Investing in Regional Growth
2016-17

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FOREWORD

Australia is a nation of great economic strength and stability. The 2016-17 Budget continues the Australian Government’s investment in the growth of our regions to deliver the foundations for a strong and dynamic economy for all Australians.

Regional Australia is critical to our national economy. Around eight million people live in regional Australia, representing a third of Australia’s population. Regional Australia is also the source of one third of Australia’s total employment and around one in three jobs in regional Australia are in highly skilled occupations. Investing in stronger regional communities and businesses will mean stronger regional economies and, in turn, a stronger national economy.

With innovation at the heart of a strong economy, the Australian Government is actively encouraging individuals and businesses across Australia to pursue opportunities. The $4 billion Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper, the $1.2 billion Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia, the $5 billion Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility, and the $1.1 billion National Innovation and Science Agenda will ensure Australia is well placed to thrive in this exciting time to create highly paid jobs and help Australia compete in global markets. This contribution from the Australian Government, combined with partnerships, creativity, local leadership and an economic renewal mindset will help the people of regional Australia position for the future.

The Australian Government is also better connecting our regions to our cities through infrastructure and digital networks to ensure regional Australia can continue to make a significant contribution to our economy. The Australian Government is investing in a range of infrastructure initiatives that will enhance these linkages. This includes a commitment to invest a record $50 billion from 2013-14 to 2019-20 in world-class infrastructure. The Australian Government is responsibly investing in roads, rail and dams.

The Australian Government is committing an additional $594 million from 2017-18 to 2019-20 in equity funding to the Australian Rail Track Corporation, to support the Melbourne to Brisbane Inland Rail. This investment builds on the Government’s existing major investments in critical regional links such as the Bruce Highway in Queensland; the Pacific Highway in New South Wales; and the Hume Highway in New South Wales and Victoria. Continuation of successful regional investment programmes such as Roads to Recovery, the Black Spot Programme, the Bridges Renewal Programme and the Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Programme are also important initiatives in transforming regional communities.

The addition of $29.9 billion to the Defence portfolio budget through the Australian Government’s 2016 Defence White Paper will strengthen the security of the country, while growing regional and rural economies – where many defence facilities are located. The upgrading of defence facilities means direct Australian Government investment in regional Australia and the creation of jobs in building and construction,
information technology and logistics. Regional businesses will also be able to capitalise on this investment by tendering for the supply of goods and services to the Department of Defence. The 2016 Integrated Investment Programme, released alongside the 2016 Defence White Paper, brings together all elements of defence investment. Australian industry now has the clarity and certainty to invest in the people and infrastructure to make these capability plans a reality.

The Australian Government is committed to opening up international markets through providing better broadband. This is being achieved by ensuring that Australians can reach and connect with growing markets. The Australian Government is ensuring this occurs by delivering the National Broadband Network quickly and efficiently to rural and regional families and businesses. Round 1 of the Mobile Black Spot Programme is extending mobile phone coverage by committing $100.0 million towards construction and upgrade costs of mobile phone base stations where coverage is poor or non-existent. A further $60.0 million has been committed for Round 2 of the programme.

Australia’s trade agreements are also increasing trade opportunities for Australian businesses in important overseas markets. The Australian Government, through these agreements is providing regional businesses with access to new export markets, cheaper inputs, new technologies, and fostering innovation. The Australian Government, through the Smart Cities Plan, is also working in partnership with State and Territory governments to ensure that Australia’s cities and big regional centres – which are home to many of the gateways to international trade for regions – function effectively in their transport systems to connect people, goods and services to markets.

The Australian Government recognises that people living outside the major Australian cities can face barriers in accessing the same range of health and aged care services as those living in urban areas. Consequently, it directs significant assistance through general health and aged care programmes targeted specifically at regional Australia. In 2016-17, the Australian Government will commence implementing its mental health reform agenda, with an immediate focus on initiating the delivery through Primary Health Networks. Primary Health Networks will play a key role in leading the development of regional mental health and suicide prevention plans. The Australian Government will provide an additional $102.3 million to the Aged Care Provider Funding - Improving the Targeting of the Viability Supplement for Regional Aged Care Facilities over five years from 2015-16, by re-classifying remote communities via a more contemporary model. Approximately 250 mainstream residential services, in or near outer regional towns, will benefit as a result of the new arrangements, as will most remote services.

The Australian Government is investing in regional Australia to foster stronger regional communities and stronger regional businesses to ensure the nation’s prosperity continues into the future.
KEY AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA BY PORTFOLIO
Agriculture and Water Resources

The Agriculture and Water Resources portfolio contributes to the productivity, competitiveness and sustainability of regional Australia. Through the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources and its portfolio agencies, the Australian Government will continue to support regional Australia by delivering services directly to those who need them, while continuing to build on the success of the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper.

In 2016-17 the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources will continue to lead the implementation of the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper. The Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper represents a $4 billion investment to strengthen the agricultural sector and ensure it remains competitive. The programmes announced in the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper will ensure that we have well developed agricultural industries, with world-class food safety and environmental credentials, and the best of modern technology, backed by a strong economy and highly skilled workforce.

The Agriculture and Water Resources portfolio is responsible for supporting regionally based industries worth $58.4 billion to the Australian economy, employing around 315,000 people and feeding more than 60 million people globally. In 2016-17 the Agriculture and Water Resources portfolio will work to maintain agriculture as one of the five pillars of the economy. This will be achieved by supporting profitable farm businesses, ensuring access to export markets for agricultural produce, improving net farm-gate returns and managing biosecurity risk. The Agriculture and Water Resources portfolio also provides support for the stewardship role played by farmers and regional communities over our natural resource base.

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, together with the Murray-Darling Basin Authority leads the Commonwealth’s contribution to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. The Murray-Darling Basin Plan, through the Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Program, and other water reform initiatives, is working towards providing responsible long-term management of water for communities, the environment and farmers. It is supporting regional economies and the environment through large-scale investment that improves economic returns to irrigators and the community, while providing water for the environment. Through investment in water infrastructure projects across the Murray-Darling Basin, the Australian Government continues to boost efficiency and productivity in rural and regional Australia.

The Government's commitment to water reform is unwavering, and funding for the Commonwealth's water functions is secure in 2016-17. However, as we move into the next stage of the water reform agenda, the Government must invest in the areas that will have the greatest benefits for our communities, agricultural industries and rivers. To do this the agencies that deliver Commonwealth water programmes must operate as efficiently and effectively as they can. This and other factors that influence the level of funding needed by Commonwealth water agencies will be considered in an
extensive review of all funding for Commonwealth water administrative functions in the coming months. The outcome of this review will feed into the Government’s post-budget decision making process, with funding for the remaining priorities of the water reform agenda to be resolved before the 2017-18 Budget.

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources has a strong presence in regional Australia, with more than 15 per cent of its employees based in regional areas. Throughout 2016-17 the Australian Government will continue to implement its policy to support regional Australia by transferring Commonwealth functions and agencies closer to the communities which they serve.

**NEW INITIATIVES**

**National Water Infrastructure Loans Facility**

The National Water Infrastructure Loan Facility will be available from 2016-17 to enhance the capital availability for water infrastructure projects, stimulating and accelerating State and Territory government investments in major water infrastructure in regional areas (including public/private partnerships). This will include, but is not limited to, the construction of dams, pipelines and managed aquifer recharge projects that are economically viable and will generate affordable water to grow regional economies.

The National Water Infrastructure Loan Facility will make available $2 billion over ten years in loans directly to State and Territory governments.

Construction of new water infrastructure will help drive the development of regional economies including in the agriculture and resources industries (such as mining and energy). Access to affordable water will be a key influence over the extent to which Australia’s farm and food sectors can realise export growth opportunities and meet growing demand from population growth.

**Additional Rural Financial Counsellors**

The Australian Government will continue the *Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper* measure to fund additional rural financial counsellors to meet increased demands during periods of drought, at a cost of $7.1 million over four years.

The Australian Government, together with State and Territory governments, funds the Rural Financial Counselling Service Programme to provide free financial counselling to primary producers, fishers, and small rural businesses in financial difficulty. There are 14 not-for-profit organisations that deliver the service across regional and rural Australia.

Drought conditions often lead to an increased number of farmers and small rural businesses in financial distress and this funding allows those in need to access prompt assistance to improve their business and personal situation.
Biosecurity Advanced Analytics Capability

The Biosecurity Advanced Analytics Capability initiative will allow for better decision making and targeting of risks that threaten our agricultural sector and the rural communities that depend on them, the environment and the broader economy. It will enhance Australia’s ability to manage the impact of biosecurity risks and maximise trade.

Funding of $15.9 million over four years will be used to build an advanced analytics capability within the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, including dedicated data and analytics specialists to better support biosecurity decision making.

The initiative will ensure better access to data that is needed to improve biosecurity decision making. This will increase our ability to know why, when, where and what pests and diseases should be the focus of biosecurity activities. Sharing of biosecurity data with States and Territories will be enhanced, to increase preparedness for potential pest and disease incursions. Access to biosecurity information will be developed in line with the Australian Government’s Public Data Policy Statement.

National Carp Control Plan

Carp are the worst freshwater aquatic pest in Australia, and dominate the Murray-Darling Basin, where they can make up 80 to 90 per cent of fish biomass and have significant detrimental effects on water quality and ecosystem health. Economic impacts to Australia of carp infestation have been estimated at up to $500 million per year, and the majority of this impact is felt in regional areas. After 8 years of testing Australian scientists have determined that Cyprinid herpesvirus-3 (carp herpesvirus) offers a genuine option for the biological control of carp. The National Carp Control Plan provides $15.0 million over three years to undertake scientific research, operational planning, community engagement and communications activities required to support a potential carp herpesvirus release and subsequent clean up. The funding will be targeted to ensure that the National Carp Control Plan enables maximum impact on carp populations, and minimum disruption to industries, communities and the environment.

A national coordinator will work with governments and relevant stakeholders to design the National Carp Control Plan, and communication and engagement activities will educate and seek input from stakeholders. Successful implementation of the National Carp Control Plan will provide an opportunity to dramatically improve the health of our waterways, and bring substantial benefits to regional communities and water users, including farmers, recreational fishers and tourism operators.

Export and Regional Wine Support Package

The Export and Regional Wine Support Package will provide the Australian Grape and Wine Authority with $50.0 million over four years to fund a range of initiatives to promote Australian wine and Australian wine tourism both domestically and overseas, such as:
• funding for regional wine associations to showcase their products at international trade shows;

• the development of an international wine exhibition in Australia in 2018-19 and 2019-20;

• coordination of Australian wine export promotion in overseas markets;

• promotion of wine tourism to regional wine producing areas targeting both domestic and international tourists; and

• assistance for smaller wine producers and exporters to access new or improved markets.

Wine tourism is an important part of many regional economies. This package will directly benefit regional wine producers by improving domestic and international wine tourism and assisting regional wine associations to take part in international trade shows. 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.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper

The Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper was launched on 4 July 2015. It is a $4 billion investment in our farmers and delivers on an election commitment. The measures under the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper focus on five key areas.

A Fairer Go For Farm Businesses

The Australian Government is helping farmers achieve a better return at the farm gate.

• The Australian Government is providing a total of $11.4 million over four years ($2.7 million in 2016-17) to boost the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission’s engagement with the agricultural sector. The appointment of a new Agriculture Commissioner, Mr Mick Keogh OAM, was announced in February 2016. A more proactive Australian Competition and Consumer Commission will help encourage fair-trading and improved competition in agricultural supply chains and ensure issues are dealt with swiftly;

• The Australian Government is delivering on its $13.8 million commitment, with $6.9 million being spent in 2016-17 as part of a pilot programme to provide farmers with knowledge and materials on co-operatives and other forms of collaboration. This will include education tools and resources, customised expert support, and support to farmer groups working to get their collaborative project off the ground;
• 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 improving sustainability;

• From July 2016, improved country of origin labelling information will give consumers clearer information on the origin of their food; and

• From 2016-17, the Australian Government will allow farmers who have previously opted out of income tax averaging to be able to re-enter the system after 10 years.

Building 21st Century Water, Transport and Communication Infrastructure

The Australian Government is planning ahead and thinking innovatively when it comes to our infrastructure.

• Over $18 million of the $500.0 million National Water Infrastructure Development Fund will be expended in 2016-17 to develop feasibility studies for future water infrastructure. The National Water Infrastructure Development Fund provides future water security for our farmers—including $50.0 million to undertake detailed planning and $450.0 million to construct national water infrastructure, in partnership with State and Territory governments and the private sector; and

• The Australian Government has committed $1.0 million to expand the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation’s (CSIRO), TRAnsport Network Strategic Investment Tool (TRANSIT) to support future government infrastructure investment. The Australian Government will continue to see real, tangible benefits like the $100.0 million Beef Roads Fund which is utilising the tool to look at the whole cattle supply chain. Farmers will see reduced transport costs from fixing road and rail inefficiencies, including bottlenecks and limited route options.

Strengthening Our Approach to Drought And Risk Management

Drought is one of the biggest challenges farmers face and it has a significant impact on agricultural output, productivity and farm incomes.

• Farmers will have more accurate, local and more frequent seasonal forecasts to assist with making decisions as part of the Australian Government’s commitment of $3.3 million for improved seasonal forecasting;

• Eligible farm businesses are able to access a one-off rebate for costs incurred obtaining independent and professional advice to apply for new insurance policies that assist with the management of drought and other production and market risks;

• The Australian Government will also provide access to $250.0 million each year in drought loans over the next 10 years starting in 2016-17;
From 1 July 2016, farmers and their partners receiving the Farm Household Allowance will receive additional assistance in their third year of payment through an increase in case management and the activity supplement;

Three enhancements are being made to the Farm Management Deposits Scheme: increasing the deposit limit to $800,000; allowing Farm Management Deposits accounts to be used as a farm business loan offset; and farmers in drought will also be able to access their Farm Management Deposits when they need it, without losing their taxation concessions. These changes will all commence in 2016-17;

The Australian Government has committed $35.0 million, including $5.0 million in 2016-17, to shovel-ready projects that have created job opportunities and provide short-term help in communities that are suffering economic downturn due to drought; and

The Australian Government has provided $25.8 million over four years, with over $4 million allocated in 2016-17 alone, to help the 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 which will direct levy funds to areas that will improve farm gate returns;

$100.0 million has been provided to extend the Rural Research and Development for Profit Programme to 2021-22, meaning farmers will benefit from getting research out of the laboratory and onto the farm, which is key to productivity growth;

A research boost of $1.4 million over four years will be provided to the export fodder and tea tree oil industries to match new agricultural production levies, as well as an increase in the matchable voluntary contribution rate for Forest and Wood Products Australia;

Support for research, development and extension in small industries through $1.2 million over three years for the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation;

The Australian Government will be better placed to tackle pest and disease incidents, and to enable future containment and eradication programmes to be put in place, with over $12 million of a total $50.0 million committed to boost our emergency pest and disease eradication and national response capability in 2016-17;
- 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 our $50.0 million commitment to manage established pest animals and weeds, with $14.5 million allocated in 2016-17.

**Accessing Premium Markets**

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

- The Australian Government is making $8.7 million available in 2016-17 to break down technical barriers to trade, in turn helping farmers and food processors to achieve increased returns from increased security of existing market access and access to new 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 funding improved biosecurity surveillance and analysis to better target critical biosecurity risks, including in northern Australia; and

- Sound traceability systems help to ensure markets remain open, thereby increasing access and returns to farmers. In 2016-17, $4.4 million is being provided to modernise Australia’s traceability systems, to verify integrity of products and improve access to overseas markets.

**Farm Household Allowance**

The Farm Household Allowance commenced on 1 July 2014 and is an uncapped, demand-driven programme that provides eligible farmers and their partners who are experiencing financial hardship with assistance and support to improve their long-term financial position.

The Australian Government recognises that farmers may experience significant financial hardship for a range of reasons—not just during drought. Through the Farm Household Allowance, eligible farm families Australia-wide are able to apply for 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 programme, 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. Starting 1 July 2016, Farm Household Allowance recipients who are in their final (third) year of payment will have access to an additional $1,000 for high value activities to assist their transition off payment before their entitlement ceases.
Farm Management Deposits Scheme

The Farm Management Deposits Scheme is designed to increase the self-reliance of Australian primary producers by helping them manage their financial risk and meet their business costs in low-income years by building up cash reserves.

The Farm Management Deposits Scheme allows eligible primary producers to set aside pre-tax income from primary production in years of high income, on which they can draw in years of low income. Income deposited into a Farm Management Deposits is tax deductible in the financial year the deposit is made and becomes taxable income in the financial year in which it is withdrawn.

Three enhancements are being made to the Farm Management Deposits Scheme as part of the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper:

- the deposit limit will double to $800,000;
- farmers affected by drought will be able to withdraw their Farm Management Deposits early without losing their claimed taxation concessions; and
- Farm Management Deposits will be able to be used to offset the interest costs of primary production loans.

A Bill to implement the changes is currently before Parliament. The changes will give farmers greater flexibility in managing their cash flow and addressing any income downturns.

Rural Research and Development for Profit Programme

The Rural Research and Development for Profit Programme implements the Australian Government’s election commitment to invest an additional $100.0 million in rural research and development over four years from 2014-15. As part of the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper, released in July 2015, the Australian Government extended the programme to 2021-22 and increased the funding to a total of $200.0 million. The programme funds research to increase the profitability and productivity of agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries and address particular high-priority challenges to achieve the best outcomes for producers. Consistent with the election commitment, funded research will focus on delivering cutting edge technologies, with an emphasis on making research accessible to end-users.

$26.7 million of grants were awarded under the first funding round for the programme, and the government has announced that $52.2 million of grants will be delivered under the second round.

As part of the 2016-17 Budget, $9.5 million from the Rural Research and Development for Profit Programme has been allocated to fund high quality proposals to undertake feasibility studies for water infrastructure projects received as part of an expression of interest process under the National Water Infrastructure Development Fund programme. The water infrastructure projects made possible by this additional
funding have the potential to improve the supply of reliable and affordable water for agricultural development in northern Australia.

**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 provides approximately $250 million per year to the Rural Research and Development Corporations. These investments are complemented by funding to Cooperative Research Centres, universities, the CSIRO and other departmental programmes.

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, which may include improving productivity, developing new products or crop varieties, advancing profitable farming systems, managing resources sustainably, or building skills and capacity within the industry. The work of the Rural Research and Development Corporations contributes significantly to the strengthening of the economic diversity of regional Australia. Each Rural Research and Development Corporation has developed five-year strategic plans and, during 2016-17, each corporation will continue to advance their strategic goals.

**Support for Small Exporters**

The 2014-15 Budget implemented the Australian Government’s election commitment to provide a rebate for export registration costs to assist small exporters. A total of $15.0 million has been allocated over four years to focus on assisting small exporters to improve market access. The initiative also includes funding for 2015-16 to 2017-18 for projects to improve market access, with a focus on small exporters.

**A New Post-Entry Quarantine Facility**

The 2012-13 Budget included a $379.9 million investment over seven years in the construction and operation of a new Australian Government-owned and operated post-entry quarantine facility for high risk animal and plant imports. Land for a new facility was acquired at Mickleham in Victoria in 2012 to consolidate existing animal and plant services to a single location. The first phase of construction was completed in late 2015 and the site was officially opened by the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources on 26 October 2015. Operations commenced in November 2015 with the first arrival of imported animals. Phase two of construction commenced in early 2016 and operations at other facilities will be transferred progressively to the new station with the process scheduled to be completed in 2018.

**Stronger Biosecurity and Quarantine**

The Stronger Biosecurity and Quarantine initiative delivers on the Australian Government’s election commitment to provide $20.0 million over four years from 2014-15 to 2017-18 to strengthen Australia’s biosecurity and quarantine arrangements.
The initiative provides early assistance to respond rapidly to pest and disease incursions in order to reduce the adverse impacts on affected regions, industries and communities.

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

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

**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 (agvet chemicals) while retaining protections for the health and safety of humans, animals and the environment.

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

These reforms will provide farmers with access to new farm chemicals more quickly, making their businesses more productive and sustainable.

**Improving Access to Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals**

The small size of the Australian market can make the costs involved with registering an agvet chemical for its use in Australia uncommercial. This is particularly the case for treating pests and diseases in specialty crops and livestock species. As established in the 2014-15 Budget, the Australian Government has committed $8.0 million over four years to help farmers gain improved access to safe and effective agvet chemicals, to assist them in producing food for Australia and the world.

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources is working closely with the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority, grower groups, Rural
Research and Development Corporations and the chemical industry to deliver this commitment.

A number of activities have commenced under the initiative, including work to:

• establish an Agvet Collaborative Forum to allow users and chemical companies to identify and agree on chemical products and uses that deserve approval for use in Australia;

• establish an assistance grants programme to help fund the generation of sufficient data to support applications to the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority for taking into account the results of the collaborative forum;

• establish an official Australian crop grouping list and associated Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority guidelines; and

• start a project to migrate some Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority permits to product labels.

These initiatives, particularly the assistance grants programme, will provide short term relief to producers while longer term solutions are developed and implemented through broader reforms.

**Council of Australian Governments Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Reforms**

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

The Agvet Chemical Task Group oversees the implementation of the COAG reforms. In 2013-14, working groups were established under the Agvet Chemical Task Group to focus on delivering key elements including reviewing the minimum training and licensing requirements, and improving access to agricultural chemicals.

**National Landcare Programme**

Built on the principles of simple, long term and local, the National Landcare Programme is investing $1 billion over 4 years from 2014-15 to deliver projects that address sustainable agriculture and environmental issues and is administered collaboratively by the Department of the Environment and the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources.

The programme includes a long term approach to investment, requirements for regional Natural Resource Management organisations to provide funding directly to community and farmer groups; simplified reporting; and stronger approaches to
community and industry participation in decision making. Sustainable fishing and water quality in estuaries and coastal marine environments is being supported through OceanWatch, which is a recognised Natural Resource Management organisation.

**Australian Government Reef Programme**

The Australian Government has committed over $82.4 million over four years from 2014-15 from the National Landcare Programme to the Reef Recovery Programme. This funding is part of the Australian Government’s joint commitment with the Queensland Government to ensure a $2 billion investment in the Great Barrier Reef (the Reef) over 10 years.

The Reef Programme is jointly managed by the Department of the Environment and the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources. The Australian Government Reef Programme includes funding to assist land managers across the Reef catchment to adopt improved agricultural and urban management practices that reduce the discharge of nutrients, sediments and pesticides in the Reef lagoon and thereby improve the Great Barrier Reef’s resilience.

**Trade and Market Access**

Agricultural export industries underpin prosperity in regional Australia through both employment and income generation. The Australian Government is continuing to develop and maintain opportunities for agricultural products to ensure they remain competitive and find new markets overseas. The Department of Agriculture 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; and
- influencing international agricultural policies, management strategies, protocols and standards so that Australian exports are not disadvantaged in world markets.

**Water Infrastructure**

The Australian Government is already more than half-way through the roll out of its $15 billion water reform agenda across Australia, which is supporting a diverse range of water infrastructure projects nationally. Much of this funding is occurring in regional areas under the $10 billion Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Programme, primarily in the Murray-Darling Basin, but also in Tasmania and elsewhere. It is administered by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources. Other current water infrastructure programmes in rural and regional areas include the $265.0 million South Australian River Murray Sustainability Programme and the $1.8 billion efficiency measures and constraints management.
In addition, this effort is being enhanced through the Australian Government’s $500.0 million National Water Infrastructure Development Fund which is part of both the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper and the Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia.

National Water Infrastructure Development Fund

The National Water Infrastructure Development Fund (the Fund) will provide $500.0 million to support the future development of water infrastructure, including the construction of dams and/or pipelines, wastewater reuse and managed aquifer recharge. The fund has two parts: the feasibility component ($50.0 million) and the capital component ($450.0 million). Up to $200.0 million of the Fund is targeted to northern Australia. The feasibility funding will support state and territory governments in identifying potential projects to assist agriculture and economic development.

$25.0 million in funding for feasibility studies was announced in the White Paper on Developing Northern Australia – $15.0 million for CSIRO to undertake water resource assessments in the Mitchell River catchment (Queensland), the Fitzroy River catchment (Western Australia) and the Darwin region (Northern Territory); up to $5.0 million for a feasibility study for Nullinga Dam (Queensland); and up to $5.0 million for a feasibility study for Ord Stage Three (Western Australia), including a detailed examination of soil suitability. Due to the high quality of proposals received as part of an expression of interest process, an additional $9.5 million has been allocated to this programme to fund further feasibility studies in Northern Australia.

The remaining $25.0 million of the feasibility component will be allocated to suitable projects through a competitive, merit-based expression of interest process, which closed on 1 March 2016. Capital funding of $450.0 million will be available to construct water infrastructure, in partnership with State and Territory governments and the private sector, from 2017-18.

Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Programme

The Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Programme is a national programme investing in rural water use, management and efficiency. 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 purchase; and supply measures.

The majority of rural water infrastructure funds have been committed to projects in the 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. Investments outside the Basin include $200.0 million in Tasmania to support the construction of dams and backbone irrigation infrastructure.
All Murray Darling Basin State governments have agreed to arrangements that allow for up to 650 gigalitres of Sustainable Diversion Limit adjustments to be achieved through supply measure projects which offset the need for water to be acquired through purchase. These supply measure works will continue until 2024.

The Australian Government has legislated to limit purchase of surface water entitlements across the Murray-Darling Basin to 1,500 gigalitres. This limit will help provide Basin communities with more certainty that the government will ensure a balance between agriculture, the environment and the socio-economic wellbeing of communities.
ATTORNEY-GENERAL’S

The Attorney-General’s portfolio supports development, sustainability and resilience in regional Australia through a diverse range of measures across the portfolio, including in civil and criminal justice and disaster relief and recovery initiatives.

Many Australian Government funded family relationship and legal assistance services are located in regional areas. All Regional Family Dispute Resolution services provided under the Families and Communities Programme for separated and separating families are located in regional Australia.

A number of Community Legal Centres provide state-wide legal assistance services, including outreach services, to regional and remote areas. Community Legal Centres located in metropolitan areas that receive Commonwealth funding also provide targeted specialist assistance in both metropolitan and regional areas through outreach work, 1800 and 1300 telephone advice lines and national websites.

Twelve new specialist domestic violence units and four new health justice partnerships are being established to improve legal assistance services for women experiencing domestic violence. Six out of the twelve new specialist domestic violence units are in regional areas, ensuring that women facing isolation compounded by distance will be able to get help. Indigenous women, and those living in migrant communities, will also receive targeted assistance. The Women’s Safety Package includes $15.0 million over three years for the legal assistance sector, to help women to access legal assistance safely.

There are eight Indigenous legal assistance providers nationally which deliver services from 75 permanent locations, as well as court circuits, bush courts and outreach locations.

The Attorney-General’s portfolio is responsible for a number of crime prevention grant funding programmes available to Australian, State, Territory and local government bodies and not-for-profit organisations. Out of 100 active crime prevention projects nationwide, 33 are currently being delivered in regional Australia.

The Attorney-General’s portfolio provides natural disaster relief and recovery support to communities throughout Australia. This year the Australian Government’s Disaster Recovery Payment and Disaster Recovery Allowance initiatives assisted communities recover from the Waroona bushfire in Western Australia.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Families and Communities Programme – Family Law Services

In 2016-17 the Australian Government will provide $162.0 million for the Family Relationships Services Programme. Of this, $156.0 million will be provided for a range
of post separation services under the family law stream of the Families and Children activity of the Families and Communities Programme. The funded services are:

- Family Relationship Centres;
- the Family Relationships Advice Line;
- family dispute resolution;
- regional family dispute resolution;
- children’s contact services;
- parenting orders/post separation cooperative parenting;
- supporting children after separation; and
- counselling.

The family law services stream aims to provide alternatives to formal legal processes for families which are separated, separating or in dispute to improve their relationships in the best interests of children. The services are located throughout Australia, including regional areas.

**Women’s Safety Package**

On 24 September 2015, the Prime Minister and the Minister for Women announced the Women’s Safety Package (the Package). The Package delivers $100.0 million in funding for a number of measures, including $15.0 million over three years for legal assistance services. This funding will be used to run a nationwide pilot initiative, delivering targeted services to help women experiencing domestic violence.

In total, the Australian Government has determined twelve service locations to establish a new specialist domestic violence unit, with four of these also building a health justice partnership with a hospital or health centre. Locations are spread across all States and Territories and will include six regional and remote areas including the Dubbo and Mallee regions, the Kimberley, Townsville, Alice Springs and North-west Tasmania.
Attorney-General’s

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<th>Region</th>
<th>Funded Service Provider</th>
<th>Three-year Funding</th>
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Specialist domestic violence units and health justice partnerships

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<th>Funded Service Provider</th>
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<td>Alice Springs</td>
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National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services

The new National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services commenced on 1 July 2015 and will deliver $1.3 billion in Commonwealth funding to legal aid commissions and community legal centres over the next 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

In the first half of 2015-16, 2369 or 14 per cent of grants of legal aid grants for Commonwealth matters were received by persons who reside in rural and remote areas. This percentage is lower than previous years due to a change in the way rural and remote areas have been reported under the new National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services.

Community Legal Centres

In the first half of 2015-16, 1632 or 20 per cent of community legal centre representation services were received by persons who reside in rural and remote areas. This percentage is lower than previous years due to a change in the way rural and remote areas have been reported under the new National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services.
areas have been reported under the new National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services.

**Indigenous Legal Assistance Services**

The Indigenous Legal Assistance Programme funds Indigenous legal assistance providers to provide culturally appropriate, accessible legal assistance and related services to Indigenous Australians so that they can fully exercise their legal rights as Australian citizens. There are eight Indigenous legal assistance providers nationally which deliver services from 75 permanent locations, as well as court circuits, bush courts and outreach locations.

**Crime Prevention Funding Programmes**

The Attorney-General’s Department manages a number of crime prevention grant funding programmes including the Schools Security Programme, and funding under the *Proceeds of Crime Act 2002* which includes the Safer Streets Programme. Approximately $8.5 million is being provided to organisations currently delivering projects in regional Australia.

Programmes under the *Proceeds of Crime Act 2002* address crime and anti-social behaviour by providing funding for community crime prevention and law enforcement. For example, the Safer Streets Programme is designed to provide funding for eligible organisations to install security related-infrastructure such as closed-circuit television cameras or lighting, or other crime prevention through environmental design initiatives in areas experiencing problems with criminal or anti-social behaviour.

The Schools Security Programme is funding government and non-government schools across Australia facing a risk of attack, harassment or violence stemming from racial or religious intolerance to install lighting, fencing and closed-circuit television cameras and to employ security guards.

**Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements**

Every year bushfires, floods, storms and other devastating natural disasters cause significant loss and damage in communities across Australia that require recovery efforts from individuals, communities, and State, Territory and local governments. Over the past five years Australia has endured natural disasters with increasing frequency and magnitude. In 2016-17, the Australian Government will continue to support communities to recover from natural disasters through the joint Australian, State and Territory Government Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements.

The Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements are a comprehensive national policy and financial framework for disaster recovery. Under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements, the Australian Government provides funding assistance to State and Territory governments to alleviate the financial burden of providing emergency and recovery assistance to disaster-affected individuals, communities, small businesses and primary producers, including for the restoration or
replacement of essential public assets, and community recovery packages to restore social networks, communities’ functioning and community facilities.

The Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements has been made available to individuals, communities, small businesses, primary producers and the not-for-profit sector for a range of natural disaster events in Australia during 2015-16.

**Disaster Recovery Payment**

The Disaster Recovery Payment is a one-off, non-means tested payment to eligible Australian residents who have been adversely affected by a major disaster either in Australia or overseas. It is activated if the Minister for Justice determines the impact of a disaster on individuals and families requires Australian Government assistance in addition to that provided under standard recovery assistance through the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements. In making this decision, the Minister for Justice will consider the number of individuals affected, the extent to which the nature or extent of the disaster is unusual, overall impact on a community, and the full range of Australian, State or Territory Government assistance measures available to the community. The Disaster Recovery Payment provides financial assistance of $1,000 for eligible adults and $400 for eligible children.

During 2015-16, Disaster Recovery Payment has been made available to communities in:

- New South Wales in response to the east coast storms and flooding;
- Queensland in response to tropical cyclone Marcia;
- Northern Territory in response to tropical cyclone Lam;
- Western Australia in response to the Waroona bushfire; and
- South Australia in response to the Sampson Flat and Pinery bushfires.

**Disaster Recovery Allowance**

The Disaster Recovery Allowance provides short-term income support to eligible individuals who experience a loss of income as a direct result of a disaster.

When available, the Disaster Recovery Allowance assists employees, small business persons and farmers who experience a loss of income as a direct result of a major disaster. It is paid at a rate equivalent to the Newstart or Youth Allowance for a maximum of 13 weeks. If, after 13 weeks, the person is still suffering hardship from a loss of income, they will be able to test their eligibility for a longer-term income support payment such as the Newstart Allowance.

During 2015-16, the Disaster Recovery Allowance has been made available to communities in:
• New South Wales in response to the east coast storms and flooding;
• Queensland in response to tropical cyclone Marcia;
• Western Australia in response to tropical cyclone Olwyn and the Waroona bushfire; and
• South Australia in response to the Sampson Flat and Pinery bushfires.

**National Emergency Management Projects**

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

**Natural Disaster Resilience Programme**

The Natural Disaster Resilience Programme supports the States and Territories to deliver initiatives which contribute to safer, sustainable communities and support them withstand the effects of natural disasters. This programme has previously provided States and Territories with $26.1 million per annum to invest in disaster resilience projects. The projects are prioritised by the States and Territories in accordance with state-wide natural disaster risk assessments to ensure they effectively meet the needs of local communities. $52.2 million has been offered to the States and Territories for the 2015-16 and 2016-17 financial years.

**National Bushfire Mitigation Programme**

The National Bushfire Mitigation Programme is providing $15.0 million over three years to the States and Territories to implement long-term bushfire mitigation strategies ($13.5 million through the Attorney-General’s Department) and improved fuel reduction activities ($1.5 million through the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources). The National Bushfire Mitigation Programme is helping to strengthen community preparedness and resilience to bushfires.

**Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse**

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse undertakes a variety of activities in regional areas.

Private sessions, in which survivors of child sexual abuse in an institutional context share their story of abuse with a Commissioner, continue to be held around Australia. Since May 2013, the Royal Commission has conducted private sessions in all
capital cities and 16 regional locations. These sessions allow the Royal Commission to bear witness to the abuse suffered, including by those living in regional Australia.

To date, two public hearings have been held in regional locations – in Rockhampton (Queensland) and Ballarat (Victoria).

Community forums, led by Commissioners, have been conducted in 13 regional locations. Royal Commission staff have also met with local services in 27 regional and remote areas. These activities improve awareness of the Royal Commission’s work, and increase accessibility for those who wish to provide information or otherwise engage with the Royal Commission.
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 initiatives. These initiatives include:

• providing high-speed broadband at affordable prices, and at least cost to taxpayers as soon as possible to all Australians through the rollout of the national broadband network;

• improving mobile phone coverage in black spot areas through the Mobile Black Spot Programme;

• facilitating reforms which will provide increased payments to over 1,600 licenced post offices in remote communities;

• providing support for digital television services;

• providing funding support for community broadcasting services;

• reforming media regulation to remove outdated media control rules and strengthen local content provisions on regional commercial television;

• supporting the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s (ABC’s) provision of local news services;

• maintaining longstanding consumer safeguards relating to access to telecommunications services and undertaking reform of these safeguards; and

• delivering tailored programmes to support artistic and cultural expression, and participation and access to cultural experiences.

People living in regional areas of Australia are already benefiting from the national broadband network (NBN) with NBN Co (nbn) rolling out its fixed wireless network to more areas and launching the “Sky Muster” satellite service. These technologies will ensure that all of remote and regional Australia will be able to access quality high-speed broadband services.

The Australian Government’s Mobile Black Spot Programme will continue to facilitate infrastructure investment in mobile base stations across Australia, including in
regional and remote areas to help improve mobile phone coverage. Round 1 of the programme will enable 499 new or upgraded base stations to be completed and a further $60.0 million for Round 2 of the programme will be made available over two years from July 2016.

The Portfolio also delivers tailored programmes and encourages partnerships that enable the protection, development, production, celebration and exhibition of artistic and cultural expression, and participation and access to cultural experiences.

NEW INITIATIVES

Australian Broadcasting Corporation - Operational Funding

The Government will provide an additional $41.4 million over three years to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), $3.1 billion in base funding over three years, to supplement local news and current affairs services, particularly those located outside the capital cities.

This 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.

This funding will support a range of initiatives, including the continuation of news bureaux in Parramatta, Geelong and Ipswich, and video journalists in Bunbury, Newcastle and Renmark.

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

Media Reform

On 2 March 2016, the Broadcasting Legislation Amendment (Media Reform) Bill 2016 was introduced to Parliament. The Bill will repeal the ‘75 per cent audience reach rule’ and the ‘2 out of 3 rule’ and introduce changes that will protect and enhance the amount of local television content in regional Australia.

Much of the regulatory framework governing Australia’s media was developed when the industry only had three main media platforms: newspapers, television and radio. The current rules are outdated and prevent traditional media companies from exploring all the options available to grow, move into new areas of activity, and access capital and expertise in other media sectors. Many regional commercial television and radio broadcasters are also under financial strain. These amendments will allow regional commercial television and radio broadcasters to operate more flexibly in the market, and ensure they can continue to provide high quality news and entertainment services.

Communities in regional Australia have told the Government how important it is to maintain locally relevant news and information in the bush. To meet these concerns,
stronger local programming obligations will be introduced on 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 would be 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.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Australia’s New Broadband Network

The Australian Government is committed to completing the national broadband network (NBN) and ensuring all Australians, regardless of where they live, have access to high-speed broadband as soon as possible, at affordable prices, and at least cost to taxpayers. The Australian Government is providing $29.5 billion in equity funding to roll out the NBN.

Delivering high-speed broadband to people living in remote and regional Australia is a key priority for the Australian Government, and millions of homes across the country will be connected to the NBN. In particular, the world class fixed wireless and satellite rollouts are accelerating. More than 370,000 homes and businesses can now receive a service over the fixed wireless network, and over 100,000 have ordered a service. The satellite rollout has entered an important phase with the successful launch of the “SkyMuster” satellite late last year, and with commercial services available from 29 April 2016. Overall, nbn’s satellites will cover 400,000 homes and businesses, with more than 200,000 expected to take up the service.

Regional and remote Australians will have improved access to high-speed broadband services, creating new opportunities in the delivery of health services, distance education and entertainment on-demand. The NBN will also allow businesses in regional and remote areas with an improved opportunity to increase their productivity, reduce costs and access new markets.

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 Government by the Community Broadcasting Foundation via a funding deed with the Department of Communications and the Arts. In 2016-17, the Government is providing $15.5 million for the Community Broadcasting Program.

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. Maintaining longstanding consumer safeguards relating to access to telecommunications services.

The Australian Government continues to facilitate access to telecommunications services across Australia through a range of contractual arrangements. These arrangements ensure that standard telephone services and payphones are reasonably accessible to all people in Australia on an equitable basis. They also ensure access to single national emergency call service and the availability of untimed local calls for customers in extended zones, which are outside of Telstra’s standard local call charging zones.

**Mobile Black Spot Programme**

The Mobile Black Spot Programme is providing $160.0 million from 2015-16 to 2017-18 to improve mobile coverage and competition in regional and remote parts of Australia. Under Round 1 of the Mobile Black Spot Programme, 499 new or upgraded mobile base stations will be deployed across the country. In addition to the $100.0 million in Australian Government funding, co-contributions were received from State and local governments, third parties and mobile network operators for a total funding envelope of $384.7 million. The first base stations started rolling out in December 2015.

The Australian Government has committed $60.0 million towards Round 2 of the Mobile Black Spot Programme, with funding to be made available over two years from July 2016. Round 2 will continue to utilise the database of mobile black spot locations as reported by members of the public. Over 10,600 reported locations have been added to the database which mobile network operators will use to select the locations where they propose to deliver improved mobile coverage through Round 2.

The Round 2 Mobile Black Spot Programme Guidelines released on 26 February 2016 call for mobile network operators to submit their funding proposals by 14 June 2016. The locations of the base stations funded under Round 2 are expected to be announced in the second half of 2016.

**Regional Equalisation Plan**

The $250.0 million Regional Equalisation Plan commenced in 2000-01 and provides financial assistance for the conversion of commercial analogue television services to digital in regional and remote areas. All relevant services were converted to digital by the end of 2013, and assistance to most affected broadcasters has concluded. However, assistance towards commercial broadcaster operational costs associated with conversion to digital television will continue until 2016-17 at 49 sites in regional and remote Western Australia.

**Supporting Regional Post Offices**

The post office network provides important services to regional communities. To help ensure the sustainability and viability of licensed post offices in communities across Australia, the Australian Government reformed the postal regulatory framework with effect from January 2016. These reforms enabled Australia Post to boost payments to
Communications and the Arts

over 1,600 licensed post offices in regional and remote communities, and around 2,900 licensed post offices nationwide. An average sized licensed post offices will receive an extra $25,000 per annum. Combined with other measures announced by Australia Post over the last two years, this means licensed post offices will receive an additional $125.0 million per annum in total additional payments.

**Viewer Access Satellite Television**

The Viewer Access Satellite Television programme provides funding to broadcasters to deliver digital free-to-air television services for over 200,000 direct to home satellite users. The Viewer Access Satellite Television service provides free-to-air digital channels from the ABC, Special Broadcasting Service Corporation (SBS) and the commercial broadcasters and, in remote central and eastern Australia, dedicated regional news channels are available which feature the news bulletins of regional commercial television broadcasters.

**Anzac Centenary Arts and Culture Fund**

The Anzac Centenary Arts and Culture Fund is providing $4.0 million in funding from 2014 to 2018 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.

**Australia Council**

The Australia Council provides significant support to the arts in remote and regional Australia through grants for individuals, groups and organisations, national touring programmes, strategic audience and market development, and capacity building programmes. In 2014-15 the Australia Council invested over $28.9 million into regional arts activity across these programmes. The work reached over 1.5 million audience members and included exhibitions, performances, school activities and workshops across all art forms.

In 2016-17 the Australian Government will allocate $8.0 million for targeted national touring programmes delivered by the Australia Council. These programmes support and promote the work of artists and arts organisations as well as providing access to the arts and increasing audiences throughout Australia, with a particular focus on regional and remote communities.

**Regional Arts Fund**

The Regional Arts Fund provides support for sustainable cultural development in regional and remote Australia. The programme 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 programme also funds high priority national strategic projects. In 2016-17 the Australian Government will allocate $3.4 million to the Regional Arts Fund. The programme is
Communications and the Arts

delivered on behalf of the Australian Government by Regional Arts Australia and peak regional arts organisations in each state and by arts ministries in the territories.

Bundanon Trust

The Bundanon Trust is a wholly owned Australian Government company limited by guarantee and 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 delivers a diverse range of functions such as artists in residence and environmental programmes which have long term cultural, economic and social benefits for the local community in the Shoalhaven region. In 2016-17 the Australian Government will allocate $1.6 million to the Bundanon Trust.

Contemporary Touring Initiative

The Contemporary Touring Initiative is delivered by the Australia Council as part of the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, a formal agreement between the Australian, State and Territory governments to support the Australian contemporary visual arts sector. The Initiative supports the development and touring of nationally significant exhibitions of contemporary visual arts and craft to reach and engage audiences, and extend contemporary visual arts and craft touring across Australia.

Community Heritage Grants

The Community Heritage Grants Programme receives Australian Government funding of approximately $600,000 per annum to 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, 1,192 projects across Australia have received $5.8 million in funding, almost half of which has gone to regional organisations.

Festivals Australia

Festivals Australia provides access to a diverse range of high quality, innovative arts projects that grow audiences at festivals across regional Australia. In 2016-17 the Australian Government will allocate $1.2 million to support arts projects that encourage partnership and collaboration across the arts sector and encourage community participation in arts activities at festivals in regional and remote areas.
Indigenous Languages and Arts and Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support programmes

The Indigenous Languages and Arts and Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support programmes enrich the social, cultural and economic life of Indigenous communities and provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to generate income, gain employment and develop professional skills, while maintaining a continued connection to country and culture.

The Australian Government provides approximately $40 million per annum through these programmes, the vast majority of which supports activities in regional and remote locations.

The Indigenous Languages and Arts programme supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people keep cultural identity strong by providing funding to:

- revive and maintain Australia’s Indigenous languages; and
- assist communities to deliver diverse arts projects that showcase, protect and encourage participation in traditional and contemporary Indigenous artistic expression.

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

The Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support programme contributes 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 8,000 Indigenous artists and over 300 Indigenous arts workers to generate income and participate in the nation’s economy.

Indigenous Repatriation

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

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 programme which collects, conserves and exhibits Australia’s rich maritime heritage by helping these groups undertake this important role.
The Scheme is jointly funded by the Australian Government and the Australian National Maritime Museum and provides grants up to $10,000 to cultural institutions and community organisations for collection management initiatives, including documenting and caring for collections; and presentation projects, including education programmes and workshops.

More than 75 per cent of the grants funded under the Scheme in the 2015-16 financial year to date, were provided to projects and institutions located in regional Australia. 68 per cent of applications were from institutions located in regional Australia.

**National Collecting Institutions Regional Outreach**

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. These include travelling exhibitions, loans of collection objects, online access to education programmes and digital content, professional guidance and support to regional museums and fellowships.

**National Collecting Institutions Touring and Outreach programme**

The National Collecting Institutions Touring and Outreach programme provides funding of $1.0 million per annum to assist the National Collecting Institutions in the development and touring of their collections within Australia. The aim of the programme is to:

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

Since the inception of the programme in 2009-10, the Australian Government has funded $7.0 million towards the development and/or touring of 59 exhibitions to over 150 venues.

**National Touring Programmes**

In 2016-17 the Australian Government will continue to support the national touring programmes, which assist and promote the work of artists and arts organisations as well as providing access to the arts and increasing audiences throughout Australia, with a particular focus on regional and remote communities.

The Visions of Australia Regional Exhibition Touring programme provides $2.4 million annually towards the costs of developing and touring exhibitions of cultural material that has historic, scientific, design, social or artistic significance. The
Visions of Australia Regional Exhibition Touring improves access for Australians in regional and remote areas to Australian cultural material.

Playing Australia is a regional performing arts touring fund that supports costs associated with national tours of performing arts, with a focus on access to the arts for regional and remote communities across Australia. Playing Australia includes the National Touring Status initiative, which was recently created based on consultation with the arts sector. The initiative is designed to enhance the development and engagement of regional and remote audiences through longer term partnerships with presenters. These grants enable the funded companies to plan and present a longer-term regional touring and engagement strategy for their 2015-17 touring programmes. The National Touring Status grant applicants were able to apply for up to $400,000 per annum.

The Contemporary Music Touring programme supports national touring activity undertaken by Australian musicians performing original contemporary music. It provides travel support of up to $15,000 for artists and their manager for tours in Australia that include performances in regional and remote areas. An additional request of up to $15,000 can be sought for tours to remote and very remote areas.
The Department of Defence and the Australian Defence Force makes a significant contribution to the development of regional Australia through the establishment of Defence facilities and by fostering linkages with the communities in which Defence members are based. Defence activities provide considerable indirect support to the regional communities surrounding its facilities. As at 29 February 2016, total overall numbers of Defence personnel in regional centres across Australia was 27,728, which equates to 28 per cent of the total 99,300 Defence personnel.

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

**Figure 1: Location of major defence facilities across Australia**
CURRENT INITIATIVES

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 to the civilian community 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. Most recently, the Australian Defence Force has provided emergency Defence Assistance to the Civil Community to communities in Australia affected by bushfire and cyclones.

Examples of Defence Assistance to the Civil Community include support to state and local services in the event of natural disasters such as the Victorian “Black Saturday” bushfires in 2009 and Cyclone YASI in 2011.

Defence Industry Development

Australia’s defence industry plays a vital role in supporting Defence and delivering leading edge technologies and capabilities that are needed to generate and sustain the future force. The 2016 Defence White Paper ensures investment in key enablers and facilities and prepares for acquisition and construction of major capabilities such as future frigates.

A significant proportion of Defence expenditure will be spent in Australia to acquire, construct and sustain Defence capabilities and to maintain Defence facilities across Australia. There will be significant investment in major capital in Defence infrastructure, including air fields, wharves, bases, training areas and other facilities. Defence will need the support of local services to sustain such a large and geographically dispersed asset base.

Examples of Defence maintenance and support locations in regional Australia include:

- Oakey and Townsville (Queensland), Darwin (Northern Territory) and Nowra (New South Wales) for helicopters;
- Bandiana and Bendigo (Victoria) and Darwin (Northern Territory) for military fighting vehicles;
- Lithgow (New South Wales) for weapons manufacture and maintenance;
- Mulwala (New South Wales) and Benalla (Victoria) for ammunition and explosive ordnance manufacture; and
• Darwin (Northern Territory) and Cairns (Queensland) for naval vessels.

The 2016 Defence Industry Policy Statement fundamentally resets the Defence-industry relationship. A key initiative of the 2016 Defence Industry Policy Statement to foster the new Defence-industry partnership is the newly announced Centre for Defence Industry Capability. Funded to around $23 million per year, the Centre for Defence Industry Capability is a close collaboration between the private sector, Defence and the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science. The Centre for Defence Industry Capability will provide Australian small to medium sized companies with a range of services to maximise their competitiveness, build export potential, and facilitate their access to Defence innovation programmes. Through the Centre for Defence Industry Capability, the Government is seeking to grow and develop Australian industry that can support the effective and efficient delivery of Defence capability. To achieve this, the Centre for Defence Industry Capability will have a network of business and skills advisors across Australia who will work closely with the companies and guide the priorities across defence industry. It will be headquartered in Adelaide with services to be provided across the country.

**Defence Logistics Transformation Program**

The Defence Logistics Transformation Program is a complex initiative that is implementing deep reform across the national Defence logistics network to continue the savings of the Defence Strategic Reform Program. It is achieving an improved logistics service delivery model through new contracts for warehousing and distribution and land materiel maintenance services.

The logistics service delivery model is supported by modern, purpose-built facilities employing efficient best-practice processes, technology and systems. In November 2013, the Australian Government committed $752.7 million to logistics infrastructure to modernise and enhance wholesale storage, distribution and land materiel functions of the Joint Logistics Command units to provide optimum support to Defence operations.

Works have been completed in Moorebank (New South Wales), Wadsworth Barracks, Bandiana (Victoria), RAAF Base Amberley (Queensland); Robertson Barracks (Northern Territory), RAAF Base Edinburgh (South Australia); and Palmer Barracks and HMAS Stirling (Western Australia).

Works at Lavarack Barracks is ongoing. Construction commenced in December 2012 and is scheduled for full completion by mid-2016.

**Explosive Ordnance Logistics Reform Program**

The Explosive Ordnance Logistics Reform Program will upgrade storage facilities across Australia for all natures of explosive ordnance. This $210.0 million reform programme will upgrade existing storage infrastructure and increase storage capacity across the explosive supply chain network. A focussed upgrade programme will optimise the national explosive storage network and deliver required capacity and operational efficiencies to Defence.
Twelve sites nationally will have infrastructure improvements delivered under the Explosive Ordnance Logistics Reform Programme. These improvements cover bulk warehousing storage, processing facilities, storage for non-explosive dangerous goods and associated roads and administration facilities, but do not include ports infrastructure remediation such as docks and associated infrastructure. The sites receiving upgrades to their explosive storage facilities are RAAF Amberley and Townsville (Queensland), RAAF Edinburgh (South Australia), Garden Island (Western Australia), RAAF Darwin (Northern Territory), RAAF Williamtown, Myambat – Hunter Valley and Eden (New South Wales), HMAS Cerberus, Mangalore – Seymour and Point Wilson (Victoria), and Fort Direction (Tasmania).

The Explosive Ordnance Logistics Reform Program will commence the detailed design process in early 2016. Subject to all required approvals construction will commence 2018.

Defence Community Organisation Program

The Department of Defence is committed to building the capacity of local communities, urban and regional, to provide support services to enable Defence member families to be resilient and self-reliant.

Defence, through 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, programmes 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; and
- providing personalised advice and ongoing communication to Defence member families on available community resources and actively linking families to the resources they require.

Defence Community Organisation has offices in the following locations:

- Queensland – Brisbane, Townsville, Toowoomba and Cairns;
- New South Wales – Sydney, Newcastle, Wagga Wagga, Nowra, Singleton and Albury;
- Australian Capital Territory – Canberra;
- Victoria/Tasmania – Melbourne, East Sale, Cerberus, Puckapunyal and Hobart;
- Northern Territory – Katherine and Darwin;
- Western Australia – Rockingham; and
Defence

- South Australia–Adelaide.

Australian Defence Force Transition Centres are also located across Australia to assist all separating Australian Defence Force members to access information relevant to their needs as well as with transition administration.

Transition Centres provide support and include practical information seminars, personalised assistance to prepare for transition, referrals, help with administration and support for post-service training and employment. Australian Defence Force members and their families can be linked into support services such as the Australian Defence Force Rehabilitation Program, the Department of Veterans’ Affairs, Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation, Centrelink and community resources.

The budget allocation for this programme for 2016-17 is $18.114 million.

**Defence Force Recruiting Support to Regional Australia**

In addition to each of the capital cities, Defence Force Recruiting maintains recruiting centres in some regional centres, including:

- Newcastle, Wollongong and Albury (New South Wales); and
- Cairns, Robina (Gold Coast), Maroochydore, Toowoomba and Townsville (Queensland).

**Indigenous Engagement**

The Department of Defence has extensive engagement with Indigenous communities in remote, urban and regional Australia. In addition to direct entry into Defence employment, the Department of Defence offers pathways programmes for Indigenous Australians seeking a career in Defence as an Australian Defence Force or Australian Public Service member including:

- The Defence Indigenous Development Program – Navy and Army Indigenous Development programmes are aimed at preparing young Indigenous Australians for entry into the Australian Defence Force. Based in Cairns (Queensland) and Batchelor (Northern Territory), the recruitment for these courses is primarily of Indigenous Australians from remote and regional Australia.

- Indigenous pre-recruitment courses and development courses are conducted at HMAS Cerberus (New South Wales) and are designed to competitively prepare young Indigenous Australians for employment opportunities in the Australian Defence Force and Defence Australian Public Service.

- Australian Public Service Indigenous Traineeships, Cadetships and Apprenticeships offer Indigenous Australians entry level Australian Public Service employment. The Department of Defence endeavours to employ Indigenous trainees, cadets and apprentices in their current location, or in close proximity to, where Defence localities and operational requirements allow.
• The Department of Defence has staff based across many locations including Queenscliff (Victoria), Oakey, Townsville and Cairns (Queensland), and Perth (Western Australia), who work with Indigenous communities throughout the country.

• The Jawun Program matches individuals skill sets 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, 51 Defence employees have participated across various locations. Defence recently opened the Jawun Program up to Australian Defence Force members.

• The North-West Mobile Force (NORFORCE) is based at Larrakeyah Barracks in Darwin. Its area of operations covers 1.8 million square kilometres and encompasses the Northern Territory and the Kimberley region of Western Australia. Australian Aboriginal soldiers form approximately 60 per cent of NORFORCE personnel and are drawn mainly from the areas they patrol to draw on their local knowledge.

These programmes contribute to positive outcomes for Indigenous Australians, predominantly through adult employment. They are aimed at increasing enlistment and participation rates into the Australian Defence Force and the Defence Australian Public Service by assisting Indigenous applicants and candidates transition into full and part-time employment. There is also a recognised benefit to both participants and their home communities that have experienced Defence’s Indigenous employment pathways programmes. Participants who return to their community have the skills and knowledge to actively become a leader and role model to others in their community.

Engaging People with Disability

The Defence Administration Assistance Program employs people with disability, through partnerships with community-based Australian Disability Enterprises, to provide Defence personnel with administrative assistance.

Over the next twelve months, Defence will implement the Defence Administrative Assistance Program at the following sites: Fleet Base West, Western Australia; Holsworthy, New South Wales; Victoria Barracks Melbourne, Victoria; RAAF Base Edinburgh, South Australia; Darwin, Northern Territory; as well Townsville and RAAF Base Amberley in Queensland. The programme has been operating in Canberra for over 20 years and in Enoggera, Queensland since 2014.

The budget allocation for this programme over the next three years is almost $9 million.
Defence Housing Australia

Defence Housing Australia’s main function is to provide housing and related services to members of the Australian Defence Force and their families. Defence Housing Australia adds new properties to its portfolio across Australia, including in regional areas, through the renewal of expiring leases, constructions, acquisitions and leasing from private investors or in bulk from property developers.

Defence Housing Australia currently has four development projects in regional areas in Townsville (Queensland), RAAF Base Tindal (Northern Territory), Sale (Victoria) and two projects at Newcastle (New South Wales), valued at approximately $415.0 million. Defence Housing Australia is currently undertaking approximately $45.0 million of upgrade work to Defence Housing Australia houses, employing local contractors in areas such as Kapooka (New South Wales), Alice Springs (Northern Territory), Learmonth (Western Australia) and Katherine (Northern Territory).

Defence Housing Australia’s diverse operations provide significant opportunities for small and medium business in regional Australia by engaging with local trade contractors on residential maintenance services. Defence Housing Australia currently employs contractors in regional areas to undertake a range of maintenance work valued at approximately $12.0 million per year.

United States Force Posture Initiatives

The Force Posture Initiatives agreed between the Australian and United States Governments will see ongoing rotations of United States Marine Corps during the six month dry season in northern Australia, as well as enhanced cooperation between the Royal Australian Air Force and United States Air Force. Both the Australian Government and the Government of the United States, will invest in a range of infrastructure and supporting arrangements for implementation and ongoing support of the initiatives. The United States Force Posture Initiatives are expected to provide opportunities to industry, particularly in the Northern Territory.

The agreement governing the implementation of the United States Force Posture Initiatives in Australia provides for costs of infrastructure and implementation to be undertaken on the basis of proportional use/proportional pay.

Defence infrastructure / Capital Facilities Projects

The Australian Government is investing $1.7 billion in the Major Capital Facilities programme in 2016-17. Capital Facilities Projects are identified by electorate in the Defence Portfolio Budget Statements Appendix. Major Capital Facilities projects in regional locations include the following.

Enhanced Land Force Facilities Stage 2

The Australian Government is investing $1.458 billion in facilities to support Enhanced Land Force Stage 2.
Stage 2 of the project will provide modern purpose-built facilities and supporting infrastructure for the Army’s 8th/9th Battalion and supporting elements of the 7th Brigade. The project will involve the construction of new and refurbished accommodation and training facilities, as well as common use facilities and site infrastructure upgrades, at Defence sites across four States and the Australian Capital Territory.

Construction of facilities and supporting infrastructure at Majura and Duntroon (Australian Capital Territory), Lavarack Barracks, Amberley, Gallipoli Barracks (Queensland), Sydney and Singleton (New South Wales) and Puckapunyal (Victoria) are complete.

All remaining works, including facilities and supporting infrastructure at Cultana Training Area (South Australia), are scheduled for progressive completion by early 2017.

**AIR 7000 Maritime Patrol Aircraft Phase 2B**

The Australian Government is investing $707.9 million to provide new and upgraded facilities and infrastructure to support the introduction of the P-8A aircraft at RAAF Base Edinburgh, RAAF Base Townsville, RAAF Base Pearce and RAAF Base Darwin. Construction is planned to commence in mid-2016 and be completed by mid-2020.

**AIR 6000 New Air Combat Capability**

The Australian Government is investing $1.477 billion to provide new and upgraded facilities and infrastructure to support the introduction of the Joint Strike Fighter at RAAF Bases Williamtown (New South Wales) and Tindal (Northern Territory). Support facilities and infrastructure will be provided at Defence Establishment Myambat (New South Wales) and at seven forward operating bases throughout Australia. Construction commenced in early 2015 and is scheduled for completion by late 2022.

**AIR 9000 Phase 5C (CH-47F Chinook) Replacement Chinook Facilities Project**

The Australian Government is investing $54.8 million in facilities at RAAF Base Townsville (Queensland). This project will provide new and upgraded facilities to support the introduction and sustainment of the new CH-47F Model Chinook Medium Lift Helicopters and associated integration systems.

Construction is completed on temporary facilities and Stage 1 of the C Squadron facilities and has commenced on the Aircraft Simulation facilities and western annex office accommodation. Construction commenced in November 2014 and is scheduled for completion by mid-2017.

**Facilities for the MH-60R Seahawk Maritime Combat Helicopters**

The Australian Government is investing $189.0 million to provide new and upgraded facilities for operational maritime helicopter squadrons at HMAS Stirling (Western Australia) HMAS Albatross and Twofold Bay (New South Wales).
The project aims to provide new and upgraded facilities to support the new maritime helicopter operations. The works include the provision of facilities for explosive ordnance storage, aircraft hangars, aircraft workshops, synthetic training, and working accommodation. Construction commenced in late 2013 and is scheduled for completion by mid-2017.

**HMAS Albatross Redevelopment**

The Australian Government is investing $192.0 million to replace ageing and obsolete facilities and engineering services and infrastructure at HMAS Albatross (New South Wales). This project will provide a combination of new and refurbished facilities to support operational and training outcomes as well as enabling functions. Construction commenced in late 2014 and is scheduled for completion by mid-2017.

**RAAF Base Williamtown Redevelopment**

The Australian Government is investing $274.0 million to sustain and improve the functionality and capability of RAAF Base Williamtown (New South Wales), including upgrades or replacement of critical ageing infrastructure to meet future requirements. Construction is scheduled to commence in mid-2016 and be completed by mid-2021.

**17th Construction Squadron Relocation Infrastructure Project**

The Australian Government is investing $71.8 million to provide facilities to collocate the 17th Construction Squadron with the 6th Engineer Support Regiment and the 21st Construction Squadron at RAAF Base Amberley (Queensland). Construction commenced in late 2015 and is scheduled for completion by late 2016.

**AIR 8000 Battlefield Airlifter Facilities Project Phase 2**

The Australian Government is investing $370.4 million to provide facilities at RAAF Base Amberley (Queensland) to accommodate and support the operation of the new C-27J Battlefield Airlifter aircraft. Construction is scheduled to commence in mid 2016 and is scheduled for completion by early 2019.

**AIR 5349 Phase 3 Growler Airborne Electronic Attack Capability Facilities Project**

The Australian Government is investing $348.6 million to provide working accommodation, maintenance, warehousing and training facilities at RAAF Base Amberley, Army Aviation Centre Oakey (Queensland) and Delamere Air Weapons Range (Northern Territory) to support the introduction of the Growler Airborne Electronic Attack Capability. Construction is scheduled to commence in mid 2016 and be completed in 2021.

**Delamere Air Weapons Range Redevelopment**

The Australian Government is investing $74.4 million to redevelop key range facilities and infrastructure to enable the continued use of the Delamere Air Weapons Range (Northern Territory) including the new Growler Mobile Threat Training Emitter Systems capability. Construction is scheduled to commence in mid 2016 and be completed by mid 2018.
Air Traffic Control Complex Infrastructure Project and AIR5431 Phases 2 and 3 Fixed Base Defence Air Traffic Management and Control System

The Australian Government is investing $409.9 million to provide facilities in support of replacement Air Traffic Management Surveillance, Command and Control Systems under AIR5431 Phases 2 and 3, including the replacement of aged and degraded Air Traffic Control Towers. Construction is planned to be completed by late 2021.

Base Services Contracts

The Department of Defence has entered into base services contracts that support the management of the Defence estate and the daily activities of Defence bases across Australia. Where services are delivered to Defence 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 include estate maintenance, hospitality and catering, range and training area support, living accommodation, transport, cleaning and access control services.

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

The Education and Training portfolio’s objective is to provide learning opportunities for all Australians, regardless of where they live. The Department of Education and Training delivers national policies and programmes to help Australians access world-class child care, early learning, school education, higher education, vocational education and training, international education and research.

Through its range of programmes the Education and Training portfolio supports Australians living in regional and rural communities. For example, the Flexible Literacy for Remote Primary Schools programme supports up to 40 remote and very remote primary schools to improve literacy skills of their students.

The Education and Training portfolio delivers a number of measures to encourage greater workforce participation and productivity across the nation. For example the Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools pilot, taking place in Ballarat and Geelong, supports students to undertake further education, training or work and build skills highly desired by employers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) industries.

NEW INITIATIVES

Students First – Indexation of School Funding From 2018

The Australian Government will provide an additional $1.2 billion from 2017-18 under Students First – indexation of school funding from 2018 measure. This funding will assist in maintaining growth in federal school funding beyond the 2017 school year at a rate that better reflects the increasing costs of schooling.

The funding increase comes from a change of indexation rate moving from Consumer Price Index to an education specific rate of 3.56 per cent from 2018-2020. There will also be an additional allowance for changes in enrolments.

This measure will bring the Australian Government’s total funding commitment to school education to $73.6 billion, an increase of $0.93 billion, over the Budget and Forward Estimates 2016-17 to 2019-20.

Australian International Education: Enabling Growth and Innovation

The Australian Government will provide $12.0 million in funding over four years from 2016-17 to support initiatives under Australia’s first National Strategy for International Education. The National Strategy for International Education commits to engaging regional communities and international students and to promote regional excellence in education, training and research. Increasing regional Australia’s share in the benefits of international education is part of the Australian Government’s plan to sustainably grow the sector.
Additional Funding for Students with Disability

The Australian Government will provide $118.2 million of additional funding, over the existing disability loading, for students with disability over two years from 2016–17. This fulfils the Australian Government’s commitment to students with disability funding, informed by the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability from 2016. This funding is in addition to the $5.1 billion in funding for students with disability already committed by the Australian Government over the period 2014 to 2017.

The funding provides schools with funding certainty for students with disability from 2014 to 2017, and can be targeted to those with the greatest need, including students with disability in regional and remote schools.

National Availability of Early Learning Languages Australia

Following a successful trial involving 41 preschool services in 2015 and an extension to around 300 services in 2016, the Australian Government will invest a total of $5.9 million over two years to make the Early Learning Languages Australia programme available to preschool services nationally from 2017.

The Early Learning Languages Australia programme is an innovative play-based language learning application (app) available on mobile tablet devices that provides preschool children with the opportunity to learn a language other than English, including Chinese (Mandarin), Japanese, Indonesian, French and Arabic.

The apps are designed so that preschool educators do not need to have any knowledge of the language being taught. This is particularly beneficial for use in regional and remote areas where access to qualified language teachers can be problematic.

Using an opt-in “bring your own device” approach, the programme includes education and IT support and funding for 1,000 low socio-economic status preschool services to purchase mobile tablet devices.

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

The Australian Government is committed to preserving Australia’s Indigenous culture and heritage much of which is held within Australia’s regional communities. The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies national collection is a critical research infrastructure with a wide range of tangible benefits for regional Australia, including the tourism, mining, agricultural, environmental and higher education sectors. It supports native title research, policy advice and a range of other research activities. In recognition of the importance of this national collection, the Government has committed $40.0 million in additional funding over four years for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. This will enable the collection of critical cultural knowledge, and promote an understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, traditions, languages and stories, past and present. This knowledge will be digitised to protect it for all Australians. Funding
of $10.0 million per annum for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies is ongoing.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Industry Skills Fund

The growth and competitiveness of small to medium business in Australia’s regional areas is important for our economy. The Australian Government is providing $31.7 million in 2016–17 for the Industry Skills Fund to support Australian businesses, including those in regional areas, to up-skill and re-skill their workers. This helps businesses become more productive, competitive and sustainable in domestic and global markets.

The Fund is the Australian Government’s initiative for addressing workforce capability issues so that businesses can respond quickly to new and changing opportunities. The Industry Skills Fund primarily targets micro and small to medium enterprises that plan to train their workers to capitalise on growth opportunities and adapt to rapid technological change. Businesses operating in, or seeking to expand into, northern Australia are provided with additional support. The Industry Skills Fund also provides for a Skills Adviser Network which delivers intensive support to businesses that are looking to grow and develop their workforce, including in regional Australia.

Skills for Education and Employment Programme

The Skills for Education and Employment programme has operated since 2002. In 2016–17 the Australian Government is providing funding of $125.4 million for this national programme to provide over 24,000 eligible job seekers with language, literacy and numeracy training. This training will assist job seekers to build skills necessary to gain employment or participate in further training. Clients will 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.

Additional Funding For Regional Schools

Under the Australian Education Act 2013, $364.3 million has been allocated in 2016 to support schools located in regional, rural and remote areas that have additional needs. Also, many small regional schools will benefit from demographic-driven loadings totalling approximately $266.1 million.

Flexible Literacy for Remote Primary Schools Programme

The $22.0 million Flexible Literacy for Remote Primary Schools programme supports up to 40 remote and very remote primary schools to implement two explicit teaching approaches: Direct Instruction and Explicit Direct Instruction. The programme is delivered by Good to Great Schools Australia and has been funded since 2013–14. The programme seeks to:
• increase teacher pedagogical skills in teaching literacy through the use of alphabetic teaching approaches, in particular Direct Instruction and Explicit Direct Instruction; and

• improve literacy results for students in participating schools.

Remote Indigenous Students Attending Non-Government Boarding Schools

From 2014 to 2016, non-government boarding schools with large numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding students from remote areas are eligible to receive additional recurrent funding under the Indigenous Boarding Initiative. The Indigenous Boarding Initiative will total $11.9 million. The additional funding will help non-government boarding schools deliver improved services to students and provide effective support to boost school attendance and engagement.

Reading Writing Hotline

The Australian Government provides funding of more than $500,000 in 2016–17 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.

Adult Migrant English Programme

The Adult Migrant English Programme provides up to 510 hours of 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 Australian society. Additional tuition is also available under the Special Preparatory Program and the Settlement Language Pathways to Employment and Training programme. The Australian Government has committed to providing $299.7 million in 2016–17 for the Adult Migrant English Programme. The Adult Migrant English Programme is delivered nationally in metropolitan, rural and regional areas, including through classroom-based and distance e-learning.

Trade Support Loans

Trade Support Loans are loans paid in instalments totalling up to $20,000 over the life of an Australian Apprenticeship. These loans assist apprentices with everyday costs while they complete their apprenticeship. Eligible Australian Apprentices, including those in regional areas, may apply for regular instalments according to their needs.

Australian Apprenticeships Incentives Programme

Eligible employers in rural and regional Australia who want to take on apprentices will continue to benefit from the Australian Government’s 2016–17 investment of $394.9 million in the Australian Apprenticeships Incentives Programme. The measures encourage employing apprentices in regional areas experiencing skills shortages or
skills drought. Apprentices may also be eligible for the Living Away From Home Allowance.

Australian Apprenticeship Support Network

Australian Apprenticeship Support Network places a greater focus on delivery of advice and direct support to apprentices and employers, tailoring support to meet individual requirements throughout the apprenticeship lifecycle. Across the country, there are around 400 Australian Apprenticeship Support Network locations.

Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools Pilot

The Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools (P-TECH) pilot is part of a suite of initiatives designed to build Australia’s science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) capability. The Australian Government has provided $500,000 in seed funding over two years from 2015–16 to test and adapt the United States’ P-TECH model in the Australian context. 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. Pilot sites have been established in the regional communities of Geelong and Ballarat (Victoria).

Commonwealth Grant Scheme

The Australian Government will provide around $7.1 billion in 2016-17 through the Commonwealth Grants Scheme to subsidise students’ higher education costs. This is an increase in funding of 65 per cent since 2009. The subsidy is available for all domestic students enrolled in a bachelor degree at a public university. Students enrolled in other course types or with private higher education providers may also be eligible for this subsidy. Under the Commonwealth Grants Scheme, universities with regional campuses receive additional funding of $70.8 million in 2016-17 in regional loading to help meet the costs associated with these campuses.

Higher Education Loan Program

The Australian Government Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) provides loans to students, including many from regional and rural areas, to help them with the cost of their tuition fees. 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.

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

In 2016-17, the Australian Government will provide $4.5 million to the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education through the National Institutes programme. Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education provides unique tertiary education opportunities for students, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from remote parts of northern Australia.
Higher Education Participation Programme
The Higher Education Participation Programme funds universities to improve access to domestic undergraduate courses for people from low socio-economic status backgrounds and to improve their retention and completion rates. In 2016-17, the Australian Government will provide $146.6 million for the Higher Education Participation Programme, which will benefit students at regional and outer metropolitan universities, which typically have higher proportions of low socio-economic status students. In 2016, universities with headquarters in regional areas were allocated $48.3 million from the Higher Education Participation Programme. The programme helps low socio-economic status students to go to university, for example through scholarships, and assists them in their studies through academic support. Under the Higher Education Participation Programme, universities can develop outreach activities in partnership with primary and secondary schools, vocational education and training providers and community groups to raise the aspirations and build the capacity of people from low socio-economic status backgrounds to participate in higher education.

National Disability Coordination Officer Programme
In 2016–17, the Australian Government will provide $4.3 million for the National Disability Coordination Officer Programme to assist people with disability to access and participate in tertiary education and subsequent employment. The programme aims to build links and coordinate services to ensure a smooth transition from school to tertiary education and, subsequently, the workforce. It operates nationally, including in regional areas.

Higher Education Disability Support Programme
The Higher Education Disability Support Programme assists all public universities, including regional campuses, to fund the cost of educational support services and equipment for domestic students with disability, and to attract and support these students in higher education. In 2016–17 the Australian Government will provide $7.2 million for the Higher Education Disability Support Programme, for the Australian Disability Clearinghouse on the Education and Training website which promotes inclusive teaching and learning practices for students with disability.

The National School Chaplaincy Programme — Supporting the Emotional Wellbeing of Students
The National School Chaplaincy Programme provides pastoral care services by supporting approximately 3,000 schools to engage a chaplain, with 48 per cent of these in schools located in regional, remote or very remote locations. Schools are eligible to receive up to $20,000 per annum (or up to $24,000 for remote/very remote schools) to engage the services of a school chaplain. Schools were invited by States and Territories to apply for funding under the National School Chaplaincy Programme.
Independent Public Schools — Assisting Government Schools and Building Stronger School Communities

The Australian Government recognises that giving schools and school leaders greater autonomy can help improve student results. Great schools have leaders and teachers who have the independence to make the decisions and develop the courses that best meets the needs of their students.

The Australian Government is supporting school autonomy with its $70.0 million Independent Public Schools initiative. The initiative aims to give selected government schools more control of local decision making and to help encourage stronger links between schools, parents and the local community.

The activities being funded include professional development for school leaders in managing their school operations, training for school council members to help them become more involved in their school, and the use of experienced and expert principals to support other schools to build leadership capability.

All States and Territories are participating in the initiative, and over 5,000 government schools across Australia, with millions of students, will benefit. The flexibility and responsiveness provided by the Independent Public Schools initiative will be of particular benefit in regional areas where local schools and their communities are best placed to know what their students need to learn and thrive. Schools in regional Australia will particularly benefit given they often have unique needs that are best understood by the school community itself.

Inspiring All Australians in Digital Literacy And STEM

As part of the Australian Government’s National Innovation and Science Agenda, Australian students will be supported through $64.6 million worth of initiatives to embrace the digital age and increase engagement with science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education. Students who may be most at risk of falling behind in the digital age, including those in regional communities, will be given opportunities to participate and engage.

Teach for Australia

The Teach for Australia programme, introduced in 2009, fast-tracks high calibre, non-teaching graduates (known as Associates) into disadvantaged schools through two years of intensive teacher training that leads to a Master of Teaching. To date the Australian Government has supported eight cohorts of the programme, providing $34.65 million for cohorts one to five and, through the current contract, an additional $22.4 million for cohorts six to eight. Teach for Australia partners with schools serving low socio-economic communities, with over 170 Associates being placed in regional and remote communities, including Portland and Horsham (Victoria), Katherine and Tennant Creek (Northern Territory), and Kalgoorlie (Western Australia). Over 40 per cent of Associates are working in regional communities, filling hard-to-staff teaching positions.
The National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education for 2016 and 2017 (National Partnership)

The Australian Government has committed a further $843.0 million to extend the National Partnership arrangements to support preschool programmes until the end of 2017. Universal access to early childhood education aims to ensure children can participate in a quality, early childhood education programme in the year before full-time school.

Jobs for Families Child Care Package

The Government will invest around $40 billion in child care support over the next four years. This includes an increase of more than $3 billion to support implementation of the Jobs for Families Package announced in the 2015-2016 Budget, and transition support to the new arrangements. This additional investment is to provide care that is affordable, accessible, and flexible. Support for rural and remote families is an important feature of the Jobs for Families Child Care Package, including recognising the extra challenges families face to access child care and early learning in rural and remote locations. The Package is being implemented in stages, with the Nanny Pilot Programme commencing in January 2016 and the Inclusion Support Programme commencing in July 2016.

Interim Home-Based Carer Subsidy Programme (Nanny Pilot Programme)

The Interim Home-Based Carer Subsidy Programme commenced on 1 January 2016. The programme is a trial of extending fee assistance to care delivered in the home by nannies in parallel with the existing In Home Care Programme. The Interim Home Based Carer Subsidy Programme targets families who find it difficult to access mainstream child care services, including shift workers (such as nurses, police officers and ambulance officers) and families living in regional and remote areas. As part of the 2016-17 Budget, the maximum per child subsidy has been lifted from $5.95 an hour to $8.50 an hour. Service providers will also have the opportunity to directly recruit families where there is spare capacity to do so. The programme has also been extended to 30 June 2018.

Inclusion Support Programme

The Inclusion Support Programme will improve the capacity and capability of child care services to include children with additional needs alongside their typically developing peers. Children with additional needs include children with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children or children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Support will include practical inclusion advice, increased funding to services to assist with the inclusion of children with additional needs and access to specialist equipment. Approximately $543 million will be provided over four years for this programme. This will help to ensure children with additional needs in regional and rural areas have the opportunity to participate in early childhood learning programmes.
Child Care Service Support Programme

The Child Care Services Support Programme provides financial assistance to child care service providers to improve access to child care for children, families and communities.

A key element of the Child Care Services Support Programme is the Community Support Programme, which supports the sustainability of child care for all Australian children and families, including in areas or under circumstances where services would not otherwise be viable—such as in disadvantaged or regional and remote areas.

National Occasional Care Programme

The Australian Government believes that families deserve a greater choice in meeting their child care needs and understands that occasional care provides a vital service for many families. This is particularly evident among families living in regional, rural and remote areas, where occasional care may be required due to seasonal work. In line with this, the Australian Government reinstated funding from 2014-15 for Non-Child Care Benefit approved occasional care, known as the National Occasional Care Programme.

The Australian Government has entered into project agreements with Victoria and South Australia to deliver increased access to occasional care, particularly in regional and remote areas, with approximately $6 million of Australian Government funding committed to these two States over the forward estimates.

State and Territory governments are also being asked to provide a co-contribution of 45 per cent of the cost.

Jobs, Education and Training Child Care Fee Assistance

Jobs, Education and Training Child Care Fee Assistance provides parents on eligible income support payments, many who live in regional areas, with additional assistance to help meet the cost of child care. The Australian Government is investing $39.1 million in the programme in 2016–17. Eligible parents are given increased help to meet the cost of child care while they enhance their skills through work, study or training to enable them to enter or return to the workforce.

Budget Based Funded Service Programme

The Budget Based Funded Services Programme supports access to child care in regional, remote and Indigenous communities. The Australian Government provides funding to approximately 300 child care and early learning services through this programme.

Budget based services currently include centre-based long day care, out-of-school-hours care, mobile child care services, and playgroups. The Australian Government has committed $61.8 million to the programme in 2016-17.
Research Block Grants

In 2016, the Australian Government is providing $1.8 billion to universities to support research and research training through a number of performance-based schemes. Research block grants are provided to all Australian 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.

The Australian Government announced in the National Innovation and Science Agenda that it will drive greater research-industry collaboration by introducing new research block grant funding arrangements for universities in 2017 that will give greater emphasis to success in industry and other end-user engagement. An additional $180.4 million will be provided over the forward estimates to increase incentives for research collaboration.

National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy

Under the National Innovation and Science Agenda, the Australian Government has committed ongoing funding of $150.0 million per year from 1 July 2017 (indexed for inflation) to the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy to support the operations of major national research infrastructure.

Prior to the commencement of this funding, the Australian Government provided an additional $150.0 million in 2016–17 on top of the $150.0 million provided in 2015–16 to operate and maintain existing research infrastructure. The strategy provides important infrastructure to the Australian research community and benefits rural and regional Australia through localised research infrastructure projects and facilities.

Future funding under National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy will be subject to the outcomes of the 2016 National Research Infrastructure Roadmap.

The Antarctic Gateway Partnership

In 2014, the Australian Research Council funded a new research initiative to enable scientific collaboration between the University of Tasmania, CSIRO and the Australian Antarctic Division. Investment of $24.0 million over three years from 2014–15 on the Antarctic Gateway Partnership Initiative will cement Hobart and Australia as a global hub for Antarctic and Southern Ocean research with flow on financial benefits to Tasmania.

Tropical Health and Medicine

North Queensland continues to benefit from the Australian Research Council’s funding of $42.0 million over four years from 2014–15 for the Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine at James Cook University. This unique research project is helping to improve health outcomes and service delivery for regional, remote, and under-served communities in tropical Australia, in particular, through research and training in virology, disease and transmission control as well as the development of new treatments and vaccines for tropical diseases.
Education and Training

Australian Research Council

The Australian Research Council advises the Australian Government on research matters, manages the National Competitive Grants Programme and the Excellence in Research for Australia initiative. The Australian Government will invest approximately $745.1 million in the National Competitive Grants Programme to support research across a wide range of disciplines including regional and rural issues. Recipients of funding under the grants programme include universities in regional areas, and the Australian Research Council encourages partnerships between researchers and industry, government, community organisations and the international community.

Women’s Safety Package

Under the $100.0 million Women’s Safety Package, the Government is providing $5.0 million to develop curriculum and teaching resources to educate children at all year levels across primary and secondary schools, from Foundation to Year 12, in age-appropriate ways about respectful relationships and on ways to recognise and counter domestic violence. This will be done by developing new and additional resources to support the teaching of the respectful relationships component of the Australian Curriculum: Health and physical education, which was endorsed by all Australian Education Ministers on 18 September 2015.

The curriculum and teaching resources will be freely available to all Australian schools through an expanded and refreshed Safe Schools Hub website, which is the digital home of the National Safe Schools Framework and provides a range of free high quality information and resources on student safety and wellbeing for teachers, students, parents, specialist professionals, and pre-service teachers.
EMPLEYMENT

Employment is the foundation of Australia’s economic strength and social wellbeing. Work helps individuals to fulfil their potential, families to thrive and communities to prosper and grow.

The Employment portfolio has a central operational and influencing role in advising on and delivering national economic and social initiatives to improve Australia’s workforce participation, productivity and jobs growth.

Of particular benefit to regional Australia will be the Australian Government’s new Youth Employment Package. Measures under this package include the Youth Jobs Path which aims to boost young people’s job prospects by helping them be better prepared for the workplace and encouraging more businesses to hire them. The Youth Employment Package also includes measures to encourage young Australians to start a business and create their own job.

Measures under the Youth Employment Package build on the early achievements of the Youth Employment Strategy announced in the 2015-16 Budget. These include achievements through initiatives such as the Transition to Work service, Empowering YOUth Initiatives and ParentsNext, which provide individualised services for youth and parents to prepare for employment and build employability skills.

The jobactive employment services system introduced in July 2015 will also continue to deliver enhanced employment services to better meet the needs of job seekers and employers, covering regional Australia through a range of programmes designed to overcome barriers for job seekers to find and stay in employment. These include redesigned wage subsidies, the Relocation Assistance to Take Up A Job Programme, and a range of measures to assist young job seekers and others at a comparative disadvantage.

NEW INITIATIVES

Youth Employment Package

The Government’s $840 million Youth Employment Package, commencing 2016-17, aims to give young job seekers the employability skills and real work experience they need to get a job. The Youth Employment Package will be highly beneficial to regional Australia, particularly those areas experiencing high rates of youth unemployment. The main elements of the package will be available to job seekers in all jobactive regions across Australia.

Youth jobs PaTH – (prepare – trial – hire)

The core of the Youth Employment Package is a $752 million new Youth jobs PaTH for young job seekers under the age of 25 years. The pathway has three elements:
Employment

• Prepare: employability skills training to help young job seekers better understand what employers expect of them in the workplace, and equip them with the skills, attitude and behaviours for them to be successful in a job. Starting from 1 April 2017, job seekers in jobactive who are aged under 25 years will receive employability skills training which is industry endorsed and evidence based to ensure young job seekers can be competitive in the labour market. The training will commence within five months of the job seeker being in employment services (unless extenuating circumstances exist).

• Trial: a voluntary internship placement of between 4 and 12 weeks to give young job seekers a chance to show what they can do in a real workplace. From 1 April 2017, young job seekers under the age of 25 years who are registered with jobactive, Transition to Work or Disability Employment Services and have been in employment services for six months or more will be eligible. The internships provide incentives of $1,000 upfront to a business to host an intern and a $200 fortnightly payment to job seekers on top of their income support.

• Hire: a new Youth Bonus wage subsidy to support the employment of young people. From 1 January 2017 a wage subsidy of between $6,500 and $10,000 for businesses who take on eligible job seekers will create further opportunities for young people. Wage subsidies will be streamlined, paid over six months, and give employers hiring young people more flexibility in how often instalments are paid (e.g. fortnightly, monthly).

Encouraging Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment

The Youth Employment Package also includes an additional $89 million investment in measures to encourage young Australians to start a business and create their own job. These measures build on the success of the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS), which has been helping job seekers establish viable small businesses for over 30 years.

From December 2016, pathways for young people to pursue entrepreneurship will be enhanced by:

• Establishment of two-week “Exploring Being Your Own Boss” workshops for up to 1000 young people per year to give them a taste of what is involved in self-employment and entrepreneurship;

• Internship opportunities of up to 12 weeks for workshop participants to gain first-hand experience in what it takes to run a small business;

• An additional 2,300 NEIS places per year and broadening of NEIS eligibility to provide access to the training and mentoring elements of the NEIS programme to job seekers not on income support;

• Inclusive Entrepreneurship Facilitators will be appointed in three regions with high youth unemployment and low-uptake of self-employment to promote
entrepreneurship and join up local services and programmes (such as jobactive, NEIS, microfinance services and start-up incubators); and

- Entrepreneurship Starter Packs will be made available online and in hard copy to let young people know about the entrepreneurship support services and programmes available in their area, how these fit together and how they can access them.

**CURRENT INITIATIVES**

**Growing Jobs and Small Business Package**

The Growing Jobs and Small Business Package outlined in the 2015-16 Budget is helping employers take on unemployed job seekers, build employability, particularly for young people to transition to work, and strengthen job seeker obligations. The package includes the following employment initiatives of benefit to regional Australia.

**Wage Subsidies**

Wage subsidies support the Australian Government’s broader objectives of increasing workforce participation. A wage subsidy not only encourages employers to take on eligible job seekers, but also assists them to fund job specific training that will allow job seekers to increase their skills and become fully productive employees. There are a number of wage subsidies available for employers who hire eligible job seekers, including long-term unemployed, Indigenous, parents, youth, and mature age job seekers aged 50 or over under the Restart programme. The Australian Government is also improving the design of the wage subsidies in the 2016-17 Budget by paying subsidies over six months, rather than the current 12 months and by reducing red tape for employers and enabling employers to choose more flexible arrangements.

**National Work Experience Programme**

The National Work Experience Programme gives employers the opportunity to develop the skills of potential employees and test their suitability with lower risk and lower financial burden of hiring. Eligible job seekers can undertake voluntary work experience in businesses for up to 25 hours per week for four weeks. Participants continue to receive their income support payment and a supplement to assist with the costs of participating.

**Transition to Work**

The new Transition to Work service for young people aged 15 to 21 years commenced in February 2016 and is delivered in 51 employment regions across Australia, including regional areas. Transition to Work service providers offer intensive pre-employment support to participants to improve their work readiness and help them into work or education. They will support young people through strong connections with employers, community services and schools in their local area.
Empowering YOUth Initiatives
Empowering YOUth Initiatives are funding community based organisations to deliver innovative approaches to support vulnerable young people onto the pathway to sustainable employment. The first 19 initiatives will commence by 30 June 2016.

Engaging Early School Leavers
The Engaging Early School Leavers measure commenced on 1 January 2016 and aims to improve employment prospects for young people who have not completed high school by ensuring they are doing activities that help them into work or study. The measure introduces a new job search requirement that early school leavers must look for work if they are not in full-time education or a combination of education and part-time work.

ParentsNext
New ParentsNext projects commenced in 10 designated Local Government Areas from 4 April 2016, including several regional areas. ParentsNext providers will work with eligible parents in these areas to help them plan and prepare for employment by the time their children are at school.

jobactive
On 1 July 2015 the Australian Government introduced the jobactive employment services model to better meet the needs of job seekers and employers, promote stronger workforce participation and build a prosperous economy. jobactive is delivered from over 1,700 sites across Australia. jobactive providers have the flexibility to deliver services based on the needs of job seekers and employers, tailored to local labour market conditions. For the first time, specific Indigenous Outcome Targets have been incorporated into the jobactive performance framework to increase providers’ focus on outcomes for Indigenous job seekers in regional and other parts of Australia.

Employment Fund
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 job seekers to build the experience and skills to get and keep jobs. The Employment Fund has a focus on training that meets the specific needs of job seekers and employers, work-related items including clothing and safety equipment, post-placement support to help a job seeker stay in the job, work-related licencing and driving lessons which are of particular importance to job seekers in rural and remote locations. The use of the Employment Fund is at the determination of the jobactive provider.

New Enterprise Incentive Scheme
The New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS) currently helps up to 6,300 participants per year to start and manage their own small business. NEIS provides nationally accredited small business management training, mentoring and business advice for up to 52 weeks. NEIS Allowance is also provided to eligible NEIS participants for up to 39 weeks. Where eligible, NEIS participants can also receive
Rental Assistance for up to 26 weeks. From December 2016, an additional 2,300 NEIS places per year will be available and NEIS eligibility will be broadened to provide access to the training and mentoring elements of the NEIS programme to job seekers not on income support. The scheme will also offer two-week “Exploring Being Your Own Boss” workshops for up to 1,000 young job seekers a year followed by an offer of internship with a small business, to encourage young people to consider self-employment as a pathway to employment.

**Relocation Assistance to Take Up a Job Programme**

The Relocation Assistance to Take Up a Job Programme helps to connect job seekers to regional jobs by providing practical and financial assistance to eligible long-term unemployed job seekers who relocate to take up ongoing work. The Relocation Assistance to Take Up a Job Programme provides relocation payments of up to $6,000 for eligible job seekers who move to a regional area or up to $3,000 for eligible job seekers who move to a metropolitan area either from a regional or metropolitan area with higher unemployment. Families with dependent children will receive up to an extra $3,000.

**Work for the Dole**

The jobactive Work for the Dole programme was rolled out nationally on 1 July 2015. Work for the Dole provides work-like experiences for job seekers across Australia to help improve their job prospects and develop the employability skills employers are seeking, as well as meeting their mutual obligation requirements. At the same time, Work for the Dole provides an opportunity for job seekers to give back to their local community. From 1 October 2016 all job seekers move into the Work for the Dole phase after 12 months in employment services.

**Employer and Employee Engagement**

The Department of Employment undertakes employer engagement activities which complement the role of jobactive providers. The objective is to understand the job creation challenges and opportunities being experienced, promote the services and incentives offered to employers through jobactive, and connect employers with those employment services. The activities undertaken depend on the circumstances and specific needs of a particular region, industry or cohort. These range from the running of workshops, information sessions, roundtables and jobs fairs, to facilitating projects that support job seekers to be more competitive for local job opportunities. The Employment portfolio works closely with employers and employees to ensure the workplace relations system is flexible and will encourage employment.

**Protection for Unpaid Employee Entitlements**

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

A number of structural adjustment programmes are in place to assist retrenched workers to transition to new employment as quickly as possible. They help to reduce the regional impacts of large-scale redundancies by providing retrenched workers from eligible companies with immediate access to intensive employment support services. Structural adjustment programmes are available for workers in automotive manufacturing, Tasmanian forestry, and in 2015-16 were introduced for BlueScope workers in the Illawarra, Queensland Nickel workers in Townsville, Arrium and Alinta workers in South Australia, and Caterpillar workers in Burnie. The programmes include employment facilitators in North Queensland, the Illawarra and North-West Tasmania.

Harvest Labour Services and National Harvest Information Service

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

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.

Seasonal Worker Programme

The Seasonal Worker Programme contributes to the economic development of 10 participating countries by supporting workers to undertake certain low and unskilled jobs so they can work in Australia and send money back to their countries. It also assists Australian employers who are unable to source enough local workers to meet their seasonal labour needs by providing access to a reliable, returning workforce. The 10 countries participating in the Seasonal Worker Programme 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, remoteness from larger markets and low levels of investment. The programme is led by the Department of Employment and supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Immigration and Border Protection.
ENVIRONMENT

The Environment portfolio supports the Australian Government in achieving a healthy environment, strong economy and thriving community now and for the future. The Environment portfolio’s programmes and initiatives protect and improve the environment through the four pillars of clean air, clean land, clean water and heritage protection.

The Environment portfolio delivers many environmental and economic benefits to regional Australia. New and existing initiatives support strong and diverse regional economies through protecting and improving the natural asset base they rely on. The Environment portfolio has a strong presence in regional Australia through the work of the Department of the Environment, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the Bureau of Meteorology and the Director of National Parks.

The Australian Government is investing $1 billion over four years from 2014-15 in the National Landcare Programme to support projects that address environmental and sustainable agriculture across the country. Across Australia, the National Landcare Programme is empowering farmers and communities to support sustainable land management practices to deliver long term benefits to our environment, our economy and our country. The National Landcare Programme is administered collaboratively by the Department of the Environment and the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources.

An additional $22.6 million has been committed to the National Landcare Programme from 2016-17 to 2018-19 to support environment protection and natural resource management and the recovery of Australia’s precious wildlife. Funding of $20.0 million from 2018-19 to 2019-20 has been allocated to the 20 Million Trees Programme to plant an additional five million trees in urban, peri-urban and regional Australia. This is restoring, rebuilding and reconnecting habitat for Australia’s animals and plants.

The Green Army is delivering on-the-ground environment and heritage conservation projects across Australia. A total of 500 Green Army projects each year help communities tackle local environmental and conservation challenges while building the skills of young Australians across regional Australia.

The Threatened Species Commissioner is working directly with local communities to protect the species that matter to them. Since 2014, over $190.0 million has been mobilised through programmes such as the National Landcare Programme and the Green Army to support threatened species recovery. The Commissioner’s work is guided by the Threatened Species Strategy which has strong and measurable targets to tackle feral cats and recover Australia’s threatened mammals, birds and plants.

The $2.55 billion Emissions Reduction Fund is supporting practical action to achieve real reductions in emissions in Australia. Regional Australia is receiving the environmental and economic benefits of the Emissions Reduction Fund with a large
proportion of projects outside capital cities. The Emissions Reduction Fund is contributing to meeting the Australian Government’s targets under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The Australian Government is doing more than ever before to protect the Great Barrier Reef (the Reef). The Australian Government is continuing to deliver its joint commitment with the Queensland Government to ensure a $2 billion investment in the Reef over 10 years. We have committed an additional $171.0 million to 2021-22 towards priority actions in the Reef 2050 Plan. This funding will greatly enhance the long-term protection of this precious ecosystem which supports rural and regional communities and industries throughout Queensland.

The Australian Government has committed $56.1 million over four years from 2016-17 to implement new management arrangements for Commonwealth marine reserves. This investment will enable active management of a world-class marine reserve network – the largest in the world – and ensure the future protection of Australia’s marine biodiversity. The funding will support the commercial fishing sector as well as recreational fishers and other marine reserve users in regional Australia.

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 will provide $55.0 million to deliver key priorities in the Australian Antarctic Strategy and 20 Year Action Plan including the first phase in a project for year-round aviation access to Antarctica and support for over-ice traverse science capability. As well as this new funding, the Australian Government has returned funding for the Australian Antarctic Programme in 2016-17 to a sustainable footing. The Australian Government has also signed a contract for a new world-class icebreaker to support the Australian Antarctic Programme. The icebreaker will be home-ported in Hobart.

NEW INITIATIVES

Reef 2050 Plan and Reef Trust Funding Injection

The Australian Government is contributing an additional $171.0 million to the implementation of the Reef 2050 Plan over six years from 2016-17. This funding is part of the Australian Government’s joint commitment with the Queensland Government to ensure a $2 billion investment in the Reef over 10 years. The Reef Trust will combine Australian Government investment with private funds and is one of the key mechanisms supporting delivery of the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan.

Funding of $70.0 million will be provided to the Reef Trust Special Account, making a total contribution of $210.0 million provided by the Australian Government since 2014-15. A further $101.0 million will be provided from the National Landcare Programme to fund additional critical areas for investment under the Reef 2050 Plan—against the seven themes of the Reef 2050 Plan, including capacity building for Traditional Owners, and improving ecosystem health and biodiversity for the Reef.
Environment

As well as being one of the world’s greatest natural assets, the Great Barrier Reef supports a wide range of activities including tourism, fishing, recreation, traditional uses, and research, which generate some 69,000 jobs and are worth $5.6 billion a year. The Australian Government’s investment in the Reef Trust will help protect and preserve the Great Barrier Reef and maintain environmental health and tourism activities in regional Queensland.

Clean Energy Innovation Fund

The Australian Government will establish a new Clean Energy Innovation Fund which will make up to $100.0 million available each year to provide debt and equity financing support for emerging clean energy projects and businesses.

The Clean Energy Innovation Fund will be a joint arrangement between the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and the Australian Renewable Energy Agency. The funding will be provided by the Clean Energy Finance Corporation for investment opportunities by businesses, including in regional Australia, to develop innovative clean energy projects and businesses.

The Clean Energy Innovation Fund will build on the strong support the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and the Australian Renewable Energy Agency are already providing in rural and regional Australia. More than half of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation’s investments support projects in regional Australia, including many of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation’s major renewable energy projects and projects in the agriculture sector.

Australia’s Presence in Antarctica

The Australian Government will provide $55.0 million to deliver key priorities in the Australian Antarctic Strategy and 20 Year Action Plan including the first phase in a project for year-round aviation access to Antarctica and support for over-ice traverse science capability. The Australian Government has returned funding for the Australian Antarctic Programme to a sustainable footing, with funding for Australia’s presence in Antarctica has flow on benefits for the Tasmanian economy.

The Australian Government has signed a contract for a new world-class icebreaker to support the Australian Antarctic Programme. The icebreaker will be home-ported in Hobart. The Antarctic sector, largely centred on the activities of the Australian Antarctic Division in Kingston, 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), contributing to employment and investing locally through operational purchases for Antarctic programme operations.

Funding for the Australian Antarctic Programme will ensure 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.
Commonwealth Marine Reserves

The Australian Government will provide $56.1 million over four years from 2016-17 to implement new management arrangements for Commonwealth marine reserves. 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, increase regional engagement in marine reserve management and deliver social outcomes through ecologically sustainable programmes.

National Landcare Programme

The National Landcare Programme is investing $1 billion over four years from 2014-15 to support a simple, local and long-term approach to enable communities across Australia to take practical action to improve productive landscapes and their local environment. The National Landcare Programme is administered collaboratively by the Department of the Environment and the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources. The Australian Government has committed an additional $22.6 million over three years to 2018-19 to the National Landcare Programme. This will build on success in the National Landcare Programme in restoring habitats and protecting species.

The National Landcare Programme is investing in projects that address environmental and sustainable agriculture issues. A significant proportion of the investment is provided to regional natural resource management organisations in regional and remote areas. These organisations are a central source of support for farmers and local community and environmental groups to take practical action to improve their environment and implement sustainable land management practices.

20 Million Trees

The 20 Million Trees Programme is part of the National Landcare Programme. The 20 Million Trees Programme works with the community to re-establish green corridors and urban forests. It supports local environmental outcomes by improving the extent, connectivity and condition of native vegetation, providing habitat for threatened species and contributing to Australia’s carbon abatement. The Australian Government has allocated $20.0 million from 2018-19 to 2019-20 to the 20 Million Trees Programme. This new funding brings the Australian Government’s total commitment to the programme to $70.0 million over six years from 2014-15. A significant share of the trees are being planted in regional Australia, which are providing the opportunity for local economic benefits such as supporting crop pollination, improving water quality, improving nutrient cycles to maintain the productive capacity of land, and enhanced amenity value.
**CURRENT INITIATIVES**

**Emissions Reduction Fund**

The Emissions Reduction Fund is the centrepiece of the Australian Government’s climate change policy. With funding of $2.55 billion announced in the 2014-15 Budget, the Fund creates a positive incentive for Australians to adopt smarter practices and technologies to cut the amount of greenhouse gases they create.

In under two years the Emissions Reduction Fund has achieved outstanding results. Funding of $1.2 billion has been committed under contracts with 275 projects to deliver 92.8 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emission reductions.

Regional Australia is benefitting, with a large proportion of projects outside capital cities. Land sector projects such as avoided deforestation, human-induced regeneration of native vegetation and savanna fire management will contribute around 65 million tonnes of emissions reductions – equating to over $800.0 million flowing to the land sector. In addition to reducing emissions, these projects have a range of economic and environmental benefits. For example, farmers are reinvesting revenue generated through the sale of carbon credits to improve farm productivity and better manage livestock and feral animals. Indigenous groups are using savanna fire management to help enable communities to continue working and living on their land.

**National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility**

Australia faces challenges in addressing adverse impacts of climate change in coastal regions. In the 2014-15 Budget, the Australian Government committed $9.0 million to the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility, hosted by Griffith University on the Gold Coast. The National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility is equipping local decision makers in the coastal zone to make better informed decisions about when and what action to take in relation to climate risks. In 2016-17 the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility will deliver CoastAdapt, a practical online tool to help local governments and other relevant organisations understand and address sea level rise, storm surges and other coastal hazards.

**Australian Renewable Energy Agency**

The Australian Renewable Energy Agency manages a portfolio of grants that are improving the affordability of renewable energy and increasing the supply of renewable energy in Australia. Many of these projects are located in regional Australia, for example the Australian Renewable Energy Agency has provided:

- $166.7 million support for two large solar photovoltaic plants at Nyngan and Broken Hill; and

- $8.4 million support for the construction of a 5 megawatt solar farm near Normanton in far North-West Queensland.
The Australian Renewable Energy Agency is also delivering a $100.0 million large-scale solar photovoltaics competitive funding process. As part of this process, 22 projects in regional Australia have been invited to proceed to the full application stage.

**National Environmental Science Programme**

The $145.0 million National Environmental Science Programme assists decision-makers to understand, manage and conserve Australia’s environment by funding world-class biodiversity and climate science. The National Environmental Science Programme supports on-the-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 which is supporting the sustainable development of our northern landscapes, based in Darwin;
- the Threatened Species Recovery Hub which 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 which 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 which is supporting environmental quality in urban areas, based in Melbourne; and
- the Earth Systems and Climate Change Hub which is increasing our understanding of the drivers of Australia’s climate, based in Melbourne.

**Green Army Programme**

The Green Army is making a real difference to regional environments and local communities through projects such as rebuilding, reconnecting and restoring habitat, tackling feral cats, weeding, planting, cleaning-up creeks and rivers and restoring cultural heritage places. The Australian Government is providing $362.8 million for the programme from 2016-17 to 2019-20. Of the 1,145 approved Green Army projects, 690 are located in regional Australia.

**Commonwealth Environmental Water**

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. As at 29 February 2016, a total of 5,357 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 programme indicate that Commonwealth environmental watering has already made contributions to key environmental objectives in the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. The Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder has also recruited six local engagement officers working within the Basin, to assist members of the community to participate in environmental water planning and decision making.

**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 Commonwealth marine reserves. The Director of National Parks employs around 200 staff in regional Australia. The majority are located at Booderee, Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta national parks 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.

**Community Heritage and Icons Grants**

The Community Heritage and Icons Grants program supports community groups across Australia in their efforts to promote community engagement and awareness of our National Heritage listed places. The Australian Government has allocated $1.4 million over three years from 2014-15 for this program. The grants benefit regional areas by strengthening local community involvement and engagement with our national heritage. This results in positive on-ground impacts for local communities and heritage in regional Australia and supports regional tourism as a result of national heritage sites being better managed and promoted to visitors.

**Protecting National Historic Sites**

The Protecting National Historic Sites program supports activities that protect, manage and conserve places on Australia’s National Heritage List recognised for their historic values. The Australian Government has allocated $11.5 million over three years from 2014-15 for this program. Many of the 62 eligible National Heritage places are found in regional Australia, each listed for local historic heritage values that have been considered of outstanding heritage value to the Australian nation. Grant funding will support owners and managers in their efforts to better manage these places and to help them promote the values for which they were listed to local and regional communities and to visitors more broadly.
Environment

Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development

The Australian Government has provided over $100.0 million to initiatives that strengthen the science underpinning regulatory decisions on the water-related impacts of coal seam gas and large coal mining development and help build community confidence in coal seam gas and coal mining developments.

The Department of the Environment 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 of the Environment is addressing critical gaps in the scientific understanding of the water-related impacts of coal seam gas and large coal mining development. This includes continuing to deliver targeted bioregional (regional scale) assessments of the impacts of coal seam gas and large coal mining development on water resources in areas across Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia with significant coal resource deposits and development pressure.

Bureau of Meteorology – Stronger Farmers, Stronger Economy

Under the Stronger Farmers, Stronger Economy – new drought management framework, the Australian Government is improving the seasonal climate forecast services for the Australian agricultural sector. This funding is providing more regular, detailed and accurate climate forecasts, and supporting drought preparedness and drought-affected regional communities.
FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE

The Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio’s objective is to help make Australia stronger, safer and more prosperous by promoting and protecting Australia’s interests internationally and contributing to global stability and economic growth. A prosperous regional Australia is at the core of our national interest.

The Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio assists Australian companies to grow their international business by increasing trade opportunities and by helping them enter new markets. The recently signed Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, for example, will work for regional Australia by opening-up access to a group of countries whose markets represent one third ($16.7 billion) of Australia’s total exports of agricultural goods in 2015 ($49.5 billion). The World Trade Organization agreement in Nairobi in December 2015 to eliminate trade-distorting agricultural export subsidies is also a major win for Australian farmers.

Two-thirds of Australia’s total export earnings come from regional industries. Where private financial markets are unable or unwilling to support regional business to take advantage of commercial export and overseas investment opportunities, the Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio can provide practical support through working capital, insurance and other financial solutions.

Tourism is a major contributor to many regional economies as a significant source of income; 44 cents in every tourist dollar is spent in regional Australia. Working in partnership with State and Territory governments, industry and commercial partners, the Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio is implementing programmes to build demand and increase visitor numbers and spending. This includes encouraging tourists to travel beyond our cities and into regional areas.

The Australian Government is working to drive regional growth by attracting foreign direct investment. Australia has a clear comparative advantage in agribusiness, resources and energy, all largely based in regional areas. In Northern Australia, the Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio is working to attract investment in “gateway” infrastructure projects that will link Australia’s north with the Indo Pacific region, improving our ability to trade and access international markets.

Recognising the importance of regional Australia, the Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio has a significant presence across Australia through offices of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Austrade, Tourism Australia, the Export Finance and Insurance Corporation and over 1,600 Australia Post outlets delivering passport services. This is complemented by Australia’s international diplomatic network, which advances Australia’s national interests around the world, including connecting regional Australia to markets and investment opportunities.
NEW INITIATIVES

Increasing our Diplomatic Footprint and Strengthening Australia’s Ability to Trade and Attract Foreign Investment

The Australian Government will increase the nation’s diplomatic footprint by opening an office in Lae (Papua New Guinea) and another post in China with the location to be announced after further consultations with China. In addition to providing consular services, these offices will support Australian small and medium sized enterprises seeking to expand their activities into these regions. In addition, Austrade will re-open its office in Tehran (Iran) to help Australian businesses take advantage of the commercial opportunities that will arise following the lifting of most of Australia’s sanctions.

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

Recently concluded Free Trade Agreements with the Republic of Korea, Japan and China will create new and larger markets for regional producers and service industries. Australian exporters and investors will have immediate and long-term advantages over competitors including: preferential access and large cuts to import tariffs in the beef and dairy sectors; more favourable import tariffs across the resources, energy and manufacturing sectors; and improved services access. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will enhance the Government’s online Free Trade Agreement portal by extending it to all existing and new Free Trade Agreements.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement

In February 2016, the Australian Government concluded negotiations of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, the largest trade deal concluded in 20 years. The Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement will remove tariffs, provide common rules for trade, increase transparency of laws and regulations and reduce costs and red tape for Australian exporters, service suppliers and investors, beyond what existing Free Trade Agreements provide. The agricultural outcomes in particular have the potential to significantly increase commercial opportunities for regional Australia.

Trade Negotiations

The Australian Government is committed to further strengthen trade relationships and is working to progress agreements with India, Indonesia, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the European Union. Economic links in our region will be deepened through the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership negotiations.

Through these negotiations, Australia is seeking new opportunities and certainty over operating conditions in sectors in which service suppliers in regional Australia have significant export potential - including higher education delivered in Australia and
online, aged care and the array of services provided to the agricultural and mining industries.

**World Trade Organization: Outcomes of Tenth Ministerial Meeting**

The World Trade Organization agreement to eliminate trade-distorting agricultural export subsidies is a major win for Australian farmers. Export subsidies have long threatened the livelihoods of Australian farmers by artificially depressing world commodity prices. The agreement will end over $15 billion worth of agricultural export subsidy entitlements worldwide. This outcome is of historic importance and has been a core objective of Australian trade policy since the 1970s.

Beyond the agriculture sector, final agreement was also reached on the expansion of the product coverage of the multilateral World Trade Organization Information Technology Agreement. This outcome will see more than 50 developed and developing countries reduce or eliminate tariffs on over 200 information technology products.

**Attracting Investment into Northern Australia**

Austrade will work with northern jurisdictions to attract investment in “gateway” infrastructure projects that will link Australia’s north with the Indo-Pacific region, improving our ability to trade and access international markets. Greater engagement will also enhance regional productivity by providing the region’s businesses with a more open and predictable business environment, which is being encouraged by the regulatory harmonisation and economic reform initiatives in Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) connectivity agendas.

**Labour Mobility**

The Australian Government’s Seasonal Workers Programme, led by the Department of Employment and supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, assists Australian employers meet low-skilled labour shortages. The Australian Government’s Seasonal Workers Programme allows workers from participating Pacific Island countries to undertake seasonal work in Australia’s agriculture, accommodation and tourism industries. In February 2016, the Government expanded the Australian Government’s Seasonal Workers Programme to the broader agricultural sector, including cattle, sheep, grain and mixed enterprises. The Northern Australian tourism industry has also been invited to join. The Seasonal Workers Programme plays a key role in addressing labour shortages in regional Australia, supporting Australian businesses and helping to grow regional economies.

In addition, the Pacific Microstates - Northern Australia Worker Pilot, led by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, was announced in the Developing Northern Australia White Paper and will bring up to 250 workers from Kiribati, Nauru and Tuvalu to Northern Australia for up to three years to work in lower-skilled industries experiencing labour shortages. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is
negotiating arrangements with employers in the aged care and hospitality industries, and expects the first workers to arrive in 2016.

**EficDirect**

In line with the Australian Government’s focus on making it easier for Australian small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to do business, the Export Credit Agency (Efic) has developed an online platform that allows SMEs to apply for export finance entirely online. The platform – called “EficDirect” – has a quick, simple and efficient application process, which can be completed in as little as 30 minutes and with a loan being provided within nine business days. Online accessibility will be particularly beneficial for SME exporters that are based in remote areas of Australia.

**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. Through the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research, Australia’s world class agricultural researchers in a range of state and Commonwealth agencies, universities and the private sector are working with counterparts in developing countries to enhance and promote agricultural competitiveness and sustainability, increased market access, and value-chain efficiencies and effectiveness. These benefits also flow back to Australia’s agricultural industries.

**New Colombo Plan**

The Australian Government’s New Colombo Plan gives undergraduates from around Australia the opportunity to participate in study and internship programmes in the Indo-Pacific region. Since 2014, over 20 per cent of New Colombo Plan scholarship recipients have been from regional and remote areas. Numbers of grants provided to regional universities under the New Colombo Plan are growing each year. 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 and other links.

**Export Market Development Grants Scheme**

The Australian Government will encourage regional businesses to increase their international marketing and promotion expenditure to achieve more sustainable international sales. The Export Market Development Grants scheme, administered by Austrade, is an Australian Government financial assistance programme for small and medium sized export-ready businesses. It also provides businesses with an opportunity to enter and embed themselves in global value chains — something that encompasses 80 per cent of global trade.

Of the 2,943 grants paid in 2014-15 (relating to eligible export promotion expenditure incurred in 2012-13) 15 per cent were awarded to recipients from regional Australia. Grants provided $16.0 million in financial support to 441 regional recipients.
TradeStart

TradeStart delivers Austrade’s export advisory services through local public sector and industry organisations throughout Australia. The prime objective of the TradeStart network is to assist export ready small and medium sized enterprises to develop international markets for their products and services.

Of the 27 TradeStart locations, 21 are in regional areas, providing greater access to Austrade services for businesses in these regions. TradeStart advisers provide practical export advice to around 2,000 export-ready companies throughout Australia each year, and work closely with the Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio’s international network to facilitate assistance for these exporters in overseas markets.

Promoting Foreign Direct Investment

The Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio will continue to build on its investment promotion work, which was strengthened in 2015 with new funding of $30.0 million over four years. Austrade and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will continue to promote Australia’s credentials and develop our position as a preferred investment destination.

Australia Week Events

The Australian Government will continue to create opportunities for businesses from regional and metropolitan areas to build and expand their business ties overseas. To further this commitment Austrade will deliver large business focused missions in important markets to showcase Australian capabilities and investment opportunities and promote Australia as a world class tourism destination and education partner. This will build on the success of Australia Week in China, the Australia Business Week in India, the Indonesia Australia Business Week and the Australia US Business Week events held to date.

Tourism

Tourism 2020 is Australia’s national tourism strategy to grow the value of the tourism industry to over $115 billion in overnight visitor expenditure by the end of the decade. Through Austrade, the Australian Government is implementing initiatives such as Tourism Employment Plans, Major Project Facilitation, the Tourism Demand-Driver Infrastructure Programme, and the Tasmanian Regional Tourism Fund. Supported by ongoing campaign promotions and tourism research, these programmes will create opportunities for regional and remote communities to grow jobs, diversify their economic base, and generate higher standards of living.

Further practical Australian Government initiatives such as Tourism Employment Plans are focused on delivering strategies to ease the labour and skills pressures facing industry and improving the capability and capacity of regional businesses to build a skilled workforce. Seven pilot plans have been completed to date, addressing industry recruitment, retention and up-skilling needs across Broome, Red Centre, Mornington Peninsula-Phillip Island, Kangaroo Island, Tropical North Queensland and Canberra.
One more pilot will be delivered this year in North-West and West Coast Tasmania, concluding in June 2016.

“There’s nothing like Australia” is the Australian Government’s global marketing campaign highlighting the best attractions and experiences Australian tourism has to offer. The current phase of the campaign focuses on promoting our highly regarded beach, coastal and inland aquatic tourism experiences, for example, Queensland’s Great Barrier Reef and Victoria’s Great Ocean Road. The Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio will also continue the Restaurant Australia campaign which resonates strongly in regional Australia.
HEALTH

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

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

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

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

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

NEW INITIATIVES

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

This initiative will provide $33.8 million over four years from 2016-17 to list new items onto the Medicare Benefits Schedule to cover the testing of Diabetic Retinopathy with a non-mydriatic retinal camera. This service will benefit approximately 370,000 people with diabetes, of which approximately a quarter are Indigenous. The introduction of this service will improve the monitoring of diabetic eye disease especially in rural and remote regions and amongst Indigenous populations. Complications from diabetes, including blindness, are expensive to the health care system and are easily prevented if diagnosed early through this type of service.
Medicare Benefits Schedule Support for Rural and Remote Registrars

This measure, which will provide $7.6 million over four years from 1 November 2016, will enable 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 measure will have a positive impact on regional Australia, as registrars training on the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine Independent Pathway are likely to be providing services in regional and rural areas during their training. The programme also leads to fellowship of the college. The Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine advise 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 programme.

Rural General Practice Grants Programme

This measure, which will provide $20.7 million over three years from 2015-16, will improve rural health services by redesigning the Rural and Regional Teaching Infrastructure Grants Programme, to create a more streamlined and simple Rural General Practice Grants Programme. This measure supports high quality and appropriate provision of services in-line with the whole-of-government priority of innovation and ensuring the consideration of rural, regional and remote Australians in broader health care reforms.

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

In response to the Aged Care Financing Authority report Financial Issues Affecting Rural and Remote Providers, which identified greater cost pressures in rural and remote areas and noted that the geographical classification system of the Viability Supplement in aged care was out-dated and may not be best targeting funding, the Australian Government will introduce changes to the Viability Supplement in 2017. This will include updating the remoteness classification system with the more contemporary Modified Monash Model. The Modified Monash Model was developed by the Department of Health to improve targeting of the District of Workforce Shortage programme and other rural incentives programmes. In addition, the Viability Supplement rates payable for mainstream residential aged care services scoring 80 points or above (services score points on the basis of geographical location, number of occupied places and catering to special needs groups) will be increased.
The Australian Government will provide $102.3 million over five years from 2015-16 to support the supplement.

Residents of approximately 250 mainstream services will benefit from the new arrangements. The majority of these services are in or near outer regional towns, for example, Holbrook in New South Wales, Childers in Queensland, and Rushworth in Victoria. Around 3,000 out of 59,300 Home Care Packages programme recipients currently attract Viability Supplement funding. Around 7,000 recipients will benefit from higher funding under these changes, most of whom are located in or near outer regional locations.

Of the 181 Multi-Purpose Services that currently provide residential and/or home care, 109 will attract higher rates of funding for Viability Supplement under the new arrangements. An additional five National Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care programme providers will also benefit from higher funding under these changes.

To ensure no services or care recipients are disadvantaged as a result of the shift to the Modified Monash Model, grandfathering arrangements will apply.

**Healthier Medicare Trail of Health Care Homes**

This initiative, which will provide $21.3 million over four years from 2015-16, supports the trial and evaluation of the Health Care Home model of care in seven Primary Health Network regions around Australia. Chronic conditions are the leading cause of illness, disability and death in Australia, with one in three Australians having at least one chronic condition and one in five having two or more. Rates of chronic disease are generally much higher in rural and regional Australia. Health Care Homes will improve the management of chronic conditions by providing patients with a “home base” for their care, ensuring greater continuity of care, better coordination of services and a team based approach to care designed around their specific needs.

**Quality Improvement in General Practice - Simplification of the Practice Incentives Programme**

This measure will establish a new Quality Improvement Incentive to be delivered through the Practice Incentives Programme. The changes will consolidate some existing Practice Incentives Programme payments into one Quality Improvement Incentive, available to all Practice Incentives Programme eligible practices, delivering a saving of $21.2 million. This incentive will streamline and simplify current Practice Incentives Programme payments to help general practice achieve high quality health care and improved patient outcomes.

**Perinatal Depression On-line Support**

This measure will provide $0.8 million over two years from 2015-16 for a targeted online perinatal support tool and smart phone app to address a gap in services for pregnant women and new mothers suffering from, or at risk of, perinatal depression. It would help up to 20,000 pregnant women and new mothers who do not currently
access support for perinatal depression particularly due to barriers for seeking help for depression, including fear of stigma, being time poor and reluctant to engage with face to face services. The impact is amplified for women in rural and regional areas who face barriers due to geographic isolation and lack of access to face to face services.

**CURRENT INITIATIVES**

**Rural Locum Assistance Programme**

The Rural Locum Assistance Programme is the consolidation of three rural locum schemes under a single administrator. This will provide a single point of access for rural health services seeking locum relief support, as well as for those seeking to undertake rural work. The programmes that the Rural Locum Assistance Programme is replacing are:

- the Rural Locum Education Assistance Programme;
- the Nursing and Allied Health Rural Locum Scheme; and
- the Rural Obstetric and Anaesthetic Locum Scheme.

Under the Rural Locum Assistance Programme, locum relief support will be provided to back-fill health practitioners who are taking leave for continual professional development or recreation purposes. The length of support is for 14 working days, or 28 working days in remote Australia to backfill a health professional undertaking professional development. On an annual basis, the Rural Locum Assistance Programme will provide:

- 10,000 funded days for nursing and midwifery locum support in rural Australia;
- 1,400 funded days for allied health locum support in rural Australia;
- 950 funded days for obstetrician locum support (both specialist and procedural general practitioners); and
- 400 funded days for anaesthetist locum support (both specialist and procedural general practitioners).

The Rural Locum Assistance Programme will also allow up to 50 general practitioners annually to access a grant of up to $6,000 to undertake emergency medicine training in return for a commitment to undertake a four week locum placement in a rural location.

**Drug and Alcohol Programme**

The Drug and Alcohol Programme aims to reduce the impact of alcohol and other drugs on individuals, families and communities across Australia through funding a range of activities that will improve access to quality alcohol and other drug treatment.
services and improve the evidence base behind alcohol and other drug treatment approaches and related issues.

These activities include:

• funding non-government organisations to operate a range of drug and alcohol treatment services;

• supporting alcohol and other drug treatment services across Australia to provide better outcomes for clients through a range of capacity building activities;

• supporting early intervention and prevention activities relating to alcohol and other drug misuse and promoting evidence-based information about alcohol and other drugs through education;

• supporting the development of evidence-based alcohol and other drug treatment service delivery and national policy through research and data collection; and

• supporting the development of evidence-based alcohol and other drug treatment service delivery commissioned through Primary Health Networks across Australia and national policy through structured advisory mechanisms.

These activities are all available in regional and rural areas.

**Macular Disease Foundation**

The Macular Disease Foundation provides education to general practitioners on macular disease and awareness sessions to the general public on macular disease and diabetic retinopathy across urban, regional and rural locations.

• Macular Disease Foundation is funded by the Australian Government under the Health Peak and Advisory Bodies Programme to:
  
  – Share information with the health sector and community in relation to the eye diseases macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy; and
  
  – Provide training and education to general practitioners in relation to macular degeneration.

• Funding of $1.36 million for the period 2015-16 to 2018-19 is provided to the Macular Disease Foundation to undertake this work across urban, regional and rural locations.

**National Tobacco Campaign**

In 2016-17, the Australian Government will support the next phase of the National Tobacco Campaign. The National Tobacco Campaign forms part of the Australian Government’s comprehensive range of initiatives designed to contribute to a reduction
in the prevalence of adult daily smoking rates. The objective of the campaign is to contribute to a reduction in the Australian adult daily smoking rate to 10 per cent or less and halve the daily smoking rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, from 47 per cent, by 2018.

**National Ice Action Strategy**

In response to the findings of the National Ice Taskforce, the Australian Government is providing an extra $298.2 million over four years from 1 July 2016 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 Community 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 to commission more alcohol and other drug treatment services, with a focus on ice, including Indigenous-specific services, based on what is necessary and appropriate to the needs of their local communities. Primary Health Networks 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.

**Investing in More and Better Coordinated Services for People with Mental Illness**

Central to the Australian Government’s mental health reforms will be a regional approach to service planning and integration, and better matching of services to individual needs. The Australian Government’s response to the Review of Mental Health Programmes and Services takes a whole of system perspective, enabling Australian Government services to complement the role of State and Territories in mental health care.

In 2016-17, the Australian Government will commence implementing its mental health reform agenda, with an immediate focus on initiating the delivery of the expanded Primary Health Network role, child and youth integration, the Digital Mental Health Gateway and the new community-based approach to suicide prevention.

From 1 July 2016, through a newly established flexible primary mental health care funding pool, Primary Health Networks will plan and commission regionally delivered primary mental health services in partnership with relevant services. Primary Health Networks will play a key role in leading the development of regional mental health and suicide prevention plans.
The Australian Government will begin work on developing a new digital mental health gateway which will bring together and streamline access to existing evidence-based information, advice and digital mental health treatment and will connect people to the services they need through a centralised telephone and web portal, including for people in regional and rural areas.

The Australian Government will also continue to support the mental health of young people across Australia, including through Headspace centres under the phased implementation of reforms.

**Closing the Gap Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme Co-Payment Measure**

The Closing the Gap Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme Co-payment Measure improves access to Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme medicines for eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living with, or at risk of, chronic disease in urban and rural settings. This measure lowers or removes the patient co-payment for Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme medicines. More than 100,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people benefit from the measure each month, many in regional and rural areas. This measure is expected to cost $32.4 million in 2016-17.

**Section 100 Remote Area Aboriginal Health Service Programme**

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

The Remote Area Aboriginal Health Service Programme aims to address geographic, financial and cultural barriers experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in remote areas of Australia in accessing essential medicines through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. This programme is expected to cost $48.6 million in 2016-17.

**Section 100 Remote Area Pharmacy Support Allowance**

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

**Medication Management Review Programmes**

These programmes aim to improve the quality use of medicine and reduce the risk of medication misadventure, including in rural and remote areas. Services include Home Medicines Review and the Residential Medication Management Review, which are conducted by an accredited pharmacist in the consumer’s home or in an Australian Government funded aged care facility respectively. The Home Medicines Review
programme also includes a Rural Loading Allowance to provide support to pharmacists to enable patients in rural and remote locations to access this programme. Other services include the MedsCheck and Diabetes MedsCheck, which aim to improve the use of medicine by providing an in-pharmacy review of a patient’s medicines by a registered pharmacist.

**Pharmacy Practice Incentives Programme**

The Pharmacy Practice Incentives programme provides incentives to community pharmacies, including those in rural and regional areas, which deliver services to consumers to a defined quality standard, with the goal of improving patient health outcomes.

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Pharmacy Workforce Programme**

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Pharmacy Workforce programme 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 Maintenance Allowance**

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

**Rural Pharmacy Workforce Programme**

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

**Streamlining Health Workforce Scholarships**

This initiative will provide greater flexibility and consistency in targeting scholarships to areas of need by streamlining a number of existing scholarship programmes into
one — the Health Workforce Scholarship programme. Additionally, a rural return of service obligation will be 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.

**Better Targeted Rural Financial Incentives for Doctors**

In 2015, the Australian Government reprioritised existing financial incentives for doctors to work in rural areas by introducing a new geographical classification system, the Modified Monash Model, to more effectively direct incentives to areas that experience greater difficulty in attracting and retaining a general practice workforce.

**Redesign of Dental Workforce Programmes**

This initiative builds on other rural workforce initiatives, such as Better Targeted Rural Financial Incentives for Doctors, to more effectively target support in remote and rural locations that are in greatest workforce need. This initiative applies the new classification system, the Modified Monash Model to the Dental Relocation and Infrastructure Support Scheme to deliver incentives to dentists who relocate to work in rural and remote communities.

**Positioning the North as a Global Leader in Tropical Health**

The Australian Government will establish the Northern Australia Tropical Disease Collaboration programme, and the Australian Tropical Medicine Commercialisation grants, an Austrade initiative delivered by the Department of Industry and Science. The Northern Australia Tropical Disease Collaboration programme will support innovative, high quality research into tropical diseases, build strong collaborations and capacity in the health and medical research workforce and promote effective translation of research into health policy and practice. Research will focus on tropical diseases with high impact on human health including those such as:

- dengue, malaria and melioidosis;
- Australian Bat Lyssavirus;
- the henipaviruses (Hendra and Nipah);
- chikungunya and Murray Valley encephalitis;
- multi-drug resistant tuberculosis; and
- other novel and emerging pathogens.

The research will aid in the early detection and effective response to incursions when they occur.
Australian Tropical Medicine Commercialisation grants will take advantage of business opportunities from the growing tropical economy by establishing targeted funding to translate and commercialise research in new therapeutics and diagnostics in tropical medicine undertaken in Australia.

**Full implementation of National Bowel Cancer Screening Programme**

The National Bowel Cancer Screening programme invites eligible people from across Australia to undertake bowel screening tests in the privacy of their home. The National Bowel Cancer Screening programme currently provides screening to Australians aged 50, 55, 60, 64, 65, 70, 72 and 74 years, and from 2017 those aged 54, 58 and 68 years.

Participation in screening has the potential to significantly reduce the number of deaths from bowel cancer. In the 2014-15 Budget, the Australian Government announced a further $95.9 million over four years to accelerate the implementation of biennial screening for all Australians aged 50 to 74 years by 2019-2020.

The development of a National Cancer Screening Register was announced in the 2015-16 Budget, which will support the expansion of the National Bowel Cancer Screening programme.

**Blood Borne Viruses and Sexually Transmissible Infections Prevention Programme**

The Blood Borne Viruses and Sexually Transmissible Infections Prevention programme aims to address rising rates of blood borne viruses and sexually transmissible infections. One of the elements of the Blood Borne Viruses and Sexually Transmissible Infections Prevention programme is the delivery of sexually transmissible infections reduction programmes targeted towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priority populations in regional and remote settings. This element of the Blood Borne Viruses and Sexually Transmissible Infections Prevention programme aims to increase sexually transmissible infections testing and treatment, and raise awareness about sexually transmissible infections prevention. Areas of focus include models of care that reach high prevalence communities and young people.

**McGrath Specialist Breast Care Nurses**

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

There are currently 57 Australian Government funded McGrath Specialist Breast Care Nurses in place around Australia, with 86 per cent located in regional and remote areas.

The McGrath Specialist Breast Care Nurses will support up to 15,000 women and their families over the four year funding agreement.
Specialist Prostate Cancer Nurse Initiative

The Specialist Prostate Cancer Nurse Initiative supports the placement of up to 15 full time equivalent prostate cancer nurses over three years through to September 2017, assisting up to 4,000 men and their families.

These prostate cancer nurses are part of a pilot project. The initiative aims to develop, test and evaluate a model for specially trained nurses to address the needs of people living in metropolitan and regional Australia who have been affected by prostate cancer by providing information, care and support to men with prostate cancer and their families.

The Australian Government is contributing funding of $6.2 million from 2013-14 to 2016-17 to the Prostate Cancer Foundation Australia for this initiative.

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

This initiative provides conditional funding through the Medicare Benefits Schedule to approved rural and remote public hospital sites. The initiative supports greater patient access to primary health care services locally, including to after hours’ services in small public hospitals, and to health services which are better able to attract and retain health professionals.

Block Funding for Small Rural and Regional Hospitals

To ensure rural and regional communities continue to have access to vital public hospital services, the Australian Government provides States and Territories with a dedicated block funding contribution for small rural and regional hospitals. In 2015-16, the Australian Government will provide approximately $800 million in block funding to States and Territories to support services provided by small rural and regional hospitals.

Emergency Medicine Education and Training Programme

The Emergency Medicine Education and Training programme, with 33 participating hub hospitals, provides training and educational support to non-specialist doctors and other staff working in emergency departments in regional and rural areas.

National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre

The Australian Government funds the operation of the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre based in Darwin (Northern Territory). The centre is equipped and ready to assist in responses to large scale emergencies and disasters in Australia and the region. Beneficiaries of the programme 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 centre provides an enhanced domestic response capability, and generates goodwill with disaster affected regional communities. The location of the centre also supports a positive regional impact by
attracting health expertise and infrastructure to the Northern Territory. Funding is allocated from 2015-16 to 2018-19 to support its continued operation.

**National Partnership on Health Care Grants for the Torres Strait**

The Australian Government provides funding for the Project Agreement for the management of Torres Strait/Papua New Guinea cross border health issues. Under this agreement, the Australian Government contributes funding to 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.

**National Partnership on the Torres Strait Health Protection Strategy — Mosquito Control**

The Australian Government provides funding for the Project Agreement 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 Partnership on the Torres Strait Health Protection Strategy — Saibai Island Health Clinic**

The Australian Government provides funding for the National Partnership on the Torres Strait Health Protection Strategy — Saibai Island health clinic to provide additional staff for the treatment of communicable diseases at the health care clinic on Saibai Island, and for development and implementation of a culturally appropriate sexual health education campaign for people in the Torres Strait. This programme targets young people to make them aware of Blood Borne Viruses and Sexually Transmissible Infections and to encourage them to access clinical services and health checks. Work will continue to develop short and long term options to address the lack of health staff accommodation on Saibai Island. The success of this programme will improve the health outcomes of Saibai Island inhabitants under the objectives of the partnership arrangement between the Australian Government and Queensland.

**Practice Incentives Programme**

The Practice Incentives Programme includes a rural loading ranging from 15 to 50 per cent (depending on the remoteness of the practice location) which is applied to the incentive payments of practices in rural and remote areas. The rural loading is paid in recognition of the difficulties of providing care, often with little professional support, in rural and remote areas and to provide access to services which are available through other means to patients in metropolitan and other urban areas.
Doubling the Practice Incentives Programme Teaching Payment

From 1 January 2015, the Australian Government has doubled the Practice Incentives Programme teaching payment to $200 for each three hour teaching session provided to undergraduate and graduate medical students.

This payment will better compensate practices for the time invested in teaching, and encourage practices to provide more teaching opportunities for students. As a greater number of students can experience general practice through these opportunities, more students are expected to pursue a future career in primary care.

Primary Health Networks

Primary Health Networks have been established to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of medical services for patients, particularly for those at risk of poor health outcomes, and to improve coordination of care to ensure patients receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time. In 2016-17, Primary Health Networks move to commissioning models for planning and purchasing medical and health services. Commissioning involves a strategic approach to the procurement of health services, informed by local health needs assessment, market analysis of local health care supply, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of service quality and performance.

After Hours Primary Health Care Arrangements

New after-hours primary health care funding arrangements 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 Programme after hours incentive payment to eligible accredited general practices registered for the Practice Incentives Programme;

- 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; and

- a new after-hours general practices advice and support line for all Australians who do not have access to face to face general practices services in the after-hours period.

headspace

The Australian Government is providing funding to Primary Health Networks to support headspace services. Primary Health Networks will integrate the delivery of headspace services with other local youth mental health and primary care services. Of the 100 headspace centres announced to date, 44 sites will be located in rural and regional areas across Australia.
The Australian Government has also committed to providing continued funding for the headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation to deliver eheadspace. Young people in communities that do not have a headspace centre are encouraged to use the free, confidential telephone and web-based service for young people with, or at risk of, developing a mild to moderate mental illness.

**Indigenous Australians’ Health Programme**

Through the Indigenous Australians’ Health Programme, 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 2016-17, 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.

**Supporting the Royal Flying Doctor Service**

Further funding of $20.0 million is being provided over two years from 2015-16 to supplement the recurrent base funding to the Royal Flying Doctor Service. Funding will support the delivery of traditional services including primary aeromedical evacuations, primary health clinics, consultations and medical chests in rural, remote and very remote communities.

This initiative aligns with the Australian Government’s commitment to support the delivery of primary health care services in rural and remote communities, and in areas beyond normal medical infrastructure.

**Quality Assurance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Medical Services Programme**

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

As at 31 December 2015, a total of 200 sites participated in the Quality Assurance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Medical Services programme, with the majority of these located in rural and remote areas.

**Support for Outreach Health Services**

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

The Royal Flying Doctor Service is funded by the Australian Government to deliver primary aero-medical evacuations, primary health clinics, remote consultations and medical chests containing pharmaceutical and medical supplies to remote locations.

**Australian Government Hearing Services Programme**

The Australian Government Hearing Services programme provides 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:

- the Voucher programme uses a national network of approximately 275 contracted service providers, including Australian Hearing, with 67 service providers located at 1,177 regional sites across Australia; and

- 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 programme providing hearing services to more than 130 of Australia’s most remote communities. In 2014-15, (the most recent full year data), 128 audiologists delivered services to these communities at over 233 sites across Australia.

**Visiting Optometrists Scheme**

The Visiting Optometrists Scheme improves access to optometry services for people living and working in rural and remote communities, and includes additional optometrist services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

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

**Supporting Leave for Living Organ Donors Programme**

The Supporting Leave for Living Organ Donors Programme ran as a pilot from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2015. Following the success of the two year pilot, the Australian Government announced that the Supporting Leave for Living Organ Donors Programme would continue for a further two years from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2017.

The programme makes a financial contribution to employers, to either replenish an employee’s leave or reimburse an employer who has made a payment to their employee (who may have exhausted their leave) in place of income lost due to time off for organ donation. A key change to the continuing programme was that the maximum reimbursement available under the programme was extended from...
six weeks to nine weeks (based on a 38 hour week) of leave, at an amount up to the National Minimum Wage.

The Supporting Leave for Living Organ Donors Programme continues to raise the profile of living organ donors, reduce financial stress associated with being a living organ donor and encourage employers to support employees who have chosen to donate an organ. Because transplant units are based in major metropolitan hospitals, the Supporting Leave for Living Organ Donors Programme is of particular assistance to donors from regional or rural Australia, as they may need more time away from work for their surgery and other post-operative treatment than donors from the city.

Rebuilding General Practice Education and Training to Deliver More General Practices

The Australian Government is supporting training for 300 extra general practitioners a year by boosting commencing training places from 1,200 to 1,500 in 2015. The new training positions are based in rural areas as much as possible, and at least 50 per cent of the new trainees are required to train on the rural pathway. As registrars deliver services to the community while training, the increase in training places is providing more services to communities in rural and regional areas.

Commonwealth Medical Internships

The Australian Government committed $40.0 million over four years, from 2013-14 to 2016-17, for the Commonwealth Medical Internships initiative, to support additional medical internships in private hospitals.

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

In 2014, 76 positions were filled under this programme. In return for a funded intern position, interns agree to work for a period of 48 weeks in regional and rural areas, within five years of commencing their internship. In 2015, of the 81 positions that were filled:

• twenty-six interns will complete their internship in full in either Townsville, Bundaberg or Mackay;

• nine interns are based in Sydney with rotations to Wagga Wagga and Kempsey;

• seven interns are based in Perth with one or more rural/regional rotations; and

• thirty-nine interns are based in Brisbane with one or more rotations in locations including Port Macquarie, Kempsey, Mt Isa, Kingaroy, Mackay, Bundaberg, Bowen, Proserpine, Townsville, Katherine, Alice Springs and Darwin.
General Practitioner Procedural Training Support Programme

The General Practitioner Procedural Training Support programme 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 programme targets existing general practitioners in rural and remote areas. For the 2014 training year, 26 obstetrics scholarships and 15 anaesthetics scholarships were awarded to rural and remote doctors.

Funding to CRANAplus

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

Northern Territory Medical Programme

The Northern Territory Medical programme addresses medical workforce shortages and retention issues by providing a full four year graduate entry medical course in the Northern Territory. It supports medical education for up to 24 students (in each year of study) as part of the Flinders University medical degree programme, and receives funding support from the Australian and Northern Territory Governments.

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

International Recruitment Strategy

The International Recruitment Strategy aims to increase the supply of appropriately qualified overseas trained health professionals to districts of workforce shortage throughout Australia. The International Recruitment Strategy has five components for recruitment and resettlement support to overseas trained doctors, nurses and allied health professionals:

• the International Recruitment Strategy;
• the Five Year Overseas Trained Doctor Scheme;
• the Additional Assistance Scheme;
• the Rural Locum Relief programme; and
• the Rural Health Professionals Programme.
Remote Vocational Training Scheme

The Remote Vocational Training 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 Remote Vocational Training Scheme supports 22 new training places each year. In 2015, a new cohort of 10 registrars training in Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services commenced training under the Remote Vocational Training Scheme.

Rural and Remote General Practice Programme

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

Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Programme

Rural training encourages the next generation of health professionals to consider rural careers and enhances the capacity of health services to meet community needs. Involvement in education and training also reduces professional isolation for existing rural practitioners, enhancing workforce retention and sustainability. The Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training programme includes four sub-programmes that support undergraduate clinical training of medical, nursing and allied health students in rural and remote Australia. Students support existing rural health professionals, alleviating the shortage of adequate health care services in rural areas through the following programmes:

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

Rural Other Medical Practitioners Programme

The Rural Other Medical Practitioners programme recognises the value of services provided by non-vocationally registered medical practitioners in rural and remote
areas, and provides higher Medicare benefits for their patients. The Rural Other Medical Practitioners programme also provides an incentive to encourage non-vocationally registered medical practitioners (both Australian and overseas trained) to provide general practice services in eligible rural and remote locations.

**Rural Procedural Grants Programme**

The Rural Procedural Grants programme enables procedural general practitioners in rural and remote areas to access grants to attend training and up-skilling in emergency and procedural medicine.

**Scaling Incentive for Overseas Trained Doctors**

The scaling incentive is a non-cash incentive offering Overseas Trained Doctors and foreign graduates, of an accredited medical school, opportunities to reduce the 10 year moratorium restriction period for access to the Medicare system. Time reductions are significantly greater for doctors who choose to work in more remote areas. The effect of scaling is to ensure that benefits will be significantly greater for doctors choosing to live and work in more remote areas of Australia. Moratorium restriction periods for access to the Medicare system by area are:

- Major cities – 10 years;
- Inner Regional – 9 years;
- Outer Regional – 7 years;
- Remote – 6 years; and
- Very Remote – 5 years.

**Scaling Rural Workforce Communications – Go Rural Programme**

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

**Specialist Training Programme**

The Specialist Training programme increases the capacity of the private and community health care sector to provide high quality training opportunities for trainee medical specialists. In 2015 and 2016, 900 training full time equivalent places are being funded. Over 50 per cent of training posts have an element of training in regional and rural areas.
Residential Aged Care Viability Supplement

The Residential Aged Care Viability Supplement is paid to eligible providers operating in rural and remote areas; providers with small numbers of residents; and providers specialising in the care of homeless people or people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It aims to improve the capacity of eligible services to offer quality care to residents. The supplement was increased by 20 per cent from 1 July 2014.

Home Care Viability Supplement

The Home Care Viability Supplement is paid to eligible home care providers operating in rural and remote areas. This supplement provides support for the higher operating costs (such as wages, fuel and training) associated with providing care in rural and regional locations. The supplement was increased by 20 per cent from 1 July 2014.

Multi-Purpose Services Programme - Aged Care Subsidies

The Multi-Purpose Services programme is a joint initiative of the Australian Government and State and Territory governments, which aims to deliver flexible and integrated health and aged care services for small regional and remote communities.

Multi-Purpose Services receive Australian Government funding for aged care and State and Territory Government funding for a range of health services. As at 30 June 2015, there were 165 Multi-Purpose Services providing 3,545 aged care places in regional and remote areas Australia-wide.
HUMAN SERVICES

The Department of Human Services provides easy access to a range of flexible and convenient Australian Government services which support regional communities.

Services are provided to people living in regional areas through the Department of Human Services’ service centres, including remote service centres, agents and access points. In addition, remote servicing teams and mobile service centres allow the Department of Human Services to provide outreach services. During 2015, mobile service centres visited over 480 towns, travelling more than 92,000 kilometres and helping over 10,000 people. Services, including specific services for regional Australians, are also provided through the Department of Human Services’ nationally networked call centres. Certain Centrelink numbers can also be called free of charge from a landline or Telstra mobile.

The Department of Human Services continues to expand its digital services. Self-service options enable claims for a payment or concession, updating of personal details and changes in circumstances. The Department of Human Services also provides a range of mobile applications allowing simple transactions using mobile devices. This helps interactions at a time and place that suits, which is of particular benefit to people located in regional areas as it reduces their need to travel to service centres.

The Department of Human Services is also the first point of contact for the Australian Government across rural and regional Australia, particularly during natural disasters such as floods and droughts. The Department of Human Services’ Emergency Reserve members and mobile service centre teams worked alongside others in the aftermath of the South Australian bushfires, Tropical Cyclone Marcia in Queensland, Tropical Cyclone Lam in the Northern Territory, Tropical Cyclone Olwyn in Western Australia, and storms and flooding in New South Wales.

NEW INITIATIVES

myGov Operations

The myGov digital service is a simple, secure way for all Australians to access services, including in regional Australia. There are now over nine million active myGov accounts providing people with a secure online access with one username and password to use a growing range of Australian Government services online. With a myGov account, people can link a range of Australian Government services to do their online business from lodging claims, and accessing correspondence to updating their contact details. For Australians 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.
As at February 2016, the myGov Digital Mailbox service has delivered more than 95 million mail items since the commencement of the service in March 2014. The onboarding of the service by the Australian Taxation Office in May 2014 has seen a significant increase in people accessing the current myGov digital service to lodge their tax returns from a place convenient to them. The existing myGov “Update Your Details” function enables the millions of myGov account holders to update selected contact information in a single transaction from their myGov account and share these with linked myGov member services.

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. The modernisation of myGov and its future direction is central to these efforts with the high volume of transactions made through the myGov digital service.

The Department of Human Services is acting on feedback from the public to deliver a number of improvements to its digital channels. A programme of work is underway to address the most pressing issues raised by myGov users. These improvements are expected to reduce the level of inconvenience being experienced by myGov users when completing simple transactions through myGov, such as account lockouts and difficulty with security codes.

A joint project team has been established to re-examine the myGov digital service, including the technology supporting it, how it is delivered and managed, as well as user experience including frustrations. This work will also assess myGov’s consistency with the Digital Service Standard. The project team will deliver a broad, long term improvement programme for the modernisation of myGov.

**CURRENT INITIATIVES**

**Digital Transformation Agenda**

In line with the Australian Government’s Digital Transformation Agenda, the Department of Human Services is focusing on making services easier to use. This includes designing services that can be accessed digitally to increase self-service options, making it easier for people living in regional areas to interact with government agencies.

The Department of Human Services is collaborating with the Digital Transformation Office to lead and support key elements of the Digital Transformation Agenda by leveraging the existing myGov digital service, which offers capacity such as Digital Mail, and “Update Your Details”.

**Welfare Payments Infrastructure Transformation Programme**

The ability to access Australian Government services online is a convenient way for Australians living in regional areas, to do business and often saves the trouble of having to travel long distances to regional centres. The planned Welfare Payments
Infrastructure Transformation programme will be one of the world’s largest social welfare information and communications technology system transformations. This is a significant multi-year transformation project that will build a new information and communications technology system that enables the Department of Human Services to:

- provide faster, more connected and automated digital services;
- give staff a modern information and communications technology platform that makes it easier for them to do their jobs; and
- position the Department of Human Services to meet the future policy needs of the Australian Government.

Express Plus Apps

The Department of Human Services’ Express Plus mobile apps continue to be popular with people wanting to engage with government services. The apps for Centrelink, Medicare and Child Support provide the option to complete many common, simple transactions on-the-go from any location, without having to call or visit an office. The mobile app digital service offer provides a convenient, flexible option to do business with us which includes uploading documents, reporting income, adding a newborn child, claiming Medicare, viewing Child Support account balances and making urgent Child Support Payments.

As at 31 December 2015, Express Plus mobile apps have been downloaded more than 6.4 million times. In 2014-15 over 61 million transactions were completed through the apps (compared to 36 million in 2013-14); this is an increase of 69 per cent in transactions. The Department of Human Services continues to deliver enhancements to mobile apps, to make this an effective digital channel, with additional functionality to advise of changes to personal details as well as a range of circumstances (such as their income and asset information) through their online profile.

In addition, the Express Plus Lite version enables the reporting of earned income in Arabic, Chinese, Persian (Farsi) or Vietnamese.

Online

The Department of Human Services’ website humanservices.gov.au is a convenient way for regional Australians to access information and conduct their government business online. Every month the Department of Human Services’ website has approximately eight 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 260,000 times each month.

Once they have authenticated themselves, users can conduct many of their transactions with the Department of Human Services online at a time and place
convenient to them. In 2014-15 an average of more than 339,000 transactions were completed online each day, an increase of almost 17 per cent from the previous financial year. 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. In some instances the online process now accounts for 80 per cent of new claim activity.

In 2014-15, over 112 million transactions were completed via online and the Express Plus mobile apps (compared to 95 million in 2013-14).

Government Remote Servicing

The Australian Government’s investment of $93.4 million over four years is supporting the continued delivery of government payments and services in remote locations in Western Australia, the Northern Territory, Northern Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania. Through a mix of Agents, Access Points, Remote Service Centres and visits by Remote Servicing Teams, the Department of Human Services will continue to provide direct access to services in remote locations.

Remote servicing ensures a person can access Australian Government payments and services, regardless of their location. It also provides the Australian Government with the capability to deliver programmes and drive reforms specifically targeted to remote areas or more broadly.

Remote servicing is also a major source of employment in remote communities, especially for Indigenous people. For example, the large majority of staff in the Department of Human Services’ Northern Territory Remote Service Centres are Indigenous.

Mobile Service Centres

The Department of Human Services operates a number of Mobile Service Centres. 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 travel to rural and regional communities to provide hard to reach and disadvantaged people with information and access to Australian Government services, where they need it. Mobile Service Centres are also an important part of the Department of Human Services’ emergency response service delivery capability. In 2016-17 the fleet plans to visit over 350 communities with the additional aim of partnering with other Australian Government agencies, where possible, to improve service delivery.

Agents and Access Points

Agents and Access Points provide essential and effective services to regional and rural people where accessibility to large regional centres is difficult.
The Department of Human Services’ network of Agents and Access Points provides the opportunity for communities to build service hubs which support other visiting government services, creating relationships within communities.

Access Points provide free self-help facilities where people can conduct their business with the Department of Human Services. This includes services such as making phone calls, using photocopying, fax and internet facilities, and certifying proof of identity documents.

Agents are located in communities that need more than Access Point services. As well as providing the same facilities and services as an Access Point, an Agent provides face-to-face information services and an internet-enabled computer and printer for people to conduct their business. Agents provide people with assistance, guidance and referrals and accept claim forms for lodgement.

In 2015, Agent training focused on online services, including using myGov and the opportunity to improve computer literacy skills.

**myGov Albury Shopfront**

The myGov Albury shopfront opened to the public on Monday 17 August 2015 and brings together staff from the Department of Human Services and the Australian Taxation Office. myGov Albury is the first regional myGov shopfront where myGov online services are integrated with a full Centrelink, Medicare and the Australian Taxation Office face-to-face service offer.

The shopfront includes a learning hub and self-service computers to help people create and use their myGov account. Staff are on hand to guide people through the myGov set-up and to help them complete their government interactions digitally with the Department of Human Services, the Australian Taxation Office and other myGov member services. People with complex needs will receive a full service within the myGov shopfront. Australian Taxation Office customers with more complex needs are managed through an appointment system. In addition, myGov Albury undertakes citizenship testing on behalf of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection. The myGov shopfront service approach is an example of government agencies coming together to deliver an integrated service to the public.

**Co-location**

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

The one-stop-shop approach also provides a platform for the co-location of services provided by other Australian Government and State and Territory agencies, such as the Australian Taxation Office, Department of Veterans’ Affairs, National Disability
Insurance Agency, Department of Immigration and Border Protection and state and territory housing agencies in various locations across Australia.

**Business Solutions Centre**

The Department of Human Services' Business Solutions Centre provides user-centred design support through citizen engagement in face-to-face interviews, small group conversations or large design sessions. The aim of these engagements is to seek citizen input into new processes, service delivery improvements, policy initiatives and system design.

In the 2015-16 financial year, the Business Solutions Centre undertook citizen engagement activities in regional areas, including Gympie, Sunshine Coast, Geelong, Shepparton, Goulburn and Dubbo. The value in engaging regional areas is to ensure the overall design and delivery meets the needs of all Australians, recognising the unique requirements of those citizens located in regional areas of Australia.

**Remote Smart Centre Services**

In April 2014 Remote Smart Centres were established to streamline processes to deliver effective and efficient services. As a result, there are more staff on hand for general enquiries and complex enquiries are handled by Indigenous telephony queue staff with training and experience in complexities of Indigenous specific payments and programmes. Calls to the Indigenous telephony queue have been separated into remote and non-remote which supports a service offer that improves access to Australian Government payments, programmes and services.

**Electronic Claiming of Medicare benefits**

Electronic claiming options demonstrate the Australian Government’s commitment to offer choices based on community needs. These options make it convenient to lodge claims for Medicare benefits without travelling to a service centre.

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

**National Indigenous Coalition**

The National Indigenous Coalition has been established as the Department of Human Services’ internal peak Indigenous forum. The National Indigenous Coalition continues to shape future services and promotes local solutions to local issues. In developing future service delivery approaches, the unique challenges of providing access and support to Indigenous Australians in regional Australia are considered by the forum. The Department of Human Services is using co-design methods to test new, more innovative ways to capture Indigenous Australian customer group insights and input in ways that will benefit service delivery to regional Australia.
Regional Citizenship Testing

The Department of Human Services has been working with the Department of Immigration and Border Protection to make citizenship tests available in regional locations. Staff of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection previously visited regional centres to conduct tests, usually on a monthly or bimonthly basis. Some 125,000 citizenship tests are taken nationwide every year. Around 15,000 of these are taken in regional areas. 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.

Videoconferencing in Regional Locations

The Department of Human Services is trialling delivery of limited specialist services such as Job Capacity Assessments and access to Social Workers and Financial Information Service Officers by video conferencing in a number of regional locations. The Job Capacity Assessments are offered at over 30 mainly regional locations. Social Work services are provided to Halls Creek and Kununurra (Western Australia), Inverell and Glen Innes (New South Wales) and Financial Information Services are provided to Mildura (Victoria), Bega, Cowra, Inverell and Glen Innes (New South Wales). The Department of Human Services also offers access to Auslan interpreter services ‘on-demand’ at 80 sites, mostly in regional Australia.

Early Release of Superannuation Benefits on Specified Compassionate Grounds Programme

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

Services Accessed by Health Professionals

Health Professional Online Services provides access to online services for health professionals across Australia through a single entry point.

This service also gives health professionals access to information on the eligibility for Medicare services necessary for the processing and payment of claims.
IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION

The Immigration and Border Protection portfolio is committed to supporting rural and regional communities in Australia. A number of the portfolio’s programmes specifically target regional Australia and encourage migrants to settle in regional areas.

NEW INITIATIVES

Fostering Australian Trade through Australian Trusted Trader

The Australian Trusted Trader programme will deliver an ongoing positive impact on regional Australia. The Australian Trusted Trader programme supports exporters in regional Australia by providing simplified and greater access to export markets and more efficient access to imported goods needed for production. Independent economic modelling done in support of ongoing Australian Trusted Trader estimates that exports will grow by $390.0 million, household consumption by $2.2 billion, and business investment by $953.0 million as a result of trade facilitation benefits offered to Australian Trusted Trader participants.

Experience from the Australian Trusted Trader pilot phase of implementation indicates that industries that operate in regional Australia, including agriculture, fisheries, and food processing, will be particular beneficiaries of an ongoing Australian Trusted Trader. For example, entities that trade in perishable commodities can derive benefit from faster and more efficient movement of goods across international borders.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Syrian and Iraqi Humanitarian Crisis

This measure enacts the Australian Government’s announcement on 9 September 2015 to make 12,000 additional Humanitarian Programme places available for people displaced by conflict in Syria and Iraq. As part of the measure, the Immigration and Border Protection portfolio was provided funding to contribute to the resettlement of humanitarian entrants in Australia.

Some of the Syrian and Iraqi humanitarian entrants will be settled in regional areas of Australia.

Our North, Our Future – Business, Trade and Investment Gateway

This measure provides the Immigration and Border Protection portfolio additional funding of $26.9 million over four years to implement a range of initiatives the Government agreed as part of the Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia (led by the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science). The measure will attract more investment and increase the number of international tourists travelling to northern Australia. As part of the measure, revenue collected by the Australian Government is expected to increase by $37.7 million over four years from 2015-16.
Emerging International Airports

The Australian Government will provide $26.2 million (including $6.9 million in capital funding) over four years from 2015-16 to establish permanent border clearance services at Townsville and Sunshine Coast airports to support regular international air services. Increased visitor numbers will boost the tourism industry in northern Australia, encouraging businesses to invest and helping to unlock the region’s full potential. Discussions are ongoing with other regional airports around Australia which may be considered by the Australian Government in due course.

Safe Haven Enterprise Visa

The Safe Haven Enterprise Visa has been introduced as a temporary protection visa. The Safe Haven Enterprise Visa will encourage those granted temporary protection to work and/or study in a designated regional area. The purpose of the Safe Haven Enterprise Visa is to provide temporary protection while encouraging enterprise through earning and learning while strengthening regional Australia. The Safe Haven Enterprise Visa is being granted to people who have been assessed as engaging Australia’s protection obligations and who have fulfilled health, character, security and identity checks.

Safe Haven Enterprise Visa holders will need to demonstrate intent to work and/or study in regional Australia. If they work and/or study in a designated area of regional Australia for at least three and a half years of their visa, and access income support for not more than 18 months of their visa, they will be able to apply for other substantive visas, including permanent visas (excluding Permanent Protection visas), provided that they meet the application criteria for those visas.

States and Territories that have opted in are responsible for identifying areas designated as regional for the purpose of the Safe Haven Enterprise Visa.

Humanitarian Programme – Allocation of Places

The Australian Government will continue to explore opportunities to increase regional settlement given existing pressures on major metropolitan centres. Currently, around 20 per cent of humanitarian entrants are settled in locations outside capital cities.

The Humanitarian Programme for 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19 is set at 13,750, 13,750, 16,250 and 18,750 places respectively, in line with an instrument made under section 39A of the Migration Act 1958. The instrument, which sets out future programme numbers, provides some certainty to regional providers on the potential number of people who may settle in regional areas over the next four years.

Regional resettlement of refugees only occurs with the support and involvement of local and State government, service providers and agencies, and the local community. The Humanitarian Settlement Services Programme is delivered by service providers on behalf of the Department of Social Services which works closely with local and State governments to support successful settlement outcomes.
2016-17 Migration Programme

The Australian Government seeks to maintain the size and composition for the 2016-17 permanent annual Migration Programme at 2015-16 levels (up to 190,000 places), which includes 128,550 Skill stream places. The Skill stream of the Migration Programme will continue to appropriately support the labour market, and benefit regional Australia by helping fill the need for skills in a range of regions and sectors.

The Migration Programme contributes directly to regional productivity and employment in regional Australia through the Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme and the state/territory and Regional Nominated visa category.

The Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme is a demand-driven programme that helps businesses in regional, remote or low population growth areas (outside the major metropolitan centres of Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Sydney, Newcastle, Wollongong and Melbourne) to recruit the skilled workers they need to manage and grow their operations. The state/territory and regional nominated visa category will also continue to benefit regional areas experiencing labour market shortages.

Seasonal Worker Programme

The Seasonal Worker Programme commenced on 1 July 2012 (following the conclusion of the Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme which ran for three and a half years) and is a demand-driven programme. Participating countries include Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

The Seasonal Worker Programme is a mutually beneficial initiative designed to provide participating countries with opportunities for economic development by allowing their eligible citizens to secure short-term employment in Australia. This in turn assists Australian employers who cannot meet their seasonal labour needs with local jobseekers to fill gaps in certain parts of the agriculture and accommodation industries.

The Department of Employment is the lead agency for the Seasonal Worker Programme and is supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and the Department of Agriculture and Austrade.

On 1 July 2015 the Seasonal Worker Programme became uncapped and on 8 February 2016 the Department of Employment announced further expansion of the Seasonal Worker Programme, from primarily horticulture to the broader agricultural sector including cattle, sheep, grain and mixed enterprises.

Working Holiday Maker Programme

The Working Holiday Maker Programme allows young adults from partner countries to take extended holidays in Australia and support their travels with work. It is
comprised of the Working Holiday (subclass 417) visa and the Work and Holiday (subclass 462) visa.

Since 2005, the second Working Holiday (subclass 417) has been helping to address acute labour shortages in certain industries across regional Australia. A participant can acquire eligibility for a second Working Holiday visa by undertaking three months of ‘specified work’ in regional Australia while on their first working holiday visa. This creates an incentive to perform work in particular industries and regions, but does not obligate participants to do so. Participation is voluntary.

‘Specified work’ includes employment activities in the agriculture, mining and construction industries. Regional Australia is defined by a list of postcodes developed in 2004-05 in consultation with State and Territory governments.

The agriculture industry remains the primary beneficiary of the Working Holiday Maker Programme, with around 90 per cent of work being agricultural in nature. Around 8-9 per cent performed work in the construction industry and around 1-2 per cent in the mining industry.

From late 2016, subject to the commencement of the necessary legislation, Work and Holiday (subclass 462) visa holders will also be able to apply for a second year visa, if they undertake three months of ‘specified work’ in tourism and hospitality or agriculture in northern Australia while on their first visa. This was announced as part of the Australian Government’s Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia.
INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND SCIENCE

The Industry, Innovation and Science portfolio’s objective is to enable growth and productivity for globally competitive industries.

The Industry, Innovation and Science portfolio interacts with around 200,000 businesses each year, in metropolitan, regional and remote locations. It works with industry stakeholders, research institutions and other levels of government to foster collaboration and create networks to promote growth. The programme and service delivery division, AusIndustry, provides knowledgeable referrals to other streams of support that contribute to local business activity and economic development.

The Industry, Innovation and Science portfolio seeks to promote the growth of internationally competitive industries by facilitating nationwide action on innovation, regulation reform, collaboration, commercialisation and international engagement through the following activities:

• supporting businesses to innovate, including collaboration with scientists and researchers in universities and other institutions to maximise commercial returns from public investment in science, research and development;

• providing specialised data to identify potential for future investment opportunities, including in relation to mineral and energy resources;

• facilitating competitive marketplaces and business investment by assisting adjustment to inevitable industrial transformation;

• providing regulatory frameworks to sustainably expand our resource base and provide adequate, reliable and affordable energy to underpin our international competitiveness and economic growth;

• reducing business costs, including energy costs through effective regulation; and

• streamlining the way businesses of all sizes and in all locations of Australia, access Australian Government information, forms and services via www.business.gov.au.

The Department of Industry, Innovation and Science is leading the delivery of the Australian Government’s National Innovation and Science Agenda. Innovation and science are at the heart of the Government’s economic plan and, through the National Innovation and Science Agenda, the Australian Government will invest $1.1 billion to incentivise innovation and entrepreneurship, reward risk taking and promote science, maths and computing in schools to drive the smart ideas that create business growth, local jobs and global success.

Growth Centres continue to be established in six sectors of competitive strength and strategic priority. Growth Centres are working to unlock commercial opportunities
and drive innovation by building links between businesses and industry organisations and the science and research sector.

The Department of Industry, Innovation and Science is the lead agency coordinating the delivery of the *Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia*. The *Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia* was released in June 2015 and is an essential part of the nation’s plan to build a strong and prosperous economy. Including 40 per cent of Australia’s landmass, and over 1.3 million people, the north is endowed with many natural resources.

The Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility is a major initiative of the *Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia* being delivered by the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science. It will offer up to $5 billion in financing to encourage and complement private sector investment in economic infrastructure. This is in addition to the $75.0 million Cooperative Research Centre, the opening of the Major Projects Approvals Agency in Darwin and the Northern Australia Tourism Initiative. The *Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia* also includes more than $700 million in direct investment in transport infrastructure and $200.0 million for water infrastructure development. These and other key initiatives offer significant Australian Government support for advancing development right across the north.

The Australian Government’s *Energy White Paper* was released in early 2015. It will ensure the energy sector continues to underpin economic growth and will benefit regional and remote Australia, through infrastructure investment and jobs for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

On 4 December 2015, the Australian Government announced a target of improving Australia’s energy productivity by 40 per cent between 2015 and 2030. To meet this commitment, the Australian Government, along with States and Territories, has developed a National Energy Productivity Plan which will benefit small and large regional energy consumers.

The Industry, Innovation and Science portfolio has a broad regional presence with services delivered through a number of networks and agencies, including: AusIndustry; the National Measurement Institute; CSIRO; the Australian Institute of Marine Science; Geoscience Australia; and the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation. Approximately 34 per cent of the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science’ staff are based outside Canberra. The Department of Industry, Innovation and Science’ regional presence includes:

- the AusIndustry Regional Manager Network, which operates from 16 regional offices raising awareness and facilitating access for regional businesses to programmes and services;

- the Entrepreneurs’ Programme, which has 28 Business Management and Innovation Connections Advisers and Facilitators located in regional Australia who
provide business advice and facilitation services to small and medium businesses – the Entrepreneurs’ Programme also has 22 Commercialisation Advisers located in capital cities who provide services to entrepreneurs, start-ups and businesses in regional Australia;

- CSIRO, which has staff at 21 sites across regional Australia;

- Questacon, which runs a suite of national programmes, including travelling exhibitions, to make science and technology programmes accessible to communities throughout Australia, with a focus on regional areas, and funds an expanding national network of Science Technology Engineering and Maths engagement hubs throughout regional and metropolitan areas, through the Inspiring Australia programme;

- the Australian Institute of Marine Science, which is based in Townsville, North Queensland, and provides applied research and development advice to industries operating along the coastline of Northern Australia;

- Geoscience Australia, which supports activities in regional Australia across minerals, energy, water, resources and supports natural hazard and disaster preparedness and response;

- the National Measurement Institute trade measurement network, which includes 15 regionally-based offices;

- the Office of Northern Australia, which supports the delivery of the Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia and includes four sites across the northern jurisdictions; and

- support for 12 Cooperative Research Centres involved in research related to rural and regional Australia. Since 1991, there have been 86 rural-focused Cooperative Research Centres supported by $1.9 billion in Australian Government funding.

**NEW INITIATIVES**

**Exploring for the Future**

The $100.5 million Exploring for the Future programme will produce the next generation of pre-competitive geoscience data, with a focus on northern Australia and South Australia, to improve Australia’s long term exploration prospects and address declining onshore greenfield exploration. The programme will aim 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 will deliver a comprehensive prospectus of Australia’s mineral, petroleum and groundwater resources based on 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 in minerals exploration, infrastructure developments and generate employment opportunities associated with the development of resources projects. Many of Geoscience Australia pre-competitive data programmes have generated benefits that reach further than local communities and the sector. It has been estimated by a 2015 ACIL Allen Consulting economic impact study on the Western Australia Government’s Exploration Incentive Scheme that the rate of return for every dollar invested in pre-competitive programmes has a multiplier of more than 20 times.

**Rum Jungle Rehabilitation Project**

The Rum Jungle Rehabilitation Project will provide a further $10.8 million in funding in 2016-17 to finalise a detailed plan for the environmental rehabilitation of the 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. This measure is a continuation of the 2013 Economic Statement Measure ‘Former Rum Jungle uranium mine site – rehabilitation’.

**National Carp Control Plan**

The National Carp Control Plan is a $15.0 million three year ministerial taskforce to oversee the development of a national plan to release a carp viral bio-control agent. The National Carp Control Plan involves consultations with stakeholders including governments, research agencies and local communities to examine the possibility of releasing the bio-control agent in conjunction with complementary control measures to create maximum impact on carp populations while minimising disruption to industries, communities and the environment.

Common carp are the worst freshwater aquatic pest in Australia with estimated economic impacts reaching $500.0 million per annum. The majority of this impact is felt in regional areas of Australia. The National Carp Control Plan will prevent degradation of rural and regional water supplies and prevent harm to river and wetland ecology while limiting the impact on local communities.

The Department of Industry, Innovation and Science will work closely with the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources in the development of the National Carp Control Plan.

**Northern Australia Water Resource Assessment**

As announced on 26 February 2016, over the next three years CSIRO will work with northern jurisdictions, research partners and communities to undertake assessments as part of the Northern Australia Water Resource Assessment. The assessments will focus on the Mitchell river basin in Queensland, the Darwin river basins (Finniss, Adelaide, Mary, Wildman) in the Northern Territory and the Fitzroy river basin in Western Australia. These assessments will be similar to the work CSIRO undertook in
the Flinders and Gilbert Agricultural Resource Assessment which identified up to 50,000 ha of new irrigated agriculture opportunities for north Queensland and informed the revision of the Gulf Water Plan. The commitment is for $15 million in Australian Government funding to June 2018 under the *Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia*.

**CURRENT INITIATIVES**

**White Paper on Developing Northern Australia**

In June 2015 the Australian Government released *Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia*, the first White Paper on Developing Northern Australia. The White Paper is a vision and a plan to unlock the great potential and opportunities of the north, capitalising on the region’s strengths and removing barriers to investment. The *Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia* underscores the importance of ensuring regulation protects the community and the environment while also supporting markets, investment and innovation.

The Office of Northern Australia in the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science is coordinating the delivery of 51 discrete initiatives under the *Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia*, across 13 different government agencies. In addition to this coordinating role, the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science has responsibility for the delivery of the following measures:

- the $5 billion Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility;
- expanding access to the Entrepreneur’s Programme to include tourism and smaller northern Australian businesses;
- $75.0 million for the establishment of a northern Australia Cooperative Research Centre;
- the establishment of a Major Projects Approvals Agency in Darwin; and
- shifting the Office of Northern Australia to the north.

The new Darwin Office of the Office of Northern Australia was opened on 18 December 2015. The new Head of Office of Northern Australia has commenced in the role and is located in Darwin. The Major Projects Approval Agency’s Darwin office was opened on 18 January 2016. The Major Projects Approval Agency provides major project proponents in the Northern Territory a single point of entry for assistance navigating regulatory approvals and complements the Northern Territory’s existing framework to facilitate major project investment.
Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility

The Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility, 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 Government’s strategy for the north.

From 1 July 2016, the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility will offer up to $5 billion 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. This support for transformative economic infrastructure will be a significant step for the longer term expansion of the economy and population in northern Australia.

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 for Developing Northern Australia. The Cooperative Research Centre will assist businesses, governments and researchers to work together to identify opportunities for business and growth in the north. The Cooperative Research Centre will be industry led, located in the north and have an initial focus on areas where the north has particular strengths. This includes agriculture, food and tropical health. The Cooperative Research Centre is expected to commence in mid 2016.

Northern Australian Tourism Initiative

The Northern Australia Tourism Initiative is one of a suite of new programmes announced in response to the Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia. This $13.6 million initiative was launched in February 2016 to provide more help to tourism businesses in northern Australia to grow, be smarter and be more internationally competitive. It extends both the Entrepreneurs’ Programme and the Australian Small Business Advisory Services programme to better target the needs of the northern Australian tourism industry.

The Entrepreneurs’ Programme provides northern tourism businesses with practical support to build management and business capability, helping businesses to improve their performance and grow. A new tourism service has also been developed to assist small groups of businesses to address a joint challenge so they can work together to make the most of northern Australian tourism market opportunities.

Under the Australian Small Business Advisory Services programme, not-for-profit small business advisory services can now apply for funding to improve their capability to provide low cost advisory and information services to Indigenous and non-Indigenous tourism small businesses in northern Australia. Small business advisory services will be available to small businesses in northern Australia from mid 2016.
Industry Growth Centres

The $248.0 million Industry Growth Centres Initiative (Growth Centres) is an industry-led approach driving innovation, productivity and competitiveness by concentrating our investment on key industry sectors.

The Growth Centres will identify opportunities to reduce regulatory burden, increase collaboration and commercialisation, improve capabilities to engage with international markets and global supply chains, and enhance management and workforce skills.

Growth Centres are being established in six sectors of competitive strength and strategic priority:

• advanced manufacturing;
• cyber security;
• food and agribusiness;
• medical technologies and pharmaceuticals;
• mining equipment, technology and services; and
• oil, gas and energy resources.

Growth Centres are working to lift the levels of collaboration between businesses, industry, research organisations and Australian Government in order to better capitalise on the excellent research and development undertaken and scientific knowledge generated in Australia.

Growth Centres are helping align industry and innovation policy and programmes, including CSIRO and Cooperative Research Centres, to contribute to improving the productivity, competitiveness and innovative capacity of their sectors.

Cooperative Research Centre Programme

The $608.0 million Cooperative Research Centre Programme forms part of the Government’s National Innovation and Science Agenda. The Cooperative Research Centre Programme was established in 1990 and is a competitive, merit based grant programme that supports industry-led collaborations between industry, researchers and the community. By investing in research and development through Cooperative Research Centres, businesses are increasing their income, competitiveness and productivity.

Cooperative Research Centres are also producing graduates with hands-on industry experience helping to create a highly-skilled workforce. The Cooperative Research Centre Programme continues to support Cooperative Research Centres related to rural and regional Australia.
These Cooperative Research Centres contribute to strengthening rural and regional
development in areas such as our agriculture and mining industries, farming systems,
participation of remote communities and improving health outcomes for Indigenous
Australians. Regional businesses (including small and medium-sized enterprises),
Rural Research and Development Corporations, universities and research
organisations can be a part of a Cooperative Research Centre and its activities.

**Entrepreneurs’ Programme**

The Entrepreneurs’ Programme is the Government’s flagship initiative for business
competitiveness and productivity at the firm level. It provides practical advice and
support for businesses, including advice from people with private sector experience;
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 small and medium businesses in key
growth sectors. Services and grants are delivered through three elements: Business
Management; Innovation Connections; and Accelerating Commercialisation. 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 programme’s eligibility requirements.

Incubator Support is part of the National Innovation and Science Agenda. Incubator
Support will contribute to the Australian Government’s priorities by supporting
incubators, accelerators and related business support organisations that can foster the
development and growth of high-potential start-ups.

As part of the National Innovation and Science Agenda, Research Innovations was
expanded and relaunched as Innovation Connections. The expansion of the Innovation
Connections Facilitator Network will allow for the reverse placement of business
people into research organisations, including in some instances regional universities,
and also the placement of graduates into businesses.

**Growth Fund**

The Government has established a $155.0 million Growth Fund, to which it is
contributing $100.6 million. The Growth Fund is helping to facilitate structural change
and build jobs of the future in regions affected by the closure of car manufacturing
plants. This will help workers from Holden and Toyota to transition to new jobs,
encourage automotive supply chain firms to diversify, and to accelerate new business
activity in sectors outside of car manufacturing in Victoria and South Australia. The
Growth Fund includes:

- the $90.0 million Next Generation Manufacturing Investment Programme to
  accelerate private sector investment in high value manufacturing in Victoria and
  South Australia; and

- the $20.0 million Automotive Diversification Programme to help automotive
  Australian supply chain firms capable of diversifying to find new markets.
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.

Funding of $78.2 million has been provided to implement the initiative as part of the Entrepreneurs’ Programme. The Single Business Service initiative recognises that in the past, 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 – 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; and
- reach new markets.

Science for Australia’s Future

Science for Australia’s Future – Inspiring Australia is a $28.1 million initiative that will promote science and reward scientific excellence through programmes like National Science Week, the Prime Minister’s Prizes for Science, State and Territory coordinating committees, regional community science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) Hubs and Questacon educational campaigns. The initiative will also deliver programmes to increase access to Questacon’s resources across rural and regional Australia. Through arrangements with State and Territory governments and local organisations, appropriate programmes are being developed and delivered to meet State and Territory policy priorities and local needs. Specific initiatives include the following:

Inspiring Australia – Regional Science Hub Programme

Over the next four years Inspiring Australia will expand its network of STEM engagement hubs across Australia to establish local, self-sustaining collaborations of organisations that will work together to deliver STEM programmes for their regions. This will create a platform from which as many Australians as possible can participate in science engagement programmes and gain access to quality science engagement activities. In New South Wales alone, 23 Inspiring Australia hubs have been established, linking with over 200 regional organisations.

Inspiring Australia – National Science Week

National Science Week has a truly national reach with activities in almost every corner of Australia, providing opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to engage in STEM. These activities reach regional and remote Australia, including through
regional activities, events and online activities for anyone who is not able to reach an event near them. Locally organised National Science Week committees ensure diverse programmes of activity are available in regions throughout Australia. A national grant selection committee for National Science Week is continually looking for innovative ideas to help engage new audiences in a wide range of locations, in different facets of STEM.

**Inspiring Australia – Pathway Programmes**

In order to ensure Australian communities are able to engage in STEM programmes 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 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.

**Inspiring Australia – Leadership Activities**

Inspiring Australia is supporting and leading a model of National Framework – Local Action for STEM engagement across Australia, working with a variety of leadership groups and subject matter experts. Previous expert groups have identified a number of priority audiences in regional Australia, including Indigenous Australians, the people of the north and those living and working in the desert regions. A number of recommendations have been implemented including the establishment of a Desert Science Knowledge Network. Ongoing work will continue to investigate the best way to introduce an Indigenous Science Engagement agenda for Australia and build support for science engagement in the north through linkages to the Government’s northern Australia agenda.

**Inspiring Australia – Citizen Science Programmes**

Inspiring Australia has supported the establishment of a variety of citizen science initiatives including the annual ABC Online Citizen Science activity and the national not-for-profit Australian Citizen Science Association, in order to boost national and regional capacity for engaging citizens in STEM activities and increasing community participation in and support for scientific research activities. Projects administered through Australian Citizen Science Association will take place in many rural and regional areas, with the Association also providing centralised advice and supporting resources to regional organisations wishing to engage in citizen science activities.

**Australian Government Innovation and Investment Fund**

The Australian Government Innovation and Investment Fund will provide $13.0 million over the three years from 2014-15 to 2016-17 to assist 41 business investment projects leading to new jobs and growth in Tasmania. The Australian Government Innovation and Investment Fund will be matched by $27.0 million from the participating businesses and is expected to create 403 new jobs. The Australian Government Innovation and Investment Fund is a merit-based, competitive grants programme that is delivered by AusIndustry. It forms part of the Australian
The Tasmania Jobs and Investment Fund

The Tasmania Jobs and Investment Fund will provide $24.0 million over the three years from 2015-16 to 2017-18 to assist business investment projects leading to new jobs and growth in Tasmania. The Tasmania Jobs and Investment Fund is made up of $16.0 million from the Government and $8.0 million from the Tasmanian Government. Grants will be offered on the basis of one dollar for every two dollars matched by the successful applicants. The Tasmania Jobs and Investment Fund is a merit-based, competitive grants programme that is delivered by AusIndustry. The first round of the Tasmania Jobs and Investment Fund opened on 4 December 2015 and closed on 12 February 2016.

Geelong Region Innovation and Investment Fund

The Geelong Region Innovation and Investment Fund was announced by the Government and the Victorian Government on 23 May 2013, as part of a package of measures to support the regions affected by Ford Australia’s decision to cease manufacturing operations in Australia from October 2016.

The Geelong Region Innovation and Investment Fund is a competitive, merit based grants programme that supports investment by business that leads directly to sustainable new jobs and economic diversification in the Geelong region. It was announced as a $24.5 million programme comprising $15.0 million from the Government, $4.5 million from the Victorian Government and $5.0 million from Ford Australia.

In 2014, Alcoa made available an additional $5.0 million as part of its $10.0 million package of assistance for employees, businesses and community affected by its closure of the Port Henry aluminium smelter and rolling mill in Geelong.

The Geelong Region Innovation and Investment Fund operates over four years to 30 June 2017.

Three funding rounds have been completed, with 16 companies currently undertaking projects that are expected to create 831 jobs and generate over $145.0 million in investment in the Geelong region.

Major Projects Approval Agency

The Major Projects Approval Agency is a national facility that provides services to the Northern Territory and Tasmania to ensure that investors and developers are aware of all regulatory approval and compliance obligations that affect their project. The Major Projects Approval 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 Approval Agency also supports red tape reform by
monitoring regulatory impacts on development and identifying opportunities for improvement.

Under the Australian Government’s economic plan for Tasmania, the Major Projects Approval Agency’s Tasmanian office was established in 2014 and allocated $2.7 million in funding. The Major Projects Approval Agency’s Darwin office was established in January 2016 as part of the Northern Australia White Paper initiative and has received $2.1 million in funding.

**Australian Tropical Medicine Commercialisation Programme**

The Australian Tropical Medicine Commercialisation Programme is delivered by the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science on behalf of Austrade. This programme, announced on 8 November 2015, helps Australian businesses and researchers to develop pathways to commercialise Australian tropical medical research in partnership with international organisations.

Grant funding totalling $7.1 million will help build connections between Australian research institutes and the global health sector, including international pharmaceutical companies and philanthropic organisations.

Tropical Medicine is the branch of medicine focused on the diagnosis and treatment of diseases, found primarily in the tropic and sub-tropic regions of the world, generally between 30 degrees north and south of the equator. These include parasitic infections, as well as ‘exotic’ viral, bacterial and fungal infections. This programme was established under the *Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia* – Tropical Health Strategy which aims at protecting our people and economy from the increased risks of disease, while commercialising Australian tropical disease research and development.

**The National Energy Productivity Plan**

The National Energy Productivity Plan aims to improve energy productivity by driving:

- more productive consumer choices, through measures which make consumer energy choices easier, help business compete and provide more efficient incentives; and

- more productive energy services, through measures which support innovation, competitive modern markets and consumer protection.

The work plan covers the first steps in the 15 year life of the National Energy Productivity Plan and will be continuously updated.

The National Energy Productivity Plan will make it easier for households and businesses to drive energy savings themselves, with better tools and more relevant advice. It will also expand energy information disclosure for buildings, and build on
existing energy performance rating tools to ensure consumers get better buildings with improved performance and lower costs.

The National Energy Productivity Plan also covers improvements in vehicle efficiency and prioritising and streamlining the way Australia sets minimum energy performance standards for appliances to provide more consumer benefits.

**Business Research and Innovation Initiative**

The Business Research and Innovation Initiative will help the Government to tap into leading-edge thinking and find the most innovative solutions to important challenges in public policy and government service delivery.

Entrepreneurs will receive funding to create innovative products and services. Businesses will 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 small and medium-sized enterprises will help them test their new ideas and provide a path to market through developing a track record. The initiative will also act as a catalyst for small and medium-sized enterprises with government as a customer thereby driving employment and economic growth.

The Australian Government will work with the new Innovation and Science Australia to nominate five national policy and service delivery challenges. Innovative businesses will be invited to submit proposals to address these challenges with the winners receiving grants of up to $100,000 to test their ideas over three to six months of development. The most successful ideas may then be eligible for a further grant of up to $1.0 million to develop a prototype or proof of concept over the next 12 to 18 months.

The Business Research and Innovation Initiative offers particular opportunities for regional, innovative small and medium-sized enterprises as applicants who must have annual turnover of less than $20.0 million per annum and the development of the solution to proof of concept stage is underwritten by the Business Research and Innovation Initiative grant.

**Research and Development Tax Incentive**

The Research and Development Tax Incentive is a key element of the Australian Government's support for innovative Australian businesses. The Research and Development Tax Incentive provides support to eligible businesses, including those in regional areas, undertaking research and development activities.

The two key components of the Research and Development Tax Incentive are: a refundable tax offset for small and medium-sized enterprises with an aggregated turnover of under $20.0 million; and a non-refundable tax offset for eligible larger firms. The rate of the research and development tax offset is reduced to the company
tax rate (currently 30 per cent) for that portion of an entity’s notional research and development deductions that exceeds $100.0 million for an income year.

**Australian Small Business Advisory Services**

The Australian Small Business Advisory Services programme improves the capacity of established, not-for-profit small business advisory service providers to deliver low cost small business advisory and information services.

Under the Australian Small Business Advisory Services Business Solutions 2014 Round, 34 projects are funded until 31 March 2018. Two additional Australian Small Business Advisory Services National Interest projects have also been funded. Since the projects commenced in March 2015 over 17,500 services have been provided to small business operators and those who intend to start small businesses in 200 local government areas across Australia. Twenty-two of these projects deliver services to regional or remote Australia.

On 29 February 2016, the Government announced the Australian Small Business Advisory Services Business Solutions Northern Australia Tourism Initiative round. Up to seven projects are expected to the funded for three years from June 2016. The majority of the Australian Small Business Advisory Services Business Solutions Northern Australia Tourism Initiative projects are anticipated to deliver services in regional or remote northern Australia.

**Tradex Scheme**

The Tradex Scheme provides an up-front exemption from Customs duty and GST on eligible imported goods that are intended for direct export or incorporated in other goods that are exported. This up-front exemption can provide significant cash flow advantages which can also assist the competitiveness of Australian business in developing their export markets.

**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 in relation to 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.

**Exploration Development Incentive**

The Exploration Development Incentive encourages shareholder investment in small exploration companies undertaking greenfields mineral exploration in Australia. It provides an economic incentive to invest in the future prosperity of the Australian mining sector. This benefits the Australian economy by enabling the mining sector to
continue making new mineral discoveries. Exploration activity will be almost exclusively carried out in regional areas. The Exploration Development Incentive enables eligible exploration companies with eligible expenditure to distribute exploration credits to shareholders. The shareholders will then be entitled to a refundable tax offset. The incentive applies from 1 July 2014 and is capped at a total of $100.0 million over a three year period.

Alice Springs Antenna Upgrade

The upgrade of the antenna at the Alice Springs ground station will ensure Australia’s access to satellite imagery that is critical to its resources management and disaster recovery management. A key element of the work has been the engagement of Alice Springs service providers. $500,000 has been invested locally through the ‘Centre for Appropriate Technology’, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation, for site support work and facility management. Other services such as engineering, building and electrical are provided by local organisations. As a visible symbol of this investment and of Geoscience Australia’s commitment to the region, the project also engaged a local Indigenous artist to prepare artwork, key elements of which have been reproduced on the reflector of the nine metre antenna.

Questacon Smart Skills Initiative

Questacon Smart Skills is a free programme developed for secondary school students which creates an awareness of technology, engineering and design thinking amongst young Australians. The programme includes virtual workshops and regional tours; in school workshops for students and professional development workshops for teachers. Complementary to the Smart Skills programme is the Questacon Invention Convention, a three day programme which 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.

Shell Questacon Science Circus

The Shell Questacon Science Circus is an award-winning partnership programme between Questacon, the Australian National University and Shell currently in its 31st year. The Science Circus programme 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, who are studying towards a Master of Science Communication Outreach at the Australian National University.

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 that might not otherwise be easily
available. 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.

**Questacon Virtual Excursions**

Questacon reaches rural and regional Australia through its Schmidt Studio and its Virtual Excursions programme, 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.

**Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation**

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

The Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation’s ability to trace the movement of water using isotopic and nuclear techniques is helping water resource managers in remote and regional Australia make more informed decisions about groundwater use and sustainability.

The Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation’s Isotopes for Water project is improving understanding and management of groundwater systems in several sites across Australia, including the Pilbara and South West regions of Western Australia, the Riversleigh and Coopers Creek regions of Queensland, and right across the Murray-Darling Basin.

The Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation is also the primary supplier of radiopharmaceuticals in Australia, producing approximately 550,000 patient doses of life-saving nuclear medicines each year. These medicines are used in the diagnosis of heart disease as well as a range of cancers, and will be required, on average, by one in two Australians during their lifetime. These medicines are distributed right across Australia, including to regional hospitals and medical practices.
INFRASTRUCTURE AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Australian Government acknowledges the significant contribution of regional Australia to our nation’s economic growth, productivity prosperity. The Australian Government is ensuring that regions continue to grow and prosper, by investing in effective connections to communities and markets, strong regional leadership and safe transportation systems.

The Infrastructure and Regional Development portfolio has a strong focus on the wellbeing and prosperity of Australians through promoting, evaluating and investing in infrastructure. It also ensures efficient, sustainable, competitive, safe and secure transport is available to all Australians.

The Infrastructure and Regional Development portfolio contributes to strengthening regional Australia through fostering local leadership, facilitating local partnerships between all levels of government and supporting effective governance of Australia’s local governments and territories.

The Australian Government has made a commitment to invest a record $50 billion from 2013-14 to 2019-20 for upgrades and the construction of safe and reliable land transport infrastructure across the country. This includes Roads to Recovery programme, the Bridges Renewal Programme, the Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Programme, the Black Spot Programme and the National Highways Upgrade Programme. Across the length and breadth of Australia, these programmes are enhancing linkages between regional centres and cities, and transforming regional communities.

The Government has finalised, or is close to finalising, agreements under the Asset Recycling Initiative (administered by The Treasury) with a number of States and Territories worth $3.3 billion. These agreements will unlock investment in regional road and rail freight corridors across NSW and Victoria, and flood mitigation works in the Northern Territory.

The National Stronger Regions Fund will provide $1 billion over five years to support priority economic infrastructure projects throughout Australia. Together, Rounds One and Two have provided $505.0 million in funding for 162 projects across Australia. This includes job creating projects such as $3.5 million to the Northern Rivers Livestock Exchange project upgrade at Casino, $10.0 million to the Mildura Airport upgrade, and $10.0 million to the Yeppoon CBD and Foreshore Revitalisation.

NEW INITIATIVES

Melbourne to Brisbane Inland Rail

The Government is committing to the Melbourne to Brisbane Inland Rail and is providing an additional $594 million from 2017-18 to 2019-20, in equity funding to the Australian Rail Track Corporation to acquire land for the Inland Rail corridor and continue pre-construction and due diligence activities.

The Melbourne to Brisbane corridor is one of the most important general freight routes in Australia. Inland Rail will provide 1,700 kilometre freight rail alignment connecting Melbourne and Brisbane.

Improved access to and from regional markets will result in a total of 8.9 million tonnes of agricultural freight expected to be carried in 2050 and increased road safety in regional Australia on the basis that each train will remove 110 B-double trucks from the road.

Inland Rail is expected to support an annual average of 800 jobs during construction and 600 operational jobs each year. Many of these jobs will be in regional areas.

Victorian Transport Infrastructure Package

The Australian Government has announced reallocation of $1.5 billion in funding to a Victorian Transport Infrastructure Package to upgrade for a range of new road and rail projects in Victoria, subject to matching Victorian funding. The Victorian Transport Infrastructure Package includes a $345.0 million allocation for a Rural and Regional Roads Package, to be matched by the Victorian Government to enable a package of $690.0 million.

The Government will work with Victoria to determine the best projects to receive funding through the package, with a focus on projects delivering clear productivity and safety benefits. The projects may include duplications, road widening, overtaking lanes and installation of Intelligent Transport Systems and Information Communication Technologies.

The Victorian Transport Infrastructure Package also includes $220.0 million to upgrade the Murray Basin Freight Rail network, to be matched by the Victorian Government. The project will link a significant portion of Victoria’s prime agricultural land, supporting the freight requirements of primary producers and the development of other freight dependent industries in the region.

Roads to Recovery

The Roads to Recovery programme will receive $400 million in 2019-20, an additional $50.0 million per year from 2019-20 to support construction and maintenance of local roads and will be provided directly to local councils for road works chosen by the councils, and to States and Territories for roads in areas where there are no councils. Each funding recipient has a set allocation of funding over the life of the programme.
This builds on the existing Roads to Recovery programme funding of $3.2 billion from 2014-15 to 2018-19. Of this existing funding around $2.4 billion will be provided to local councils in rural and regional areas.

**Black Spot Programme**

The Black Spot Programme will continue to receive $60.0 million per year from 2019-20 for road safety works such as roundabouts, crash barriers and street lights at places where there have been serious crashes or where serious crashes are likely.

This builds on the existing funding of $500.0 million from 2014-15 to 2018-19 which is helping make roads safer for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. Each State and Territory receives a share of the total funding, based on population and crash data.

The Australian Government has broadened the eligibility criteria for the Black Spot Programme for 2015-16 and 2016-17 to make it easier for regional communities to compete for the additional funding. The Australian Government has also guaranteed that at least 50 per cent of funding provided over these two years will be dedicated to fixing roads in regional Australia.

**Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Programme**

The Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Programme will receive $40.0 million per year from 2019-20, building on the current commitment of $248.0 million (2013-14 to 2018-19), to fund road augmentation infrastructure that contributes to the safety and productivity of heavy vehicle operations across Australia. Projects funded under the Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Programme include rest stops and parking bays, upgrading the capacity of roads and technology trials aimed at improving heavy vehicle productivity.

**Bridges Renewal Programme**

The Bridges Renewal Programme will receive $60.0 million per year from 2019-20, building on the current commitment of $300.0 million (2015-16 to 2018-19), to help regions upgrade and repair bridges to enhance access for local communities and facilitate higher productivity vehicle access.

Round one of the Bridges Renewal Programme was open to State, Territory and local governments with $108.0 million in funding for 66 projects. Round two was open to local governments only, with a further $103.0 million allocated to 141 projects. Round three of the Bridges Renewal Programme is expected to open in 2016.

**CURRENT INITIATIVES**

**Developing Northern Australia – Improving Northern Cattle Supply Chains**

The Australian Government has committed $100.0 million from 2016-17 to 2018-19 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, local governments and potentially industry, for projects which aim to reduce costs to the northern Australia cattle industry.

Opportunities to improve productivity will be modelled using state-of-the art transport logistics modelling developed by CSIRO, (referred to as the ‘TRANSIT’ model). These opportunities will then be assessed and prioritised in consultation with the northern State, Territory and local governments. Successful projects are expected to be announced from mid-2016.

Northern Australia Roads Programme

The Australian Government has committed $600.0 million for the Northern Australia Roads programme 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 will be considered for funding.

Works will include upgrades as well as safety and productivity improvements, such as widening, overtaking lanes, and pavement renewal. The Australian Government will also work with jurisdictions to agree Indigenous employment and supplier use targets for road projects. Successful projects are expected to be announced in mid-2016.

National Stronger Regions Fund

The Australian Government is delivering the $1 billion National Stronger Regions Fund over five years from 2015-16 to promote economic development in disadvantaged regions across Australia.

The National Stronger Regions Fund is helping regions invest in their own future by supporting infrastructure projects identified by local communities.

The National Stronger Regions Fund provides up to three quarters of the cost of projects in remote and very remote areas, and up to half the cost of projects in all other areas, that support economic growth and sustainability, particularly in areas of disadvantage, with remaining contributions coming from local and State governments, communities and the private sector.

Successful projects from the first two Rounds have been announced. Together they are providing $505.7 million in funding for 162 projects across Australia of which most are in regional areas.

Stronger Communities Programme

The Australian Government is providing $45.0 million over two years, commencing in 2015-16, to fund small capital projects in local communities to improve local
community participation, cohesion and contribute to vibrant and viable communities across Australia.

Funding of $150,000 per year over two years will be available to support projects in each of the 150 Federal Electorates. Applicants must seek a grant of at least $5,000 and up to a maximum of $20,000 and must match the Stronger Communities Programme grant in cash or in-kind on at least a dollar for dollar basis.

**Community Development Grants Programme**

The Australian Government established the Community Development Grants programme in 2013 to fund Government identified projects that support needed infrastructure that promotes stable, secure and viable local and regional economies. The Australian Government has already invested $363.9 million into the Community Development Grants programme from 2013-14 to 2017-18, of which $15.3 million has been transferred to deliver projects under other programmes.

The Community Development Grants programme is benefitting regional communities by creating jobs during construction as well as enhancing social and economic well-being in the long term.

The Community Development Grants programme has provided funding for nearly 300 projects including the Australian Government’s 2013 election commitments and Australian Government selected uncontracted projects from the Regional Development Australia Fund and Community Infrastructure Grants Programme.

**Tasmanian Jobs and Growth Package**

The $106.0 million Tasmanian Jobs and Growth Package is an initiative which complements the Australian Government's Economic Growth Plan for Tasmania—a package of measures aimed at stimulating Tasmania's economy by supporting growth and employment.

The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development is administering $88.9 million for 31 projects from 2013-14 to 2016-17, and the remaining $17.1 million has been transferred to deliver projects under other programmes.

**Tasmanian Freight Rail Revitalisation**

The Freight Rail Revitalisation programme will raise the quality of the major lines on the Tasmanian rail network through selective re-sleepering and track replacement. The total project cost is $119.6 million with an Australian Government contribution of $59.8 million.

The project 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.
The current Freight Rail Revitalisation programme builds on upgrades that were designed to keep the lines at an operational standard, with the objective of improving overall safety, reliability to support the competitiveness of the Tasmanian rail network.

**Developing Northern Australia – Freight Rail Analyses**

The Australian Government committed $5.0 million as part of the *Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia* to undertake freight rail feasibility studies in northern Australia, including a pre-feasibility study on a potential rail line between Mount Isa and Tennant Creek.

The analysis will consider the viability and economic opportunities of a new freight transport link between Queensland and the Northern Territory, also considering the broader context of the corridor reaching from Townsville to Darwin. The study will help to determine the best transport links to connect businesses in Queensland and the Northern Territory, and improve access to global markets for local producers across the northern region.

The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development is working closely with the Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australian Governments to collaborate on delivering the freight rail analyses measure.

**Drought Communities Programme**

The Drought Communities Programme is designed to provide employment for people whose work opportunities have been impacted by drought in eligible local government areas. The Australian Government is providing $35.0 million over four years from 2015-16, with $13.0 million to be provided in 2016-17.

Funding is being 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 currently 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, and Brewarrina, Coonamble and Walgett in New South Wales.

**National Highway Upgrade Programme**

The Australian Government is investing $228.7 million from 2014-15 to 2017-18 for a new National Highway Upgrade programme. The National Highway Upgrade programme provides funding for improvements to Australia’s key national highway networks through works such as shoulder and centreline widening, ripple strips and wire rope barriers, overtaking lanes, turning lanes and pavement improvements. This commitment provides for these essential works on the:
PROTECTED
SENSITIVE: CABINET

Infrastructure and Regional Development

• Newell Highway (New South Wales);

• Hume Freeway, Monash Freeway, Western Highway and Goulburn Valley Highway (Victoria);

• New England Highway, Cunningham Highway, Flinders Highway and Landsborough Highway (Queensland);

• Great Northern Highway (Western Australia);

• Sturt Highway (South Australia);

• Bass Highway (Tasmania);

• Victorian Highway (Northern Territory); and

• Federal Highway (Australian Capital Territory).

Regional Roads Productivity Package (Northern Territory)
The Australian Government is investing $90.0 million from 2013-14 to 2016-17 to replace bridges on the Roper Highway, improve flood immunity on Port Keats Road, seal sections of the Santa Teresa Way, construct a new bridge over Rock Bottom Creek on Central Arnhem Road, strengthen, widen and seal sections of the Buntine Highway and install gravel on sections of Arnhem Link Road.

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

Pacific Highway (New South Wales)
The Australian Government is investing $5.64 billion from 2013-14 onwards towards the upgrade of the Pacific Highway to a four lane divided road between Hexham and the Queensland border. Currently around 408 kilometres of the upgrade has been completed and a further 145 kilometres is being built. The full upgrade will be completed by the end of the decade. 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.

Great Western Highway (New South Wales)
The Australian Government is contributing $200.0 million towards the $250.0 million upgrade of the Great Western Highway between Katoomba and Lithgow. The works include the upgrade of the highway at Forty Bends, safety upgrades between Katoomba and Mount Victoria and a programme of safety works between Mount Victoria and Lithgow. The project is expected to improve road safety and road freight...
efficiency while protecting the area’s natural environment, heritage and community amenity.

Great Ocean Road (Victoria)
The Australian Government is investing $25.0 million from 2013-14 to 2018-19 to the upgrade the Great Ocean Road in south-west Victoria. The upgrade will rehabilitate existing pavement, stabilise cliff and land slip sites, strengthen bridges and improve drainage assets between Torquay and Allansford. 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 expected to be completed in mid-2018.

Midland Highway (Tasmania)
The Australian Government is investing $400.0 million from 2013-14 to 2023-24 to upgrade the Midland Highway to a minimum 3 star Australian Road Assessment Programme safety rating. This package of works will involve some 30 individual projects over the length of the highway. Seven projects have been completed of the 14 approved for delivery to date. 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. The project will improve connectivity and road safety on this key north-south corridor in Tasmania.

Bruce Highway (Queensland)
The Australian Government is investing $3.6 billion from 2013-14 to 2018-19 to a package of projects to upgrade and maintain the Bruce Highway, Queensland’s major north-south transport corridor which links Brisbane and the regional centres to the north of the state. Over ten years this will increase, with investment reaching up to $6.7 billion.

Cape York Region Package (Queensland)
The Australian Government is investing $208.4 million from 2014-15 to 2018-19 to facilitate upgrades to infrastructure including improved road access into Cape York from the south. The projects will provide benefits to the Cape York local community and local industry, including the mining sector.

Outback Way (Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia)
The Australian Government is investing $42.0 million from 2014-15 to 2018-19 to upgrades of sections of the Outback Way to improve safety and access to remote areas. The project will unlock the potential benefits of the Outback Way, benefitting Indigenous and remote communities and the Australian economy, particularly in the areas of tourism, mining and freight.

Great Northern Highway (Western Australia)
The Australian Government is investing $307.8 million from 2014-15 to 2017-18 to upgrading the 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).

North West Coastal (Western Australia)

The Australian Government is investing $172.7 million from 2014-15 to 2017-18 towards works to address the problems associated with predicted traffic growth, including heavy vehicles, and safety concerns, due to the age of the road and its narrow seal width. The works are also expected to improve freight efficiency and reduce freight costs by improving access for the local farming area and the resources areas in the north-west.

Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands (South Australia)

The Australian Government is investing $85.0 million from 2015-16 to 2018-19 to upgrade 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.

$25 million South Australian Regional Roads Package

The Australian Government will deliver an additional $25.0 million for South Australian regional roads to boost the economy, increase productivity, improve safety and create jobs. The Australian Government has allocated funds to the following road projects for regional South Australia:

- $9.0 million to complete the Penola Bypass;
- $6.9 million towards upgrades on the Sturt Highway;
- $4.0 million for new overtaking lanes on the Eyre Highway between Port Augusta and Whyalla;
- $3.1 million towards new overtaking lanes on the Augusta Highway;
- $0.8 million to upgrade the Riddoch Highway and Wireless Road intersection in Mount Gambier;
- $0.8 million for safety works on the Todd Highway on the Eyre Peninsula; and
- $0.4 million for safety works on the Copper Coast Highway on the York Peninsula.
Regional Aviation Access Programme

Through the Regional Aviation Access Programme, the Australian Government provides targeted support for aerodrome infrastructure and air services to remote areas where they are not commercially viable.

The 2015-16 Budget allocated $33.7 million over four years to the Remote Airstrip Upgrade funding component. In December 2015, the Australian Government announced 52 grants from this funding totalling $11.6 million, with many projects supported into 2016-17 for more complex work.

The Remote Air Services Subsidy Scheme subsidises flights to ensure residents of 260 remote communities have access to regional service centres. $55.5 million is allocated to the Remote Air Services Subsidy Scheme over the four years from 2016-17.

The Airservices Australia Enroute Charges Payment Scheme

The Airservices Australia Enroute 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 Airservices Australia Enroute Charges Payment Scheme offers eligible airlines a rebate of the Airservices Australia enroute navigation charge for applicable flights.

Sixty per cent of the applicable enroute charge is available to eligible airlines flying commercial routes. As an incentive to promote new services, new routes are eligible to be considered for funding equal to 100 per cent of applicable enroute charges. Eligible aeromedical providers receive up to 100 per cent of applicable enroute charges.

Regional Development Australia Committees

The Regional Development Australia (RDA) Committee programme provides a network of 55 committees of community leaders, working to strengthen Australia’s regions and build stronger communities. They achieve this by enhancing economic development opportunities and fostering effective communication between communities, business and all three spheres of government.

The Australian Government is continuing the RDA Committee programme, providing $73.6 million for the period 2016-17 to 2019-20. Current funding agreements have been extended until 31 December 2017. Key tasks for RDA Committees include maintaining 3-5 year regional plans and advising on critical issues affecting economic development, as well as priority activities to drive economic development in their regions. RDA Committees also assist local community stakeholders to develop project proposals, identify appropriate funding sources and promote Australian Government programme.

Local Government Financial Assistance Grants

The Local Government Financial Assistance Grant programme 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 programme which will provide an estimated $9.7 billion to local government over the period 2016-17 to 2019-20 — approximately $2.4 billion per year. The funding is untied and consists of two components:

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

**Services to Territories**

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

The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development delivers services, provides funding support and undertakes capital works with the objective of ensuring that territory communities have access to similar services as equivalent mainland communities.

For example, the Australian Government in 2015-16 provided $110.8 million in funding for services to the Indian Ocean Territories, and approximately $6.1 million in funding for services to the Jervis Bay Territory.

**Indian Ocean Territories**

The Australian Government continues to support the communities of Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands and has extended air services underwriting. The Australian Government continues to review the air services arrangements for territories to place these on as commercial a setting as possible. To promote economic development the Commonwealth also recently released a new land management strategy.

**Norfolk Island**

The Australian Government’s Norfolk Island reform programme provides $136.6 million over the period 2015-16 to 2018-19 to support the long term sustainability of Norfolk Island.

The Australian Government has passed legislation which extends Commonwealth laws to Norfolk Island from 1 July 2016 and amends the definition of Australia to include Norfolk Island. Commonwealth taxation and healthcare arrangements and access to social security payments will commence from 1 July 2016. New South Wales has agreed for its laws to be applied creating a modern body of State law. These will be phased in over time in consultation with both New South Wales and the Norfolk Island community so as to provide a smooth transition.
Elections for the Norfolk Island Regional Council are to be held on 28 May 2016 and the Council will operate from 1 July 2016.

State Government type services will be provided by both New South Wales and the Council and the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development will continue to work with all stakeholders to transition to a broader set of state services over the coming years. The Australian Government has invested $13.0 million in the upgrade of the Cascade Jetty which will facilitate greater access to Norfolk Island by cruise ships and support containerised cargo.

**Jervis Bay**

The Australian Capital Territory has long held the view it is not best placed to deliver services to the Jervis Bay Territory. The Commonwealth, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory continue to consider the proposal for New South Wales to deliver state type services in Jervis Bay. A proposal is expected to be put to the community for consideration during 2016-17. The three governments will make a final decision on service delivery arrangements following community consultation.

**National Capital Authority**

The Australian Government recognises the maturity of the Australian Capital Territory Government in the delivery of local government and planning. The Australian Government will review the role of the National Capital Authority in providing services to the territory and consider whether they duplicate or overlap with those functions and responsibilities already administered by the Australian Capital Territory Government. Further consideration will be given to how the existing arrangements of both the National Capital Authority and the Australian Capital Territory can be streamlined and made both clearer and more efficient.
PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET

Responsibility for Indigenous outcomes sits across all portfolios. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet is responsible for broad policy directions, and some specific funding programmes, 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.

Two thirds of Indigenous Australians, live outside the major cities with over 20 per cent living in remote and very remote locations.

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet’s regional network is located in the communities they serve and has ensured practical change on the ground through implementing and supporting the Indigenous Advancement Strategy.

Introduced on 1 July 2014 the Indigenous Advancement Strategy replaced more than 150 individual programmes and activities with five flexible, broad-based programmes.

NEW INITIATIVES

Community Development Programme

In remote Australia many people are moving onto welfare at a young age and staying there for extended periods.

The Australian Government has provided $25.9 million to better tailor the mutual obligation framework to the needs of remote Australians and to increase incentives to work in remote Australia.

The Community Development Programme is making steady progress to reduce welfare dependency in remote communities through enabling people to participate in meaningful activities that prepare them for work and make their communities better places to live. However, stronger incentives are needed to encourage people to be active in their communities and to take up available work.

On 2 December 2015, the Australian Government introduced legislation into the Senate that if passed will mean changes to remote welfare and compliance arrangements. A new Remote Income Support Payment will replace activity tested payments, including supplements and allowances, for eligible job seekers in Community Development Programme regions. Payments will be administered weekly by local Community Development Programme providers, enabling more immediate application of financial penalties for job seekers who do not attend their mutual obligation activities.

To encourage job seekers to work, the amount an individual can earn before their income support starts reducing under the income test will be increased to the equivalent of the minimum wage.
A Community Investment Fund will be established to reinvest non-compliance penalties in economic and community development initiatives in remote communities.

Arrangements will be phased in from 1 July 2016, initially in up to four of the 60 Community Development Programme regions.

**Northern Australia White Paper (Land Reforms)**

The Australian Government has commenced a range of reforms as outlined in the *Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia* and report of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Investigation into Indigenous land administration and use. These initiatives will support Indigenous Australians to use their rights in land and waters for economic development as part of the mainstream economy. Particular projects include supporting land reform pilots which illustrate the benefits of innovative land use, funding for native title corporations to engage effectively with proponents of development and reforms to support streamlined approval processes for Indigenous land use.

**Indigenous Student Success in Higher Education**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are enrolling in universities in greater numbers than ever before. The Australian Government and universities have worked together to develop new arrangements to capitalise on these improvements to ensure students are not only enrolling, but also progressing and completing university awards in greater numbers. This will lead to more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people taking up professional careers.

The Australian Government will consolidate funding of $253.1 million over four years from 2016-17 within a capped special appropriation under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*.

The new measure will commence from the 2017 academic year, consolidating the existing Commonwealth Scholarships Programme, Indigenous Support Programme and tutorial assistance under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy. Universities will be able to design support that best meets the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students but funding will be geared to extend the current focus on access along with enhanced retention and completion outcomes. The new model features a loading that recognises the additional support students from remote and regional locations require.

**CURRENT INITIATIVES**

**The Prime Minister and Cabinet’s Regional Network**

The Prime Minister and Cabinet’s Regional Network encompasses 12 regions across Australia that have similarities in culture, language, mobility and economy. The Prime Minister and Cabinet’s Regional Network is responsible for providing expertise and information about the local circumstances of communities, stakeholders, services,
issues and sensitivities. Each region is led by a senior officer (Regional Manager), who is accountable for achieving outcomes in their region.

In the coming year, the Prime Minister and Cabinet’s Regional Network will focus on strengthening engagement with Indigenous families, communities and leaders across urban, regional and remote Australia to understand their needs and aspirations and affect practical change on the ground in the Government’s key priority areas. The Prime Minister and Cabinet’s Regional Network will work 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.

Indigenous Advancement Strategy

The Indigenous Advancement Strategy began on 1 July 2014 and replaced more than 150 individual programmes and activities with five flexible, broad-based programmes:

- Jobs, Land and Economy;
- Children and Schooling;
- Safety and Wellbeing;
- Culture and Capability; and
- Remote Australia Strategies.

Through these five broad programmes, the Indigenous Advancement Strategy supports a wide range of activities, including many activities designed by Indigenous communities and organisations to achieve local aspirations.

Jobs, Land and Economy

Getting more adults into employment, fostering Indigenous business and assisting Indigenous people to benefit socially and economically from the use of their land are essential to delivering the Australian Government’s commitment to improving the lives of Indigenous Australians. Since commencement of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy on 1 July 2014, over 25,000 job placements have been supported by the employment initiatives under its Jobs, Land and Economy programme.

The Australian Government is leading by example by committing to a three per cent employment target across the Australian Public Service by 2018, which will increase the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to 9,270. For the first time, the Government has set agency-level targets for Indigenous representation to help drive accountability, taking into account agencies’ current representation and regional presence.

Partnering with some of Australia’s largest employers, the Employment Parity Initiative (EPI) aims to increase the number of large Australian companies with a
workforce reflective of the size of the Indigenous population. The EPI aims to get 20,000 more Indigenous job seekers into jobs by 2020. To date, ten companies have entered into EPI agreements committing to an additional 6,815 jobs for Indigenous Australians.

The Australian Government’s Indigenous Procurement Policy began on 1 July 2015 and provides opportunities for Indigenous businesses to win an increasing share of the Australian government’s contracts. This is helping stimulate Indigenous entrepreneurship and business development, and providing Indigenous Australians with more opportunities to participate in the economy.

Under the policy, three per cent of Australian Government contracts must be awarded to Indigenous businesses by 2020. This means that by 2019-2020 at least 1,500 new domestic contracts will be awarded to Indigenous businesses across the Australian Government.

In the first six months of the policy, over 750 contracts were awarded to more than 250 Indigenous businesses valued in total at over $91 million. This is almost 15 times above the value of Australian Government procurement with Indigenous businesses in previous years.

The Australian Government has committed more than $70 million to support around 5,000 Indigenous Australians into guaranteed jobs through Vocational Training and Employment Centres model. Already Vocational Training and Employment Centres have supported just over 3,900 job placements for Indigenous Australians, many of them in regional and remote regions.

The Australian Government will continue to support the recognition of traditional ownership and Indigenous interests in land through native title processes and Australian Government land rights legislation, including in regional areas across Australia. It will continue to support negotiation of further 99-year township leases in the Northern Territory to support home ownership and economic development opportunities for Indigenous people and their communities. The Australian Government currently supports Indigenous rangers to deliver environmental outcomes and address Indigenous disadvantage by providing jobs to Indigenous people. At 30 March 2016, the Australian Government was providing funding for the training and employment of 775 Indigenous rangers, mostly in remote and regional areas.

Indigenous Protected Areas now make up more than 65 million hectares, or approximately 44.4 per cent of the National Reserve System, Australia’s network of protected areas.

**Children and Schooling**

The Children and Schooling programme supports activities which nurture and educate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, youth and adults. The programme has a strong focus on increased school attendance and improved educational outcomes.
which lead to employment. Through this programme the Government is aiming to contribute to:

- having 95 per cent of all Indigenous four-year-olds enrolled in early childhood education by 2025;
- halving the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy by 2018;
- attaining 90 per cent school attendance for Indigenous children by 2018;
- halving the gap for Indigenous people aged 20-24 years old in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020;
- assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to attend high performing schools, including both day and full boarding support;
- mentoring support to improve rates of school attendance, Year 12 attainment and transition to further education;
- assisting tertiary students who are required to travel away from their permanent home for short periods to undertake approved course-related activities; and
- sporting academies across Northern Territory, Western Australia, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales.

Remote School Attendance Strategy
The Remote School Attendance Strategy aims to increase school attendance in remote areas by providing targeted 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 in 2016 is expected to operate in 77 schools across 74 communities. $80.0 million in funding has been allocated for 2016-2018.

Over 2014 and 2015 the Remote School Attendance Strategy achieved some promising results, with the best gains in school attendance in Queensland and Northern Territory schools. The Remote School Attendance Strategy continues to be a significant employer of local Indigenous people with over 400 employed.

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 programme, the Australia Government is providing approximately $250 million funding in 2015-16 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 policing 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; and

• reduce petrol sniffing in regional and remote areas of Australia by supporting local community action and replacing regular fuel with low aromatic unleaded fuel, with over 150 sites currently supplying low aromatic unleaded fuel.

**Culture and Capability**

Activities funded under the Culture and Capability programme support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to maintain their culture, and participate equally in the economic and social life of Australia. Strengthening Indigenous culture and capability underpins the Australian Government’s engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in working together to understand and develop tailored responses to meet the aspirations and priorities of communities. Activities supported include:

• community led healing initiatives;

• reconciliation activities, including the use of Reconciliation Action Plans;

• leadership and governance training;

• interpreter services; and

• Indigenous broadcasting services.
Remote Australia Strategies
Funding of approximately $160 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 programme 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 $6 million dollars is provided through the programme to deliver one project in a community each calendar year, providing infrastructure, health services and vocational training. The Army Aboriginal Community Assistance programme will be delivered in Laura (Queensland) in 2016 and Toomelah (New South Wales) in 2017.

National Partnership Agreements
National Partnership Agreement on Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment
As announced in the 2015-16 Budget, the Australian Government is continuing its significant investment into services and outcomes for remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. The Government has redirected $988.2 million over eight years to establish a new National Partnership on Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment.

A New Remote Indigenous Housing Strategy
The Australian Government is providing funding to partner States through to 2017-18 for a new Remote Housing Strategy to replace the existing National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing. The Remote Housing Strategy will continue to build on the investment under the National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing, to facilitate new housing, housing-related infrastructure and refurbishments, as well as, for the first time, provide incentives to States for progress against agreed outcomes which establish more sustainable housing systems in remote Indigenous communities.

Portfolio Bodies
Indigenous Business Australia
The Australian Government continues to support Indigenous home ownership, businesses and investments through Indigenous Business Australia, a corporate Australian Government entity within the Prime Minister and Cabinet portfolio. Indigenous Business Australia provides new and existing Indigenous business owners access to expert advice and business finance. Indigenous Business Australia also provides housing finance that enables Indigenous Australians to buy their first homes, and investment advice and products that allow groups to build wealth and maximise economic outcomes from their land and other assets.

In 2016-17, Indigenous Business Australia expects to provide:
• approximately 530 new concessional home loans to eligible low and middle income Indigenous families to assist buying their first home;

• approximately 50 business loans to assist eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to start up, acquire, or grow a successful small-to-medium sized business; and

• investment assistance to 85 Indigenous organisations.

**Indigenous Land Corporation**

The Indigenous Land Corporation is a Corporate Australian Government entity within the Prime Minister and Cabinet portfolio. It assists Indigenous Australians to acquire land, and manage Indigenous-held land, “so as to provide economic, environmental, social or cultural benefits for Aboriginal persons and Torres Strait Islanders”. The Indigenous Land Corporation has a national focus, engaging extensively with Indigenous landholders in regional Australia through:

• managing a cattle herd of up to 100,000 head across 13 properties in northern Australia, in partnership with Traditional Owners (through Indigenous Land Corporation subsidiary National Indigenous Pastoral Enterprises Pty Ltd);

• running complex multi-property land management projects and pastoral services across regions that provide advice, training, mentoring and other assistance to Indigenous landholders;

• continuing innovation in payment for ecosystem services including the generation of carbon credits from controlled savanna burning on Indigenous-held land; and

• providing land management assistance to projects on Indigenous-held land to protect country, bring land back into production and build capacity to sustainably manage land and develop land-based enterprises; and operating training-to-employment programmes for Indigenous Australians.

**Aboriginal Hostels Limited**

Aboriginal Hostels Limited 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 29 February 2016, Aboriginal Hostels Limited operates 47 accommodation facilities Australia wide, predominately in regional and remote locations. Aboriginal Hostels Limited provides 1,850 beds for residents per night across the country, with 81 per cent of these beds located in regional and remote areas (551 beds per night in regional areas, 943 beds per night in remote areas and 356 beds per night in capital areas).
SOCIAL SERVICES

The Social Services portfolio is as broad as it is big, representing around one third of the total Commonwealth budget. The Department of Social Services’ policies and programmes support people throughout their lives to encourage wellbeing, independence and participation in work and community. These initiatives provide a safety net for those who cannot fully support themselves, enhance the wellbeing of people with high needs, assist individuals who need help with care and support a diverse and harmonious society.

In 2015-16, more than 2.1 million regional Australians received assistance from income support, pension and family payments. In the same period, about $487.0 million in grants was invested in regional community services to assist individuals and families to get the support they needed. Those services include emergency relief for people experiencing financial hardship, playgroups for children with special needs and help for job seekers with disability to prepare for, find and keep a job.

Last year, the Australian Government committed $20.7 million to implement a new Investment Approach to Welfare, with a further $13.0 million to continue related longitudinal studies. Since then, the Department of Social Services has introduced a new front line data collection tool called the Data Exchange, or DEX. Information gathered through these initiatives will allow the Department of Social Services to continue tailoring its social services policies to ensure the welfare system looks after those who need it most, including vulnerable groups in regional Australia. It will also help ensure the system remains sustainable well into the future.

Over the last 12 months, the Department of Social Services and other Commonwealth agencies have worked closely with communities in Ceduna, South Australia and the East Kimberley in Western Australia to co-design a trial of Cashless Debit Cards, aimed at reducing welfare fuelled alcohol, drug and gambling abuse. The Australian Government has invested over $2.5 million in additional community services to support the trial, including more drug and alcohol services, a 24/7 mobile outreach, and financial counselling. Telecommunications infrastructure is also being enhanced; for the first time the communities of Koonibba, Yalata, Oak Valley and Scotdesco will have access to ongoing internet connectivity. Further investment through the 2016-17 Budget will enable the trial to be expanded to a third high-priority location in regional Australia.

NEW INITIATIVES

Investment Approach: Creation of a Try, Test and Learn Fund

The $96.1 million (over four years from 2016-17) Try, Test and Learn Fund is part of the Australian Investment Approach to Welfare. Its name is an explanation of its function: it will test policy interventions, try new approaches and the Department of Social Services will learn what works well and what is ineffective. In this way, policies for priority groups will be designed which are more targeted and effective; some members
of these groups will be regional Australians. It will also encourage a whole-of-system view, rather than a fragmented approach.

Under the Try, Test and Learn Fund evidence-based policy proposals will be tested for effectiveness using actuarial valuations. As a result, ineffective approaches will cease and funding will be re-directed. This actuarial analysis will also identify groups with a high risk of long-term welfare dependency. The aim would be to implement policy interventions that promote independence and employment thus breaking the welfare cycle.

**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, 2013).

The Australian Government recognises particular vulnerabilities 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.

$100.0 million will be invested in initiatives under the Third Action Plan 2016-19 of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-22*. The initiatives will provide targeted support to priority groups, including women and children in rural, regional and remote locations, focused on:

- enhancing primary prevention (stopping violence happening in the first place);
- holding perpetrators to account and preventing them from re-offending;
- keeping women safe in their homes;
- addressing gender inequality and women’s economic participation;
- responding to children exposed to domestic and family violence; and
- addressing violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children.

The Third Action Plan marks the half-way point for the National Plan, and will continue Commonwealth and State and Territory efforts to break the cycle of violence, informed by recommendations of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Advisory Panel.
Trial of a Third Site for the Cashless Debit Card

The Australian Government will build upon and further test the efficacy of the Cashless Debit Card by expanding the trial to a third location in late 2016. This proposal mirrors the parameters of the current trial in Ceduna and the East Kimberley, but would test the card in a regional community with different demographics. The trial will impact people receiving working age income support payments however this impact is expected to be largely positive due to the anticipated improvement in community function.

Expanding the trial will provide further evidence of the ability of the Cashless Debit Card to disrupt behaviours such as drug and alcohol abuse and domestic violence that contribute to high unemployment, low participation, long-term welfare dependency and intergenerational disadvantage among vulnerable Australians.

In preparation for the trial, community services will be enhanced in place, supporting people to address their addictions.

Supporting the Financially Vulnerable

The Centre for Social Impact (2014) identified people in regional Australia are most likely to experience financial exclusion as a result of a range of factors related to locational disadvantage.

In 2015-16, $6.1 million was provided to support Financial Counselling for Problem Gamblers, with around $3.0 million allocated in regional locations. Through the 2016-17 Budget, the Australian Government will extend funding for Commonwealth Financial Counsellors for Problem Gamblers for 12 months, until 30 June 2017. This $7.1 million extension means specialist services will continue to be available to 28 priority areas in regional Australia.

Financial Counsellors for Problem Gamblers are trained to identify and support problem gamblers and their families. This includes counselling, addressing harm minimisation and safety issues as well as working with therapeutic counsellors to address the addictive behaviours. They work with the whole family to restrict the problem gambler’s access to finances, as well as protecting joint assets.

Third Action Plan – Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009-20

In response to the increasing number of Australian children exposed to child abuse and neglect, the Australian Government is working with States, Territories and the non-government sector to implement a national approach to protecting our children.

The Third Action Plan 2015-18 under the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009-20 outlines strategies and actions to keep Australia’s children and young people safe, including those living in regional areas.
As part of the Commonwealth’s commitment to the Third Action Plan, two trials will be funded to improve the wellbeing of children and young people that will:

- help parents understand the importance of child development and parenting in their child’s first 1,000 days and make it normal for families to ask for help; and

- improve support for young people leaving out-of-home care, including case management, to assist them to gain skills for social and economic participation.

**Building Social Cohesion for Recently Arrived Migrants**

In 2015, more than 8,000 migrants and refugees settled in regional Australia.

This initiative focuses on building social cohesion and improving employment pathways in settlement locations, including regional areas, for newly arrived migrants.

The initiative increases the likelihood of early and sustained engagement with communities to reduce the risk of long term welfare dependency and marginalisation through two elements:

- increased Australian Government funding for the National Community Hubs Programme to support the establishment of new hubs in settlement locations, including regional Australia. Community hubs bring together vulnerable people, including recently arrived migrants, women and children in local facilities such as schools, to build community connectedness and equip participants with knowledge and skills to be active members of the community; and

- a pilot project to assist newly arrived humanitarian migrants of working age and with vocational English proficiency to find work that reflects the skills and experience they have gained in their home countries.

This $10.9 million investment (over three years from 2016-17) recognises the important contribution that migrants make to Australian society, including regional communities, while seeking to strengthen their sense of belonging and increase opportunities for social and economic participation; both key components of successful settlement and strong social cohesion.

At the time of the 2011 Census, 79,520 migrants were in the labour force in rural and regional Australia.

**CURRENT INITIATIVES**

**Domestic and Family Violence – Women’s safety package**

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) *Personal Safety Survey 2012* (ABS, 2013, cat. No. 4906.0) found 21 per cent of women living outside of capital cities have experienced domestic violence, compared to 15 per cent of women living in capital cities.
In September 2015, the Prime Minister announced the $100.0 million women’s safety package. The package includes practical actions to achieve a significant and sustained reduction in domestic, family and sexual violence. It recognises the diverse experiences of women and their children, and the need to ensure responses meet their specific circumstances, including those living in regional Australia.

Work already underway to prevent and respond to violence in regional and metropolitan communities includes:

- $5.0 million to expand 1800RESPECT, the national telephone and online counselling and information service, to ensure more women can get support;

- $6.0 million for safer technology including the distribution of safe mobile phones and working with the Children’s eSafety Commissioner to develop online resource material;

- $12.0 million to trial innovative technology to keep women safe, such as domestic violence alerts and global positioning system (GPS) trackers for perpetrators, with funding matched by States and Territories;

- the delivery of domestic violence-alert training to health and allied health workers, which has a focus on training for workers in regional and remote communities;

- $5.0 million for local women’s caseworkers, to coordinate support for women affected by domestic violence, including housing, safety and budgeting services; and

- $2.0 million additional funding for MensLine to develop tools and resources to support perpetrators not to reoffend.

Family Mental Health Support Services

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, support is now delivered in 100 locations across the country. $21.35 million was provided in 2015-16 to 56 services across regional Australia to support families living in these locations.

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.
Families and Children

The Australian Government will allocate over $256 million in 2016-17 to enable Family and Children’s services to continue to be delivered across Australia, with an extensive footprint in regional areas. The Family 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 programmes and home visits.

Communities for Children Facilitating Partners services operate in 29 regional areas to support early childhood development and wellbeing. Under this model, a funded Facilitating Partner works with each community to identify local needs and tailor services accordingly. Services may include parenting support, home visitation, supported play groups and life skills programmes.

Other Family and Children’s services include:

- Family and Relationship Services;
- Children and Parenting Support Services;
- Intensive Family Support Services; and
- Family Law Services.

Home Interaction Programme for Parents and Youngsters

The Home Interaction Programme for Parents and Youngsters is a two-year, home-based parenting and early childhood learning initiative that currently operates in 65 regional communities of high disadvantage.

Home Interaction Programme for Parents and Youngsters builds the confidence and skills of parents and carers to create a positive learning environment to prepare their child for school. At each Home Interaction Programme for Parents and Youngsters site, a not-for-profit organisation delivers the programme in collaboration with the local community.

National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009-20

The National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009-20 is a collaborative commitment between the Australian Government, State and Territory governments and the non-government sector to address the significant issue of child abuse and neglect within Australia.

The National Framework has supported children and families in regional areas by building community awareness of the issues affecting children’s wellbeing through the Child Aware Local Initiative and assisting community workers to respond to at-risk children and families through the Building Capacity, Building Bridges programme.
Activities in 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.

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; and
- organisations responding better to children and young people to keep them safe.

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 and the Third Action Plan 2015-18 are part of a range of activities that address issues of concern for Australian children. There are close links between Third Action Plan 2015-18 and the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-22.

Financial Wellbeing and Capability

Services funded under the Financial Wellbeing and Capability activity operate across 1,300 outlets in regional 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.

The 2016-17 Budget will allocate over $96 million to continue services under the Financial Wellbeing and Capability activity.

Around 52 per cent of people accessing a Commonwealth Financial Counselling services are in regional Australia.

Settlement Services

In 2016-17, $205.0 million will be provided for settlement services, which assist eligible people who have recently arrived in Australia to establish their new lives. Funding for services in regional areas helps new arrivals to become active and contributing members of their local communities.

Settlement services are currently being delivered in regional areas that include: Geelong, Mildura, Shepparton, Wodonga (Victoria); Hobart, Launceston (Tasmania);
Social Services

Albury, Wagga Wagga, Newcastle, Wollongong, Coffs Harbour (New South Wales); Toowoomba, Townsville, Logan, Cairns (Queensland); and Mount Gambier (South Australia).

On 9 September 2015, the Australian Government announced that an additional 12,000 humanitarian entrant places would be made available for people displaced by conflict in Syria and Iraq (in addition to the 13,750 places in Australia’s 2015-16 Humanitarian Programme). People who come to Australia as part of this intake are being settled in a number of Australian communities, in both metropolitan and regional areas.

As at 11 April 2016, 2,515 humanitarian entrants have been referred for settlement services in these regional locations across Australia in 2015-16.

Strong and Resilient Communities

This activity aims to build strong, resilient, cohesive and harmonious Australian communities with opportunity to thrive, capacity to respond to local needs and challenges, and free from intolerance and discrimination.

Resilient and inclusive communities are characterised by a strong sense of community belonging, high levels of community participation and volunteering, strong leadership and community engagement, well-integrated and well-used support services, and opportunities for social mobility. Funding will be provided to regional and metropolitan communities, to help build these attributes, to ensure improved individual, family and community outcomes.

In 2016-17, the Australian Government will allocate around $30.0 million to organisations under the current activity. This is expected to benefit regional communities at similar levels to 2015-16, which resulted in around 49 per cent of grants and 41 per cent of funding allocated to regional Australia.

Transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme

From 1 July 2016, the National Disability Insurance Scheme will commence full rollout across Australia, following bilateral agreements with New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania. In addition, all existing clients in the Australian Capital Territory will transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme by 1 October 2016. By 2019-20, the scheme will support an estimated 460,000 people with significant and permanent disability, regardless of where they live, including around 250,000 people in regional and remote areas.

Current National Disability Insurance Scheme trial and early transition sites across Australia cover a mix of regional and metropolitan areas. 25,000 participants in regional Australia are expected to receive support by the end of the trial period, representing around 70 per cent of trial participants. Trial and early transition sites are currently operating in the:
• Hunter region and, for children aged 0-17, the Nepean-Blue Mountains region of New South Wales;

• Barwon region, Victoria;

• Townsville region of Queensland for children aged 0-17;

• Perth Hills, Cockburn/Kwinana and Lower South West regions of Western Australia;

• South Australia for children aged 0-14;

• Tasmania for young adults aged 15-24;

• Australian Capital Territory; and

• Barkly region of the Northern Territory.

As the National Disability Insurance Scheme rolls out across Australia, around 70,000 people in regional and remote areas are expected to receive support in 2016-17, rising to 155,000 in 2017-18.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme will create new employment opportunities in regional Australia, in response to additional demand for services from National Disability Insurance Scheme participants.

Disability Employment Services

The Disability Employment Services programme provides specialist employment assistance to people who have disability as their main barrier to employment in the open labour market. Over $800 million was provided by the Australian Government in 2015-16 to support this important initiative.

In regional Australia, Disability Employment Services is delivered by 79 organisations from 953 locations. Currently, there are 134,000 active participants in the programme, including over 45,560 regional Australians.

Since March 2010, almost 100,000 Disability Employment Services participants in regional Australia have been placed in a job.

In August 2015, a 12-month trial commenced to test a participant-driven employment assistance model for young job seekers in DES with a mental health condition. The outcomes of the trial will inform future approaches to employment services for people with disability from 2018.

A youth mental health training and support package for delivery to all DES providers will be developed in 2016-17.
National Respite for Carers Programme

The National Respite for Carers Programme assists carers in their caring role.

The National Respite for Carers Programme funds 34 regional Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres to assist carers with short-term and emergency respite options, based on assessed need, and provide advice and coordinate access to respite services in a carer’s local area.

National Respite for Carers Programme also supports the National Carer Counselling Programme, Carer Information Support Service and Consumer Directed Respite Care.

Carer Gateway

The Australian Government is progressing work on an Integrated Plan for Carer Support Services, as announced in the 2015-16 Budget. The Integrated Plan for Carer Support Services outlines practical actions to recognise, support and sustain the vital work of unpaid carers.

From December 2015, the Carer Gateway has allowed carers in regional areas to obtain practical information and resources to support them in their caring role with access to a specific phone line and website that features an interactive service finder that helps carers connect to local support services. This includes information on services delivered by phone or online, like counselling.

Throughout 2016, the future service delivery model for integrated carer support will be co-designed to ensure supports are maintained for all carers regardless of the age of the person being cared for or where they live.

The National Carer Gateway is budgeted to cost $33.7 million by 2018-19.

Young Carer Bursary Programme

The Young Carer Bursary Programme was a 2013 election commitment to assist young carers aged 25 years and under to continue to study, and to relieve the financial pressure for them to undertake part-time work in addition to their educational and caring responsibilities.

The first bursary payments were made in February 2015 to 150 young carers to support them as they began the 2015 academic year. On 30 March 2015, the Australian Government announced further funding of $500,000 to deliver an additional 150 bursaries for the 2015 calendar year.

On 5 August 2015, the Australian Government announced 333 annual bursaries valued at $3,000 each will be provided in both 2016 and 2017.
National Disability Advocacy Programme

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.

In 2015-16, 58 advocacy agencies across Australia, including 10 in regional Australia, were funded around $16.0 million under the National Disability Advocacy Programme. Approximately 12,000 people received individual support, and a broader group benefitted from agency support. In 2015, a search tool was launched on the Department of Social Services website to enable people to identify their nearest National Disability Advocacy Programme agency.

People with disability, advocacy agencies, the National Disability Insurance Agency, State and Territory governments and key stakeholders such as public guardians will be consulted in the development of a way forward for advocacy support. This review will provide a direction and model for the provision of services funded under the programme from 1 July 2017.

Counselling Support Information and Advocacy – Carer Support

In 2015-16, 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.

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 Dementia Education and Training for Carers 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 $1.07 million to the Dementia Education and Training for Carers initiative in 2016-17.

Cashless Debit Card

The Australian Government is looking at the best ways to support communities where a lot of people are on welfare, and alcohol, gambling and drug use are causing harm and social dysfunction. The Cashless Debit Card trial commenced in Ceduna (South Australia) in March 2016, and in the East Kimberley towns of Wyndham and Kununurra (Western Australia) in April 2016. The trial was designed and implemented in full consultation with the community. As at 19 April 2016, there were 703 people on the Cashless Debit Card, with which the quarantined amount cannot be used for alcohol or gambling.
The Government has also invested over $2.5 million in these locations toward improving and increasing support services for the community, including:

- community safety initiatives;
- drug and alcohol services;
- additional capacity for existing mental health services;
- enhancing existing financial management services; and
- extra funding for family violence services.

**Strengthening Immunisation for Children**

The Australian Government has strengthened immunisation requirements for child care payments and the Family Tax Benefit Part A end of year supplement. Since 1 January 2016, vaccination objection is no longer a valid exemption category for the Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate and the Family Tax Benefit Part A end of year supplement. This measure reinforces the importance of immunisation to protect children against harmful diseases and aims to increase immunity in communities across Australia, including regional areas. Vaccination objections on the basis of personal or philosophical beliefs are not supported by public health policy or medical research.

**More Generous Means Testing Arrangements for Youth Payments**

Over 33,000 Australian families are better off after the Australian Government introduced more generous youth payment means testing arrangements on 1 January 2016.

Complex parental means tests have been simplified and more closely aligned with the Family Tax Benefit Part A family income test. The arrangements apply to eligible families with dependent children receiving Youth Allowance, ABSTUDY Living Allowance and Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme.

The changes provide additional assistance for working families to support their children to make the transition from school to further study. These changes mean, for example, families will no longer have their farm assets counted toward the means test.

Regional families often face higher study costs because students have to move away from home to pursue their course of choice.

**Assistance for Isolated Children**

Families in isolated areas incur additional costs to educate their children. In 2015-16, the Assistance for Isolated Children scheme provided $71.5 million to the families of 9,391 primary, secondary, and tertiary students unable to attend an appropriate state
school on a daily basis because of geographical isolation. Depending on the student’s circumstances, the Assistance for Isolated Children scheme provides:

- basic boarding allowance;
- additional boarding allowance;
- second home allowance; and
- distance education allowance.

**Relocation Scholarship**

The relocation scholarship is an annual payment to help eligible ABSTUDY or Youth Allowance students with their higher education if they have relocated to or from a regional or remote area to study. This recognises that students from regional Australia often face higher costs of further study or training. In 2015-16, over 19,000 students from regional Australia received a relocation scholarship.

Payment rates for the relocation scholarship are different depending on where the student lives and their year of study.

If the student’s family home is in a regional area, the scholarship amount is:

- $4,333 in the first year the student needs to live away from home to study in an approved scholarship course;
- $2,167 in the second or third year; and
- $1,083 in the fourth or subsequent year.

If the student’s family home is not in a regional area but their place of study is, their payment is $4,333 in the first year they need to live away from home to study in an approved scholarship course, and $1,083 for all subsequent years.

**ABSTUDY**

ABSTUDY helps eligible students and apprentices, mainly from remote areas, with living, study and travel expenses if they need to study away from home. ABSTUDY supported 19,083 regional Indigenous students with a means-tested living allowance, assistance with school fees or fares to attend a boarding school in 2015-16.

ABSTUDY is an ongoing special measure to help address particular educational disadvantages faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

**Income Management**

Income management helps 26,508 people (as at 25 March 2016) budget their welfare payments to ensure they are getting basic essentials, as part of the Australian
Government’s commitment to reforming the welfare system. Improved control of finances helps people to stabilise their lives so they can better care for themselves and their children. It can also support them to join or return to the workforce.

Income management is operating in different forms across regional and metropolitan Australia, with a total investment of $146.7 million in 2015-16 and 2016-17.

Under income management, part of a person’s welfare payments is income managed and directed towards meeting basic needs such as food, clothing, housing, utilities and education. 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.

**National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness – Extension**

The Australian Government recognises that homelessness is a complex issue. Under the 2015-17 National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, the Australian Government will provide $115.0 million in 2016-17, to be matched by the States and Territories, to ensure that critical homelessness initiatives continue to support some of Australia’s most vulnerable people.

States and Territories retain responsibility for determining services locations, providers and funding.

The 2015-17 National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness Project Plans require each state and territory to identify areas of significant need for services assisting women and children experiencing domestic and family violence, and homeless youth. In total, 14 of the geographic areas identified are in regional or remote Australia.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare collects and reports information on the specialist homelessness services funded under the 2015-17 National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness and the National Affordable Housing Agreement through the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection.

In 2014-15, the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection reported that (of a total of 255,657):

- 52,061 (20 per cent) of clients presented to agencies in inner regional areas;
- 28,257 (11 per cent) of clients presented to agencies in outer regional areas;
- 13,053 (5 per cent) of clients presented to agencies in remote or very remote areas; and
- 162,286 (63 per cent) presented to major city agencies.
TREASURY

The Treasury portfolio, through the Australian Taxation Office, administers a range of subsidies and personal benefits. These initiatives are not designed specifically for regional or urban areas, but rather to assist people and organisations that satisfy the eligibility criteria regardless of their location. The Treasury also administers payments to State and Territory governments under the federal financial relations framework.

Further details are provided in the Treasury Portfolio Budget Statement.

NEW INITIATIVES

Ten Year Enterprise Tax Plan — Targeted Personal Income Tax Relief

The Government will increase the 32.5 per cent personal income tax threshold from $80,000 to $87,000 from 1 July 2016.

This measure will reduce the marginal rate of tax on incomes between $80,000 and $87,000 from 37 per cent to 32.5 per cent, preventing around 500,000 taxpayers facing the 37 per cent marginal tax rate. This will ensure that the average full-time wage earner will not move into the second highest tax bracket in the next three years. In the absence of this action, they would move into the second highest tax bracket in 2016-17.

Personal income tax — Increasing the Medicare Levy Low-Income Thresholds

The Government will increase the Medicare levy low-income thresholds for singles, families and seniors and pensioners from the 2015-16 income year. The increases take account of movements in the Consumer Price Index so that low income taxpayers generally continue to be exempted from paying the Medicare levy.

The threshold for singles will be increased to $21,335. For couples with no children, the threshold will be increased to $36,001 and the additional amount of threshold for each dependent child or student will be increased to $3,306. For single seniors and pensioners, the threshold will be increased to $33,738. For senior and pensioner couples with no children, the threshold will be increased to $46,966 and the additional amount of threshold for each dependent child or student will be increased to $3,306.

Ten Year Enterprise Tax Plan — Excise Refund Scheme for Distillers

The Government will extend the current brewery refund scheme to domestic distilleries and producers of low strength fermented beverages such as non-traditional cider from 1 July 2017. The scheme will not be extended to most alcopops producers (that is, those that merely purchase the spirits and add the soda and other flavours), nor wine which benefits from the Wine Equalisation Tax rebate.

This measure forms part of the Government’s Ten Year Enterprise Tax Plan, which will encourage Australians to work, save and invest.
Ten Year Enterprise Tax Plan — Wine Equalisation Tax Rebate Integrity and Wine Tourism Funding

The Government will address integrity concerns with the Wine Equalisation Tax (WET) rebate by reducing the WET rebate cap and tightening eligibility criteria.

The Government will reduce the WET rebate cap from $500,000 to $350,000 on 1 July 2017 and to $290,000 on 1 July 2018 and introduce tightened eligibility criteria which will apply from 1 July 2019. This measure will better target assistance and reduce distortions in the wine industry.

The Government will also provide $50.0 million over four years to the Australian Grape and Wine Authority to promote wine tourism within Australia and Australian wine overseas to benefit regional wine producing communities.

This measure forms part of the Government’s Ten Year Enterprise Tax Plan, which will encourage Australians to work, save and invest.

Ten Year Enterprise Tax Plan — Increase the Small Business Entity Turnover Threshold

The Government will increase the small business entity turnover threshold from $2 million to $10 million from 1 July 2016. The current $2 million turnover threshold will be retained for access to the small business capital gains tax concessions, and access to the unincorporated small business tax discount will be limited to entities with turnover less than $5 million. An additional 90,000 to 100,000 business entities will gain access to the small business concessions, such as the lower small business corporate tax rate, accelerated depreciation and depreciation pooling provisions.

This measure forms part of the Government’s Ten Year Enterprise Tax Plan, which will encourage Australians to work, save and invest.

Ten Year Enterprise Tax Plan — Increase the Unincorporated Small Business Tax Discount

The Government will increase the tax discount for unincorporated small businesses incrementally over 10 years from 5 per cent to 16 per cent. The tax discount will increase to 8 per cent on 1 July 2016, remain constant at 8 per cent for eight years, then increase to 10 per cent in 2024-25, 13 per cent in 2025-26 and reach a new permanent discount of 16 per cent in 2026-27. This will coincide with staggered cuts in the corporate tax rate to 25 per cent. The current cap of $1,000 per individual for each income year will be 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 will be extended to individual taxpayers with business income from an unincorporated business that has an aggregated annual turnover of less than $5 million.
This measure forms part of the Government's Ten Year Enterprise Tax Plan, which will encourage Australians to work, save and invest.

**National Innovation and Science Agenda — Expanding Tax Incentives for Early Stage Investors**

This measure forms part of the Government’s commitment to ensuring early-stage innovative companies have access to investment capital.

The Government has amended the *Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook 2015-16* measure National Innovation and Science Agenda — tax incentives for angel investors to:

- reduce the holding period from three years to 12 months for investors to access the 10 year capital gains tax exemption;
- include in the definition of eligible startups, a time limit on incorporation and criteria for determining if the startup is an innovation company;
- require that the investor and innovation company are non-affiliates; and
- limit the investment amount for non-sophisticated investors to $50,000 or less per income year in order to receive a tax offset.

These amendments have been determined in close consultation with stakeholders and will better target the incentives to ensure they promote investment in the early-stage innovation companies. These companies face difficulty attracting the capital and business expertise needed to succeed.

**National Innovation and Science Agenda — Expanding the New Arrangements for Venture Capital Limited Partnerships**

This measure expands the funding arrangements to attract more venture capital investment.

The Government has amended the *Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook 2015-16* measure *National Innovation and Science Agenda — new arrangement for venture capital investment* to:

- add a transitional arrangement that allows conditionally registered funds that become unconditionally registered after 7 December 2015 to access the tax offset if the criteria are met;
- relax the requirement for very small entities to provide an auditors’ statement of assets;
- extend the increase in fund size from $100 million to $200 million for new early-stage venture capital limited partnerships (ESVCLPs) to also apply to existing ESVCLPs; and
• ensure that the venture capital tax concessions are available for FinTech, banking and insurance related activities.

These amendments have been determined in close consultation with stakeholders and will better improve access to capital and make the regimes more user-friendly.

Norfolk Island – Capital Gains Tax Exemption

On 23 October 2015, the Australian Government announced it would provide a full capital gains tax exemption on assets held by Norfolk Island residents prior to 24 October 2015. This exemption applies to those assets that were exempt from capital gains tax before Norfolk Island was fully brought within Australia’s income tax system, due to the holder’s Norfolk Island residency. These assets will continue to be exempt until a capital gains tax event first happens (for example the asset is sold or disposed of). Once an exempt asset has been sold or disposed of, this exemption will no longer apply, however other exemptions, such as the main residence exemption, may be applicable. The measure is estimated to have a negligible cost to revenue over the forward estimates period.

The measure will significantly assist the Norfolk Island community in transitioning into Australia’s mainstream taxation system, which is part of the Government’s election commitment to introduce taxation, social security and healthcare arrangements on Norfolk Island effective from 1 July 2016.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Tax Averaging for Primary Producers – Allowing Re-access

Tax averaging allows primary producers to smooth out their income tax liability. Currently a primary producer may opt-out of tax averaging, but is not able to access the scheme again.

The Government will allow primary producers to re-access tax averaging ten years after the year in which they chose to opt out. The measure will apply to all primary producers, including those that had previously opted out. This measure is estimated to have an unquantifiable cost to revenue over the forward estimates period. Legislation giving effect to this measure is yet to be passed by Parliament.

This measure forms part of the Government’s Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper.

Strengthening the Foreign Investment Framework

The Australian Government has delivered on its commitment to strengthen Australia’s foreign investment rules for residential real estate and agricultural investments.

The screening threshold for agricultural land was lowered from $252 million to $15 million (applied cumulatively) on 1 March 2015. Direct interests in agribusinesses valued at $55 million or more are now also screened by the Foreign Investment Review Board. Transparency has also been improved. Foreign persons with an interest in
agricultural land have been required to register that interest on the Australian Taxation Office Agricultural Land Register since 1 July 2015.

In addition to the changes, the Australian Government is also committed to improving transparency around foreign ownership of water entitlements. The Australian Government will introduce legislation for the establishment of a register of foreign ownership of water entitlements before 1 December 2016.

**Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman**

The Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman commenced on 11 March 2016 and is a Commonwealth-wide advocate for small businesses and family enterprises. The Ombudsman helps small businesses access the independent support and advice they need to resolve disputes without resorting to costly litigation, contributes to the development of small business-friendly Commonwealth laws and regulation, and works with States and Territories in the development of national strategies.

The Ombudsman works with existing services to ensure small businesses access the services best placed to help them while avoiding unnecessary duplication. The Ombudsman also seamlessly links with business.gov.au to help small businesses easily connect with Government services, advice and programmes.
VETERANS’ AFFAIRS

In 2016-17 the Department of Veterans’ Affairs will continue to implement the Anzac Centenary National Programme. 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 National programme is a national commemoration that comprises domestic—including in regional areas—and international activities and events.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Spirit of Anzac Centenary Experience

The Spirit of Anzac Centenary Experience travelling exhibition is the flagship community event of the Anzac Centenary National programme. On behalf of the Australian Government, the Australian War Memorial, in partnership with the Department of Veterans’ Affairs, the Department of Defence, the Commonwealth Bank and Telstra has developed the exhibition to follow a chronological timeline spanning the period from pre-First World War Australia to the present day using a mix of over 200 artefacts from the Australian War Memorial’s collection, visuals, audio, film and interactive digital technologies.

Since the exhibition’s launch in Albury-Wodonga in September 2015, the Spirit of Anzac Centenary Experience has visited Launceston, Hobart, Ballarat, Bendigo, Wollongong, Melbourne and Adelaide. As it continues its tour, the exhibition is planned to visit all capital cities and a number of regional centres, including Tamworth, Toowoomba, Mackay, Cairns, Townsville, Port Augusta, Bunbury, Kalgoorlie, Geelong, Orange (pending the availability of a suitable venue) and Newcastle. The exhibition is planned to complete its tour in Sydney in April 2017.

The Spirit of Anzac Centenary Experience transforms existing community spaces to tell the stories of Australians’ experiences during the First World War. This includes a Community Zone which is developed in conjunction with local councils and community organisations at each location to tell local stories. The Spirit of Anzac Centenary Experience also acts as a catalyst for local commemorative events and engagement. There is a strong focus on education and encouraging school groups to attend.

For those unable to attend the exhibition in person, a mobile device application has been created to give users a virtual tour of the exhibition. The Spirit of Anzac Centenary 360 Explorer is available for download at no cost and can be used in conjunction with virtual reality devices for a 3D experience.

The Spirit of Anzac Centenary Experience will continue to give Australians a chance to engage in the stories of the First World War and the Century of Service, contribute to the shared journey and take something very special away from the experience.
Saluting Their Service

Saluting Their Service is the Australian Government’s commemorations grants programme.

Under Saluting Their Service funding is available for projects, including events and activities, that are directly commemorative of Australia’s involvement in war, conflict and peace operations.

Grants are approved each year in most electorates across Australia, many in regional areas. In 2014-15, 374 grants were provided to 110 of the 150 electorates across Australia, and for 2015-16, an estimated 280 grants will be provided to 100 electorates.