia's prosperity in cities and regional communities and the fund is focused on creating an economic environment which encourages private sector investment and jobs growth. Elements of the fund, such as the Advanced Manufacturing Growth Fund, will target areas most affected by the transition of the automotive industry. The funding is supporting five elements:

- \$47.5 million for a new Advanced Manufacturing Growth Fund, building on the existing \$155.0 million Growth Fund, helps industry adjust to the wind-down of car manufacturing. The funding is for up to a third of the project cost of capital upgrades to establish and expand high value manufacturing in South Australia and Victoria. This will help make businesses more competitive through innovative processes and equipment. In Round 1 of the program, 18 companies shared in around \$27.9 million of funding. Five successful companies were based in regional Victoria and will receive funding of around \$10.1 million from the round.
- \$4.0 million for the Advanced Manufacturing Growth Centre supports small scale and pilot research projects in advanced manufacturing, benefiting small firms and early stage researchers, allowing them to quickly move to larger scale research or commercialisation.
- \$20.0 million under the Cooperative Research Centre Projects initiative is for larger scale advanced manufacturing research projects of up to \$3.0 million in funding over three years.
- \$10.0 million is to establish Innovation Labs in South Australia and Victoria to enhance manufacturing business capability in the digital age and improve the use of existing innovation lab infrastructure by manufacturing small and medium enterprises.
- \$5.0 million maintains engineering excellence by investing in student research at universities, technology institutions and in industry to continue the flow of highly trained engineers to the automotive design and engineering sector.
- \$13.5 million tariff concession is on imported vehicle prototypes and components used by Australian motor vehicle design and engineering services that operate in a global network.

Growth Fund

The Australian Government established a \$155.0 million Growth Fund, to which it is contributing \$100.6 million over six years from 2013-14. The Growth Fund is supporting employees, businesses and the regions most affected by the closure of Australia's car manufacturing industry. The Growth Fund is helping workers from Holden and Toyota to transition to new jobs, support automotive supply-chain firms diversify into new products and markets, and to accelerate new business investment in manufacturing. The Growth Fund includes the following elements:

- the \$90.0 million Next Generation Manufacturing Investment Program to accelerate private sector investment in high value manufacturing in Victoria and South Australia

- the \$20.0 million Automotive Diversification Program to help automotive Australian supply chain firms capable of diversifying to find new markets
- the \$30.0 million Skills and Training Initiative to help Holden and Toyota workers recognise their skills and train for new jobs. Holden and Toyota contributed \$15.0 million funding each.

Entrepreneurs' Programme

The Entrepreneurs' Programme is the Australian Government's flagship initiative for business competitiveness and productivity at the firm level. It provides practical advice and support for businesses, including: provision of private sector advice; co-funded grants to commercialise novel products, processes and services; funding to take advantage of growth opportunities; and connection and collaboration opportunities. This is building the capabilities of SMEs in key growth sectors. Services and grants are delivered through four elements: Business Management; Innovation Connections; Accelerating Commercialisation; and Incubator Support. Services are flexible, tailored and focused on value-added advice and support. Services can be accessed by all Australian businesses, including those in regional Australia, subject to meeting the program's eligibility requirements.

In line with the Australian Government's priority on regional development, the Government has expanded the Incubator Support element to better facilitate entrepreneurial activity in the regions. This will enable the initiative to further support the competitiveness of regional start-ups by improving the services and capabilities of new or existing incubators. New features include additional facilitative support and more generous funding ratios for regional projects to maximise outcomes for regional areas.

Single Business Service

Consistent with the Australian Government's Digital Transformation Agenda, the Single Business Service is putting the needs of Australian businesses first by simplifying and streamlining access to information and advice.

Ongoing funding is provided to implement the initiative as part of the Entrepreneurs' Program. The Single Business Service initiative recognises that businesses have struggled to access Australian Government services and navigate the wealth of Australian Government information available to find what they need or who to talk to. Businesses, including those in regional Australia, can now get information and help through one website (www.business.gov.au), one contact centre (13 28 46) and, AusIndustry's national network to:

- get a business up and running
- develop and commercialise ideas and products
- improve, innovate and grow a business
- reach new markets.

Centre for Defence Industry Capability

The Centre for Defence Industry Capability (CDIC) is a ten-year initiative of the Defence Industry Policy Statement worth \$230.0 million from 2016-17. Its purpose is to help transform the relationship between the Department of Defence and the defence industry, and to fund defence industry development, critical skilling and export initiatives.

A national footprint has been established for the CDIC and comprises around 40 highly experienced business and innovation advisers and support staff. The CDIC is headquartered in Adelaide, with advisers located across all states and territories to form a national advisory network which extends to regional areas.

The CDIC is coordinating tailored region-based engagements to bring together stakeholders in a united effort to deliver defence capability, grow the Australian industrial base and present a national position to overseas markets. The CDIC and the Department of Defence are working with states and territories on:

- industrial development activities and support for new and established defence companies
- region-based activities in trade shows, related industry events and communication strategies
- better connecting businesses with opportunities in other sectors, markets and international opportunities
- exchanging information with region-based defence industry development agencies on current and emerging industrial capabilities to aid in the development and delivery of support programs and initiatives.

Cooperative Research Centre Program

The Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) Program, established in 1990, is a competitive, merit-based grant program that supports industry-led collaborations between industry, researchers and the community. The CRC Program has two funding streams:

- CRCs, which undertake medium to long term, industry-led high quality collaborative research
- CRC Projects (CRC-Ps), which undertake a short-term, industry-identified and industry-led collaborative research project.

Businesses investing in research and development through CRCs and CRC-Ps are increasing their income, competitiveness and productivity. The CRC Program continues to support CRCs and CRC-Ps that have impacts on rural and regional Australia.

CRCs and CRC-Ps contribute to strengthening rural and regional development in areas such as our agriculture and mining industries, farming systems and improving health outcomes for Indigenous Australians. Regional businesses (including small and medium-sized enterprises), Rural Research and Development Corporations, universities and other research organisations can be a part of CRCs and CRC-Ps and their activities.

Business Research and Innovation Initiative

The Business Research and Innovation Initiative (BRII) Pilot is providing \$12.0 million over three years from 2016-17 in competitive grants for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to help the Australian Government to tap into leading-edge thinking and find the most innovative solutions to important challenges in public policy and government service delivery.

Entrepreneurs receive funding to create innovative products and services. Businesses retain the intellectual property and the right to commercialise the ideas in Australia or overseas.

Critical early-stage financial support to innovative start-ups and SMEs will help them test their new ideas and provide a path to market through developing a track record. The initiative also acts as a catalyst for SMEs with government as a customer thereby driving employment and economic growth.

Regional and rural Australia will be assisted through the solutions to current and future challenges. For example, a current challenge “...improve transparency and reliability of water market information” will assist participants and farmers with the confidence to participate in Australia’s water markets, and in turn contribute to the sustainable management of water resources across Australia.

Regional and rural SMEs are also eligible for and being assisted through BRII with grant recipients from areas such as Wollongong and North Bruny in Tasmania working on providing solutions to government challenges.

Major Projects Facilitation Agency

The Major Projects Facilitation Agency provides services to ensure that investors and developers are aware of all regulatory approval and compliance obligations that affect their project. The Major Projects Facilitation Agency is a ‘single point of entry’ into the Australian Government and works closely with state and territory governments to complement their activities. It provides information and advice across all tiers of government and across jurisdictions. The Major Projects Facilitation Agency also supports red tape reform by monitoring regulatory impacts on development and identifying opportunities for improvement.

While the agency provides a national service, it has offices in Tasmania and Northern Territory. Under the Australian Government’s economic plan for Tasmania, the Major Projects Facilitation Agency’s Tasmanian office was established in 2014 and allocated \$2.7 million in funding over three years to July 2017. The Major Projects Facilitation Agency’s Darwin office was established in January 2016 as part of the *Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia* initiative and was allocated \$2.1 million in funding to July 2019.

Anti-Dumping measures

The purpose of Australia’s anti-dumping system, which is administered by the Anti-Dumping Commission, is to give Australian producers the opportunity to compete with imports on a level playing field.

Anti-dumping measures are currently in force on certain imported goods that compete with goods produced by a number of industries that are located in regional Australia.

These include the food processing industry located in Shepparton, Victoria, and the steel industry, which has its manufacturing hubs in regional New South Wales and South Australia.

Tradex Scheme

The Tradex Scheme provides an upfront exemption from customs duty and goods and services tax on eligible imported goods that are intended for direct export or incorporated in other goods that are exported. This program is broad-based and available to all eligible applicants. The upfront exemption can provide significant cash flow advantages that can also assist the competitiveness of Australian business, including those operating in regional areas, in developing their export markets.

Square Kilometre Array Project

The Australian Government is a partner in a 10 nation project to establish the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) Observatory, which will operate radio telescopes with unparalleled scientific and technical capabilities. The telescopes will be co-hosted in Australia (which will host the SKA 'low' frequency element) and South Africa (which will host the SKA 'mid' frequency element), with the global headquarters in the United Kingdom. As part of the National Innovation and Science Agenda, the Australian Government announced \$293.7 million over 10 years from 2016-17 to further support Australia's involvement in the SKA project. The project is currently in its pre-construction design and engineering phase, with construction currently scheduled to commence in 2019.

The Australian elements of the SKA will be sited in the remote Murchison district in the Mid-West region of Western Australia, with support and computing facilities in Geraldton and Perth. Constructing and operating the SKA-Low telescope will generate a variety of benefits for the region, including economic activity, employment and skill development opportunities. The traditional owners of the SKA-Low site—the Wajarri Yamaji—will be amongst the local beneficiaries. Negotiations for an Indigenous Land Use Agreement for the site are currently underway.

The Australian Government is partnering with the Western Australian Government to enable the SKA project in Australia. The state and Australian governments are actively engaging with a range of regional stakeholders including Indigenous communities, pastoralists, local government, regional development agencies and local business. The Australian SKA Office also meets twice a year with its Regional Stakeholders Group. The purpose of these meetings is to discuss the progress of the SKA project and any related issues such as infrastructure, opportunities for education and industry development.

Maintaining Australia's Optical Astronomy Capability

The Australian Government is investing an additional \$26.1 million from 2017-18 to 2020-21 (\$119.0 million over 10 years) to maintain Australia's reputation for world-renowned astronomical research and instrumentation through unparalleled international collaboration and opportunity. This measure secures the operation of the Anglo-Australian Telescope (AAT) beyond July 2020, at which time Commonwealth funding was expected to cease. As the AAT is located in regional Coonabarabran, the continued operations of the telescope, expected until at least 2024, will continue to benefit regional jobs, tourism and the local economy. The investment involves a ten-year strategic partnership with the European Southern Observatory, which was signed on

11 July 2017. This partnership provides Australian scientists and businesses competitive access to research infrastructure and industry opportunities with the world's foremost eight-metre optical/infrared telescopes at La Silla and Paranal Observatories in Chile.

This partnership will also be complemented by the transition of Australia's world-leading research and commercial capabilities in optical astronomy, through the Australian Astronomical Observatory, from government to research-sector ownership from 1 July 2018. This is expected to create new options and pathways to expand industry engagement across Australia, and to commercialise innovative technologies and spin-off applications on an international stage. This measure addresses the critical gap in astronomy capability identified in the *Decadal Plan for Australian Astronomy (2016-2025)*.

Inspiring Australia – Science Engagement Program

The Inspiring Australia – Science Engagement Program is providing \$22.6 million from 2016-17 to 2018-19 and ongoing funding of \$7.2 million per year from 2019-20 for a range of activities that will be delivered under the Inspiring Australia banner. The Minister for Jobs and Innovation, or the Assistant Minister for Science, Jobs and Innovation, may approve additional funding for program elements from time to time.

The program provides support for regional Australia through a wide range of activities. These include National Science Week, an annual nationwide celebration of science with activities occurring across Australia and providing opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to engage in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM). National Science Week supports activities that reach regional and remote Australia, through local events as well as online activities. Locally-organised National Science Week committees ensure diverse programs of activity are available in regions throughout Australia.

Each state and territory has an Inspiring Australia manager employed by a museum, university or other science-based organisation, with Australian Government funding to support National Science Week and other Targeted Science Communication including in regional locations. For example, these contracts have supported a growing network of regional science hubs, local collaborations of organisations that work together to deliver science engagement events for their regions. These aim to create a platform through which as many Australians as possible can participate in science and gain access to quality science engagement activities.

To ensure Australian communities are able to engage in STEM programs throughout the year, the national network of Inspiring Australia officers is working with regional STEM hubs to build capacity in regional areas and encourage the development and promotion of combined and inter-linked community calendars of STEM activities. This initiative aims to support deeper community engagement in STEM and build connections to further learning and participation opportunities.

The program also provides funding for Citizen Science Grants, which provide opportunities for the public to engage in science by participating in scientific research projects that include the collection or transformation of data in Australia. Projects can take place anywhere in Australia, including in regional areas or through the internet, enabling citizens who may previously not have had the opportunity to participate in science to do so. Participants will be empowered by learning new skills, forming new networks, and receiving updates on their participation in research projects.

The program also provides funding for Maker Projects, to support the development of STEM skills in students and youth under 18 years of age in design, engineering and programming, through hands-on learning. The objective of the Maker Projects is to encourage practical skills, creativity and entrepreneurial thinking through the development of maker spaces and activities in schools and communities, including those in regional and disadvantaged areas. Stream A funds eligible Australian schools to purchase equipment required to support the establishment of a maker space for students to access and work on STEM-related activities; whilst Stream B supports Australian communities and regions to encourage participation in STEM and innovation related events and activities in partnership with industry for youth under 18 years of age.

The Sponsorship Grants for Student Science Engagement and International Competitions element of the program supports young Australians to develop skills and potential career opportunities in a STEM field. This is facilitated by providing grants to organisations (for example, such as schools and community groups) to sponsor eligible young Australians to participate in conferences, competitions and other STEM-related events both in Australia and overseas. This is of particular importance to students living in regional areas who may not otherwise have access to these types of STEM engagement opportunities or who may have difficulty funding the costs of travelling to these STEM events.

Questacon Smart Skills Initiative

The Questacon Smart Skills Initiative includes the programs: Smart Skills, Maker Project, Invention Convention and Enterprising Australians. It is a free initiative developed for secondary school students that creates an awareness of technology, engineering and design thinking amongst young Australians. The Smart Skills program includes: regional tours; in-school workshops for students; and professional development workshops for teachers. The Maker Project program includes school workshops and school holiday workshops at Questacon; and virtual workshops across Australia. A key element of the Questacon Smart Skills Initiative is the Invention Convention, a three-day program that delivers intensive innovation and enterprise-focused workshops in regional centres. The Invention Conventions involve partnerships with local and national enterprises to assist in fostering innovation. Enterprising Australians showcases inspirational stories of Australian innovators, inventors and entrepreneurs through online and travelling exhibitions. The Questacon Smart Skills Initiative has ongoing funding of \$1.7 million per annum through the National Innovation and Science Agenda, announced in December 2015.

Questacon Virtual Excursions

Questacon reaches rural and regional Australia through its Schmidt Studio and its Virtual Excursions that are part of the Questacon Smart Skills Initiative program, which involves one hour hands-on workshops covering topics including environmental science, physics of flight and the innovation process. These videoconference workshops are designed for students in primary and secondary school and are an effective means for schools who have limited opportunities due to their location.

Shell Questacon Science Circus

The Shell Questacon Science Circus is an award-winning partnership program between Questacon, the Australian National University and Shell currently in its 33rd year. The

Science Circus program tours nationally, returning to the same communities every few years.

The Science Circus facilitates and hosts a temporary science centre in regional and remote areas, presents in-school science shows to pre-primary, primary and secondary school students and families, and facilitates teacher professional development workshops. The team of presenters consists of up to 16 students studying towards a Master of Science Communication Outreach at the Australian National University. The program has ongoing funding of \$150,000 per annum through the National Science and Innovation Agenda.

Travelling Exhibitions

Questacon tours travelling exhibitions to a range of regional and metropolitan venues across Australia, fulfilling Questacon's national role and responsibility of providing access to hands-on informal learning experiences outside the Questacon Centre in Canberra. The interactive exhibitions are developed in-house by Questacon and provide engagement for all ages. The travelling exhibitions provide a range of size, topics and complexity options suitable for most venue requirements. Travelling exhibitions, as part of Questacon's core business activity, are funded through ongoing Questacon departmental appropriation.

Teacher Development Programs

Questacon delivers a broad range of accredited programs to pre-service, casual and registered teachers through the national outreach programs and stand-alone activities. The programs build confidence, skill and content knowledge in teachers in the delivery of STEM activities in the classroom. The STEM X Academy is an intensive five-day program delivered each January in partnership with the Australian Science Teachers Association and the CSIRO that joins teachers with researchers to develop new activities for the classroom. Teacher development, as part of Questacon core business activity, is funded through ongoing Questacon departmental appropriation.

Installation of Solar Photovoltaic System

Through the Public Service Modernisation Fund, \$1.8 million (over 2017-18 and 2018-19) has been allocated to deliver an off grid solar photovoltaic system to provide supplementary low cost electricity to the Australian Institute of Marine Science's regional Cape Ferguson headquarters. This site houses the National Sea Simulator, a world-class marine research aquarium facility for tropical marine organisms in which scientists can conduct cutting-edge research. This investment will help lift the current utilisation of the National Sea Simulator from 65 per cent to 90 per cent while reducing costs and carbon emissions. This investment will also help the local region through the employment of local contractors to install the solar photovoltaic system.

National Carp Control Plan

Carp are the worst freshwater aquatic pest in Australia. They dominate the Murray-Darling Basin, where they can make up 80-90 per cent of fish biomass, with significant detrimental effects on water quality and ecosystem health. The economic impacts of carp infestation have been estimated at up to \$500 million per year, with the majority of this impact felt in regional areas.

The Australian Government provided \$15.0 million over three years from 2016–17 to support the development of the National Carp Control Plan. This funding will deliver the scientific research, operational planning, community engagement and communications activities required to support a potential carp virus release and subsequent clean up. The aim is to ensure that the National Carp Control Plan enables maximum impact on carp populations with minimum disruption to industries, communities and the environment. The plan is expected to be finalised in 2018.

The Department of Industry, Innovation and Science works closely with the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, the Department of the Environment and Energy, and the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation in the development of the National Carp Control Plan.

White Paper on Developing Northern Australia

The Australian Government is continuing to build on its commitment to develop Northern Australia because unlocking the full potential of this important region brings benefits to the nation as a whole. In 2015, the Australian Government released the White Paper on Northern Australia, *Our North, Our Future*. This \$6.2 billion economic development plan is creating the right conditions for growth and prosperity in the north.

Over half of the White Paper initiatives have already been delivered, and the rest are well underway. From delivering roads and water infrastructure to the establishment of the Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia and the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility, the Australian Government is creating an environment that encourages business growth, jobs and investment.

The Office of Northern Australia in the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science is coordinating the delivery of the White Paper and strategically expanding the northern agenda into a contemporary focus. In addition to this, the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science has responsibility for the delivery of the following measures:

- \$5.0 billion Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility
- expanded access to the Entrepreneurs' Programme to include tourism and smaller northern Australian businesses
- \$75.0 million for the Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia.

The Department has also established the Major Projects Facilitation Agency in Darwin and moved the Office of Northern Australia headquarters to Darwin.

The White Paper on Developing Northern Australia also includes the following key initiatives:

- Northern Australian Tourism Initiative
- Northern Australia Water Resource Assessment.

Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility

The Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility (NAIF), announced in the 2015-16 Budget, is a major initiative of the *Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia* and is integral to the Australian Government's strategy for the north.

The NAIF commenced on 1 July 2016 and has up to \$5.0 billion over five years to provide in concessional finance to encourage and complement private sector investment in economic infrastructure (such as rail, water, energy, communications networks, ports and airports) that otherwise would not be built or would not be built for some time.

The NAIF is an independent corporate Commonwealth entity that operates at arm's length to the Australian Government. The NAIF Board makes decisions about the eligibility and financing of all economic infrastructure projects in accordance with the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility Investment Mandate in the *Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility Act 2016*. This support for transformative economic infrastructure is a significant step for the longer term expansion of the economy and population in northern Australia. Investment will be spread across the three jurisdictions in northern Australia.

Northern Australian Tourism Initiative

The Northern Australia Tourism Initiative was announced in the *Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia*. This initiative is providing \$13.6 million over four years, with an expected completion date of 30 June 2019, to assist tourism businesses in northern Australia with practical support to build management and business capability, helping businesses to improve their performance and grow and be more internationally competitive. It extends both the Entrepreneurs' Programme and the Australian Small Business Advisory Services (ASBAS) program to better target the needs of the northern Australian tourism industry.

Under the ASBAS Northern Australia Tourism Initiative, not-for-profit small business advisory services are funded to improve their capability to provide low-cost advisory and information services to Indigenous and non-Indigenous tourism small businesses and tourism small business intenders in northern Australia.

Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia

The *Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia* included \$75.0 million over 10 years to establish a Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Developing Northern Australia, which commenced operations in 2017-18. The CRC will assist businesses, governments and researchers to work together to identify opportunities for business and growth in the north. The industry-led CRC, based in Townsville, is focusing initially on agriculture, food and tropical health areas where the north has particular strengths.

On 17 October 2017, the Australian Government announced Cooperative Research Centre Projects grants totalling \$13.9 million for seven industry-led collaborative research projects addressing unique industry problems in northern Australia. The funding for the projects builds on the \$75.0 million investment in the CRC for Developing Northern Australia.

National Resources Development Strategy – Exploring for the Future

Over four years from 2016-17, the \$100.5 million Exploring for the Future program is investigating the potential of mineral, energy and groundwater resources in northern Australia and parts of South Australia, both regions where the resource potential is relatively poorly known. The program aims to de-risk and renew the appetite for investment in mineral exploration, and help identify major new gas and minerals resources.

Exploring for the Future is delivering a comprehensive prospectus of Australia's resources through the collection and release of nationally significant geological data and information. Access to new and more detailed geological data and information will assist all participants in the resources sector increase the potential and level of exploration activities in Australia. The new pre-competitive data has the potential to stimulate investment and employment opportunities in minerals and energy exploration, resource development and groundwater resource development.

Exploring for the Future will provide a broad-regional understanding of resource potential across the entire northern Australia region. This broad understanding will be linked to a series of focused regional minerals, energy and groundwater projects in areas with the greatest knowledge gaps.

National Radioactive Waste Management Facility – Community Benefit Program

The Australian Government is providing a total of \$6.0 million over two years from 2016-17 for community based projects for completion within two years of commencement.

In 2017-18, a \$2.0 million Community Benefit Program has been made available to each community around the shortlisted sites of Wallerberdina Station (near Hawker, South Australia) and Lyndhurst and Napandee (in Kimba, South Australia). This is in acknowledgment of the communities' contribution to the ongoing community consultation process to site a National Radioactive Waste Management Facility and the short-term disruption during the site identification process. Forty-five projects have been announced to deliver social and economic benefits in the communities.

This is the second time the community around the shortlisted site of Wallerberdina Station has received a \$2.0 million Community Benefit Program. In 2016-17, 11 projects in the Hawker and Quorn regions of South Australia were announced (grants totalling \$2.0 million). A number of these projects have already been completed.

Rum Jungle Rehabilitation Project

The Rum Jungle Rehabilitation Project provides \$10.8 million in funding, from 2016-17 to 2019-20, to finalise a detailed rehabilitation plan for the former Rum Jungle mine site in the Northern Territory and its continued site management and maintenance activities. It also supports maintenance activities at the Rum Jungle Creek South site, a public recreation area.

Onshore Gas Social and Economic Research Fund

The Onshore Gas Social and Economic Research Fund provides scientific and independent research to enable Australians to form their own views of the social,

economic and environmental impacts and benefits of gas projects based on local data and regional characteristics. Addressing community and land holders concerns about the impacts of onshore gas is essential for the development of the gas industry.

In 2014-15, the Australian Government invested \$1.5 million in the expansion of the Gas Industry Social and Environmental Research Alliance (GISERA) from Queensland into New South Wales. The New South Wales Government, CSIRO and key industry players matched this funding. The Australian Government is providing \$4.0 million in funding to CSIRO over four years from 2016-17 to further expand the alliance, becoming the Onshore Gas and Social and Economic Research Fund, to regions where onshore gas activity is occurring or has the potential to be developed.

On 7 February 2018, the South Australian Government announced its partnership with CSIRO, through GISERA, to undertake social and environmental research on the potential impacts and opportunities of onshore gas development on the environment and communities in the onshore Otway Basin in South Australia's South East. The South Australian Government's \$1.0 million investment over three years will be complemented by contributions from CSIRO and the Commonwealth.

GISERA's research program includes: research on surface and ground water; greenhouse gas footprint; agricultural land management; terrestrial biodiversity; marine environment; and socio-economic impacts and opportunities. GISERA's research independence is ensured through the strong governance framework, which includes project approval from Regional Research Advisory Committees and undergoing CSIRO's peer review process. All research is available on GISERA's website: gisera.csiro.au.

INFRASTRUCTURE, REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CITIES

The Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities portfolio contributes to the prosperity of the economy and the wellbeing of all Australians through the design and implementation of the Australian Government's regional development, infrastructure and transport policies and programs. The portfolio promotes new jobs, productivity improvements, economic growth and sustainability through significant social and infrastructure investment in all areas of Australia, including to communities in regional Australia.

Through this Government's \$75 billion investment in transport infrastructure, Australians living in regional and remote areas benefit from better connections to essential services and employment. Transport infrastructure allows the safe and efficient movement of millions of tonnes of freight from farm gates and factories to markets across Australia and connects our producers with opportunities in the global economy.

In 2018-19, the Government has for the first time committed to a credible, decade-long Infrastructure Investment Pipeline of projects, which has been prioritised based on the capacity of projects to drive Australia's economic growth in an environment of a growing population and constrained Government budgets.

Through the Pipeline, the Australian Government has made major commitments to deliver a range of road and rail infrastructure projects, which support regional development and our local communities. The Government is delivering the Melbourne to Brisbane Inland Rail project providing \$9.3 billion in equity and grant funding to the Australian Rail Track Corporation to construct the Inland Rail. The Inland Rail project will connect regional communities in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland to vital export markets.

Further investments include continued funding to improve safety, capacity and flood immunity on the Bruce Highway in Queensland and further improvements to the Pacific Highway, involving the construction of a bypass of Coffs Harbour to increase amenity in this regional centre and enable more efficient freight movements along the New South Wales north coast.

To implement the Government's commitments, this portfolio will work with state and territory governments and local councils to deliver infrastructure projects through shared funding arrangements to support our growers and producers and boost our rural and regional productivity and sustainability.

An efficient freight system is essential to the competitiveness of Australian business, which in turn underpins the living standards of all Australians. In 2018-19 the Government will lead the development of a *National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy* through the COAG Transport and Infrastructure Council. This will provide a framework for all Australian governments and industry to develop a rolling 20-year action plan to support continuous improvements in the movement of domestic and international freight. The Strategy will guide the development of several initiatives announced in this Budget, including allocation of funding under the new Roads of Strategic Importance initiative.

The Government will deliver the \$272.2 million Regional Growth Fund, which support major transformational projects that deliver long-term economic growth and create sustainable jobs in our regions. This initiative will be bolstered by an additional investment of \$200 million in the Building Better Regions Fund which will fund local

projects that create jobs, boost local economies and support strong regional communities.

NEW INITIATIVES

National Pipeline of major projects and initiatives

The Pipeline includes over 40 new major transport projects and initiatives that will address the needs of our regional areas and major cities. This long term Pipeline of nationally significant investments demonstrates the Government's commitment to support industry, grow jobs and deliver economic prosperity.

This investment builds on existing commitments and includes \$3.3 billion to continue funding to the Bruce Highway, bringing the Australian Government's total commitment to \$10 billion, \$971 million towards the Pacific Highway for the construction of a bypass of Coffs Harbour; and \$160 million to continue with upgrades to the Outback Way, across Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland. It also includes new projects to address regional freight constraints, such as:

- investing \$155 million to upgrade the Nowra Bridge in New South Wales
- \$170 million towards the construction of the \$340 million Cunningham Highway - Yamanto to Ebenezer (Amberley Interchange) in Queensland
- \$160 million for the Joy Baluch Bridge in South Australia.

Other Pipeline projects in regional Australia include \$560 million to construct the Bunbury Outer Ring Road in Western Australia, \$180 million for the Central Arnhem Road, \$100 million for the Buntine Highway upgrades in the Northern Territory, and a further \$50 million for the Geelong Rail Line Upgrade in Victoria.

Roads of Strategic Importance Initiative

In addition to funding for new projects, the Government has announced major new initiatives through the 2018-19 Budget that will significantly benefit regional Australia.

The Roads of Strategic Importance initiative (ROSI) will receive \$3.5 billion through the Infrastructure Investment Program over ten years. ROSI will support upgrades to key road freight corridors in regional Australia to increase network reliability and connectivity. Of this funding, \$1.5 billion has been allocated to roads in Northern Australia.

Investment in regional routes will support local jobs and regional economic activity by better connecting farms and factories with their markets across Australia and around the world. These major roads are also used by tourists and the upgrades will have broader benefits to regional Australia by supporting tourism.

Corridors for investment through ROSI will be identified through analysis of network performance and consultation with stakeholders, including the heavy vehicle industry and state and territory governments.

Works funded through ROSI may include addressing safety hazards, increasing the quality of the road to allow for high capacity freight services, upgrading bridges and addressing impediments to local freight and tourist connectivity. Funding is specifically

earmarked to support upgrades of regional corridors in Northern Australia, Tasmania, the Great Northern Highway in Western Australia and connections from regional New South Wales into the Australian Capital Territory.

The ROSI initiatives are in addition to the funding for projects in each state and territory under the continuing Black Spot Program.

Urban Congestion Initiative

The Australian Government recognises the burden congestion places on people's lives, meaning we spend less time with our families and on businesses which have to suffer productivity and financial costs. In the 2018-19 Budget the Government is continuing its ongoing commitment to alleviate congestion not only through investments in major urban projects in the Pipeline but also through the targeted \$1 billion Urban Congestion Initiative.

As a significant proportion of regional freight is destined for domestic markets in urban areas, and with many of Australia's major export facilities also located in our cities, the Urban Congestion Initiative will complement the ROSI initiative by reducing the time freight takes to get to its final destination.

Major Project Business Case Fund

The Government is also contributing \$250 million to a new Major Project Business Case Fund for planning nationally significant projects beyond the Pipeline announced at Budget. The Fund will enable the Australian Government to continue to partner with state and territory governments in the development of nationally significant projects and to influence their design to achieve the greatest level of value for money for the investment.

The Australian Government has committed \$15 million for planning for the Toowoomba to Brisbane Passenger Rail and \$10 million for EastLink WA (Orange Route) through the Major Project Business Case Fund.

National System for Domestic Commercial Vessel Safety

The domestic commercial vessel industry is mainly located in coastal and regional Australia and is an important part of the tourism, transport and fishing industries.

From 1 July 2018, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) will assume full service delivery of the National System for Domestic Commercial Vessel Safety, which will achieve nationally consistent safety regulation for the first time, improve safety outcomes and reduce barriers for industry. This new national system will be funded through the introduction of cost recovery charges.

However, to allow time for the industry to transition to nationally-consistent charges and full cost recovery, the Government will provide \$55.0 million over ten years from 2018-19 toward a \$102.4 million joint funding package with the states and the Northern Territory.

No levy will be charged to industry in 2018-19. From 1 July 2019, levy charges will be gradually increased. This will ensure fair and equitable treatment of all operators as charging arrangements are standardised and services transition across Australia.

Regional Aviation Access Program

Through the Regional Aviation Access Program, the Australian Government provides targeted support for aerodrome infrastructure (Remote Airstrip Upgrade component) and air services to remote areas (Remote Air Services Subsidy Scheme component) where they are not commercially viable.

The 2018-19 Budget will allocate an additional \$24.0 million over four years to the Remote Airstrip Upgrade component to provide grants to undertake safety and access works at airstrips in remote locations.

This funding builds upon the 2015-16 Budget which allocated \$33.7 million over the four years to June 2019. To date, 175 remote airstrip projects have been approved to receive assistance, including \$7.04 million (GST exclusive) approved for 31 projects under Round 5 that was announced on 23 March 2018.

Building Better Regions Fund

The Australian Government has announced \$200.0 million to deliver a third round of the Building Better Regions Fund (BBRF), bringing the total commitment for this program to \$641.6 million from 2017-18 to 2021-22. The program is supporting regional and remote communities to partner with governments and other stakeholders and take advantage of a range of economic and regional development opportunities. Local governments and incorporated not-for-profit organisations are eligible to apply.

Round 1 of the BBRF resulted in 257 projects being funded across regional Australia. Successful applications for round two will be announced in mid-2018.

In 2018-19, a key priority for the BBRF will be to help stimulate local economies by investing in the tourism sector. Forty-three cents of every tourism dollar is spent in regional Australia, and the number of domestic and international tourists visiting our regions grows every year. This is a vital sector for our regional economies, creating jobs, stimulating new business and sustaining long term economic growth.

The Government wants to help regions unlock their tourism potential and has earmarked up to \$45.0 million from the next round of BBRF for tourism-related infrastructure projects that build on our successes in this sector.

Stronger Communities Programme

The Australian Government will provide \$22.5 million to deliver a fourth round of the Stronger Communities Programme (SCP) in 2018-19. The SCP supports small capital projects that deliver important social benefits to communities across Australia.

Similar to the first three rounds of the SCP, round four will make funding of \$150,000 available in each of the 150 Federal Electorates in 2018-19. Members of Parliament will continue their role in identifying suitable projects, with funding of between \$2,500 and \$20,000 available for eligible projects. SCP grant funding must be matched in cash or in-kind on at least a dollar for dollar basis.

The previous three rounds of SCP provided \$22.5 million per year from 2015-16 to 2017-18. Input from the community is a key element of the SCP. Each Member of Parliament is required to establish a community consultation committee to identify projects for consideration under the program.

Decentralisation Agenda

The Decentralisation Agenda forms part of the Government's commitment to promote economic activity in Australia's regions and ensure every part of Australia benefits from our growing economy. Decentralisation of Government jobs outside of Canberra, central Sydney and Melbourne will benefit regional communities through the creation of local jobs, local economic diversification, and stimulation of regional economic growth. In the long term, it can also help improve government service delivery through closer proximity to citizens and stakeholders, and has the potential to provide long-term operational cost savings.

Since 2013, the Government has implemented a number of decentralisation initiatives including:

- moving the Australia Pesticide and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) to Armidale
- the creation of several hundred jobs in Gosford, NSW by the Australian Tax Office
- the generation of 250 call centre jobs in Adelaide by Datacom Connect for the Department of Home Affairs
- the establishment of Agrifutures in Wagga Wagga, NSW
- the proposed establishment of the Regional Investment Corporation in Orange, NSW
- the establishment of offices for Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) in Toowoomba, Dubbo, Adelaide and Perth.
- the establishment of WSA Co in Liverpool
- headquartering the National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguards Commission in Western Sydney.

The Government is building on these recent successes in its Decentralisation Agenda by announcing the relocation of functions from six more Australian Government entities that will move to locations outside of Canberra, central Sydney and Melbourne. This includes:

- relocation of Department of Human Services staff from Sydney CBD to Parramatta
- moving positions from the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC) from Canberra to Darwin
- moving positions to be moved from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's Indigenous Affairs Group Regional Network Melbourne CBD office to Shepparton, complementing the existing positions moving from the same Group's Sydney CBD Office to Parramatta
- the Unique Student Identifier Register to move from Canberra to Adelaide
- the Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner to be located in Adelaide and, importantly,

- positions to be decentralised from the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities, involving three positions for the Indian Ocean Territories and nine positions for the Inland Rail unit.

The Government remains resolute in its commitment to delivering the Decentralisation Agenda. The 2018-19 Budget marks an important next step for the ongoing roll-out of this Agenda.

Regional Australia Institute

The Australian Government will provide \$1.2 million over four years to the Regional Australia Institute for the delivery of a national program of inquiry into issues affecting regional Australia.

The national program of inquiry will contribute to an informed public debate about issues that affect regional Australia, and provide advice for the development of Australian Government and state regional policy.

Norfolk Island – Next Phase Reforms

The Australian Government is increasing its contribution to the wellbeing of people living on Norfolk Island through a significant package for new services, community programs, and infrastructure development projects.

Over the forward estimates, the Australian Government will allocate an additional \$38.7 million for the expansion of existing services and the delivery of new services on Norfolk Island. Measures announced will also increase funding to the Norfolk Island Regional Council, and secure the future of world heritage and community infrastructure assets as well as provide a welcome boost to the local economy.

The Australian Government will continue to focus on improving service delivery to this remote community.

Indian Ocean Territories – Essential Infrastructure Upgrades

The Australian Government is supporting the external territories of Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands with the allocation of an additional \$32.0 million over three financial years for investment in essential infrastructure. These funds will support economic activity on Christmas Island through the replacement of the Flying Fish Cove port wharf and moorings, and strengthen asset management more broadly through the development of strategic asset management plans for infrastructure in both territories.

Infrastructure is critical in supporting Australia's strategic capability in the Indian Ocean maritime region, and ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the local communities.

Indian Ocean Territories – Underwriting of Air Services

The Australian Government continues to support air services arrangements for the external territories of Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, with a focus on placing these on as commercial a setting as possible. The Australian Government is allocating \$19.6 million over the forward estimates to continue to underwrite air services to the territories - home to approximately 2,150 Australian citizens and residents.

The Indian Ocean Territories are some of the Australia's most remote and isolated communities. This measure will provide essential connectivity between the islands and the mainland. This funding ensures that territory communities have access to the basic services enjoyed by all Australians, as well as supporting business opportunities, tourism and vital social and cultural connections with mainland Australia.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Infrastructure Investment Program

Current Infrastructure Investment Program projects and sub-programs are delivering significant benefits to individuals, local communities and the national economy, including through major upgrades to the Pacific Highway in New South Wales, Bruce Highway in Queensland, the North South Corridor in South Australia and Midland highway in Tasmania.

Roads to Recovery Program

The Roads to Recovery Program will deliver funding of around \$4.8 billion from 2013-14 to 2021-22 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 program.

In the 2016 Budget, the Australian Government committed to an extension of the Roads to Recovery Program, with a further \$50.0 million per annum from 2019-20 onwards to support construction and maintenance of local roads. The annual base funding for the program will increase to \$400.0 million from 2019-20 and, of this, around \$300.0 million will be provided to local councils in rural and regional areas.

Black Spot Program

Projects under the national Black Spot Program will receive \$744.5 million from 2013-14 to 2021-22 to help make roads safer for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. Each state and territory receives a share of the total funding, based on crash data and population.

Black Spot projects will continue to receive \$60.0 million a year from 2021-22 for road safety works such as roundabouts, crash barriers and street lights at places where serious crashes have occurred or where serious crashes are likely. The Australian Government will provide \$275 million to the Program from 2018-19 to 2021-22.

More than 60 per cent of road deaths and a significant proportion of serious injuries occur outside metropolitan areas. In line with national road safety policy objectives, approximately 50 per cent of Black Spot funds in each state (other than Tasmania, the ACT and the Northern Territory) are reserved for projects in non-metropolitan areas.

Bridges Renewal Program

The Bridges Renewal Program will receive \$480.0 million from 2015-16 to 2021-22 to provide funding for upgrades and repairs to bridges that enhance access for local communities and facilitate vehicle access to enhance the local economy. Building on the 2016 Federal Budget investment, the Australian Government extended the Bridges Renewal Program with base funding of \$60 million per year from 2021-22 onwards. The

Australian Government will provide \$345 million to the Program from 2018-19 to 2021-22.

Since 2015-16, the Bridges Renewal Program has funded 385 projects over three rounds.

Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program

The Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program will receive \$368.0 million from 2013-14 to 2021-22, to provide funding to infrastructure projects that improve productivity and safety outcomes of heavy vehicle operations across Australia. In the 2016 Federal Budget the Australian Government extended the Program with base funding of \$40 million per year from 2021-22 onwards. The Australian Government will provide \$237 million to the Program from 2018-19 to 2021-22.

The Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program funds road infrastructure that contributes to the safety and productivity of heavy vehicle operations across Australia delivering benefits to all road users.

Projects funded under the Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program include rest stops and parking bays, upgrading the capacity of roads, and technology trials aimed at improving heavy vehicle productivity.

Regional Roads Productivity Package (Northern Territory)

The Australian Government is investing \$90.0 million from 2013-14 to 2018-19 towards the \$106.5 million package. Works include replacing bridges on the Roper Highway, improving flood immunity on Port Keats Road, sealing sections of the Santa Teresa Road, constructing a new bridge over Rocky Bottom Creek on Central Arnhem Road, strengthening, widening and sealing sections of the Buntine Highway, and installing gravel on sections of the Arnhem Link Road.

Northern Territory Roads Package

The Australian Government is solely funding a \$77.0 million package of works from 2014-15 to 2018-19 for the strengthening and widening of road pavements, flood immunity improvements, and fatigue management measures such as upgrading rest areas and intersection improvements. Roads being upgraded under the Northern Territory Roads Package include the Stuart, Victoria and Barkly Highways.

Developing Northern Australia – Improving Northern Cattle Supply Chains (Northern Australia Beef Roads Program)

The Australian Government has committed \$100.0 million towards the Northern Australia Beef Roads Program to improve the productivity and resilience of the cattle industry in Northern Australia. Funding will be used for road infrastructure upgrades, with contributions also being provided by the three northern jurisdictions and local governments, for projects which aim to reduce costs to the Northern Australia cattle industry.

Opportunities to improve productivity were modelled using state-of-the art transport logistics modelling developed by CSIRO, (referred to as the 'TraNSIT' model). Successful projects to be funded under the program were announced in late 2016 and construction on projects is commencing throughout 2018.

The Australian Government is also working with jurisdictions to maximise Indigenous employment and supplier use opportunities for all Northern Australia road projects funded under both the Northern Australia Roads and Beef Roads Programs.

Northern Australia Roads Program

The Australian Government has committed \$600.0 million for the Northern Australia Roads Program for priority road projects in northern Australia.

Roads identified in an audit of northern Australian infrastructure by Infrastructure Australia, along with other roads identified as priorities by the states and territories, such as those connecting communities, or regional towns to ports, were considered for funding, with successful projects announced throughout 2016.

Works will include upgrades, as well as safety and productivity improvements, such as widening, overtaking lanes, and pavement renewal. Construction on some projects commenced in mid-2017, with further projects commencing construction throughout 2018.

National Highway Upgrade Program

The Australian Government is investing \$225.8 million from 2014-15 to 2020-21 under the National Highway Upgrade Program.

The National Highway Upgrade Program provides funding for improvements to Australia's key national highway networks such as widening shoulders, installing wire rope barriers, overtaking lanes, turning lanes, bridges, and improving pavement on highways around Australia.

Victorian Infrastructure Package

The Australian and Victorian Governments are each contributing \$345.0 million towards the \$690.0 million Rural and Regional Roads package to improve safety and increase productivity across regional Victoria. More than 40 key road projects are receiving funding, including a new crossing of the Murray River between Echuca and Moama and targeted road upgrades in the Green Triangle.

The \$440.0 million Murray Basin Freight Rail project is funded under the Victorian Infrastructure Package. The project aims to better connect primary producers to the State's major ports, reduce transportation costs by allowing larger trains to move more product with each trip, and boost export opportunities. Upgrades to 1,000 kilometres of freight rail infrastructure across the Murray Basin will be delivered through the project.

Great Ocean Road (Victoria)

An upgrade of the Great Ocean Road in south-west Victoria will receive \$50.0 million from 2014-15 to 2017-18 from the Australian Government towards the \$100.0 million project. The upgrade will better connect villages along the south-west coast and increase tourism at famous attractions such as the Twelve Apostles and Bells Beach. The upgrade will also improve safety and reduce travel times. The upgrade is rehabilitating existing pavement, stabilising cliff and land slip sites, strengthening bridges and improving drainage between Torquay and Allansford.

The Australian Government committed \$25.0 million towards this project in 2013 and a further \$25.0 million under the Rural and Regional Roads Package that forms part of the \$3.0 billion Victorian Infrastructure Package. Both commitments have been matched by the Victorian Government to enable a substantial upgrade of this iconic regional road. Construction commenced in August 2014 and is expected to be completed in mid-2022.

Great Western Highway (New South Wales)

The Australian Government is contributing \$200.0 million towards the \$247.5 million upgrade of the Great Western Highway between Katoomba and Lithgow. The projects will improve road safety and road freight efficiency, while protecting the area's natural environment, heritage and community amenity. The upgrade of the highway at Forty Bends and Hartley Valley, and safety upgrades between Katoomba and Mount Victoria are now complete. A program of safety works between Mount Victoria and Lithgow is under way.

New England Highway (New South Wales)

The Australian Government is contributing \$131.0 million towards \$241.2 million in upgrades on sections of the New England Highway. The works include an upgrade at Bolivia Hill, construction of the Scone Bypass, planning for the Tenterfield Heavy Vehicle Bypass and construction of a roundabout at Armidale Airport. These projects will improve safety as well as increase productivity of freight movements along the New England Highway.

Pacific Highway (New South Wales)

The Australian Government is investing \$5.6 billion over eight years from 2013-14 towards the upgrade of the Pacific Highway to a four-lane divided road between Hexham and the Queensland border. This package of projects will reduce travel times, deliver significant freight benefits and reduce crash and fatality rates while meeting the needs of the coastal communities that live along the Highway. Over 80 per cent of the final highway length has been constructed and the full upgrade is due to be completed in 2020.

Bruce Highway (Queensland)

The Australian Government's 10 year Bruce Highway \$6.7 billion upgrade package announced in 2013 is focusing on a range of specific upgrades and safety packages to the Bruce Highway agreed with the Queensland Government as part of the Infrastructure Investment Program.

The projects include major upgrades and realignments, strengthening and widening works, a range of safety and efficiency measures to target sites with poor crash histories, plus the provision of additional overtaking lanes and rest areas.

Cape York Region Package (Queensland)

The Australian Government is investing \$208.4 million to facilitate upgrades to infrastructure including improved road access into Cape York from the south.

The Cape York Region Package involves upgrading and sealing priority sections of the Peninsula Developmental Road, sections of the Endeavour Valley Road and delivering community infrastructure projects to nine local government areas on the Cape.

The projects will provide benefits to the Cape York local community and industry, including the mining sector.

Outback Way (Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia)

The Australian Government has committed \$100.0 million to continue upgrading the Outback Way across Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia. Funding between these jurisdictions was informed by an investment strategy developed by the Australian Government in consultation with the jurisdictions.

This commitment builds on the Australian Government investment of \$42.0 million from 2014-15 to 2018-19 to upgrade sections of the Outback Way, including the Great Central Road in Western Australia, the Plenty Highway and Tjukururu Road in the Northern Territory, and the Donohue Highway and Kennedy Developmental Road in Queensland, to improve safety and access to remote areas. This is in addition to the \$28.0 million in funding for projects on the Plenty Highway and Tjukururu Road committed to under the Northern Australia Roads Program.

The works 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.

Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands (South Australia)

The Australian Government is investing \$85.0 million from 2015-16 to 2018-19 towards the \$106.3 million upgrade of 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.

South Australian Regional Roads Package

The Australian Government has committed \$11.0 million towards the \$13.8 million South Australian Regional Roads Package to deliver vital road upgrades across the state. The upgrades will create jobs, improve safety, increase productivity and boost the regional South Australian economy. The package will see works on the Sturt Highway, Eyre Highway, Lincoln Highway and Augusta Highway.

Great Northern Highway – Muchea to Wubin Upgrade (Western Australia)

The Australian Government is investing \$275.8 million from 2014-15 to 2010-21 towards the \$344.8 million upgrade of the Great Northern Highway between Muchea and Wubin which will significantly improve freight efficiency and safety on this section of the National Network. Upgrades to this link will also contribute to the long term objective of enabling road trains to travel further south to Muchea before “breaking down” to B-double or single trailer configurations. Road trains are currently required to “break down” at Wubin, some 220 kilometres north of Muchea.

NorthLink WA – Central and Northern Sections (Western Australia)

The Australian Government is investing \$635.9 million from 2014-15 to 2019-20 towards the \$793.7 million project to construct a new 37 kilometre highway from the intersection of the Tonkin and Reid highways in Malaga to the Great Northern Highway at Muchea.

The new route will replace the Great Northern Highway through the Swan Valley as the main road freight route from Perth to the north of Western Australia. This project will be divided into two stages: the Central Section from the Reid Highway to Ellenbrook and the Northern Section from Ellenbrook to Muchea.

Midland Highway (Tasmania)

The Australian Government is investing \$400.0 million from 2014-15 to 2023-24 towards the \$500.0 million upgrade of the Midland Highway. The project will improve connectivity and road safety on this key north-south corridor in Tasmania, and raise the standard of the full length of the highway to a minimum three star Australian Road Assessment Program safety rating.

The highway is the major route between Tasmania's two largest cities, Hobart and Launceston, and the key freight route between Hobart and the northern ports. To date, 20 projects have been developed over the length of the highway that are in planning, under construction or have been completed, with more currently being developed as part of the forward plan to 2023-24.

Keys2drive

The Australian Government will continue to support Keys2drive with a funding commitment of \$16.0 million over 4 years from 2017-18. The program delivers a free lesson to learner drivers and their parent or mentor and will include a number of enhancements to expand uptake in regional areas.

Melbourne to Brisbane Inland Rail

The Australian Government has committed \$9.3 billion in equity and grant funding for the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) to deliver the Melbourne to Brisbane Inland Rail project. The ARTC will also enter into a Public Private Partnership to deliver the most complex section - Gowrie to Kagaru.

Spanning three states and 1,700 km, Inland Rail will be a nationally significant civil engineering project. The majority of the construction and capital expenditure will occur in regional areas particularly in south-east Queensland and north-west New South Wales.

In addition to 500 km of new rail track and the upgrade of 1,200 km of the existing rail corridor, the project will involve over 8 km of tunnelling in southern Queensland through the Toowoomba Range, which will be among Australia's largest tunnel projects.

Inland Rail will deliver improved access to and from regional markets, reduced costs for business, improved linkages within the national freight network, improved reliability, certainty and capacity and better road safety for the community.

The Australian Government is committed to maximising the benefits of Inland Rail for industry and local communities during construction and operations. Regional Offices at

Wodonga, Dubbo and Toowoomba have been established to work with stakeholders to maximise local procurement and employment opportunities arising from construction as well as preparing industries and communities to take advantage of the opportunities arising from the operation of Inland Rail. These offices will support the Australian Government's commitment to engage with regional communities through its Decentralisation Agenda.

Construction on Inland Rail will commence in mid-2018 in New South Wales. Around 16,000 direct and indirect jobs will be supported during the construction.

Regional Rail in Victoria

The Australian Government is committed to the development of regional Victorian communities and is investing in transport projects that connect people to jobs and opportunities, and provide families and businesses with affordable options for where to live and invest.

In June 2017, the Australian Government agreed the Regional Rail Package, committing \$1.5 billion towards the \$1.7 billion total to improve passenger rail infrastructure across regional Victoria. This investment will upgrade the Ballarat, Geelong, Gippsland, North East, Bendigo and Echuca, and Warrnambool rail lines to improve the frequency and reliability of passenger rail services across the state. In addition, it will deliver a study that will consider ways to improve rail services and options to standardise the Shepparton Rail Line to support economic productivity and efficiency by connecting people with jobs, education, health facilities, markets and services in Melbourne.

Tasmanian Freight Rail Revitalisation

The Freight Rail Revitalisation program will raise the quality of the major lines on the Tasmanian rail network through selective re-sleepering and track replacement works, along with level crossing and bridge upgrades. The program will reduce the operational costs of freight movements by providing additional rail capacity, improved reliability and reduced transit times. These upgrades will support the economic viability of high-tonnage businesses in regional Tasmania, such as those in the cement and paper industries that are reliant on efficient transportation to the port to compete in international and interstate trade and commerce.

The Australian and Tasmanian Governments are each contributing \$59.8 million to Tranche One, which is expected to be complete in mid-2019, and a further \$59.8 million each to Tranche Two, which is expected to commence in mid-2019, for a total program of \$239.2 million.

Faster Rail Connecting Capital Cities and Orbital Regional Centres

The Australian Government is focussed on improving the use of rail transport to ease the pressures within Australia's largest cities, and provide important links to regional centres. It is seeking to improve opportunities for regional centres while mitigating population growth pressures (including congestion, housing supply and affordability, and job accessibility) on our major capital cities.

From 2017-18, the Australian Government is providing \$20.0 million in funding to develop three business cases for proposals to improve passenger rail services between our big cities and nearby regional centres through faster and higher speed services. The business cases include:

- the NSW Government proposal for upgrades between Sydney and Newcastle
- Consolidated Land and Rail Australia's (CLARA) proposal for faster rail between Melbourne and greater Greater Shepparton
- North Coast Connect's proposal for faster rail between Brisbane and Nambour/Sunshine Coast.

Adelaide to Tarcoola Re-Railing Upgrade Acceleration (South Australia)

The Australian Government has committed to fully funding up to \$252.0 million in equity over three years from 2016-17 to the Australian Rail Track Corporation for the delivery of the Adelaide-Tarcoola Rail Upgrade Acceleration project. The Adelaide-Tarcoola section of track forms part of the Melbourne to Perth corridor and is approaching the end of its asset life with the majority of the rail between 45 and 60 years old. Production of steel rail and early preparation works are well underway with over half the rail now delivered to site. Installation of the stronger 60 kg/m rail for the upgrade of this section commenced in March 2018.

The project will bring forward an order for approximately 73,000 tonnes of steel from Arrium Steel over the next three years and create up to 130 direct and indirect jobs over the life of the project, as well as other local jobs in the region.

Bass Strait Passenger Vehicle Equalisation Scheme

The Australian Government aims to reduce the cost of seagoing travel between Tasmania and mainland Australia by providing a rebate for the transportation of an eligible passenger vehicle across the Bass Strait. The rebate is provided to the driver of an eligible passenger vehicle in the form of a reduced fare charged by a Bass Strait shipping service operator, for example TT-Line. It assists with the cost associated with the transportation of eligible passenger vehicles interstate across the Bass Strait.

In 2018-19, the Bass Strait Passenger Vehicle Equalisation Scheme is forecast to provide \$49.8 million in rebates.

Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme

The Australian Government supports the Tasmanian economy and regional Australia by assisting with the cost of transporting freight across the Bass Strait. The Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme helps address the sea freight cost disadvantage incurred by the shippers of eligible non-bulk goods moved by sea between the mainland of Australia and Tasmania, King Island and the main island of Tasmania, and the Furneaux Group of Islands and the main island of Tasmania. This assistance is provided because of Tasmania's geographical location and because, unlike shippers on the mainland of Australia, shippers on these islands do not have access to a network of road and rail transport.

On 1 January 2016, the Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme was expanded to provide assistance to eligible goods leaving Tasmania that are being trans-shipped via mainland Australia.

In 2018-19, the Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme is forecast to provide \$172.6 million in assistance to eligible shippers.

Regional Aviation Access Program

Through the Regional Aviation Access Program, the Australian Government provides targeted support for aerodrome infrastructure (Remote Airstrip Upgrade component) and air services to remote areas (Remote Air Services Subsidy Scheme component) where they are not commercially viable.

The Remote Air Services Subsidy Scheme component subsidises weekly flights to ensure residents of 266 remote communities have access to regional service centres. \$53.1 million is allocated to the Scheme over the four years from 2018-19.

Payment Scheme for Airservices Australia's En Route Charges

The Airservices Australia En Route Charges Payment Scheme supports regional commercial airlines operating low volume, commercially vulnerable routes as well as aeromedical providers flying to regional and remote communities. The Scheme offers a rebate against the Airservices Australia En Route Charge for eligible flights, with an additional incentive to encourage new regional commercial passenger routes.

The 2018-19 Budget continued the Scheme's funding of \$8 million over the four years to 2021-22 with \$2 million allocated per annum.

Implementing the Smart Cities Plan

On 29 April 2016, the Australian Government launched its Smart Cities Plan. The Smart Cities Plan seeks to improve the productivity, liveability and accessibility of Australian cities and urban centres, helping to build an agile, innovative and prosperous nation. The Plan provides a framework for cities policy at the federal level and guides action across portfolios to deliver better outcomes for our cities and the people who live in them.

City Deals will be the primary mechanism for delivery of the Smart Cities Plan. City Deals are a long-term partnership between the three levels of government and the community focussed on aligning planning, investment and governance to accelerate growth and job creation, stimulate urban renewal and drive economic reforms.

City Deals are already up and running in Townsville, Launceston and Western Sydney. A commitment to develop City Deals in Geelong, Hobart, Darwin and Perth will continue to drive jobs, economic growth and liveability in key urban centres and their regions.

A focus of the City Deals in regional cities has been to coordinate efforts across governments to support urban renewal, stimulate industry and employment opportunities and improve liveability.

Townsville City Deal

The Australian Government, Queensland Government and Townsville City Council agreed the Townsville City Deal on 9 December 2016. The City Deal is a long-term plan to secure the economic success of Townsville by bringing all relevant policy, program and funding levers together to achieve a shared vision for Townsville as an economic gateway to northern Australia, and a lifestyle-rich city for residents and visitors alike.

Under the Townsville City Deal, the Australian Government has committed \$250.0 million to drive investment, jobs growth, urban renewal, governance reform and long term sustainability through the collaborative partnership across three levels of government. Initiatives under the City Deal include the development of the North Queensland Stadium, the establishment of a Townsville Development Corporation, the Townsville Industrial Development Board and the intergovernmental water taskforce.

Launceston City Deal

The Australian Government, the Tasmanian Government and the City of Launceston agreed the Launceston City Deal on 20 April 2017. The Launceston City Deal is a commitment between governments to deliver a collective program of planning, reform and investment aimed at building on the region's natural advantages to improve the lives of local residents.

Through the Launceston City Deal the Australian Government has committed a total of \$141.0 million to stimulate growth and create a vibrant, liveable city. Initiatives under the City Deal include the relocation of the University of Tasmania's Launceston campus, the Launceston City Heart project to rejuvenate the central business district, the delivery of a National Institute for Forest Products Innovation Hub and support from the National Landcare Program for management actions to increase the health of and reduce pollution in the Tamar Estuary.

In the course of the first year of implementing the city Deal, the Australian Government has announced an additional \$54.33 million contribution to the growth of Launceston, including to improve the health of the Tamar, develop new facilities at Youngtown Barracks to accommodate reservists in the Defence Force moving from Paterson Barracks and to develop a business case for a new defence Innovation and Design Precinct.

Western Sydney City Deal

The Australian and New South Wales Governments, together with eight local governments of Western Sydney, signed the Western Sydney City Deal on 4 March 2018. The City Deal is a 20-year agreement between the three levels of government to deliver jobs, rail and investment for the people of Western Sydney.

The Australian Government has committed \$125 million in funding to the Western Sydney City Deal. Initiatives under the City Deal include an Aerotropolis employment precinct with jobs in knowledge-intensive industries, a North-South Rail Link from St Marys to the Badgerys Creek Aerotropolis via the Western Sydney Airport, a Western Parkland City Liveability Program to deliver community facilities, and a new planning regime for Western Sydney to cut development costs and boost housing supply.

The City Deal builds on the Australian Government's \$5.3 billion equity investment in the Western Sydney Airport and \$2.9 billion towards the \$3.6 billion Western Sydney Infrastructure Plan. This funding is part of a much larger contribution to the region, including investment in rail, development of government land, and the establishment of new government offices and services in the region.

Smart Cities and Suburbs Program

The \$50.0 million Smart Cities and Suburbs Program is a key initiative under the Government's Smart Cities Plan to support the delivery of innovative smart city projects

that improve the liveability, productivity and sustainability of cities and regional towns across Australia.

Successful Round One projects were announced on 17 November 2017 with 49 projects from all states and territories sharing in \$28.3 million of Australian Government funding, leaving up to \$21.7 million available for a second round. Of the funded projects, 40 per cent are located in regional cities. Successful projects are being co-funded by partners including local governments, industry, research organisations and the private sector.

Applications for round two of the Smart Cities and Suburbs Program opened on 2 May 2018 and will close on 2 July 2018. Successful projects will be announced later this year following an assessment process.

National Water Infrastructure Development Fund and Loan Facility

The Australian Government's \$2.6 billion commitment to build the water infrastructure of the future is being realised through the \$580.0 million National Water Infrastructure Development Fund (Fund) and the \$2 billion National Water Infrastructure Loan Facility (Loan Facility). Through these initiatives, the Australian Government will co-invest with state and territory governments in the construction of water infrastructure that will provide secure and affordable water to support the growth of regional economies and communities across Australia.

Through the Fund and the Loan Facility, the Australian Government has committed:

- \$59.5 million for 39 water infrastructure feasibility studies, including \$40.5 million for 16 studies in northern Australia, to assess available water resources and identify and fast track the assessment of the feasibility of new dams, pipeline and managed aquifer recharge projects
- \$554.0 million in capital to assist state and territory governments construct new water infrastructure, including Rookwood Weir in Queensland (\$176.1 million), Dungowan Dam in New South Wales (\$75.0 million), the Northern Adelaide Irrigation Scheme (\$45.6 million), McLaren Vale water storage (\$2.5 million) in South Australia, modernisation of the Macalister Irrigation District in Victoria (\$20.0 million), South West Loddon pipeline in Victoria (\$20.0 million), Scottsdale Irrigation Scheme in Tasmania (\$25.3 million), and the Myalup-Wellington Project in Western Australia (\$190.0 million including \$50.0 million through the Loan Facility).

The \$2.0 billion National Water Infrastructure Loan Facility is available to assist state and territory governments to fund the construction of major water infrastructure projects. The assessment and contract management of water infrastructure loans will be undertaken by the Regional Investment Corporation (RIC) from 1 July 2018.

Regional Jobs and Investment Packages

The Australian Government is rolling out funding under the \$222.3 million Regional Jobs and Investment Packages over three years from 2017-18. This program is helping to diversify regional economies, stimulate economic growth and deliver sustainable employment in 10 pilot regions through funding more than 220 projects.

Regional Growth Fund

The Australian Government has launched the Regional Growth Fund (RGF), which is providing \$272.2 million over four years from 2018-19, for regional infrastructure projects that will unlock economic opportunities across the regions. The RGF provides grants of \$10.0 million or more for major transformational projects. These projects will support long-term economic growth and create jobs in regions, including those undergoing structural adjustment. The RGF is expected to leverage investment from the private sector, not-for-profit organisations and other levels of government.

On 2 March 2018, the Australian Government released the program guidelines and sought initial applications as part of a two-stage process. Applications closed on 27 April 2018 and successful applicants will be asked to bring forward a full business case in the second stage.

National Stronger Regions Fund

The Australian Government has conducted three funding rounds of the National Stronger Regions Fund and is investing more than \$613.0 million, over five years from 2015-16, in infrastructure projects across Australia. These projects will deliver economic benefits and address disadvantage, with most projects located in regional areas across Australia.

Community Development Grants Programme

The Community Development Grants Programme (CDG) provides funding for critical projects where the Australian Government has identified the need for new or upgraded facilities. Projects range from new sporting facilities, to upgrading community centres and small-scale infrastructure projects.

CDG projects contribute to local economies, create jobs and boost the confidence within a region. To date, funding of more than \$996 million has been committed to more than 788 projects, including more than 450 projects from the 2016 Federal Election.

Drought Communities Programme

The Drought Communities Programme is designed to provide employment for people whose work opportunities have been affected by drought in eligible local government areas. The Australian Government has committed \$34.5 million over four years from 2015-16.

Funding is targeted at local infrastructure projects that offer the greatest potential to stimulate local community spending, use local resources, and provide a long lasting benefit to communities and the agricultural industries on which they depend. Eligible local government areas receive funding of up to \$1.5 million to support projects. Projects must be completed by 30 June 2019.

Declared councils eligible to receive Drought Communities Programme funding are: Balonne, Barcaldine, Barcoo, Blackall Tambo, Boulia, Bulloo, Burke, Carpentaria, Diamantina, Flinders, Longreach, McKinlay, Murweh, Paroo, Quilpie, Richmond and Winton in Queensland; Brewarrina, Coonamble and Walgett in New South Wales; and Buloke, West Wimmera and Yarriambiack in Victoria.

Regional Development Australia Committees

The Regional Development Australia Committees program provides a network of 52 committees of community leaders, working to strengthen Australia's regions and build stronger communities. They work with all levels of government, business, industry, educational institutions and community groups to attract investment to their regions, create jobs and drive innovation and economic development. The program also funds Regional Investment Officers who are located in the Indian Ocean Territories, on Norfolk Island and in the Jervis Bay Territory.

The Australian Government is continuing the Regional Development Australia Committees program, providing \$75.3 million for the period 2018-19 to 2021-22. A key task for Regional Development Australia Committees is to connect businesses with industry sectors, international trade partners, financial markets, regional entrepreneurs and business leaders to attract new investment to their regions and create local jobs.

Local Government Financial Assistance Grant

The Local Government Financial Assistance Grant program 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 Financial Assistance Grant program, which will provide an estimated \$11.6 billion to local government over the period 2017-18 to 2021-22.

The Australian Government will make an early payment during the 2017-18 financial year of 50 percent of the 2018-19 Financial Assistance Grant funding. This cash injection of more than \$1.2 billion will give councils the opportunity to start work immediately on new projects and to benefit from additional interest on cash in the bank.

The funding is untied and consists of two components:

- a general purpose component distributed between the states and territories according to population
- an identified local road component distributed between the states and territories according to fixed historical shares.

Additionally, the Australian Government is providing supplementary funding to South Australia for local roads. South Australia will receive \$20.0 million for this purpose in 2017-18 and 2018-19.

Indian Ocean Territories

The Australian Government continues to support the communities of Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands through the provision of essential services and funding for the operation of major infrastructure. Activities include provision of healthcare, education, policing, and ports and airports management. In 2017-18 the Australian Government provided \$115.4 million in administered funding and \$8.2 million in capital funding in support of services to the Indian Ocean Territories. The Australian Government further provided funding for various port projects, as well as airport and runway projects, and stormwater management works on Christmas Island.

The Australian Government is funding the development of a strategic plan for Christmas Island to support economic and community development. Funding is also

being provided for the development of a Five Year Strategic Plan for the Indian Ocean Territories Health Service, which will ensure the delivery of targeted, high quality and cost effective health services to local communities.

Norfolk Island

Since passing legislation which extended Commonwealth laws to Norfolk Island from 1 July 2016, the Australian Government has continued to invest in improvements to service delivery for the Norfolk Island community.

In 2017-18 the Australian Government has provided \$32.7 million in funding for services to Norfolk Island. The Australian Government has further invested \$16.4 million from 2015-16 to 2017-18 for the upgrade of Cascade Pier which will facilitate greater access to Norfolk Island by cruise ships and improve cargo transfers. In addition, funding of approximately \$7.3 million from 2015-16 to 2017-18 is providing capital works upgrades at Norfolk Island Central School and Norfolk Island Health and Residential Aged Care Service.

Jervis Bay

The Australian Government supports the community of the Jervis Bay Territory by funding the provision of state-level and local government type services. In 2017-18 the Australian Government provided \$6.8 million in funding for service delivery. State-level services, such as education, justice and welfare are delivered by the Australian Capital Territory Government under a service delivery arrangement.

JOBS AND SMALL BUSINESS

Regional Australia is at the heart of Australian culture and a key contributor to our economy. The Australian Government is committed to ensuring regional Australia thrives with the creation of more jobs, assistance to grow small businesses, and promotion of further investment to bolster the economic and social wellbeing of regional Australians.

As part of the Jobs and Innovation portfolio, the Department of Jobs and Small Business has a central role in advising and delivering policies and programs that assist families and communities to prosper. These initiatives seek to facilitate jobs growth, promote greater workplace productivity and increase workforce participation – especially for younger and older Australians.

The Australian Government recognises regional Australia is undergoing change in terms of industry transformation and an ageing population. Change has impacted some regional areas more than others based on a region's industrial base, infrastructure investment, population size and access to higher education.

In light of this, the 2018–19 Budget is focusing on regionally tailored approaches that will help communities respond to change and promote future jobs growth. Additionally, the Australian Government is rolling out More Choices for a Longer Life – jobs and skills for mature age Australians to provide support and incentives for older Australians to find the right job, stay in the workforce, have flexibility in their later working years and retire with security. Further funding is also being provided to the highly successful Transition to Work service to help young people improve their work readiness and move into work (including apprenticeships and traineeships) and education.

NEW INITIATIVES

More Choices for a Longer Life — jobs and skills for mature age Australians

More Choices for a Longer Life – jobs and skills for mature age Australians provides older Australians, including people in regional areas, with practical assistance to stay in the workforce, share their skills and experience with younger workers and importantly continue to benefit from the economic and social wellbeing that having a job brings. The package includes seven initiatives focused on jobs and skills:

- **Facilitating a life-long approach for skills development for mature age people**
The Australian Government will introduce a Skills and Training Incentive to encourage mature age workers aged 45-70, or their employers, to co-invest with the Government in skills development. The aim is to help mature age workers become more resilient to future changes in the workforce by encouraging further investment in their skills and training. The incentive is valued up to \$2 000 per participant and must be matched either by the worker or the employer. Participants will be required to first complete a Skills Checkpoint assessment, through the Department of Education and Training's Skills Checkpoint for Older Workers program, which will identify suitable training linked to the worker's current job (e.g. upgrading skills), a future job opportunity, or an industry or skill in demand.
- **Collaborative Partnership on Mature Age Employment**
A Collaborative Partnership on Mature Age Employment will be established between the Department of Jobs and Small Business, the Age Discrimination Commissioner, business, industry peak bodies, universities and other experts. The

objective of the partnership will be to increase the employment of older Australians by promoting the benefits of a diverse workforce, the advantages of recruiting and retaining older workers and the benefits of flexible work arrangements.

- Restart wage subsidies – additional places and securing funding for future years**
 The Australian Government will improve the funding arrangements for wage subsidies to ensure that they will continue to be available. This includes the Restart wage subsidy which provides employers with a strong incentive to hire and retain mature age people aged 50 and over. There is strong demand for wage subsidies which can vary from \$6,500 to \$10,000 (GST inclusive).
- Career Transition Assistance Program – bringing forward the national rollout and extending eligibility**
 A national rollout of the Career Transition Assistance (CTA) Program, announced in the 2017-18 Budget, will be brought forward by a year, to 1 July 2019. Furthermore eligibility will be expanded to include people aged 45 to 49 years.
- Encouraging Entrepreneurship among Older Australians**
 From January 2019, the number of Entrepreneurship Facilitators (introduced as part of a 2016-17 Budget measure) will be expanded to encourage entrepreneurship and self-employment among older Australians with an additional 20 facilitators, 10 of which will operate in regional locations. New facilitators will deliver services to all people in a region, however their primary focus will be on mature age people. The existing facilitators have a focus on young people.

The 20 new Entrepreneurship Facilitators will be located in the following regions:

New South Wales	Queensland
Coffs Harbour – Grafton	Fitzroy
Richmond – Tweed:	Ipswich
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ballina Tweed Heads 	Wide Bay
Sydney – South West:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gympie Bundaberg
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liverpool Campbelltown 	South Australia
Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven	Adelaide – West
	Barossa – Yorke – Mid North
Victoria	Western Australia
Ballarat	Mandurah
Latrobe – Gippsland	Perth – North East
Melbourne – South East:	Tasmania
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dandenong Pakenham 	Greater Hobart and South-East Tasmania
	Northern Territory
	Darwin

- **'Job Change' initiative to assist mature age workers to remain in employment**
Job Change targets mature age workers who are considering early retirement, and retrenched workers, by providing them with support to continue in employment. For many Australian workers there is no longer a 'job for life'. This initiative will provide a range of proactive measures to assist mature age workers gain the skills needed to transition into alternate employment opportunities.

Regional Employment Trials Program

The \$18.4 million Regional Employment Trials Program will be introduced in 10 selected disadvantaged regions. The trials will inform the delivery of future employment services and help Australians in selected disadvantaged regions to better access localised employment services and economic growth opportunities.

To better respond to the particular employment challenges of trial regions, a \$1.0 million per region grant program will be implemented to help stimulate communities to deliver tailored employment solutions at a local level. Additionally, the Department of Jobs and Small Business will engage employment facilitators to work with Regional Development Australia committees to generate projects, connect with local stakeholders and promote economic opportunities as they arise.

Funding additional Transition to Work placements

The Transition to Work service is at the forefront of the Australian Government's ongoing efforts to tackle high youth unemployment. It is achieving excellent outcomes for young Australians.

Transition to Work currently operates within a fixed budget of \$458.1 million over four years from 2018-19, with service providers required to accept all referrals from the Department of Human Services. Providers are assisting more young people than anticipated and this has been putting pressure on the service to continue to effectively help young people. This measure means that Transition to Work will now be funded based on the demand for services and will be able to continue delivering quality services to all eligible young people.

Streamlining Services for Refugees

This initiative will simplify the approach for newly arrived refugees accessing support services. Newly arrived refugees will be able to participate in the Humanitarian Support Program and the Adult Migrant English Program before becoming eligible for full jobactive services after six months on activity tested income support. This will allow them to focus on adjusting to life in Australia and gain English language proficiency skills to help them enter the workforce.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Australian Small Business Advisory Services (ASBAS)

Small business contributes to jobs creation, innovation and the growth of the Australian economy. The Australian Government wants to assist small business enhance their competitiveness and provide tools to assist them to further flourish. Australian Small Business Advisory Services is the Australian Government's primary small business advisory initiative that provides small business with access to low cost, high-quality advice and activities to build sustainable and productive businesses.

There are currently two ASBAS initiatives underway:

- **ASBAS Digital Solutions 2018**

The Australian Government is providing up to \$18.0 million over three years, starting from 2 July 2018, as part the ASBAS Digital Solutions 2018 round. Australian small businesses in metropolitan and regional areas will have access to specialist advisers who can help employers capitalise on new opportunities available in the digital economy.

Service providers will focus their services on improving the digital capabilities of small businesses in the following areas: website and selling online; social media and digital marketing; using small business software; and online security and data privacy. Services will be offered proportionately across metropolitan and regional areas.

- **ASBAS Northern Australian Initiative**

The ASBAS Northern Australia Tourism Initiative (NATI) is one of the programs in response to the Australian Government's *North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia*. The three-year program started in July 2016 aiming to enhance the capacity of established, not-for-profit small business advisory service providers to deliver low-cost small business advisory and information services to tourism small businesses in Australia's north.

Service providers are required to deliver six tourism advisory streams: funding avenues and financial analysis; building your business; making the most of your talent and team; management capabilities; digital engagement implementation; and tourism ready.

A total of \$4.2 million has been made available to fund ASBAS NATI grants over the three-year period, ending on 30 June 2019.

Stronger Transitions – transition of retrenched workers into future jobs

As part of the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook 2017-18, the Australian Government announced the Stronger Transitions \$10.3 million package to support workers in industries and regions significantly impacted by industry transformation to transition to future jobs. It will be available in five regions, starting from 1 July 2018: Mandurah, North/North-West Tasmania, North Queensland, Adelaide and Melbourne North/West. Elements of this package include:

- Skills and training support – this component includes forming partnerships with employers to help workers prior to retrenchment, e.g. career advice, training and recognition of prior learning, skills assessment, and online job search support.
- Employment support – this component will provide immediate access to Stream B jobactive services post retrenchment, including an additional \$550 Employment Fund credits.
- Better connecting skilled workers to employers and training – local employment facilitators will work directly with retrenched workers to connect with training, job opportunities and support services. Jobs Fairs will be held to connect job seekers and employers.
- Supporting workers to relocate for work – this component will provide workers with immediate access to the Relocation Assistance To Take Up a Job Program.

- Access for small business opportunities – this component will support retrenched workers to pursue small business opportunities through the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS).

Career Transition Assistance

Starting on 1 July 2018, Career Transition Assistance will support mature age job seekers 50 years of age and over become more competitive in their local labour market. Career Transition Assistance will be trialled in five regions prior to a national rollout. From July 2019, Career Transition Assistance will be available to mature age job seekers aged 45 years of age and over in all Employment Regions across Australia.

It aims to support participants to increase their confidence in the skills and experience they have, and their motivation and resilience to continue looking for work. It will help participants to increase their understanding of the opportunities available in their local labour market and support the tailoring of job applications to particular industries and employers.

It includes an optional Functional Digital Literacy component which will help to develop participants' ICT skills by providing them with the core digital literacy capabilities required to work in a variety of workplaces.

Closing the Gap – Employment Services package

The 2017–18 Budget included funding of \$55.7 million for Closing the Gap – Employment Services package to give providers greater flexibility to assist Indigenous Australians find employment. The package includes:

- expanding the Transition to Work service to more Indigenous youth
- immediate access to wage subsidies and an increase of up to \$10,000
- culturally tailored support through jobactive, including access to pre- and post-employment mentoring support, culturally appropriate pre-employment training and preventative health activities through the Employment Fund
- additional support to participate in community-based work experience and Work for the Dole projects
- development of a trial of jobactive service delivery designed and delivered by the Yarrabah Indigenous community
- pre-employment support to incarcerated Indigenous Australians, delivered in prison prior to release through the Time to Work Employment Service.

Employee Assistance – Protection for Unpaid Employee Entitlements

The Australian Government's Fair Entitlements Guarantee is a safety net of last resort. It protects employees who lose their job through liquidation or bankruptcy of their employer and are left with unpaid employment entitlements. 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.

Employment Fund

The Employment Fund is included within the Budget for jobactive employment services model. All jobactive providers across Australia have access to the Employment Fund which is a flexible pool of funds that can be used to assist eligible Australians build their experience and skills to get and keep jobs. The Employment Fund focuses on training that meets the specific needs of job seekers and employers, work-related items and post-placement support to help Australians stay in work.

Empowering YOUth Initiatives

The Empowering YOUth Initiatives are testing new approaches to assist young people, 15 to 24 years of age and at risk of long-term welfare dependency, on the pathway to sustainable employment. A range of innovative initiatives in locations across the country, including regional locations, have been funded for a maximum of two years each. An evaluation of each initiative will provide learnings to inform future policy design and service delivery to young people.

Initiatives funded in the first funding round will end by June 2018. Initiatives funded in the second funding round will end by June 2019.

Encouraging Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment

The New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS) assists individuals not in employment, education or training to start their own business by providing accredited training, help with a business plan, and business mentoring and advice. NEIS has been helping people to create their own job for over 30 years and supports up to 8,600 people each financial year.

NEIS providers also deliver two-week "Exploring Being My Own Boss" workshops to give up to 1,000 individuals a taste of what is involved in self-employment.

Three Entrepreneurship Facilitators are located in areas of high youth unemployment; Cairns, the Hunter Valley (including Newcastle) and Launceston and North-East Tasmania. The facilitators promote entrepreneurship and support people to establish their own businesses in regional areas including by connecting them with existing services such as NEIS.

The SelfStart online hub is a starting point for people who wish to explore and develop their ideas into a successful business. SelfStart connects people to existing services and provides targeted information to help them start their own business.

Harvest Labour Services and National Harvest Information Service

Harvest Labour Services help employers in horticultural areas to supplement local labour with out-of-area workers where there is an acknowledged shortfall in the local labour market. Harvest Labour Services are delivered by five organisations through 15 sites across 11 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 Harvest Labour Services.

jobactive

The jobactive employment services model has been successfully meeting the needs of job seekers and employers, promoting stronger workforce participation and building a prosperous economy since its introduction nearly three years ago. jobactive is delivered from over 1,700 sites across Australia with providers having flexibility to deliver services based on the needs of job seekers and employers that are tailored to local labour market conditions.

Launch Into Work

The Launch into Work program trials pre-employment projects, co-designed with employers, that provide training, work experience and mentoring to Australians to increase their skills, experience and confidence. Projects are intended to train job seekers for specific roles within the organisation, and may be conducted in a variety of industries.

Launch into Work projects support participants to:

- move from welfare into paid work
- build the skills and experience required to overcome individual barriers to employment
- develop increased confidence and self-worth associated with engaging in meaningful work
- gain the opportunity to have a career and plan for the future.

National Work Experience Program

The National Work Experience Program gives employers the opportunity to develop the skills of potential employees. Eligible job seekers can undertake voluntary work experience in businesses for up to 25 hours per week for a maximum of four weeks. Participants continue to receive their income support payment and a supplement to assist with the costs of participating. From 1 July 2018, the National Work Experience Program is being expanded and enhanced to provide more work experience opportunities for people (particularly mature age people) looking for work. The number of places will increase from 6,000 to 10,000 annually. The program's eligibility will be expanded to include people aged 17 years or over and incentive payments will be available for host businesses and employment services providers.

ParentsNext

ParentsNext is a pre-employment program that connects parents of young children to services in their local community and helps them plan and prepare for employment by the time their children start school. From 1 July 2018, the ParentsNext program will be expanded nationally, including to all regional areas of Australia to allow more parents to access personalised assistance to improve their work readiness.

The national expansion is delivered in two streams – an intensive stream and a targeted stream. Both streams will connect parents to a wide range of services, including pre-employment education and training, assistance accessing childcare, mentoring, work experience and job opportunities. The intensive stream provides services in 30

locations—10 where the program has been delivered since April 2016 and a further 20 where there is a high proportion of Indigenous Parenting Payment recipients. The targeted stream provides services in the remainder of the 51 Employment Regions.

Relocation Assistance to Take Up a Job Program

The Relocation Assistance to Take Up a Job Program helps to connect Australians to regional jobs by providing practical and financial assistance to eligible long-term unemployed who relocate to take up work. The Relocation Assistance to Take Up a Job Program provides assistance of up to \$6,000 who move to a regional area or up to \$3,000 for eligible job seekers who move to a metropolitan area. Families with dependent children can receive assistance of up to an extra \$3,000.

Seasonal Work Incentives for Job Seekers – trial

As part of the 2016-17 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, the Australian Government announced a two year trial of incentives aimed at increasing the number of job seekers who undertake horticultural seasonal work, such as fruit picking. The trial started from 1 July 2017. The measure responds to concerns about the ability of the Australian horticulture industry to attract sufficient numbers of seasonal workers.

There are three incentives aimed at increasing the number of job seekers who undertake horticultural seasonal work:

- a seasonal horticultural work income exemption allowing participants in the trial to earn up to \$5,000 each year from seasonal horticultural work without it being assessed under the social security income test
- a seasonal work living away and travel allowance of up to \$300 for eligible job seekers where the job is more than 120 km from their home
- a Provider Seasonal Work Incentive Payment of \$100 per week for up to six weeks to an employment services provider who successfully places an eligible job seeker in seasonal work as part of the trial.
- To be eligible for the incentives, job seekers will need to be participating in jobactive, Transition to Work or Disability Employment Services. Job seekers must also have received Newstart or Youth Allowance (Other) continuously for at least three months.

Seasonal Worker Program

The Seasonal Worker Program contributes to the economic development of participating countries by supporting workers to undertake certain unskilled jobs so they can work in Australia and send money back home. It also assists Australian employers who are unable to source enough local workers to meet their seasonal labour needs. Over 90 per cent of seasonal workers undertake placements in the agriculture sector in regional Australia including in Robinvale, Mildura, Shepparton and Koo Wee Rup in Victoria; Griffith and Coffs Harbour in New South Wales; Renmark in South Australia; Cairns, Bowen and Mundubbera in Queensland; Katherine in the Northern Territory; and Carnarvon, Margaret River, Kununurra and Broome in Western Australia. The 10 countries participating are Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, all of which experience challenges

such as small economies of scale, remoteness from larger markets and low levels of investment.

Structural Adjustment Packages

A range of assistance is in place to assist retrenched workers to quickly transition to new employment.

The Government provides Structural Adjustment Packages on a case by case basis to assist workers in areas where expectations of future employment opportunities in industries that are low or where large scale closures may impact on the local labour market. This helps to reduce the regional impacts of large scale redundancies by:

- providing retrenched workers from eligible companies with immediate access to intensive jobactive employment support services.
- delivering Jobs Fairs to help connect retrenched workers to new employers and employment opportunities.
- providing a local Employment Facilitator to assist retrenched workers in specific regions to connect with training, job opportunities and to link them with other existing support.
 - Employment Facilitators are located in North Queensland (Cairns and Townsville), Geelong, Gippsland, Whyalla/Port Augusta, Adelaide and North/North-West Tasmania.
 - In August 2017, an Employment Facilitator was appointed in Mandurah, Western Australia, to assist retrenched workers impacted by the transition from mining.
 - In February 2018 an Employment Facilitator was appointed in the Melbourne West and North West region as part of the Stronger Transitions package.

The Automotive Industry Structural Adjustment Program is in place to assist retrenched workers from the automotive manufacturing industry.

Time to Work Employment Service

As part of the Closing the Gap—Employment Services package announced in the 2017-18 Budget, the Time to Work Employment Service (formerly known as the Prison to Work Employment Service) is a new national in-prison employment service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The service will start progressively across 70 non-remote prisons throughout 2018.

The Time to Work Employment Service aims to better prepare Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in prison for their release, by improving their prospect of connecting with post-release support services and better supporting the post-release employment services providers to place them in jobs.

All sentenced adult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners are eligible to volunteer for service three months prior to their earliest known release date. Those who wish to participate will receive employment assessments, assistance to develop a Transition Plan and a Facilitated Transfer to a post-release employment service provider.

Transition to Work

The Transition to Work service for youth aged 15 to 21 years offers intensive pre-employment support to participants to improve their work readiness and help them into work or education. The service providers support young people through strong connections with employers, community services and schools in their local area.

From 1 January 2018, eligibility was expanded to include Indigenous young people with a Year 12 certificate.

Wage Subsidies

Wage subsidies support the Australian Government's broader objectives of increasing workforce participation by providing a financial incentive to employers to hire eligible job seekers. There are a number of wage subsidies available, including for job seekers who are long-term unemployed, Indigenous, parents, youth (under 30 years of age), and mature age (50 years or over) under the Restart Program.

Work for the Dole

Work for the Dole provides work-like experiences for job seekers across Australia to help improve their job readiness and employability skills, as well as meeting their mutual obligation requirements. At the same time, Work for the Dole provides an opportunity for Australians to give back to their local community. The establishment of Indigenous specific activities that link to community goals and help support employment pathways for Indigenous participants is actively encouraged.

Youth Jobs PaTH – (Prepare – Trial – Hire)

Youth Jobs PaTH is part of the Australian Government's Youth Employment Package announced in the 2016-17 Budget. It has three elements:

- **Prepare:** Employability Skills Training ensures young people understand what employers expect of them in the workplace, and equip them with the skills, attitudes and behaviours for them to be successful in a job. Since April 2017, job seekers in jobactive who are aged under 25 years receive training in the basic employability skills that businesses need, such as reliability, team work and punctuality. For most job seekers, the training becomes compulsory after five months in jobactive.
- **Trial:** PaTH Internships of four to 12 weeks help young people 17 to 24 years gain the skills and work experience they need to get and keep a job.
- **Hire:** a Youth Bonus wage subsidy of up to \$10,000 (GST inclusive) encourages the employment of young people 15 to 24 years.

PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET

The Prime Minister and Cabinet portfolio provides high quality advice and support to the Prime Minister, the Cabinet, portfolio Ministers and Assistant Ministers to achieve a coordinated and innovative approach to the development and implementation of Australian Government policies, including those that impact on regional and remote communities. The portfolio coordinates and develops policy across the Australian Government in economic, domestic and international issues, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, and public service stewardship.

While responsibility for Indigenous outcomes resides across all portfolios, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is responsible for broad policy directions, and some specific funding programs, aimed at ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are able to take up the full range of opportunities our nation has to offer. This includes measures to encourage workforce participation, economic development, educational success and safety at home – the foundations of successful communities. Sixty three per cent of Indigenous Australians live outside the major cities and more than 18 per cent live in remote and very remote locations.

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's Regional Network works closely with local service providers and communities to design and deliver services for Indigenous Australians across metropolitan, regional and remote locations. It is the primary delivery and engagement arm for Indigenous Affairs under the Government's Indigenous Advancement Strategy.

NEW INITIATIVES

Reforms to the Community Development Programme

The Australian Government will be reforming the current Community Development Programme to drive employment in remote Australia, improve the skills and employability of job seekers, and increase their participation in the community. Up to 6,000 wage subsidies will be provided to support jobs over four years in remote Australia to ensure more remote job seekers are lifted off welfare and into a job. The reforms have been designed to:

- drive active participation by job seekers, and encourage personal responsibility through improvements to mutual obligation requirements and a reduction in required hours of participation
- improve the skills and employability of job seekers, making them job-ready
- grow the size and capacity of the remote labour market and support the development of more local businesses in remote Australia, backing the Government's agenda to drive demand for, and support the supply of, remote job seekers
- deliver a simpler, more streamlined system, with fewer job seeker interactions with the national welfare system.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Indigenous Advancement Strategy

The Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) began on 1 July 2014 and replaced more than 150 individual programs and activities with five flexible, broad-based programs:

- jobs, land and economy
- children and schooling
- safety and wellbeing
- culture and capability
- remote Australia strategies.

Through these five programs, the Indigenous Advancement Strategy supports a wide range of activities, including many designed by Indigenous communities and organisations to achieve local aspirations.

As part of the 2017-18 Budget, the Australian Government established an additional program focused on Research and Evaluation. The current work stream focuses on strengthening the evaluation of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy.

Jobs, Land and Economy

Supporting people to find and stay in work, fostering Indigenous business and assisting Indigenous people to benefit socially and economically from the use of their land are essential elements of the Australian Government's commitment to improve the lives of Indigenous Australians. Since the IAS began on 1 July 2014, more than 52,000 job placements have been supported as part of the Jobs, Land and Economy program.

In partnership with some of Australia's largest employers, the Employment Parity Initiative aims to increase the number of large Australian companies with a workforce that reflects the size of the Indigenous population. By 2020, the initiative is aiming to secure an additional 20,000 more Indigenous people into jobs. To date, 12 companies have entered into Employment Parity Initiative agreements, with a total commitment of 7,465 jobs new jobs for Indigenous Australians.

To stimulate Indigenous entrepreneurship and business development, and providing Indigenous Australians with more opportunities to participate in the economy, the Australian Government introduced the Indigenous Procurement Policy (IPP). Introduced on 1 July 2015, it provides opportunities for Indigenous businesses to win a greater share of Australian Government contracts.

Since the launch of the IPP, Indigenous businesses have won contracts to deliver over \$1.0 billion in works for the Commonwealth Government. For the first time, an Indigenous business has won a significant management contract for Defence, managing the delivery of the \$213.0 million Garden Island redevelopment project. In the first two years of the IPP, 807 contracts valued at \$91.0 million were awarded to Indigenous businesses domiciled in remote Australia.

Further, since 1 July 2016 under the IPP all businesses that win Australian Government contracts valued at or over \$7.5 million, in eight industry sectors, must meet minimum Indigenous employment requirements or use Indigenous businesses in their supply chains. This will ensure Indigenous Australians gain skills and economic benefit from larger Australian Government contracts. In 2016-17, 34 contracts with 21 businesses, worth more than \$1.6 billion were subject to the IPP requirements.

The Australian Government's Community Development Programme aims to deliver better opportunities for remote job-seekers and to foster stronger economic and social outcomes in remote Australia.

The Community Development Programme supports around 34,000 job-seekers each day; 82 per cent identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. The Programme is designed to recognise the social and labour market conditions found in remote Australia.

The Community Development Programme is making steady progress to reduce welfare dependency in remote communities by enabling people to participate in meaningful activities that prepare them for work and improve communities to live in. From 1 July 2015 to 28 February 2018, the Community Development Programme has supported 16,900 job seekers into 22,800 jobs. During the same period, 7,887 jobs were filled continuously for at least six months.

The Australian Government has committed up to \$113.8 million to support more than 7,500 Indigenous Australians into guaranteed jobs through Vocational Training and Employment Centres. Nearly 7200 Indigenous Australians have already been placed in jobs – many of them in regional and remote regions.

Between 1 July 2014 and 28 February 2018, the Australian Government committed more than \$192.0 million to Tailored Assistance Employment Grants to connect working age Indigenous Australians (and graduating secondary students) into nearly 15,000 real and sustainable jobs. A further \$46.3 million has been committed for employers to support more than 1,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university students undertaking their first undergraduate degree.

The Council of Australian Governments' Investigation into Indigenous Land Administration and Use and the *Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia* developed a comprehensive strategy to improve Indigenous land systems so Indigenous landowners can use their land for economic development. The Australian Government and the states and territories are implementing the recommendations of the Council of Australian Governments' investigation. Indigenous Land Administration systems are transitioning from a focus on recognition and protection of rights to supporting Indigenous Australians' choice to use those rights in the mainstream economy. There are a range of Australian Government initiatives underway to empower and support Indigenous land owners to embrace the new phase of land rights, ensure the right support is available and that claims are resolved to allow the land rights and native title systems to fully transition.

The Australian Government funds a national network of Native Title Representative Bodies and Service Providers to assist native title groups across Australia. In 2018-19, funding of approximately \$89.0 million is available for 14 Native Title Representative Bodies and Service Providers to help native title claimants and holders. The Australian Government is also providing ongoing funding of approximately \$5.0 million a year to build the capacity of native title land holding corporations across Australia. This will help ensure native title holders can realise the benefits of native title rights and interests.

The *Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia* includes initial funding of \$48.0 million over four years (from 2015) for a number of Indigenous specific measures. These include ongoing funding of \$20.4 million for Prescribed Bodies

Corporate to build capacity, \$10.6 million for land tenure reform pilots that broaden land use and economic opportunity, \$17.0 million for township leasing and land administration to support the Northern Territory over three years and funding of \$7.1 million for Prescribed Bodies Corporate capacity building and land tenure reform is available in 2018-19. In addition to these initiatives, the White Paper included Indigenous employment and supplier targets for major infrastructure projects.

Township leases are a proven model for achieving long term tradeable tenure and economic development on Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory. The leases simplify land use and access to subleases across communities. After the success of the Gunyangara community entity township lease and Mutitjulu township sublease, negotiations will continue for township leases in other interested communities including Jabiru, Pirlangimpi and Yarralin.

The Australian Government addresses Indigenous disadvantage and supports Indigenous communities to improve the environment by providing jobs to Indigenous people through the Indigenous rangers and the Indigenous Protected Areas programs. As at February 2018, funding is provided for more than 2,900 full time, part time and casual positions, across 118 Indigenous ranger groups and 75 Indigenous Protected Areas, mostly in remote and regional areas. There are now more than 65 million hectares of Indigenous Protected Areas representing more than 44 per cent of the National Reserve System.

From 1 July 2018, both of these initiatives will be funded under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy: Jobs, Land and Economy Program. Funding has been transferred for existing Indigenous Protected Areas from the Natural Heritage Trust to the Indigenous Advancement Strategy to align the program with others, including Indigenous rangers. This will streamline program management arrangements and reduce the administrative burden on organisations that currently administer both Indigenous Protected Area and Indigenous ranger projects.

Indigenous Entrepreneurs Package

Before the 2016 election, the Australian Government committed to provide \$115.0 million in targeted support for Indigenous entrepreneurs and businesses. Implementation of the Indigenous Entrepreneurs Package is well underway, through:

- The continuing investment of \$90.0 million over three years in the Indigenous Entrepreneurs Fund to establish and grow Indigenous businesses by facilitating access to commercial finance and providing one-off grants for business plant and equipment primarily in remote and regional Australia.
- The implementation of the Indigenous Business Sector Strategy (IBSS). The IBSS is a ten-year policy initiative that aims to improve access to business support, access to capital and access to information and networks. The strategy was launched by the Prime Minister on 12 February 2018 and focuses on fostering Indigenous entrepreneurship in regional and remote Australia. Starting from July 2018, one of the first actions under the Strategy will be to double the footprint of micro-finance in regional and remote Australia which will increase access to the support needed to foster self-employment.
- Re-focusing Indigenous Business Australia's (IBA) Business Development and Assistance Programme to support early stage and high risk Indigenous entrepreneurs.

Under the re-focused Business Development and Assistance Programme, IBA will continue to deliver at least 30 per cent of its business support program in regional and remote Australia.

Children and Schooling

The Children and Schooling program supports activities to nurture and educate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, youth and adults. The program has a strong focus on increased school attendance and improved educational outcomes which lead to employment. Through this program the Australian Government aims to:

- have 95 per cent of all Indigenous four-year-olds enrolled in early childhood education by 2025
- halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy by 2018
- attain 90 per cent school attendance for Indigenous children by 2018
- halve the gap for Indigenous people aged 20-24 years old in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020
- assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to attend high performing schools, including both day and full boarding support
- provide mentoring support to improve rates of school attendance, Year 12 attainment and transition to further education
- assist tertiary students who are required to travel away from home for short periods to undertake approved course-related activities
- Contribute to sporting academies across Northern Territory, Western Australia, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales to support improved rates of school attendance and Year 12 attainment.

Remote School Attendance Strategy

The Remote School Attendance Strategy is a flexible place-based strategy with the objective of increasing school attendance in remote areas. This is achieved through providing assistance to remote families, schools and communities in the Northern Territory, Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales.

The Remote School Attendance Strategy commenced in January 2014 and now operates across 78 locations with a combined enrolment of approximately 14,500 students. \$128.1 million in funding has been allocated from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2018.

Since 2014 the Remote School Attendance Strategy has achieved promising results, with Queensland achieving the greatest average improvements. The Remote School Attendance Strategy also provides employment for around 500 people, 94 per cent of whom are Indigenous.

Indigenous Student Success Program

In 2018, under the Indigenous Student Success Program, universities can access \$68.5 million to offer scholarships, tutorial assistance and other support to help

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people attend and successfully progress through university to graduation. The program features a loading that recognises the additional support students from remote and regional locations require.

Safety and Wellbeing

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring that Indigenous Australians grow up in a healthy and safe home and community, including in regional and remote areas. Under the Safety and Wellbeing program, the Australian Government is providing \$264.6 million in 2017-18 and \$245.3 million in 2018-19 for a range of targeted, evidence-based activities to help increase Indigenous community safety and wellbeing. This includes activities that:

- reduce alcohol and other drugs misuse through treatment, rehabilitation and education
- prevent crime and reduce offending and re-offending through diversion and prevention activities and prisoner rehabilitation services that help prisoners to successfully integrate back into their communities
- support victims of family and domestic violence through family safety activities, Indigenous women's legal services and family violence prevention legal services
- improve safety, through additional support for policing in remote Indigenous communities
- prevent community violence by promoting connection to family, culture, community and land, including through sport and recreation activities
- reduce the impacts of grief and trauma through social and emotional wellbeing support services for members of the Stolen Generations and other Indigenous people experiencing trauma
- promote safe and functional physical environments in remote areas through community and night patrols
- reduce petrol sniffing in regional and remote areas of Australia by supporting local community action and promoting the use of low aromatic fuel as an alternative to regular unleaded fuel. Around 175 sites currently supply low aromatic fuel.

Culture and Capability

Activities funded under the Culture and Capability program support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to maintain their culture, and participate equally in the economic and social life of Australia.

Funding of up to \$63.3 million from 2017-18 to 2019-20 is available for more than 120 licensed Indigenous broadcasting and media services. These organisations provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians to access information and share their cultures and languages.

Other activities supported include:

- community led healing initiatives
- establishing Empowered Communities regional backbone organisations
- raising awareness of the importance of Constitutional Recognition
- reconciliation activities, including the use of Reconciliation Action Plans
- leadership and governance training
- interpreter services
- celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture including National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) activities.

Empowered Communities

Empowered Communities (EC) is a regionally focused initiative of Indigenous leaders that fosters Indigenous-led responsibility and involves local communities in decisions that affect them. Integral to this approach is the sharing of data and Commonwealth funding information with EC regions. Leaders then use this data to test it with the community and develop regional development plans. EC leaders have worked with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to develop a joint decision-making framework to guide decisions about discretionary investment in EC regions.

In 2016, funding of \$14.4 million over three years was provided from the Indigenous Advancement Strategy for backbone organisations in seven of the eight EC regions:

- Cape York
- New South Wales Central Coast
- Inner Sydney
- Goulburn-Murray
- East Kimberley
- West Kimberley
- Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands.

It is envisaged the framework can expand beyond eight sites as communities seek to apply a regional governance approach and meet criteria set by EC leaders.

Remote Australia Strategies

Funding of approximately \$160.0 million over three years to 2018-19 has been provided to address the disproportionate disadvantage of Indigenous Australians in remote Australia. This funding supports community-led initiatives that are delivered through Indigenous organisations and support Indigenous employment outcomes.

The Army Aboriginal Community Assistance program (AACAP) is a joint venture between the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Australian Army to improve primary and environmental health and living conditions in remote Indigenous communities. Up to \$7.0 million from 2017-18 is provided through the program to deliver one project in a community each calendar year, providing infrastructure, health services and vocational training. The AACAP will be delivered in Toomelah (New South Wales) in 2017 and in Yalata (South Australia) in 2018.

Funding of \$12.0 million over three years from 2018-2021 will ensure remote Indigenous communities continue to have better access to telecommunications. The Australian Government is providing internet access, training and/or essential infrastructure. A remote telecommunications project provides phone services across Australia in nearly 550 locations in remote Indigenous communities.

Aboriginals Benefit Account

The Aboriginals Benefit Account (ABA) is legislated under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (Land Rights Act) to receive and distribute royalty equivalent monies generated from mining on Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory. The ABA is funded by the Australian Government from consolidated revenue.

Funding is provided annually, as legislated under subsection 64(1) of the Land Rights Act, from the Aboriginals Benefit Account to the four Northern Territory land councils to fulfil functions specified under s23 of the Land Rights Act. Functions of the individual land councils are varied and may include activities that support the progression and protection of land rights, preservation of culture and heritage, land use and economic development.

ABA beneficial grants, as legislated under subsection 64(4) of the Land Rights Act, are distributed for the benefit of Aboriginal people living in the Northern Territory.

Generally two funding rounds are held each year with a focus on:

- supporting communities
- supporting enterprises
- supporting culture, language and leadership
- supporting land, sea and waters management and use.

ABA is also funding a one-off \$40.0 million infrastructure project which will improve living conditions and outcomes for residents of homelands in the Northern Territory. Land Councils will assist homelands residents to identify need and develop proposals. The Department will engage Indigenous organisations to deliver works by June 2020.

Enhanced Evidence and Evaluation in Indigenous Affairs

As part of the 2017-18 Budget the Government has allocated \$52.9 million over four years to implement a whole-of-government research and evaluation strategy for policies and programs affecting Indigenous Australians.

The strategy includes three components:

- \$40.0 million over four years from 2017-18 to strengthen evaluation of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS)
- \$10.0 million over three years from 2017-18 to establish an Indigenous Research Fund that will add to the Indigenous policy evidence base
- \$2.9 million over four years from 2017-18 for the Productivity Commission to enhance its role in Indigenous policy evaluation and to expand the Commission to include an additional Commissioner with relevant experience in Indigenous policy.

An in-depth, independent review process known as Grant Activity Reviews will be funded with \$2.5 million per year from the Indigenous Advancement Strategy strengthening evaluation appropriation. The reviews will provide richer insights on the contribution Indigenous Advancement Strategy grant funding is making in communities. The Grant Activity Reviews will focus on four key areas: benefits being achieved through individual grants; identifying strengths and opportunities to improve grant activity and service delivery; better understanding the grant recipient's business drivers; and improving the design of grants and grant management practices.

These components will help strengthen Indigenous research and evaluation to build an evidence base which will inform funding decisions and deliver better outcomes for First Australians.

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's Regional Network

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's Regional Network is made up of 12 regions across Australia that cover metropolitan, regional, remote and very remote locations. The Regional Network is responsible for providing expertise and information about local communities, stakeholders, services, issues and sensitivities. Each region is led by a senior officer (Regional Manager), who is accountable for outcomes in their region.

The Regional Network engages with Indigenous people, communities and leaders across Australia. It focuses on understanding the needs and aspirations of Indigenous people to achieve practical change in the Australian Government's key priority areas, including strengthening opportunities for economic participation. The Regional Network works to design and implement tailored and culturally appropriate local solutions in partnership with Australian Government agencies, state and territory governments, local governments, Indigenous communities, service providers and other stakeholders.

Office for Women, National Women's Alliances – National Rural Women's Coalition (NRWC)

In 2018-19 and 2019-20, the Office for Women will provide funding of \$281,000 each financial year to the NRWC as part of the National Women's Alliance grants under the Women's Leadership and Development Strategy program. The grant will enable NRWC to engage with rural, regional and remote women and women's organisations to ensure that their issues and a diversity of voices are represented in Australian Government decision-making and policy outcomes.

The NRWC provides leadership programs, forums, meetings, conferences, round-tables and webinars as well as other digital communication platforms to communicate with women throughout Australia. Technology enables the NRWC to deliver programs to enhance the skills of rural, regional and remote women.

Aboriginal Hostels Limited

Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL) is a Commonwealth company within the Prime Minister and Cabinet portfolio that facilitates safe, culturally appropriate and affordable accommodation for Indigenous Australians who must live away from home to access services and economic opportunities.

As at 15 March 2018, AHL operates 47 accommodation facilities Australia wide, predominately in regional and remote locations. AHL provides 1,791 beds for residents across the country. Eighty-one per cent of these beds are located in regional and remote areas (534 beds per night in regional areas, 912 beds per night in remote areas and 345 beds per night in capital areas).

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

The Australian Government has committed additional, ongoing funding of \$10.0 million per annum from 1 July 2016 (indexed for inflation) for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) to preserve Australia's Indigenous culture and heritage much of which is held by, or on behalf of, regional communities. The national Indigenous collection is vital to research across a range of important areas for regional Australia, including native title, traditional ownership, land and water management, tourism, mining, agriculture, environment and higher education. The funding enables AIATSIS to continue working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the collection and preservation of critical cultural knowledge, and promote an understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, traditions, languages and stories.

Indigenous Business Australia

The Australian Government continues to support Indigenous home ownership, businesses and investments through Indigenous Business Australia, a corporate Commonwealth entity within the Prime Minister and Cabinet portfolio. IBA provides new and existing Indigenous business owners access to expert advice, business finance and products that allow groups to build wealth and maximise economic outcomes from their land and other assets.

IBA facilitates home ownership by Indigenous Australians by providing affordable housing loans to customers who would generally not qualify for housing finance elsewhere. This includes addressing barriers such as lower incomes and savings, credit impairment, and limited experience with loan repayments.

IBA provides extra assistance to Indigenous Australians living in remote communities through a specifically targeted initiative, the Remote Indigenous Home Loan program. Over 1,700 locations are eligible for assistance that are deemed remote and very remote based on the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA), in addition to 28 locations which are nominated communities under the Australian Government's Remote Indigenous Housing Strategy.

In 2018-19, IBA expects to provide:

- approximately 650 new concessional home loans to eligible low and middle income Indigenous families to help buy their first home of which 80 per cent are expected to be in regional areas and 60 Remote Indigenous Home Loans
- 150 business loans, and other forms of capital and business support, to assist eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to start or grow a successful business
- investment assistance to approximately 100 Indigenous co-investors and organisations
- 80 per cent of this activity will occur in regional areas.

Indigenous Land Corporation

The Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) is a Commonwealth entity within the Prime Minister and Cabinet portfolio. The ILC strategically invests in Indigenous held land and waters to foster prosperity and empowerment among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The ILC aims to create economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits by assisting in the acquisition and management of land (and waters) of the Indigenous Estate. This includes economic independence (in particular, jobs for Indigenous people); social benefit through stronger families; cultural identity and connection to country; and environmental sustainability.

The ILC has Regional Indigenous Land Strategies in place across four bioregions: Northern Australia; Desert; South West Australian and South-East Australia.

In 2018-19, the ILC will partner with Indigenous land-holders in these regions to implement more than 100 discrete projects by providing investment, advice, training, mentoring and other assistance to land based projects that drive Indigenous wealth creation and employment, asset development and the protection and management of environmental and cultural values. Key sectors of the economy that present opportunities for Indigenous Australians or where Indigenous land-holders may have a competitive advantage include: Agribusiness, Urban Investment, Niche Indigenous products, Tourism, Renewables, Water-based activities.

Torres Strait Regional Authority

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) is the peak Commonwealth representative body for Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people living in the Torres Strait Region. The role of the TSRA is to work to close the gap for Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people living in the Torres Strait region, and empower Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people living in the region to determine their own affairs based on the Ailan Kastom (island custom) of the Torres Strait. The TSRA does this by formulating, implementing and monitoring programs for Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people living in the Torres Strait.

The TSRA also performs separate functions under the *Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)* as the Native Title Representative Body for the Torres Strait region.

Priority areas for the TSRA include economic development; fisheries; culture, art and heritage; native title; environmental management; governance and leadership; healthy communities; and safe communities.

SOCIAL SERVICES

The Department of Social Services is responsible for a range of policies, payments, programs and services that improve the lifetime wellbeing of people and families in Australia. The Department administers around one quarter of the total Australian Government budget, with effort particularly focused on vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals, families and communities, including those in regional and remote areas.

The Department of Social Services works in partnership with stakeholders including through a delivery network located within state, territory and regional offices to understand need and invest in services for Australians, including those in regional locations.

NEW INITIATIVES

Extending the Cashless Debit Card Trial

The Cashless Debit Card is aimed at supporting disadvantaged communities to reduce the consumption and effects of drugs, alcohol and gambling on the health and wellbeing of communities, families and children. Under the Cashless Debit Card, 80 per cent of welfare payments are placed onto a recipient's card, with the remaining 20 per cent placed into their regular bank account. The Cashless Debit Card looks and operates like a normal bank card, except it cannot be used to buy alcohol or gambling products, or to withdraw cash.

The Cashless Debit Card trial was implemented in the Ceduna region, South Australia, in March 2016, and the East Kimberley, Western Australia, in April 2016. Roll out commenced in the Goldfields, Western Australia in March 2018. Once fully rolled out in the Goldfields, the Cashless Debit Card will support a total of 5,800 people in vulnerable communities.

The trial will commence in the Bundaberg and Hervey Bay region once legislation has been passed.

As part of the 2018-19 Budget, the Cashless Debit Card trial will be extended in Ceduna and the East Kimberley until 30 June 2019.

The Australian Government will also maintain funding for community services to support the trial, such as financial counselling.

50 Years of ABSTUDY – Strengthening ABSTUDY for Secondary Students

ABSTUDY is an ongoing program to help address educational disadvantages faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. ABSTUDY helps eligible Indigenous students and apprentices, many from remote areas, with study, living, and travel expenses, including if they need to study away from home. ABSTUDY supports around 20,000 Indigenous secondary students and 10,000 Indigenous tertiary students. ABSTUDY expenditure is estimated to be around \$270.0 million in 2018-19.

From 2019, the year of the 50th anniversary of ABSTUDY, this package will help more than 5,000 Indigenous secondary boarding students to stay in school by:

- increasing travel support – providing practical support to address issues with travel arrangements, including mandating safe travel plans for school student

travellers and increasing the maximum number of family or community member visits to the school each year

- increasing boarding payments by \$5,258.60 (2018 value, subject to indexation) per year for around 1,900 secondary students who currently are missing out because of technical quirks in the ABSTUDY payment structure
- introducing simpler criteria and clearer processes for secondary school scholarships to be approved for ABSTUDY assistance
- streamlining payments for schools and boarding providers
- removing the Maintenance Income Test from certain payments that are specific to schooling and boarding, and addressing associated anomalies.

The measure addresses a range of recommendations and issues raised in the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs report on Educational opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and the Review of Support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Secondary Students Studying Away From Home as well as from the 2015 McClure Review and the 2014 Forrest Review.

The measure will assist Indigenous secondary students to stay in school and help address the Closing the Gap targets.

Improved Access to Youth Allowance for Regional Students

The Australian Government will make it easier for regional, rural and remote students to access financial assistance for tertiary education, by expanding the number of students who are eligible to be considered 'independent' under the regional workforce participation rules. Students who are considered 'independent' are not subject to the Parental Income Test.

From 1 January 2019, the following changes will apply to the \$150,000 parental income cut-off for the Youth Allowance 'workforce participation' independence criterion for regional students:

- providing an increase of the \$150,000 threshold to \$160,000
- increasing the new \$160,000 cut-off by \$10,000 for each additional child in the family to take into account the extra costs of raising larger families
- providing students with additional certainty about whether they will meet parental income cut-off, by making the year in which the parental income is assessed the financial year preceding the beginning of the student's "14 month self-supporting period" (which forms part of the independence criterion). This way students will know before they decide to take a gap year whether their parental income will be under the cut-off.

This is a component of the *Response to the Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education – additional support for students* measure.

National Disability Insurance Scheme – Continuity of Support

The Australian Government has committed to provide Continuity of Support to people with disability currently receiving Commonwealth government services, but ineligible for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), to ensure that they are not disadvantaged in the transition to the NDIS.

Existing funding arrangements expire on 30 June 2019, when the NDIS reaches full scheme in most states and territories. From 1 July 2019, existing clients of transitioning Commonwealth programs who are ineligible for assistance under the NDIS, will have access to a level of support that is consistent with that which they currently receive through four Continuity of Support packages including Mental Health, a Continuity of Support Fund, Mobility Allowance (from July 2020), and the National Auslan Interpreter Booking and Payment Service.

National Disability Insurance Scheme Jobs and Market Fund

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) represents one of the largest job creation opportunities in Australia's history. The NDIS workforce is expected to grow from 73,000 full time equivalent workers in 2013 to approximately 162,000 full time equivalent workers by 2020. The provider market across Australia will also need to grow rapidly to meet the needs of 460,000 participants at full scheme. Importantly, the NDIS is creating local jobs and business opportunities for local people, including in regional, rural and remote Australia.

The Australian Government will invest \$64.3 million over four years from 2017-18 for a new Jobs and Market Fund to support the rapid NDIS workforce and provider growth required. Jobs and Market Fund projects will be strategically targeted to address workforce and market gaps identified through market analysis and informed by consultation with the sector. A focus of the Jobs and Market Fund will be developing the capacity of workers and service providers in regional, rural and remote areas.

New Disability Employment Services – Transition Assistance

Transitional funding is being made available to support 14 generally smaller organisations providing Disability Employment Services that might otherwise experience difficulties adjusting to the new program arrangements commencing from 1 July 2018. Total funding of up to \$9.9 million is being made available to give them the opportunity to adjust over a two year period to the new program arrangements.

Two providers receiving grants are based in regional areas, and others provide support to around another 600 people living in regional areas. About \$1.5 million of the grant funding will support continued provision of services to Disability Employment Services participants living in regional areas.

Integrated Carer Support Services

The Integrated Carer Support Service will introduce a range of new tailored supports and services for carers. The new services will be designed to improve carer wellbeing, increase their capacity and support their participation, socially and economically.

There are approximately 544,000 carers living in inner regional areas and 308,000 living in outer regional and remote areas.

The Integrated Carer Support Service will provide a consistent, integrated approach to delivering carer support services at the national, regional and local levels. The Integrated Carer Support Service will introduce new ways to access those services that will support all carers, including those in regional Australia.

The new early-intervention service model will be rolled out in two stages:

- From October 2018, new supports and services to assist carers will be rolled out through the Carer Gateway website including online peer support, counselling, coaching and educational resources.
- From September 2019, the Government will establish a network of Regional Delivery Partners to help carers access a range of local services such as needs assessments, targeted financial support, information and advice, tailored phone and in-person counselling, peer support and coaching, and crisis support where required.

Regional Delivery Partners will also conduct outreach activities, and link to social, health, education, community and cultural groups, to better understand regional needs.

Clients of the Respite and Carer Support, Respite Support for Carers of Young People with Severe or Profound Disability, and Young Carers Respite and Information Services programs who are ineligible for the National Disability Insurance Scheme will be able to access Continuity of Support through services provided under the new Integrated Carer Support Service.

To fund the new services, the Australian Government will introduce a new \$250,000 family income test threshold for Carer Allowance payments and the Carer Allowance (child) Health Care Card Only, aligning it with other welfare payments and improving the sustainability of the welfare system.

The Integrated Carer Support Service forms the third and final stage of the 2015-16 Budget commitment to develop an Integrated Plan for Carer Support Services. An additional \$113.3 million will be invested over five years to 2021-22 to roll out the new services.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Try, Test and Learn Fund

In the 2016-17 Budget, the Australian Government announced \$96.1 million over four years to support the Try, Test and Learn Fund as part of the Australian Priority Investment Approach to Welfare.

In late 2017, the Australian Government committed around \$23 million for 14 trial projects focused on three priority groups: young carers; young parents; and students at risk of long-term unemployment. The trials will run from 18 months to two years in selected locations across Australia including Darwin, Hobart, Greater Geelong, New England, Ipswich, Newcastle and Mandurah.

In 2018, the Australian Government is looking to commit up to \$50.0 million to trial projects addressing long-term welfare dependency among vulnerable groups including: working age carers on Carer Payment; working age migrants and refugees on income support; Newstart Allowance recipients aged 50 and over; and at-risk young people

aged 16-21 receiving income support. A central feature of the Try, Test and Learn Fund is to generate new insights and empirical evidence into what works to reduce long-term welfare dependency. Through robust evaluation of each project, the Try, Test and Learn Fund will allow the Australian Government to identify what approaches work and use this evidence to transform investment in existing programs, or make the case for new investments.

Domestic and Family Violence – Third Action Plan

Women living in regional Australia are more likely to experience domestic violence than those living in capital cities (Australian Longitudinal Study on Women’s Health, 2014; Personal Safety Survey, 2016). The Australian Government recognises the vulnerability of women and their children in regional Australia to domestic and family violence, including issues in accessing services, a lack of privacy due to services often knowing both the victims and perpetrators, and issues around isolation and social and cultural characteristics of living in small communities.

The Third Action Plan (2016-19) of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-22* includes targeted support for women and children in rural, regional and remote locations. These are implemented across the following six key priority areas:

- preventing and intervening early to address the attitudes and practices that excuse, justify and promote violence against women
- improving responses and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children
- providing greater support and choice for women and children leaving or trying to leave domestic and family violence
- sharpening the focus on sexual violence as a key component for women’s safety
- responding to children exposed to domestic and family violence to help them feel safe and to recover from their experience
- holding perpetrators to account across all systems and targeting responses that work to change their behaviour.

The Third Action Plan will continue the efforts of the Australian Government and state and territory governments to break the cycle of violence, informed by recommendations of the Council of Australian Governments Advisory Panel. The Fourth Action Plan (2020-22) is currently being developed, and will draw on consultations across the community including key representatives from regional areas. Throughout the development process, it will be important to consider how services and supports are accessed and delivered for people that live in regional Australia, given the higher prevalence of domestic, family and sexual violence in these communities.

National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children

The *National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009-20* is a joint commitment between the Australian Government, state and territory governments and the non-government sector to ensure the safety and wellbeing of Australia’s children. The Third Action Plan 2015–18 focuses on three strategies:

- early intervention with a focus on the early years, particularly the first 1,000 days for a child
- helping young people in out-of-home care to thrive in adulthood
- organisations responding better to children and young people to keep them safe.

Activities underway as part of the Third Action Plan 2015-18 emphasise prevention and early intervention, and supporting children and young people exposed to risk factors for abuse and neglect, including children and families in regional Australia. As part of this work, the Australian Government is funding the Building Capacity in Australian Parents trial, which will provide support and tools parents need to help their children thrive in the first 1,000 days and normalise families asking for help in the regional Queensland locations and surrounds of Rockhampton, Toowoomba and Ipswich.

Under the Towards Independent Adulthood trial, personal advisers provide intensive, holistic support and mentoring for up to 80 young people in Western Australia, including some young people from regional areas, as they transition from formal out-of-home care into adulthood. The Third Action Plan 2015-18 also includes a focus on the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families to address their overrepresentation in the child protection system.

The *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-20* and the Third Action Plan 2015-18 form part of the Australian Government's commitment to supporting the wellbeing of Australian children. There are close links between the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-20* and the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-22*.

Families and Children

The Families and Children's activity aims to help families improve the wellbeing of children and young people by strengthening relationships, building parenting and financial management skills, providing parenting support, and delivering school readiness programs and home visits. The Australian Government will allocate \$274.9 million in 2018-19 to enable these services to continue to be delivered across Australia, with an extensive footprint in regional areas.

Families and Children's services that the Department of Social Services has responsibility for include:

- Family and Relationship Services
- Communities for Children Facilitating Partners
- Children and Parenting Services
- Adult Specialist Support Services
- Young People.

Communities for Children Facilitating Partners services operate in 28 regional areas to support early childhood development and wellbeing. Under this model, a Facilitating Partner is funded to work with each community to identify local needs and tailor services accordingly. Services may include parenting support, home visitation,

supported play groups and life skills programs. In 2016-17, 23,772 individual clients from regional and remote areas received these services and 80,728 group clients attended these services in regional and remote areas.

The Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters is a two-year, home-based parenting and early childhood learning initiative that currently operates in 66 regional or remote communities of high disadvantage.

The Department of Social Services has also established a dedicated taskforce to work in partnership with the Northern Territory Government, non-government organisations and local communities on the implementation of the Commonwealth response to the recommendations and findings of the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory.

Financial Wellbeing and Capability

Services funded under the Financial Wellbeing and Capability activity operate in regional and remote locations as well as major cities across Australia, assisting the most financially vulnerable and disadvantaged people and families.

This includes support through the provision of emergency relief and material aid, financial counselling and capability including literacy and budgeting support, as well as access to microfinance schemes. Funding is also provided to support a national financial counselling helpline, providing access to financial counselling for people who are unable to attend a face-to-face service.

In 2018-19, around \$100.0 million will be allocated to continue services under the Financial Wellbeing and Capability activity.

Approximately 214,000 people in regional or remote locations access Financial Wellbeing and Capability services. This equates to 44 per cent of all clients accessing these services nationally.

Income Management

Income Management is part of the Australian Government's commitment to a strong social welfare safety net, reducing social harm in areas with high levels of welfare dependency and supporting vulnerable people, families and communities. Income Management currently supports around 25,000 people across Australia.

Income Management ensures that part of an individual's welfare payments is directed towards meeting priority needs such as food, clothing, housing, utilities, education, and medical care. People can spend their income managed funds by organising direct payments to people or businesses such as stores, landlords, or utility providers, and by using the BasicsCard. Money that is income managed cannot be spent on alcohol, tobacco, pornography, home brew kits or gambling.

Income management will continue to operate in different forms across Australia, with a total investment of \$72.3 million in 2018-19.

Assistance for Isolated Children

Families in isolated areas incur additional costs to educate their children. In 2016-17, the Assistance for Isolated Children scheme provided \$70.9 million to the families of 11,032 students unable to attend an appropriate state school on a daily basis because of geographical isolation. In 2018-19, the estimated expenditure was \$76.3 million.

In 2018, depending on the student's circumstances, the Assistance for Isolated Children scheme provides:

- Basic Boarding Allowance (\$8,249)
- Additional Boarding Allowance (\$2,366)
- Second Home Allowance (\$240.30 per fortnight)
- Distance Education Allowance (\$4,124).

Regional and Remote Student Access to Education – Additional Support

From 1 January 2018, the period young people from regional and remote areas of Australia have to earn the amount required to satisfy the workforce independence provisions for Youth Allowance (student) or ABSTUDY, was reduced from 18 months to 14 months. Students will continue to be required to earn at least 75 per cent of Wage Level A of the National Training Wage (\$24,042 for 2016-17 and \$24,836 for 2017-18) during the reduced period.

This initiative recognises that students from regional and remote areas face additional costs in pursuing tertiary education and have a much lower participation rate in higher education than students from major cities.

National Rental Affordability Scheme

The National Rental Affordability Scheme aims to increase the supply of new affordable rental housing by offering financial incentives for 10 years, to build and rent dwellings to low and moderate income households, at a rate that is at least 20 per cent below market value rent.

The National Rental Affordability Scheme is now closed to new dwelling allocations but will continue to operate until the current ten year incentive periods are complete.

In 2018-19, the annual National Rental Affordability Scheme incentive is \$11,192.13. Australian Government expenses for 2018-19 are estimated at \$310 million.

As at 31 December 2017, there were 34,413 dwellings available for rent in the National Rental Affordability Scheme, of these:

- 4,901 (14.3 per cent) dwellings are located in inner regional areas
- 2,764 (8.0 per cent) dwellings are located in outer regional areas
- 272 (0.8 per cent) dwellings are located in remote areas
- 39 (0.1 per cent) dwellings are located in very remote areas

- 26,437 (76.8 per cent) dwellings are located in major cities of Australia.

Career Pathways Pilot for Humanitarian Entrants

The three year, Career Pathways Pilot will help humanitarian entrants, who already have professional or trade skills and/or qualifications, find jobs that match their skill set. New arrivals with vocational level English are eligible to participate in the Pilot within the first five years of settlement. Participants may be unemployed, or if already working, underemployed.

The Career Pathways Pilot was announced in the 2016-17 Budget with an allocation of \$5.2 million from 2016-17 to 2018-19.

Career Pathways Pilot participants are assisted to access training and support to find employment opportunities that match their skills. The Career Pathways Pilot complements Government employment assistance programs already available to Australian refugee jobseekers.

The Career Pathways Pilot is expected to benefit up to 1,200 humanitarian entrants. Career Pathways Pilot sites are located in six settlement locations around Australia and include two regional locations in Hobart and Toowoomba.

Settlement Grants

Settlement Grants support both humanitarian entrants and other eligible migrants in their first five years of life in Australia, with a focus on social participation, economic wellbeing, independence, personal wellbeing and community connectedness.

Settlement Grants currently fund 90 organisations that deliver services in both metropolitan and regional and rural areas. Grant funding priorities and allocations are determined through assessment of settlement needs ensuring that funded services are targeted towards those communities and locations in greatest need of settlement assistance, and is responsive to changing settlement patterns and emerging communities.

Over the next four years (2018-19 to 2021-22), \$203.3 million is allocated to Grants for Community Settlement. In the 2017 calendar year, Settlement Grants delivered services to 8,086 clients in regional and rural locations.

Volunteering

The Department of Social Services administers two streams of funding to support volunteering: the Volunteer Management Activity and Volunteer Grants.

In 2018-19, the Australian Government will provide funding of \$5.7 million for the Volunteer Management Activity to support the delivery of Volunteer Support Services and one-off innovation and collaboration projects to encourage, support and increase participation in volunteering in metropolitan and regional areas across Australia. Volunteer Support Services provide volunteering information and support to individuals, volunteers, volunteer managers and volunteer involving organisations. Under the Volunteer Management Activity, 52 community organisations are funded to deliver 72 Volunteer Support Services. Over three quarters of these are located in regional areas.

In 2018-19, around \$20.0 million will be allocated to Volunteer Grants. This is expected to benefit regional communities at similar levels to previous years, which resulted in around 44 per cent of grants and 47 per cent of funding being allocated to regional Australia.

National Disability Strategy 2010-2020

The *National Disability Strategy 2010-2020* is Australia's overarching policy framework for improving the life of Australians with disability, their families and carers. It provides a shared vision across all levels of government of a more inclusive Australian society that enables people with disability to fulfil their potential as equal citizens.

There are approximately 930,000 Australians with disability living in inner regional areas and 515,000 in outer regional and remote areas.

Under the *National Disability Strategy 2010-2020*, the Australian Government released a Plan to Improve Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People with Disability in October 2017. The Plan recognises the particular difficulties faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability in remote communities and includes funding for a trial of integrated health and education approaches to support students with disability in remote communities.

There are approximately 34,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability living in inner regional areas and 38,000 living in outer regional and remote areas. The Allied Health in Remote Schools project will trial an integrated approach to identifying and addressing developmental delay and disability in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in remote communities. These issues can reduce attendance and engagement with education, leading to further problems and reduced long-term outcomes. Allied health professionals will deliver targeted services to give practical support to children to assist them to meaningfully engage with their schooling.

The trial is a joint project between the Department of Social Services and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, with funding of \$2.2 million over three years to 2020-21. The project will include recommendations on options for a potential broader program.

National Disability Insurance Scheme

On 1 July 2016, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) commenced transition to full scheme across Australia (except Western Australia). On 12 December 2017, the Western Australian Government joined the nationally-delivered NDIS. The NDIS will be fully rolled out and available to all people in New South Wales and South Australia from July 2018, Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania and the Northern Territory from July 2019 and Western Australia from July 2020. The NDIS in the Australian Capital Territory is now fully operating.

The NDIS will create new employment opportunities in regional Australia, in response to additional demand for services from NDIS participants. As the NDIS rolls out across Australia, a growing number of people in regional and remote areas are expected to receive support. By 2019-20, the scheme will support an estimated 460,000 people with significant and permanent disability, regardless of where they live, including around 160,000 people in regional and remote areas.

National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguards

The Quality and Safeguarding Framework was released by the Disability Reform Council on 3 February 2017. The Framework will provide nationally consistent protections for National Disability Insurance Scheme participants from full scheme.

Under the Framework, a new Commonwealth agency, the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, will offer safeguards for an estimated 460,000 people with disability and their families, of which around 160,000 are regionally based. It will regulate providers; manage complaints and reportable incidents; and oversee investigations. The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission will start operating in New South Wales and South Australia from 1 July 2018 and in the other states and territories in July 2019 and in Western Australia by July 2020.

National Disability Insurance Scheme Appeals

In 2018-19, the Australian Government will invest a further \$11.2 million in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Appeals program. NDIS Appeals was set up to ensure that all people with disability affected by reviewable decisions of the National Disability Insurance Agency, have access to support when they are seeking a review of those decisions in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. While the focus of NDIS Appeals is the provision for advocacy support, funding for legal assistance is available where a case raises complex or novel legal issues. NDIS Appeals support is available across Australia including in 10 regional areas.

National Disability Insurance Scheme – Boosting the Local Care Workforce

In 2018-19, the Australian Government has committed \$15.8 million to the Boosting the Local Care Workforce Program, designed to assist disability and aged care providers to expand their workforce to meet the growing number of National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants.

The program has a particular focus on boosting local job opportunities in rural, regional and outer suburban areas and includes three initiatives designed to develop the immediate capacity of existing disability service and aged care providers. The program will deploy up to 25 skilled Regional Coordinators to work with existing local service providers to help them adapt to the NDIS. The program will also engage up to 10 nationally focused Specialist Coordinators to identify areas of market underutilisation and workforce gaps. Additionally, eligible disability service providers will be assisted financially to access relevant professional services and grants that will help them prepare their businesses to deliver services under the NDIS.

National Disability Advocacy Program

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring people with disability have access to effective disability advocacy that promotes, protects and ensures their full and equal enjoyment of all human rights, enabling full community participation. Through the commitment to the *National Disability Strategy 2010-20*, all levels of government are responsible for supporting disability advocacy.

As a demonstration of the Australian Government's commitment, funding of around \$20.0 million will be provided in 2018-19 to around 60 advocacy agencies across Australia, including 10 in regional locations, under the National Disability Advocacy

Program. Approximately 13,000 people received individual support in 2016-17, and a broader group benefitted from agency support. A search tool on the Department of Social Services website enables people to identify their nearest National Disability Advocacy Program agency.

In 2016-17, people with disability, advocacy agencies, the National Disability Insurance Agency, state and territory governments and key stakeholders such as public guardians were consulted via a formal review of the National Disability Advocacy Program. Findings of the review will provide a direction and model for the provision of services funded under the program from 1 July 2020, with a focus on improving national coverage of the National Disability Advocacy Program and access for people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds, and better coordination of systemic issues that impact on the broader population of people with disability.

Disability Employment Services

The Disability Employment Services program provides specialist employment assistance to people whose primary impediment to employment in the open labour market is disability, injury or a health condition. The Australian Government will provide around \$800 million in 2018-19 to support this important initiative.

In 2016-17, through Disability Employment Services, the Australian Government invested more than \$319 million (40 per cent of the program's expenditure) assisting people with disability in regional Australia seeking employment in the open labour market. Subject to labour market conditions, a similar amount is expected to be spent in regional areas in 2018-19.

In regional Australia, Disability Employment Services are currently delivered by 71 organisations from nearly 1,000 locations. Regional Australians currently comprise nearly 40 per cent of those receiving support through Disability Employment Services, or over 74,000 of the approximately 195,000 participants registered in the program.

From the commencement of Disability Employment Services in March 2010 until February 2018, more than 141,000 participants in regional Australia have been placed in a job.

In the 2017-18 Budget, the Australian Government announced reforms to Disability Employment Services, to improve the overall performance of the program from 1 July 2018. The reforms follow extensive sector consultations in 2015 and 2016 with people with disability and their families; service providers; employers; and peak organisations representing the interests of these groups.

Changes to the program include:

- improving participant choice of provider and say in the services they receive and how they receive them
- engendering greater competition between providers to drive performance
- strengthening the link between provider revenue and performance in supporting participants into employment

- undertaking a trial of possible expansion of Disability Employment Services eligibility for school leavers
- indexing provider payments at an estimated cost of more than \$300 million over the next 10 years.

As a result of the recent grant selections process, 88 organisations have received offers to deliver Disability Employment Services in regional Australia from 1 July 2018.

Community Mental Health

Family Mental Health Support Services are community-based mental health services that provide early intervention support for children and young people with early symptoms of mental ill-health, or who are at particular risk of developing mental illness later in life.

Through an increased investment since early 2015, Family Mental Health Support Services are now delivered in 100 locations across Australia. Funding of \$46.3 million has been allocated in 2018-19 to 52 service providers delivering support to children and young people in 58 regional or remote locations. Family Mental Health Support Services can be accessed by participants either on an individual basis or as part of a group session. A total of 75,046 participants accessed Family Mental Health Support Services in 2016-17. Of the 18,477 participants accessing Family Mental Health Support Services on an individual basis, 8,893 or 48.1 per cent were located in regional and remote Australia.

The increased investment in Family Mental Health Support Services in regional Australia allows more vulnerable children and young people to access support and achieve better mental health outcomes later in life.

The Community Mental Health, Individual Placement and Support Trial provides employment support, as part of a broader strategy aimed at tackling high youth unemployment.

The trial targets vulnerable young people with mental illness up to the age of 25, who are at risk of disengaging from education and employment and who are at risk of long-term welfare dependency.

The Individual Placement Support model integrates employment and vocational support with clinical mental health and non-vocational support, and focuses on the needs of people with mental illness seeking to remain in education and/or employment. Professional employment specialists located in headspace sites will provide vocational and employment assistance, in tandem with clinical support. There are 14 trial sites being rolled out nationally over three years. Nine of the 14 trial sites are being delivered in regional or remote Australia.

National Carer Gateway

On 14 December 2015, Carer Gateway commenced, allowing carers in regional areas to obtain practical information and resources to support them in their caring role via a national phone line and website. The website features an interactive service finder that helps carers connect to local support services and includes information on services delivered by phone or online. Services offered by this program will form part of the Integrated Carer Support Service.

National Respite for Carers

The National Respite for Carers program assists carers in their caring role. Funding of \$63.4 million has been allocated in 2018-19 for 54 Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres to assist carers with short term and emergency respite options, based on assessed need, and to provide advice and coordinate access to respite services in a carer's local area. Of these centres, 34 are located in regional areas. The National Respite for Carers program also allocates a further \$11.9 million in 2018-19 to support the National Carer Counselling program, Carer Information Support Service and Consumer Directed Respite Care. Services offered by this program will form part of the Integrated Carer Support Service.

Young Carer Bursary Program

The Young Carer Bursary Program was a 2013 election commitment to assist young carers, aged 25 years and under, in greatest need across Australia including in regional areas, to continue to study and to relieve the financial pressure on them to undertake part-time work in addition to their educational and caring responsibilities.

From 2015 to 2017, the first three calendar years of the program, 988 bursaries were awarded. For 2017 a total of 113, or one-third of Young Carer Bursary Program recipients, were from regional Australia. Bursaries are currently valued at \$3,000 each. Services offered by this program will form part of the Integrated Carer Support Service.

Counselling, Support, Information and Advocacy – Carer Support

In 2018-19, approximately \$3.4 million was provided to 17 Counselling Support Information and Advocacy carer support services in regional Australia to provide specific information, education and training for carers to assist them to understand and manage situations, behaviours and relationships associated with care needs of the person they are caring for. The type of activity and support provided varies depending on the needs of the carer. Services offered by this program will form part of the Integrated Carer Support Service.

Dementia Education and Training for Carers

The Dementia Education and Training for Carers initiative aims to improve the quality of life of people living with dementia. The initiative provides training and education for carers of people with dementia, with 22 services in regional Australia. There is an emphasis on increasing the competence and confidence of carers by providing courses that aim to enhance their skills or processes that connect a carer to information.

The Australian Government has allocated \$1.1 million to the Dementia Education and Training for Carers initiative in 2018-19. Services offered by this program will form part of the Integrated Carer Support Service.

TREASURY

The Treasury provides policy advice on a range of issues from macroeconomic policy settings to microeconomic reform, social policy, as well as tax policy and international agreements and forums.

Further details are provided in the Treasury Portfolio Budget Statement.

NEW INITIATIVES

Backing Small Business Investment – further extending the immediate deductibility threshold

The Australian Government will extend the 2015–16 Budget measure *Growing Jobs and Small Business – expanding accelerated depreciation for small businesses* by a further 12 months to 30 June 2019 for businesses with aggregated annual turnover less than \$10 million.

Small businesses, including those in regional areas, will be able to immediately deduct purchases of eligible assets costing less than \$20,000 first used or installed ready for use by 30 June 2019. Assets valued at \$20,000 or more can continue to be placed into the small business simplified depreciation pool, and the pool can be immediately deducted if the balance is less than \$20,000 over this period.

This measure will improve cash flow and support small businesses to invest in assets that will help them grow, such as small businesses in regional areas seeking to purchase assets to expand or set up their business in new locations.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Ten Year Enterprise Tax Plan-Increase the Small Business Entity Turnover Threshold

The Australian Government increased the small business entity turnover threshold from \$2 million to \$10 million per annum from 1 July 2016. The current \$2 million annual turnover threshold was retained for access to the small business capital gains tax concessions, and access to the unincorporated small business tax discount has been extended to entities with turnover less than \$5 million per annum.

Over 90,000 additional business entities are able to access the small business tax concessions, such as a lower corporate tax rate, immediate tax deductibility of certain assets and simplified depreciation pooling provisions as a result of this measure.

This measure forms part of the Australian Government's Ten Year Enterprise Tax Plan announced in the 2016–17 Budget, which is encouraging Australians to work, save and invest.

Ten Year Enterprise Tax Plan – Reduce Taxes on Business

The Australian Government reduced the company tax rate to 27.5 per cent for companies with aggregated annual turnover less than \$10 million from 2016-17. The turnover threshold for the lower tax rate increased to \$25 million from 2017-18 and will

rise to \$50 million in 2018-19. The Government is committed to reducing the company tax rate for all companies to 25 per cent by 2026-27.

The Australian Government also increased the tax discount for unincorporated businesses from five per cent to eight per cent in 2016-17. The discount will incrementally increase to 16 per cent in 2026-27. The current cap of \$1,000 per individual for each income year has been retained.

The tax discount applies to the income tax payable on the business income received from an unincorporated small business entity. Access to the discount was extended to individual taxpayers with business income from an unincorporated business that has an aggregated annual turnover of less than \$5 million from 1 July 2016.

This measure forms part of the Australian Government's Ten Year Enterprise Tax Plan announced in the 2016-17 Budget, which is encouraging Australians to work, save and invest.

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

The Department of Veterans' Affairs' (DVA) purpose is to support those who serve or have served in the defence of our nation and to commemorate their service and sacrifice by:

- maintaining and enhancing the quality of life of clients by improving their financial wellbeing, self-sufficiency and their physical and mental wellbeing
- acknowledging and commemorating veterans' service and sacrifice, and promoting an increased understanding of Australia's wartime history.

The Department provides support and services to current and former members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF), and their families, including those living in regional and remote communities.

In the 2018-19 Budget, \$11.2 billion will be provided to support around 288,000 clients, including veterans and dependants. The funding comprises: \$6.2 billion for income support and compensation; \$4.9 billion for health services for veterans and their families; and \$80.0 million for commemorative activities.

Most veterans and their families prefer to deal with DVA on the telephone or increasingly online, using new services such as MyService. For those who prefer face-to-face contact, there are more than 170 access points across all states and territories of Australia, including in regional and rural areas via a network of government service centres and agents.

As part of the DVA Transformation and in partnership with the Department of Human Services (DHS), DVA is also trialling other innovative service delivery methods. DVA services are now being delivered from more service points, expanding our reach through a pilot using the DHS Mobile Service Centres, the Golden Wattle and Desert Rose which service rural and remote Australia, as well as through an expanded agent network with DHS.

DVA is also trialling information services with other partners, including Australia Post. Trial sites in North Lakes Queensland and Mt Gambier in South Australia are currently operational, testing new regional approaches to service delivery.

DVA also offers outreach services including support for community based activities such as grants, day club visits, mens' health peer education, visits to over 40 ADF bases, and gives presentations on services and entitlements.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs also supports the acknowledgement and commemoration of those who served Australia and its allies in wars, conflicts and peace operations through promoting recognition of service and sacrifice, preservation of Australia's wartime heritage, and official commemorations.

In 2018-19, the Department of Veterans' Affairs will conclude the implementation of the Anzac Centenary national program. Throughout the centenary period from 2014 to 2018, 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. The Anzac Centenary program is a national commemoration that comprises domestic and international activities and events. Anzac Centenary activities are also being planned and delivered by state, territory and local governments, and business and community organisations, including in regional areas.

NEW INITIATIVES

Armistice Centenary Grants Program

The Armistice Centenary Grants Program is a one-off grant program, which enables local community-based commemorative projects and activities that commemorate the end of the First World War, to remember Australian service personnel from all conflicts and celebrate a just and secure peace.

In the 2017-18 Budget, the Australian Government provided \$7.5 million for this grants program (\$5.0 million for 2017-18 and \$2.5 million for 2018-19) with each federal electorate allocated \$50,000.

The application closing date was extended to 28 March 2018 to ensure local communities were provided with the opportunity to liaise with their Federal Member of Parliament in support of activities and projects to mark the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War in November 2018.

Support for Veterans through Improved Compensation Arrangements

This measure provides former members of the Australian Defence Force who are unable to work with fortnightly compensation payments equivalent to their normal earnings where they are engaged in an approved study program as part of the Department of Veterans' Affairs rehabilitation plan. The 2018-19 Budget provides \$10.8 million over the forward estimates to support this initiative. It will run until 30 June 2022.

This measure aims to provide financial surety to veterans through their medical discharge into rehabilitation and then into ongoing remunerative work, where possible. Ongoing financial security is paramount to this veteran cohort, and this initiative seeks to provide support through study to facilitate reskilling, long-term self sustainability to mitigate future reliance on the incapacity payment system.

Eligible veterans in regional areas will be able to access support through an approved rehabilitation plan.

This measure also reverses two 2015-16 Budget measures which will ensure that veterans' permanent impairment payments under the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related claims) Act 1988* remain as they are and consistent with the permanent impairment payment entitlements for civilians under the Comcare scheme.

Support Veterans' Employment Opportunities

An additional \$8.3 million will be provided in the 2018-19 Budget over four years to further develop, implement and promote the Prime Minister's Veterans' Employment Program, and to fund two new initiatives under the program.

The Industry Advisory Committee on Veterans' Employment is establishing a framework to allow businesses to publicly commit to support the employment of veterans. This measure will provide funding to support the framework.

This measure will also provide additional support to veterans who are finding the transition to the civilian workforce challenging, including assistance with the preparation of civilian resumes, assistance with translating military skills into civilian

language, interview coaching, mentoring and pre and post-employment coaching services.

Affected veterans, including those in regional areas, will be supported to help them find meaningful and sustainable employment.

Mental Health Treatment for Australian Defence Force Reservists with Disaster Relief and Certain Other Service

The 2018-19 Budget provides an additional \$2.2 million to extend eligibility for mental health treatment to certain Reservists. This initiative provides health care treatment for certain conditions under Department of Veterans' Affairs arrangements without the need to link the condition to the person's military service, and without the need for a compensation claim.

Currently, those with permanent full-time Australian Defence Force service and Reservists with continuous full-time service are eligible for this support. From 1 July 2018, Reservists with Disaster Relief or Border Protection Service, or who have been involved in a serious training accident, will also be eligible. This means that eligible Reservists in regional areas will gain access to mental health care without the need to prove that the condition has arisen from their military service and without the need for a diagnosis.

This measure builds on the 2017-18 Budget measure *Mental Health Treatment for Current and Former Members of the Australian Defence Force – expanded access*.

Extend Eligibility for Long Tan Bursary

The Long Tan Bursary provides up to \$12,000 over three years to eligible children of Australian Vietnam veterans who served in the Vietnam War between 31 July 1962 and 30 April 1975 to establish themselves in post-secondary education. This 2018-19 Budget measure will extend eligibility to apply for support to the grandchildren of Vietnam veterans. This acknowledges the intergenerational emotional, physical and social effects of service in Vietnam. Those affected grandchildren in regional areas will gain support for their education.

There are no additional costs associated with this measure as the program is capped at 37 bursaries per year.

Improved Dental and Allied Health Services for Veterans

This integrated reform package re-balances the Department of Veterans' Affairs arrangements for purchasing dental and allied health services nationally and strengthens the quality of dental and allied health services for the 140,000 Department of Veterans' Affairs cardholders across Australia who use these arrangements.

The package has a focus on whole-of-patient care by implementing a "treatment cycle" approach to referrals from General Practitioners (GPs) to providers of allied health services. Patients are anticipated to benefit through better communication between GPs and allied health providers.

Included in the package is an enhancement to existing arrangements to support individuals who may have difficulty in travelling to access services, such as those in regional areas, by expanding the availability of telehealth consultations (via telephone

or video) for additional treatment types such as dietetics and speech pathology to supplement face-to-face services.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Expanded Access for Non-Liability Health Care – Mental Health Treatment for Current and Former Members of the Australian Defence Force

Non-liability health care provides free treatment for certain conditions without the need to link the condition to the person's military service, without the need for a diagnosis or a compensation claim. The 2017-18 Budget provided \$33.5 million over four years to extend the range of mental health conditions treated under the non-liability health care arrangements.

From 1 July 2017, treatment became available for any mental health condition for anyone with permanent Australian Defence Force service or Reservists with Continuous Full-time Service.

Further eligibility expansion is proposed in the 2018-19 Budget to Reservists who have Disaster Relief Service, Border Protection Service or been involved in a serious training accident, regardless of whether they have Continuous Full-time Service.

GP Health Assessment for Five Years Post Discharge

This initiative will enable all Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel transitioning to civilian life from 1 July 2019 to access an annual comprehensive health assessment by a general practitioner (GP) for the first five years post-discharge. All ADF members with at least one day of continuous full-time service, including Reservists, discharged from 1 July 2019 will be eligible to access the Annual GP Health Assessment using the Department of Veterans' Affairs White Card, which the Government has committed to issue to all transitioning ADF members.

The Annual GP Health Assessment will significantly increase the opportunity for GPs to identify and treat mental and physical health concerns in ex-ADF members early, facilitating earlier recovery and minimising the impacts of mental health concerns on individual functioning, quality of life and workforce participation. A behavioural insights trial will also be conducted over the first three years to establish the most effective mechanisms to encourage ex-ADF members to undertake the annual GP health assessments.

This initiative was announced as part of 2017-18 MYEFO and will cost \$2.1 million over four years. This proposal builds on the existing one-off ADF Post-Discharge GP Health Assessment, a 2013-14 Budget measure, and the online assessment tool developed as part of that Budget measure, which is now embedded in GP practice software. The one-off GP health assessment will continue to be available for all ex-ADF members who transition both before and after 1 July 2019.

Veteran Payment

As part of a package of measures in response to the Senate's report on the *Inquiry into suicide by veterans and ex-service personnel*, the 2017-18 MYEFO provided \$16.1 million over four years for the Veteran Payment. This new income support payment will assist vulnerable veterans until their claim for liability for a mental health condition has been determined.

It provides early access to financial support and provide these veterans with vocational and psychosocial rehabilitation, including financial counselling and budgeting.

The payment commenced on 1 May 2018, and is available to veterans who meet the eligibility criteria, including those located in regional Australia.

Extended Family Support for Veterans

This initiative will deliver improved family support to contemporary veterans when they most need it, including at times of family crisis. The 2017-18 MYEFO provided \$7.1 million over four years to fund this initiative. The support will include key psychosocial interventions such as greater access to childcare and counselling to enable the family unit to maintain its connections to community, employment and social interaction. Financial advice will also be available.

Eligible veterans will be those who have served in recent conflicts and are in receipt of incapacity payments under the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004*. Childcare assistance will be capped at up to \$10,000 per child per annum (under school age) and/or \$5,000 per child per annum (primary school) and cover Commonwealth approved childcare. Brief intervention counselling is capped at four sessions per year for up to five years and can be accessed by the veteran's key family members – partner, children, siblings and/or parents – via the veteran's rehabilitation plan.

The spouses of veterans killed in recent conflicts, or who commit suicide following their service, will be eligible for childcare assistance and household services and counselling to assist them to adjust to life after the death of their partner.

The initiative commenced on 1 May 2018, and will be available to veterans who meet the eligibility criteria, including those located in regional Australia.

Prime Minister's Veterans' Employment Program

The Prime Minister launched the Veterans' Employment Program, one of the Government's 2016 election commitments, on 17 November 2016. Its aim is to raise awareness of the unique skills and experience that veterans can bring to businesses and increase employment opportunities in the business community.

The Government is providing \$2.7 million over four years to implement a number of initiatives under the program. These include establishing an Industry Advisory Committee and annual awards to recognise the achievements of companies in creating employment opportunities for former members of the Australian Defence Force.

The Industry Advisory Committee on Veterans' Employment has been established under the Program to develop advice on practical measures to embed veterans' employment strategies into the recruitment practices of Australian businesses. The Committee is focussing on priority areas and provided its first progress report to the then Minister for Veterans' Affairs in October 2017.

Annual awards have also been established to recognise the achievements of companies in creating employment opportunities for former members of the Australian Defence Force. In March 2018, the inaugural Prime Minister's Veterans' Employments Awards showcased businesses across Australia that employ or support veterans and highlighted the significant contributions being made by veterans in the civilian workplace.

A 2018-19 Budget measure will provide funding to continue to implement these initiatives, and to implement two new initiatives (see 'Support Veterans' Employment Opportunities' above). Support will be provided to assist the Industry Advisory Committee on Veterans' Employment to establish a framework to allow businesses to publicly commit to support the employment of veterans, and additional support will be provided to veterans who are finding the transition to the civilian workforce challenging.

Case Management – Pilot

The 2017-18 MYEFO provided \$4.0 million over two years for a Department of Veterans' Affairs case management service, which aims to provide tailored support to two groups of veterans and their families who have medical and non-medical complex needs:

- recently transitioned (medically or administratively) members
- veterans who have discharged for some time, maybe years, and have fallen into crisis.

The service will provide a dedicated case manager who is part of a team of multi-disciplinary team of professionals that support the veteran and their family for a 24 month period. At the centre of the service will be medical case management so that complex needs are coordinated through various health providers, including the general practitioner.

A pilot of the service will begin on 1 July 2018. It is anticipated that the pilot will include 100 cases in the first year (2018-19) and an additional 100 cases in the second year (2019-20).

The pilot will provide the opportunity to find the best case management model and service delivery method to achieve effective outcomes for these two veteran groups.

The case management service partly addresses recommendations 1 and 15 of the Senate's report on the *Inquiry into suicide by veterans and ex-service personnel*.

The case management pilot provides the Department of Veterans' Affairs with a service delivery mechanism to reach out to identified vulnerable veterans. The pilot aims to assist these veterans to receive and engage in tailored services and support they need from wider community resources and government programs. This pilot will be available for veterans in regional parts of Australia.

Scoping Study to Professionalise Veterans' Advocacy

The MYEFO 2017-18 provided \$1.7 million in funding over two years to evaluate professional advocacy models operating across Government in Australia and overseas to determine the model appropriate for the Australian veteran community.

The study is part of a package of measures in response to the Senate's report on the *Inquiry into suicide by veterans and ex-service personnel*, which will examine advocacy models to service veterans in both metropolitan and regional Australia.

Veteran and Veterans Families Counselling Service – Client Eligibility Expansion – Partners, Families and Former Partners

The Veteran and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS) provides free and confidential, nation-wide counselling and support for war and service-related mental health conditions, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depression.

VVCS also provides relationship and family counselling to address issues that can arise due to the unique nature of military service. VVCS counsellors have an understanding of military culture and can work with clients to find effective solutions for improved mental health and wellbeing.

A family inclusive service, VVCS client eligibility has expanded over time. Today, VVCS supports not only current and former Australian Defence Force (ADF) members but also their immediate family. Supporting families is fundamental to the VVCS service delivery paradigm, which recognises that military trauma rarely impacts on the individual alone. The 2017-18 Budget provided \$8.5 million over four years to make VVCS even more accessible to families by extending access to the partners and children of current and former ADF members who hold a Repatriation Health Card – Gold or White for an accepted mental health disability. The former partners of eligible ADF personnel will also be able to access VVCS support for five years following separation or while co-parenting a child under the age of 18.

Regardless of where you reside in Australia – in a city, in rural or in regional Australia – VVCS counsellors are available to support ADF veterans and their families.

Saluting Their Service

Saluting Their Service is the Australian Government's ongoing commemorations grants program. 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.

The program provides grants of up to \$4,000 under the community Commemorative Grants category for projects that assist people at a community level and enable small communities to build memorials and preserve wartime memorabilia that are locally significant.

Funding is also available under the Major Commemorative Grants category of the program for significant projects at a national, state or territory level.

Grants are approved each year in most electorates across Australia, many in regional areas. In 2016-17, 180 grants were provided to 84 of the 150 electorates across Australia.

As at 30 April 2018, 82 grants provided to 53 electorates across Australia have been approved for 2017-18, with an estimate of a total of 171 grants to be provided to 86 electorates for 2017-18, ensuring valuable funding reaches veteran communities across the country, including regional Australia.

Coordinated Veterans' Care (CVC) Mental Health Pilot

The Coordinated Veterans' Care (CVC) Mental Health Pilot is a two-year trial funded at \$3.6 million over the forward estimates (2017-18 - 2019-20). The pilot will target up to 250 veterans, particularly in rural and regional areas with relatively larger numbers of potentially eligible veterans, where access to mental health specialists may be more difficult.

The pilot will be embedded in the existing CVC Program. The CVC Program uses a team-based model of care, led by a general practitioner and supported by a practice nurse. It will provide enhanced community-based support for those with mild to moderate anxiety or depression and physical health problems, in particular musculoskeletal conditions with pain.

The pilot includes a new digital coach application on a smart phone or smart device that the veterans will use. The app is based on 'light touch' cognitive behavioural therapy and is being developed by Clevertar, a digital specialist in health care. Technical and clinical coordination for the pilot will be provided by Tunstall, a health call monitoring facility staffed by registered nurses and supervised by a mental health nurse.

In 2018-19, the pilot will be rolled out in a number of regional locations, commencing in Bundaberg, Queensland.