

REGIONAL MINISTERIAL
BUDGET STATEMENT 2022–23
OCTOBER 2022-23

INVESTING IN OUR REGIONS
WITH PURPOSE AND INTEGRITY

Circulated by

The Honourable Catherine King MP

Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government
of the Commonwealth of Australia

and

The Honourable Kristy McBain MP

Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories
of the Commonwealth of Australia

For the information of honourable members
on the occasion of the Budget 2022-23

October 2022

© Commonwealth of Australia 2022

ISBN: 978-1-925843-96-5

This publication is available for your use under a [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Australia](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/au/legalcode) licence, with the exception of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, the, images, signatures and where otherwise stated. The full licence terms are available from <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/au/legalcode>.



Use of the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts material under a [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Australia](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/au/legalcode) licence requires you to attribute the work (but not in any way that suggests that the Department of Infrastructure Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts endorses you or your use of the work).

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts material used 'as supplied'

Provided you have not modified or transformed Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development & Communications material in any way including, for example, by changing the Regional Ministerial Budget Statement 2022-23 text; calculating percentage changes; graphing or charting data; or deriving new statistics from published Treasury statistics – then the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development & Communications prefers the following attribution:

Source: The Australian Government the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

Derivative material

If you have modified or transformed Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts material, or derived new material from those of the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development & Communications and the Arts in any way, then Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development Communications and the Arts prefers the following attribution:

Based on The Australian Government the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts data

Use of the Coat of Arms

The terms under which the Coat of Arms can be used are set out on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet website (see www.pmc.gov.au/government/commonwealth-coat-arms).

Other uses

Enquiries regarding this licence and any other use of this document are welcome at:

Director, Creative Services
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
GPO Box 594
Canberra ACT 2601
Email: creative.services@infrastructure.gov.au
Website: www.infrastructure.gov.au

Printed by CanPrint Communications Pty Ltd

Contents

Foreword	1
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	3
Attorney-General's	25
Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.....	31
Defence	57
Education.....	79
Employment and Workplace Relations	89
Foreign Affairs and Trade	97
Health and Aged Care	107
Home Affairs	139
Industry, Science and Resources	153
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts.....	165
Prime Minister and Cabinet	207
Social Services	223
Treasury	247
Veterans' Affairs	251

Foreword

The Government's October 2022 Budget showcases the Government's purposeful, targeted and coordinated approach to realising the full potential of Australia's diverse regions and the people that live in them.

This Budget delivers on our election commitments and focuses on high quality investments that create jobs, build resilience and unlock economic growth – investment that supports the Government's ambition of 'no one held back and no one left behind'.

To cope with the growing pressures on the whole economy, serious global uncertainty, and to build resilience against future shocks, we have reviewed spending decisions taken by the former Government, prioritising expenditure for projects that provide value for money, are appropriately funded and able to be delivered.

As we face the mounting global and domestic challenges of 2022, the statistics for regional Australia tell a positive story. Our regions, home to one in three Australians, are growing. Between June 2020 and June 2021, regional Australia's population grew by 1.0 per cent or 80,040 people. In comparison, the combined capital city population declined by -0.3 per cent, or 47,250 people.

In the year to July 2022, regionally-based industries including agriculture, forestry, fishing and mining - made up 72.2 per cent of the value of Australia's merchandise exports. With an increasing number of job opportunities, it is no wonder more people are choosing to call regional Australia home.

We are listening to the unique perspectives of regional Australia and working in genuine partnerships to meet the challenges and opportunities that come with this growth. Our place-based approach will support regions to secure long-term prosperity, while leveraging opportunities including the transition to net-zero emissions.

This October 2022 Regional Ministerial Budget Statement details more than 760 initiatives, including over 220 major new packages and individual measures, which the Australian Government is delivering to boost regional communities and industries.

This includes investment of \$15 billion in the National Reconstruction Fund (NRF) to support, diversify and transform Australian industry and the economy, helping to drive regional development and secure well-paid jobs.

Our \$1.9 billion Powering the Regions Fund, as well as \$3 billion from the NRF will provide dedicated support to ensure regional Australia can harness the economic opportunities of decarbonisation, including hydrogen and clean energy manufacturing.

Our Net Zero Taskforce will bring together perspectives from communities, state and territory governments, industries and unions to advise the Government on ensuring regional Australians are first to benefit from Australia's transformation to a renewable energy superpower.

The Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development portfolio will lead the government's revised and redesigned program for regional development to deliver fairer, transparent investments that represent good value and benefit to all communities.

This includes investing \$1 billion over 3 years in two new programs targeted at regional and rural areas. Community groups and government will be invited to seek support from the *Growing Regions Program* which will support infrastructure that enhances liveability and supports prosperity. Through the *Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program*, the Government will work with states and local councils in a nationally consistent way to invest in larger scale place-based projects aimed at transforming regional and rural centres.

The Government will provide \$9.6 billion to deliver the commitments we took to the election with transparency and integrity. This includes the delivery of significant and transformative priority investments like Cairns Marine Precinct, the investment in Middle Arm, logistics hubs in northern and central Australia, enabling infrastructure in the Pilbara, the Central Australia Plan and key highways in Tasmania and South Australia.

The Government's investments in affordable housing, health, communications, water and transport will provide crucial services that support equity across regional Australia.

For example, the *Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia* is a five-year, \$656 million package that will significantly improve mobile coverage in rural and remote communities. And our investment of approximately \$12 million a year will restore a 50 percent loading to bulk-billed Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) services delivered by video telehealth to regional and rural patients.

We are committed to enshrining a Voice for Indigenous Australians in our Constitution and further boosting efforts on *Closing the Gap* between the experience of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, including in regional Australia.

We are also committed to providing ongoing support for the Regional Development Australia network in 53 locations, which we established when last in government. Further, our commitment to a much stronger partnership with local government will support our ability to listen and respond to the needs of regional Australia.

Our approach to developing Australia's regions, supported by the investments we are making through this Budget, will harness the wealth of the diverse communities that make up regional Australia. We are committed to ensuring regional Australia is at the centre of our nation's growth and at the forefront of our agenda for a better future for all of Australia.

The Hon. Catherine King

Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

The Hon. Kristy McBain

Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories

25 October 2022

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry portfolio plays a key role in delivering the Australian Government's commitment to resilient, prosperous and sustainable food and fibre industries. The diverse sectors the portfolio champions are central to the character and prosperity of regional, rural and remote Australia and the nation's identity.

Successful partnerships with other levels of government, non-government organisations, industry, primary producers, research organisations and First Nations people are essential to the work of the portfolio. We support economic prosperity while fostering an environment for our food and fibre industries to grow, enhancing their sustainability and premium credentials. Our diverse roles and functions include biosecurity operations and trade facilitation, world-class science and research, policy development, program administration, client services and regulation.

The Australian Government works with industry to create the settings for the agriculture sector to reach its goal of \$100 billion in farm gate output by 2030. Achieving this goal will require a sustained, collaborative effort across industry, government and communities to make sure the foundations are strong and regional, rural and remote Australia can capitalise on emerging opportunities. Initiatives in this Budget will help primary producers capitalise on export opportunities while promoting responsible and transparent supply chains and bolstering the long-term resilience and sustainability of Australia's primary industries, which are key to growth in the regions.

Changes in global trade, climate patterns, and increased spread of pests and diseases in our region continue to create new and complex biosecurity risk pathways, increasing pressure on Australia's biosecurity system. Australia's world-class biosecurity system is critical to the integrity and sustainability of Australia's way of life. Biosecurity is at the heart of how Australia prevents, responds to and recovers from pests and diseases that threaten plant, animal and human health, regional communities, our environment and our economy.

The strength of our biosecurity system is dependent on improved diagnostics, emerging surveillance technologies, listening to First Nations' voices, and working closely with industry partners and international neighbours. The Budget includes a significant down-payment on the Australian Government's commitment to long-term, sustainable funding arrangements for biosecurity through new investments worth \$134.1 million over four years.

This measure includes support for our exporters to grow and diversify their markets by developing a national approach to improve traceability in supply chains across all products and commodities. The Budget also includes funding so that the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry can continue the major export reform program to modernise and deliver world-leading regulatory systems and processes to help our farmers and producers get their produce into high-value overseas trade markets more quickly and efficiently.

The Australian Government recognises that our farming, fishing and forestry industries have long been at the forefront of managing and adapting to climate change, with natural disasters such as drought, flooding, and fires presenting ongoing challenges to sector performance. The Government will work with industry to tackle these challenges by delivering more sustainable and climate-smart agriculture and to support the economy's transition to net zero emissions. Central to this work will be the *Next Phase of Natural Heritage Trust Funding* measure, which includes \$302.1 million over five years to support the transition of agriculture towards sustainable farming and land management practices, build climate and disaster resilience and contribute to emissions reductions and improved environmental outcomes.

Meeting the needs of agriculture, fishing and forestry workforces is necessary if we are to keep our regional industries thriving. Australia's timber industry plays an important role in rural and regional Australia. It provides jobs and security to thousands of workers, while providing a renewable resource. Crucial to maintaining a strong industry and ensuring Australia's domestic timber supply is a skilled and equipped workforce. Supporting research outputs and programs will further ensure that Australian forestry is at the forefront of international progress in innovative and sustainable solutions.

As at 31 August 2022, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Portfolio employed 6,154 staff under the Public Service Act 1999. Of this total, 3,375 are employed in Canberra, central Melbourne and central Sydney (55 per cent), 2,224 in other capital cities (36 per cent) and 555 in regional areas (9 per cent).

The portfolio comprises the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and eight portfolio bodies. The portfolio has a regional footprint across Australia. Employees work in a diverse range of settings, including shipping ports and airports, mail centres, quarantine facilities, laboratories, abattoirs and offices in remote and regional centres, rural communities and cities. Staff are based in regional and remote locations such as Armidale, Orange, Townsville, Perth, Darwin, and Norfolk, Christmas and Thursday Islands, ensuring staff are close to the sites, communities and industries that they serve. Several portfolio bodies employ staff under their own legislation and most have staff in locations outside the capital cities.

New Initiatives

Bolstering Australia's Biosecurity System - Protecting Australia from Escalating Exotic Animal Disease Risks

The biosecurity threat environment facing Australia's 10,000 km northern border has been worsening for some time, driven by changing climate, land use and trade patterns. The emergence of foot and mouth disease (FMD) and lumpy skin disease (LSD) has greatly escalated the risk of these diseases entering Australia, particularly through the north and then rapidly spreading southwards.

The Australian Government is investing \$61.6 million over two years from 2022-23 to strengthen our response to rapidly escalating biosecurity risk in our region. This funding supports biosecurity outcomes in neighbouring countries, including vaccine purchase and roll-out, strengthening laboratory capabilities and providing in-country technical expertise. It expands frontline FMD and LSD risk management efforts on passenger and mail pathways; strengthens our domestic preparedness capability; and improves domestic detection and response capability in northern Australia for FMD, LSD and other exotic pests and diseases.

This new funding builds on the measure *Manage the Immediate Risk of Foot and Mouth Disease and Lumpy Skin Disease to Australia*, which provided \$14 million to bolster Australia's frontline biosecurity defence and technical support for neighbouring countries battling FMD and LSD. It also complements on the \$10 million biosecurity cooperation package to assist Indonesia, which will see Australia supply additional vaccinations, as well as technical and advisory support to strengthen Indonesia's biosecurity measures. The measure will extend and broaden our effort through to 30 June 2024, recognising the disease status in neighbouring countries and implications for Australia will take time to emerge.

This measure is intended to help avoid the significant economic and social costs of pest and disease incursions, particularly for regional, rural and remote Australia, should they enter or establish here. The measure involves partnering with First Nations people and helps protect outcomes for Country. It also supports efforts to strengthen biosecurity arrangements in Australia's northern regions in the face of this risk.

Bolstering Australia's Biosecurity System – National Livestock Traceability Reform to Enhance Agricultural Biosecurity and Exports

The Australian Government is investing \$46.7 million over three years from 2022-23, contingent on commitments from states and territories, to reform Australia's livestock traceability infrastructure, including strengthening on-farm biosecurity. This funding will support our \$65 billion agricultural export trade sector by ensuring our livestock traceability systems are world class and fit for purpose to manage biosecurity risks.

The funding will be used for a grants program, to be administered by interested states and territories, to support on-farm and off-farm transition to an effective national livestock traceability system for sheep and goats, including the individual electronic identification (eID) of sheep and farmed goats nationally. The funding will also support a one-off Commonwealth contribution to a relevant industry body or bodies to establish a national livestock traceability database to ensure a fit-for-purpose data capture, storage and distribution system for tracking livestock movement into the future.

Recent outbreaks of FMD and LSD in Indonesia illustrate the threat of exotic disease to agricultural production and regional Australia. A livestock disease outbreak in Australia would have catastrophic effects on the regional economy. Our livestock traceability arrangements are a key part of recovery from any incursion. The better our traceability arrangements, the faster the recovery from what would be severe economic impacts.

This measure will support the objectives and implementation of Australia's first National Biosecurity Strategy. The Australian Government will work with state and territory governments, who are the primary regulators for livestock traceability in their respective jurisdictions, to help Australian farmers and regional businesses protect our economic prosperity by preparing for, mitigating against and responding to biosecurity threats.

Bolstering Australia's Biosecurity System – Biosecurity Dogs and Trainers

The Australian Government is investing \$11.7 million over four years from 2022-23 with \$3.3 million ongoing, to deliver on its election commitment to provide 20 more biosecurity detector dogs at our border. Due to an increase in the volume of travellers, mail and cargo, and a growing biosecurity threat including FMD, there is an urgent need to expand the detector dog fleet. This need has been highlighted in the recommendations of three recent reports by the Inspector-General of Biosecurity.

Detector dogs are a key part of our biosecurity infrastructure to prevent incursions of exotic pests or diseases into Australia. By protecting our farmers and agricultural industries from biosecurity threats the additional detector dogs will have a direct positive impact on rural communities, businesses and employees that depend on agricultural production.

National Heritage Trust – Investing in Climate-Smart Sustainable Agriculture

The Australian Government is investing \$302 million over five years from 2023-24, through the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT), to support the transition of the agricultural sector towards sustainable farming and land management practices, build Australia's climate and disaster resilience and contribute to emissions reductions and improved environmental outcomes.

This investment forms a part of the next phase of NHT funding, which will provide \$1.1 billion over six years from 2022-23 (and \$2.5 million per year ongoing). This continues support for the sustainable management of Australia's natural resources to achieve local and long-term environmental, sustainable agriculture and First Nations' outcomes.

Powering Australia – Development of Australia's Seaweed Farming

The Australian Government is providing \$8.1 million over three years from 2022-23 to the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation to deliver its election commitment to develop the Australian seaweed industry and the Powering Australia agenda.

Methane emissions from livestock contributed 10 per cent of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions in 2020. Emissions-reducing feed supplements containing the seaweed *Asparagopsis* have the potential to reduce methane emissions in livestock by up to 90 per cent. Investment in methane-reducing activities in the agricultural sector is vital to respond to climate change and support the agriculture sector's long-term productivity and sustainability.

A Better Plan for Forestry and Forest Products – National Institute for Forest Products Innovation and Regional Forestry Hubs

The Australian Government is delivering on its election commitment to establish a \$108.6 million Australia-wide National Institute for Forest Products Innovation (NIFPI) for an initial five years from 2022-23. The NIFPI supports transformative research and innovation in the forest industries, which is vital for many regional communities. The extension and adoption of the NIFPI's research outcomes will support Australia's long-term supply of wood and wood products.

Funding will support a new institution established in Launceston at the University of Tasmania, with a research centre in Launceston and two other research centres distributed across Australia. The NIFPI will deliver both applied research and development regionally and broader solutions to national and emerging challenges.

The NIFPI builds on the research and development work of Forest and Wood Products Australia, and the three existing regional NIFPI centres, which have developed innovative solutions for forest growers, harvesters and timber processors, largely with a regional focus and application.

The Australian Government is also providing \$8.6 million of funding over two years from 2024-25 to continue the work of the 11 Regional Forestry Hubs across Australia, expanding their work and extending their life until June 2027.

A Better Plan for Forestry and Forest Products – Forestry Workforce Training Program

The Australian Government is providing \$10.7 million in funding over four years from 2022-23 to deliver its election commitment to support the delivery of and access to training specific to the pulp, paper, fibre and timber industries in the forestry and wood products sector.

This funding will benefit regional-based organisations in the sector through improved access to training. It will help maintain the skills and qualifications of their existing workforce and offer staff opportunities to retrain and diversify skillsets. These opportunities will provide attractive career pathways for both new and existing employees. This in turn supports the regions in which they are based, with new jobs bringing increased economic support to the broader community.

A Better Plan for Forestry and Forest Products – Support Plantation Establishment

The Australian Government is investing \$86.2 million over five years from 2022-23 to deliver its election commitment to support the establishment of new plantations within Regional Forestry Hub regions. The program will provide funding to landholders and foresters for the establishment costs of new plantations.

To meet the increasing demand for forest products in Australia, the plantation estate needs to grow. Supporting its expansion will secure future wood supply for Australia, support forestry jobs in rural and regional locations and provide certainty for other industries, such as construction, that require access to timber.

Strengthen Australia's illegal logging traceability and timber identification systems

The Australian Government is investing \$4.4 million over two years from 2022-23 to improve Australia's illegal logging traceability and timber identification systems. The investment will trial timber testing technologies for potential integration under Australia's illegal logging laws, which can expose illegally logged timber and false claims made by importers. The investment will also explore options for collecting more information on regulated timber products.

Accelerate Adoption of Wood Processing Innovation

The Australian Government is investing \$112.6 million over six years from 2021-22 to support the medium to long-term sustainability of wood processing by stimulating investment in upgrades to existing manufacturing lines, as well as supporting innovation to diversify domestic production.

The increase in demand and disruptions to timber supply have highlighted the need for Australia to expand the capacity and capability of domestic wood production. Enabling wood processing facilities to use innovative technologies in their production will strengthen the sector's ability to supply more of Australia's wood demands into the future, including ways to reduce the sector's carbon footprint. This will improve domestic sources of in-demand products, make better use of existing timber supplies and allow industry to be more resilient to future supply chain issues.

Australian Export and Trade Support – Digital Services to Take Farmers to Markets

The Australian Government is investing \$199.9 over three years from 2020-21 (and \$22.3 ongoing from 2023-24) in the Digital Services to Take Farmers to Markets initiative, including an extra \$127.4 million through the October Budget. This builds on the technology uplift and modernisation work to date, with an additional investment over two years from 2023-24 to further fast-track digital services that will reduce the burden on exporters, and help them get produce to markets faster, and at a lower cost. It will also expand the Export Account for reusability by other Commonwealth agencies.

As part of this work, the Australian Government will deliver personalised and tailored export guidance, assurance platforms for third party audits, simplified quota management, and elements of an export account for reuse by other Commonwealth agencies. This will contribute to reducing the cost to exporters of business transactions and reducing service touchpoints.

Further, the department will mature its export and data analytics capability to intelligently identify audit targets and predict compliance outcomes. This will reduce the cost and effort burden for highly compliant and low-risk export businesses. Departmental resources will shift towards high-risk areas of compliance and regulatory functions, further improving audit assurance outcomes and lowering the risk of non-compliance.

This will generate greater trust among trading partners about export regulation and product quality, helping protect and grow access to valuable markets.

Support for Regional Trade Events

The Australian Government is providing \$12.4 million over three years from 2022-23 to deliver on its election commitment to sponsor regional trade events to showcase Australian produce and expertise to new domestic and international stakeholders. This includes events such as Beef Australia 2024, Casino Beef Week, LambEx, Hort Connections and the second Dairy Symposium.

This measure supports agricultural events which benefit farmers, processors, exporters, agribusinesses, and agritech companies, while also delivering economic outcomes to the broader rural and regional communities where the events are held.

Improve the long term sustainability of the South East Trawl Fishery and support fishing communities

This measure provides \$24 million over three years from 2022-23 for structural adjustment assistance in response to catch reductions and area closures in the Commonwealth South East Trawl Fishery.

The South East Trawl Fishery, extending from Sydney, New South Wales around Victoria and Tasmania to Cape Jervis South Australia, is a key sector in the Commonwealth Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery and supports meaningful employment in regional towns.

Six species in the South East Trawl Fishery have declined below sustainable limits and are not recovering despite significantly reduced catch limits over a number of years. This reflects the impacts of external factors, including climate change. To safeguard the long-term sustainability of the South East Trawl Fishery, the Australian Fisheries Management Authority has implemented significant catch reductions and intends to implement long-term closures of key fishing grounds.

This measure will provide fishers with critical financial support should they wish to transition out of the South East Trawl sector or downsize their operations, minimising impacts on businesses and the regional economy.

The measure will help maintain economic viability for those who remain in the fishery and remove active and potential effort from the fishery to minimise impacts on habitats and ecosystems.

Animal Welfare Strategy – Establishing an Inspector-General of Animal Welfare

The Australian Government is providing \$4 million over four years from 2022-23 to deliver its election commitment to establish an Inspector-General of Animal Welfare. This will initially be achieved by expanding the current office of the Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports (IGLAE) to include additional animal welfare-related objectives and renaming it as the Inspector-General of Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports (IGAWLAE). New duties of the IGAWLAE will include reviewing the performance of functions and exercise of powers by the department concerning detection of non-compliance with animal welfare requirements and standards for livestock exports. The IGAWLAE will review reporting of animal welfare-related investigations or other action taken, and strengthen reports to the Parliament, with a view to increasing accountability and transparency.

This will deliver on the Australian Government's commitment to strengthen animal welfare standards by increasing accountability and transparency for reporting of animal welfare breaches. Livestock industries and regional economies will receive a positive impact from the ongoing economic activity generated by ongoing livestock exports, enabled by improved community confidence and sentiment. Having a single inspector-general in charge of both animal welfare and live animal exports will reduce the regulatory burden on industry.

Ensuring Australia is prepared for the next drought

The Australian Government is investing \$6.6 million over two years from 2022-23 to support work to prepare for future droughts. This includes work to review and revise the National Drought Agreement with the states and territories and the Commonwealth Drought Plan. These initiatives will support timely and effective response to drought conditions.

Current Initiatives

Biosecurity – better understanding how pests and diseases could enter Australia

Globally, the spread of devastating pests and diseases is accelerating, with increased movements of people, products and vectors around the world, supply chain complexity, climate and land use changes. The Australian Government committed \$34.6 million over four years from 2021-22 to address these compounding threats focusing on:

- Increasing collaboration with state and territory governments, regional neighbours, private veterinarians, industry representative bodies and producers, to build and bolster strategic partnerships to tackle these threats.
- Enhancing the data-driven and qualitative intelligence essential for managing Australia's biosecurity and animal health status.

- Harnessing scientific expertise in the university and research sector.
- Strengthening surveillance and detection outcomes in the marine environment such as remotely operated vehicles and automated image analysis to help address the biosecurity risks posed by vessels, including biofouling.
- Targeted capacity building with Pacific Island neighbours to improve prevention, preparedness, recovery and resilience against animal disease events.
- Development of an integrated animal and plant pest and disease research program.

Biosecurity – supporting Australia’s preparedness, response and recovery capability

Australia’s favourable animal, plant and environmental health status provides a competitive trade advantage for Australian farmers and regions internationally. The Australian Government is providing \$67.4 million over four years from 2021-22, and \$13.1 million ongoing, to build, enhance and test Australia’s biosecurity preparedness, response and recovery capability. This includes:

- A two-year national program, with state and territory and Australian Government counterparts, to enhance Australia’s response capability by stress-testing the national biosecurity system in response to a significant national pest or disease incursion. This program is underway along with the implementation of a new digital incident management system.
- Further steps toward a comprehensive national pest and disease surveillance information system with states and territories. Arrangements to take this work forward are in place, building on the current AUSPestCheck plant pest surveillance system.
- Funding to maintain the FMD vaccine bank, which remains ready to support Australian producers during a FMD response should it be required.
- Additional contingency funding to support national responses to plant, animal and environmental pest and disease incursions under the biosecurity emergency response deeds with state and territory governments and industry.

Biosecurity – Trial pre-border biosecurity screening technology on travellers and air cargo

This initiative provides \$19.5 million over two years from 2021-22 to support ground-breaking trials in the use of remote approaches across traveller, mail and air cargo pathways to screen for biosecurity risks pre-border and to continue existing work on auto-detection algorithms for biosecurity risk material.

This builds on the Australian Government’s investment in screening technology at the border for people and goods, with the successful development of a world-leading auto-detection algorithm using the 3D Real Time Tomography (RTT) X-ray to detect fruit, meat, plant material, seafood and wildlife.

The RTT X-ray technology has proven to be up to three times more effective in identifying biosecurity risk than the current screening technology. This initiative will support critical next steps towards improved detection of biosecurity risk material, while enabling the more efficient flow of people and goods across the border. Planning is well advanced for the 2023 installation of RTTs into the (pre-border) baggage handling systems of two Australian international airports. This initiative is on track and to date, \$4.8 million has been spent.

Biosecurity – Upgrade the Maritime Arrivals and Reporting System

The Australian Government is providing \$28.7 million over four years from 2021-22 to improve Australia's ability to manage biosecurity risk posed by vessels, aircraft and non-commercial vessels arriving in Australia. This measure expands and updates the existing *Maritime Arrivals Reporting System* to capture all international air and sea vessel arrivals, creating a nationally consistent data repository for all conveyances.

It is also streamlining biosecurity reporting arrangements for commercial airlines and non-commercial vessel operators, improving compatibility and interoperability with other biosecurity risk information systems used by external border agencies and industry, and enhancing the system's ability to collect data, enabling better targeting of biosecurity inspection activities, compliance and enforcement action.

Biosecurity – Deliver digital capability for biosecurity screening of incoming international mail through new technology

The Australian Government is providing \$31.2 million over four years from 2021-22 and \$1.5 million ongoing to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of biosecurity interventions in the international mail pathway.

International mail is a key pathway for biosecurity risk material, such as pork products carrying African swine fever (ASF) and seeds, so appropriate interventions are an important component of an efficient, effective and resilient biosecurity system.

System investments will provide for automated workflow with integrated risk assessment allowing effective targeting of high biosecurity risk. Coupled with investment in additional 3D X-rays for this pathway, which have proven to be three times more effective in detecting risk material than current X-ray capability, this will increase resource use efficiency while reducing delivery times for international mail.

The automated workflow is on track for full system delivery by June 2023 and as of August 2022, \$2.4 million has been spent. Achievements include delivery of two proof of concepts for the new automated workflow in July and October 2022. New phone capability for all mail centre staff is expected to be delivered in November 2022.

The X-ray initiative is on track and to date, \$3.5 million has been spent. Achievements include completion of a second 3D x-ray installation at the Sydney Gateway Mail Facility in April 2022.

Biosecurity – To manage the biosecurity risk posed by hitchhiker pests arriving in imported cargo

The Australian Government is providing \$96.9 million over four years from 2021-22 to strengthen and boost offshore and border biosecurity arrangements to protect Australia from the devastating agricultural and environmental pests that can ‘hitchhike’ on or in goods and containers destined for Australian shores.

This measure enables a whole-of-system approach to managing hitchhiker pests before they reach Australia’s borders, including by expanding the offshore treatment provider program, quality systems schemes, strengthening our border interventions, acquiring advance information on global cargo movement, and developing innovative detection technologies to improve hitchhiker pest detection capabilities.

By strengthening biosecurity and supporting better-targeted interventions, this investment will reduce the threat of hitchhiker pests entering Australia, avoiding the significant costs to Australian agricultural producers of hitchhiker pest incursions, maintaining market access, and ensuring faster clearance of consignments on arrival for compliant importers.

As of June 30 2022, \$22.9 million has been expended on this initiative. Key achievements to date include establishing and progressing 22 projects to address the risk of hitchhiker pests, completing a draft risk analysis, establishing the Industry Advisory Group, and commenced the refinement of offshore treatment provider assurance programs.

Biosecurity – Continue to protect Australia from the biosecurity risk posed by African swine fever

The Australian Government is providing \$58.6 million over four years from 2021-22 and \$13.6 million ongoing to deliver continued capability to protect Australia from the continuing and evolving threat of ASF and other significant diseases. This builds on Australian Government efforts through the previous ASF response package to reduce the likelihood of ASF entering Australia and to enhance preparedness to respond to any incursions.

This measure is continuing support for the following activities:

- Strengthening border control measures via additional frontline screening by biosecurity officers, detector dogs and 3D X-ray machines.
- Undertaking targeted operations and product testing to provide assurance and verification of compliance with import requirements.
- Actioning specific recommendations from ASF simulation exercises involving state and territory governments and industry representatives.

- Engaging with industry and key trading partners to enhance domestic preparedness and develop market access strategies to maintain export trade and import supply chains should an outbreak of ASF occur in Australia.
- Capacity-building with near-neighbours and technical support for preparedness, response and recovery from ASF.

Pest and Disease Preparedness and Response Programs

The Australian Government continues to support the eradication of exotic animal and plant pests and diseases that, if allowed to establish and spread, would have serious economic and environmental impacts on agricultural industries, health and the environment. Through the *National Partnership on Pest and Disease Preparedness and Response Programs*, the Government is providing up to \$189.2 million over four years from 2022-23 to support nationally agreed eradication responses.

The Government also continues to strengthen Australia's ability to prepare for, detect and respond to emergency and emerging priority pests and diseases through the *Priority Pest and Disease Planning and Response Program* (\$17.6 million over four years from 2020-21). This program funds the development and implementation of national action plans to address the risks posed by priority pests and diseases to trade, the environment and public health together with developing innovative approaches to improve surveillance activities and Australia's diagnostic capacity and capability for emerging pests and diseases.

Pest Animals and Weeds Management (through the Established Pest Animals and Weed Management Pipeline)

The Australian Government is providing \$30.3 million over four years from 2019-20 to continue the fight against established pests and weeds and help limit their impact on Australia's agriculture sector and the environment. \$28.5 million has been committed to deliver activities that support:

- National prioritisation and better information to improve the understanding of the distribution and impact of priority established pest animals and weeds on Australia's agricultural sector and environment, to support targeted research, national coordination and information sharing. This includes conducting the third national animal pest and weed management survey in 2022 that will measure the awareness and management of pest animals and weeds by agricultural land managers.
- Priority pest innovative solutions to focus longer-term research efforts on innovative solutions for a set of priority established pest animals and weeds, \$13 million for 19 successful grantees through the *Advancing Pest Animal and Weed Control Solutions Competitive Grant Round*.
- Farm-ready management techniques, national coordination and delivery to increase the development and take-up of 'farm-ready' pest animal and weed management and control techniques including feral pig management and priority pest animal and weed management and capacity-building projects with state and Northern Territory agencies.

Red Imported Fire Ants eradication program

The Australian Government contributes to a number of nationally cost-shared pest and disease eradication response programs. Pest and disease incursions are a major threat to Australia's agricultural industries and the environment, potentially impacting access to export markets and undermining the livelihood of Australian communities. The Australian and state and territory governments are jointly investing \$411.4 million over 10 years from 2017-18 to eradicate red imported fire ants from south-east Queensland. The Australian Government is contributing \$212.5 million as a part of this package. This eradication program is being delivered by Queensland. Advice to ministers on the future of the program is scheduled to be provided in early 2023, following an independent 'fit for purpose' review.

Red imported fire ants are one of the world's worst invasive species due to their significant economic, environmental and social impacts. If these ants were established in Australia, it would generate significant costs for all levels of government and industry, damage regional biodiversity and ecosystems, and lower the quality of life of individuals in affected communities.

Biosecurity – For Reduction and prevention activities to reduce the economic and environmental burden of established feral animals, pests and weeds

The Australian Government is providing \$29.1 million over four years from 2021-22 to continue efforts to deliver better solutions to combat established pest animals and weeds posing a significant threat to Australian primary production, the environment and biodiversity. An additional \$20 million leverages matched funding to deliver state and territory-led on-ground management activities to better protect Australia's agricultural productivity and natural resources. This investment recognises the impact of bushfires, flood and drought on their control and prevalence. This investment:

- Delivers support for land managers through on-ground reduction and prevention activities for problematic pests and weeds, including through Indigenous rangers, natural resource management and Landcare groups and by leveraging up to \$20 million in matched funding from state and territory governments.
- Funds research, development and extension grants for next-generation control projects identified through the Advancing Pest Animal and Weed Control Solutions competitive grant program.
- Drives national coordination outcomes for critical focus areas and pest species.
- Continues to build greater understanding of the costs and distribution of these pests and weeds.

There is a strong focus on securing co-investment outcomes with key stakeholders, providing both immediate and longer-term solutions for land managers.

Extending the Agri-Business Expansion Initiative (ABEI)

The Australian Government is providing \$85.9 million over three years from 2020-21 to help Australian farming, forestry and fishing exporters to expand and diversify their export markets.

This initiative is being delivered jointly by Austrade and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry.

ABEI benefits regional communities by growing agricultural and food exports – helping to connect Australia’s regional agricultural industries to new markets and position them for long-term growth.

Delivery to-date includes:

- Supporting delivery of market access achievements valued at \$819.5 million in potential export opportunities for Australian businesses.
- ‘Surge’ agriculture counsellor deployments to London, Bangkok and Hanoi, following initial deployments to Seoul, Washington DC and Riyadh (the latter two converted to long-term deployments).
- 23 grants totalling \$20.2 million have been delivered through the expanded *Agricultural Trade and Market Access Cooperation grants program*.

Australian Trade System Support – Cultivating Australia’s Traceability – Promoting and Protecting Australian Premium Agriculture

The Australian Government is investing \$68.4 million over four years from 2021-22 to provide value-added benefits from Australia’s agricultural traceability systems and increase access to premium value overseas markets. The measure is part of the *Simplified Trade System Package*.

Working in partnership with industry and state and territories, the measure supports the development of a national approach to improve traceability in agricultural supply chains across all products and commodities. This will increase product value, which could add up to \$1 billion a year to the bottom line of Australia’s farmers. It also reduces regulatory compliance costs, which could save businesses \$225-325 million a year by harmonising traceability frameworks and leveraging regulatory technology solutions to reduce paper-based processes. The funding supports three key initiatives:

- The *National Agricultural Traceability Alliance*, to enhance collaboration, engagement and co-design of a national agricultural traceability strategy, and specific reform projects with industry, farmers and other stakeholders to bring value-added economic benefit across agricultural supply chains.

- The *National Traceability Hub*, to provide a forum for enhanced engagement between industry groups and government to co-design traceability initiatives.
- The *Agricultural Credentials Initiative*, to support farmers and industry harness value from Australia's premium and value-added agricultural products through consistent credentials and frameworks backed by data. Initiatives include developing consistent agricultural sustainability credentials for emerging market access requirements and to support climate action in agriculture, better and more transparent data on provenance and animal welfare, and a new Indigenous Agricultural Product Framework to empower First Nations Australians.

Supporting Trade – Representation and promotion of Australia's interests in international fora and standard-setting bodies

The Australian Government is providing \$15 million over four years from 2021-22 to enhance Australia's representation and promote Australia's interests in international fora and standard-setting bodies that underpin global agriculture trade.

Ms Su McCluskey has been appointed as the Special Representative for Australian Agriculture. Ms McCluskey is working to develop coalitions of support to promote the importance of the multilateral trading system to free and open markets and the key role of international trade in providing global food security.

The initiative also strengthens Australia's engagement in three key international standard setting bodies: International Plant Protection Covenant (IPPC), World Animal Health Organisation (OIE) and International Food Standards (CODEX). This includes the secondment of Australian technical staff to regional Pacific offices.

Expenditure to date is estimated at \$2.5 million, with COVID-19 disruptions in 2021-22 delaying secondment of officers overseas.

Busting Congestion for Agricultural Exporters – Improving the ease of doing business

The Australian Government is investing in a suite of reforms to accelerate trade growth as agriculture recovers from drought, bushfires and COVID-19. These reforms are modernising existing systems and processes to give Australian agricultural exporters access to world-leading government services. The package, worth \$328.4 million over four years from 2020-21, has enabled the reform of agricultural export systems and the streamlining of administrative requirements while contributing to the industry's goal of \$100 billion in farm gate production by 2030.

The reforms will lead to annual government fees and charges being over \$20 million lower than expected from 2023-24 and generating over \$200 million of other benefits to industry by 2030. Primary producers will also benefit through increased opportunities to have their products exported to high-value markets.

Building the Agriculture Workforce

The Australian Government is investing in a range of measures that will help Australia build a bigger, better trained, and more productive workforce, many of which will have benefits to agriculture. In the short term these include:

- Partnering with state and territory governments to accelerate the delivery of 465,000 fee-free TAFE places, with 180,000 to be delivered next year. This initiative is being led by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.
- An increase in the permanent Migration Program ceiling to 195,000 in 2022-23, including 34,000 places specifically for regional visas within the skill stream. This initiative is being led by the Department of Home Affairs.
- Additional funding to the Department of Home Affairs to recruit 500 staff to address the visa backlog.
- A one-off income credit so that Age Pensioners who want to work can earn an additional \$4000 over this financial year without it affecting their pension. This initiative is being led by the Department of Social Services.

In the longer term, the Government has committed to reforms to the vocational education and training framework to improve flexibility through micro-credentials and better inclusion of work-based learning. The Government has also announced a review of Australia's migration system to ensure it meets the challenges of the coming decade. As a substantial user of the migration program, the agriculture workforce will benefit from improvements to a range of policy settings.

These measures complement substantial reforms to expand and strengthen the highly successful Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme, which supports agricultural employers meet workforce shortages. The PALM scheme is jointly managed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.

In addition to the above, the Government has established a tripartite Agricultural Workforce Working Group, comprising members of government, industry and unions. The group will collaborate for 12 months to pursue solutions to the sector's workforce challenges, including attraction, skilling, retention and workforce conditions.

The Government continues to implement measures announced at the 2021-22 Budget that that help the agriculture sector secure, skill and build its workforce. These include \$5.1 million to the National Farmers' Federation to deliver the *Ag-CAREERSTART* pilot program for young Australians to experience work in the agriculture industry and \$3.2 million to fast-track horticulture growers' and business' participation and progress through the *Fair Farms* program.

Soil and Stewardship

The Australian Government is providing \$196.9 million over four years from 2021-22 (including the *Food Waste for Healthy Soils Fund*) to implement the National Soil Strategy and associated Action Plan. The National Soil Package meets the commitment under the 20-year National Soil Strategy to work with states and territories, industry and other stakeholders to improve Australia's soil health.

The National Soil Package includes:

- A two-year *Pilot Soil Monitoring and Incentives Program* to better understand Australia's soil health and assess the impact of land management practices on soil condition. This element of the *National Soil Package* will provide low-cost soil sampling and testing to land managers to encourage more comprehensive soil monitoring, a program to purchase existing privately held soil data, and the redevelopment of a publicly available soil information system that will provide the data to improve understanding of Australia's soil condition, changes over time and the impact of land management practices.
- An accreditation program to provide further education and training for agronomists, extension officers and other trusted advisors to enhance soil science expertise and their ability to provide practical advice to farmers.
- *Soil Science Challenge* grants to help address key soil research gaps.

A further \$18 million of existing funding from the National Landcare Program's Smart Farms sub-program has been directed towards soil extension activities through a National Soil Community of Practice (consisting of Soil Science Australia and Regional Soil Coordinators), local soil extension officers and over 200 soil extension activities around Australia. This will support the on-ground implementation of the Pilot Soil Monitoring and Incentives Program.

Farm Household Allowance Business Income Reconciliation Debt Waiver

The *Farm Household Allowance* (FHA) is an uncapped, demand-driven income support payment that is only available to farmers and their partners in hardship who meet (and continuously meet) the income and assets tests. It is delivered by Services Australia on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry. The program delivers wide-ranging benefits to drought-affected communities in regional Australia, enabling recipients to support local businesses by paying for household goods and services.

From the 2020-21 financial year through to 30 June 2024, the Australian Government is to waiving the recovery of most FHA business reconciliation debts for around 5,300 farmers at a cost of \$14.7 million. This aligns with the recommendations of and reforms resulting from the farmer-led *Review of the Farm Household Allowance Program*. Regional Australia has been hit hard by a succession of natural disasters including drought, flood, bushfires and COVID-19, and waiving the FHA-associated debt will help people who need it most, as well as improving business confidence across regional Australia.

Future Drought Fund

The *Future Drought Fund* (FDF) provides secure, continuous funding for drought resilience initiatives. Each financial year, \$100 million is made available from the FDF to support Australian farmers and communities to prepare for, and become more resilient to, the effects of future drought. Progress to date includes:

- Establishing eight regional *Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hubs*, to deliver regionally responsive development, extension, adoption and commercialisation support. Collaborative hub projects have commenced and adoption officers funded to provide on the ground assistance to farmers.
- 150 projects to support the development, trial and extension of drought resilience practices.
- 19 Regional Drought Resilience Plans under development through state and territory governments.
- 6,800 farmers have accessed direct support to build business planning and risk management capability and proactively plan for drought.
- 93 projects and more than 900 people supported to develop leadership skills and drive locally led action to build community drought resilience to build community drought resilience.
- Launch of the Climate Services for Agriculture platform, providing access to regionally specific historical and projected climate information and analysis, to help farmers, agribusiness and communities understand and plan for drought and other climate risks.
- Launch of the Drought Resilience Self-Assessment Tool, enabling farmers to generate a farm-scale understanding of their drought risks and resilience, and options to improve.

The Australian Government is providing a further \$94.5 million over six years from 2022-23 to consolidate the Drought Resilience Funding Plan in place under the *Future Drought Fund Act 2019*.

Regional Investment Corporation

Since 2018-19, the Australian Government has provided \$3.1 billion in concessional loan funding to farmers and regional small businesses through the Regional Investment Corporation (RIC) as part of a \$4.1 billion loan program.

The RIC delivers loans in a nationally consistent, prudent and timely manner. Loans are targeted at farm businesses and farm-related small businesses impacted by drought; new farmers looking to enter the farming business; and those that are in financial need that mainly supply, or intend to mainly supply, products into supply chains that are interstate or overseas. Loans are also targeted at forestry businesses to encourage new plantation developments and the replanting of bushfire-damaged plantation areas. The majority of these businesses are in regional areas.

From 2021-22, the Australian Government reallocated \$336.5 million of existing loan funding over three years to 2025-26 to continue providing concessional loans to farmers, farm-dependent small businesses and forestry businesses through the RIC. The reallocation will provide certainty to regional areas that concessional loans will be available to drive innovation, growth and resilience building.

Wine Tourism and Cellar Door Grants

The *Wine Tourism and Cellar Door Grant* program provides wine and cider producers who exceed their wine equalisation tax rebate cap access to a grant of up to \$100,000 for their eligible cellar door sales. The objective of the program is to support producers who add value by encouraging visitors to wine regions, and thereby encourage regional tourism.

The program is capped at \$10 million per year and will be available through Wine Australia in the 2022-23 financial year.

Wine tourism is an important part of many regional economies. The grants are intended to have a positive economic and social impact on wine producers and tourism operators in regional Australia. The program specifies that cellar doors must be within 50 kilometres of a vineyard or production facility, targeting regional areas.

The Australian Government is also continuing to fund the following initiatives:

- \$25.5 million over four years from 2021-22 to expand diagnostic capabilities and invest in additional technologies to facilitate the streamlined movement of plant and animal-based goods across the border while managing biosecurity risks.
- \$10 million for two programs through *Educating Kids about Agriculture* over four years from 2019-20.
- \$3.5 million over four years from 2019-20 to 2022-23 for the *National Farm Safety Education Fund* to improve farm safety outcomes.
- \$3.1 million over two years from 2021-22 for regional National Institute for Forest Products Innovation centres in Mount Gambier, Launceston and Gippsland.
- \$14.8 million over six years from 2019-20 for the *Dairy Export Assurance Program* to reduce the regulatory and cost burden on exporters in the dairy sector.
- \$30 million to support states and territories to build resilience into Australia's fruit fly management system, invest in critical fruit fly infrastructure to support exports and manage pest pressure over three years from 2021-22.
- Up to \$2.5 million in 2022-23 and 2023-24 and ongoing annual funding of up to \$2.3 million thereafter to match the additional forest growers' levy funding for research and development expenditure made through Forest and Wood Products Australia.

- \$15.1 million over two years from 2021-22 to support construction softwood transport and forestry industries impacted by global supply chain disruptions.
- \$8 million over three years from 2020-21 under the *Fisheries Habitat Restoration Program* is supporting 28 projects that are restoring marine and estuarine fish habitats across Australia.
- \$20 million over three years from 2020-21 through the *Recreational Fishing and Camping Facilities Program* is supporting local councils to improve or build new boating, fishing and camping facilities to provide better recreational fishing opportunities.
- \$20.1 million over four years from 2021-22 to reduce regulatory burden and improve services for approximately 1,220 Australian fishing businesses, through the *Data Transformation* and *E-Monitoring* program.
- \$9 million over four years from 2021-22 to support Australia's agricultural sector to access pest and disease controls tools for new or emerging commodities, or to address infrequent pest or disease pressures in Australia major commodities.
- \$13.2 million over two years from 2021-22 to implement an online portal to allow the import industry to perform self-service functions for the inspection of cargo, or other goods of biosecurity concern.
- \$1.1 million over two years from 2022–23 to support continued progress of the Victorian-led National Horse Traceability Working Group and to contribute to establishing national horse traceability arrangements.
- \$10 million of funding delivered to state and territory agriculture departments with necessary surveillance and control activities as part of a broader action plan in response to the emergence of Japanese encephalitis virus.
- \$4.1 million for an early warning system for drought, helping regional Australia better prepare for, manage and recover from drought, over two years from 2021-22.
- \$37.5 million from existing Regional Investment Corporation Loan funding over four years from 2021-22 for concessional loans to support plantation forestry development in regional Australia, and to support plantation recovery following the 2019-20 Black Summer Bushfires.
- \$7.2 million over four years from 2020-21 to modernise and streamline the 30-year-old agricultural levies legislative framework.
- \$5.4 million over four years from 2021-22 for industry-based projects to improve market transparency in the fresh food supply chain.
- \$8.7 million over 11 years from 2019-20 to introduce a mandatory code of conduct for the dairy industry.

- \$8.5 million over four years from 2021-22 to establish export regulatory arrangements, including export certification, for non-traditional agricultural products, starting with Australian cosmetics.
- \$35 million for the *Horticultural Netting Program – Trial Expansion* over four years from 2021-22.
- \$157.4 million over nine years to 2022-23 to provide grants to rural research and development corporations to improve agricultural productivity and profitability.
- \$10 million to support the South Australian Government to upgrade 1,600 kilometres of its ageing dog fence.
- \$41 million over two years through the *Forestry Recovery Development Fund Program* to support wood processing facilities to recover from the impacts of Black Summer bushfires.

Attorney-General's

The Attorney-General's Portfolio comprises the Attorney-General's Department (the department) and 17 portfolio entities. The portfolio delivers programs and policies to maintain and improve Australia's law, justice, security and integrity. This work spans a range of significant areas and affects the lives of many Australians, including those in regional and remote communities.

Ensuring individuals, families and communities in regional areas can access the support and services they need is a key priority for the Albanese Labor Government. The Albanese Labor Government has committed \$509.3 million in 2022-23 for legal assistance services under the National Legal Assistance Partnership 2020-25 (NLAP). There are 11 priority client groups under the NLAP, one of which is people residing in rural or regional areas. NLAP funding delivers services in regional areas, though the amount of funding specifically dedicated to service delivery in regional areas cannot easily be quantified.

The portfolio manages legal assistance services and alternative pathways to formal legal processes to provide greater avenues to justice for Australians in regional communities. The *Family Relationships Services Program* delivers a range of post-separation services to families in regional communities. The portfolio is also leading work to protect the rights of older Australians through Specialist Elder Abuse Services, including in some regional communities.

Portfolio agencies that provide services directly to the public, such as administrative review and complaints handling bodies and the federal courts, continue to enhance the online services they provide to people in remote and regional areas. Online services particularly benefit people in remote and regional areas as they significantly reduce the cost and time taken to interact with the Australian Government.

As at 31 August 2022, the Attorney-General's Portfolio employed 7,050 staff under the *Public Service Act 1999*. Of this total, 5,324 are employed in Canberra, central Melbourne and central Sydney (76 per cent), 1,572 in other capital cities (22 per cent) and 154 in regional areas (2 per cent).

The portfolio's footprint includes office locations such as Adelaide, Albury, Brisbane, Cairns, Canberra, Dandenong, Darwin, Dubbo, Hobart, Launceston, Lismore, Melbourne, Newcastle, Parramatta, Perth, Rockhampton, Sydney, Toowoomba, Townsville, and Wollongong.

The High Court of Australia and the Australian Federal Police employ staff under their own legislation and have staff distributed around Australia.

New Initiatives

First Nations Justice

In the 2022-23 October Budget, the Australian Government announced \$99.0 million over four years from 2022-23 to form new partnerships with First Nations peoples to improve Australia's high rates of First Nations incarceration and deaths in custody. The following measures, which are consistent with recommendations in the Final Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, will be delivered by the Attorney-General's portfolio.

Community-led justice reinvestment initiatives and an independent national justice reinvestment unit

The Australian Government will provide \$81.5 million over four years from 2022-23 (\$12.2 million in 2022-23) and \$23.1 million thereafter to deliver First Nations justice reinvestment initiatives. Funding will enable up to 30 communities to establish locally tailored initiatives that address the underlying causes of incarceration and deaths in custody. An independent national justice reinvestment unit will also be established to work with communities to implement these initiatives. A number of rural, regional and remote areas will benefit from these initiatives, including sites identified for early investment located in Alice Springs in the Northern Territory and Halls Creek in Western Australia.

This measure also implements two key recommendations in the Australian Law Reform Commission's 2018 *Pathways to Justice* Report.

Legal Assistance for First Nations families in coronial proceedings

The Australian Government will provide \$13.5 million over three years from 2022-23 (\$3 million in 2022-23) to increase the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) to provide culturally appropriate legal assistance to First Nations clients in coronial inquiries. This measure will ensure that First Nations families who have lost a loved one in custody can access culturally appropriate, timely and fair legal assistance before, during and after all coronial processes. In 2018-19, nearly half of all ATSILS' new services were provided in outer regional, remote or very remote areas.

Ensuring that the families of the deceased have access to legal assistance and can fully participate in coronial inquests will contribute to better, more informed inquests – allowing the identification of reforms to the justice system and embedding understanding and cultural safety within the justice system.

Funding for community legal centres in flood and bushfire affected areas

In the 2022-23 October Budget, the Australian Government announced additional funding of \$12 million over four years (\$3 million in 2022-23) for community legal centres in flood and bushfire affected areas of New South Wales and Queensland. This funding will provide experienced, trauma-informed legal assistance services to assist individuals, small

businesses and primary producers to navigate through the legal issues that arise in the immediate and longer-term aftermath of the catastrophic floods.

This funding builds on funding of \$5.4 million over two years from 2021-22 (\$4.1 million in 2022-23) included in the 2022-23 Budget measure *Flood Package*.

Further information on the *Flood Package* can be found in the Prime Minister and Cabinet chapter.

Responsible investment to grow our regions

The Government will provide \$14 million over four years from 2022-23 (\$4.3 million in 2022-23) to improve community safety in Central Australia.

Of this \$14 million, the National Indigenous Australians Agency will receive \$3 million to enable the immediate expansion and enhancement of existing community safety patrols, family violence support services and youth support services. The remote and regional communities of Alice Springs, the Central Desert Region, the MacDonnell Region, and Yuara will receive a direct and rapid benefit from these measures.

An additional \$11 million will be made available for early intervention programs for at-risk youth and to upgrade security infrastructure for eligible organisations located in Alice Springs and surrounding areas. Early intervention programs are designed to divert youth from criminal justice pathways. They include programs to build job readiness, improve access to mental health, drug and alcohol diversion, address the drivers of gender-based violence, enhance cultural and community connections to improve community resilience. The funding can also be used to support better access to victim support services.

Current Initiatives

National Legal Assistance Partnership

The Australian Government is committed to funding legal assistance services in regional Australia. In 2020, the former Government entered into the National Legal Assistance Partnership 2020-25 (NLAP) with states and territories to provide legal assistance services across Australia.

The NLAP provides long term, quarantined and guaranteed funding to Legal Aid Commissions (LACs), Community Legal Centres (CLCs), and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (ATSILS). The NLAP delivers baseline funding for those organisations, as well as specific funding for the specialist Domestic Violence Units and Health Justice Partnerships and Family Advocacy and Support Services that some LACs and CLCs operate.

The NLAP provides over \$2.4 billion over five years from 2020-21 (\$506.6 million in 2022-23) for vital legal assistance to keep everyday Australians, families and communities safe. People residing in rural or remote areas are recognised as a national priority client

group under the NLAP. The NLAP requires legal assistance services to plan and target resources to national priority clients, recognising that people facing disadvantage are more likely to experience legal problems, are less likely to seek assistance and less able to access services.

There are approximately 75 LAC offices across Australia, with around 76 per cent of offices located in regions outside of metropolitan areas. Approximately 75 per cent of CLCs are located in regions outside of metropolitan areas. There are seven ATSILSs nationally which deliver services from 70 permanent locations, including regional and remote areas, court circuits, bush courts and outreach locations.

Women's Safety

To support implementation of the first five-year action plan of the next *National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032*, the Australian Government will invest \$1.3 billion over six years from 2022-23 to address women's safety. Key components of this measure for the Attorney-General's portfolio are outlined below.

Expansion of the Lighthouse Project and culturally responsive support for First Nations Australians

The Australian Government committed \$87.9 million over four years from 2022-23 (\$25.9 million in 2022-23) to continue and expand the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia's family safety risk screening and specialised case management pilot known as the *Lighthouse Project* and enhance culturally responsive support for First Nations Australians.

This measure will expand the *Lighthouse Project* from three to 15 registries, including seven registries in regional areas (Cairns, Dandenong, Launceston, Newcastle, Rockhampton, Townsville and Wollongong), which will have a positive impact on people in regional areas who are involved in family law proceedings, particularly women and children experiencing or at risk of family violence.

This measure includes funding for the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia to employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officers and establish specialist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lists and culturally responsive case management processes, which will benefit First Nations people in regional areas who are involved in family law proceedings.

This measure also includes \$24.2 million over three years for additional legal assistance services to support the expansion of the *Lighthouse Project*, which will be provided to states and territories for Legal Aid Commissions.

Maintaining protection against cross-examination by family violence perpetrators

The Australian Government committed additional funding of \$52.4 million over four years from 2022-23 (\$13 million in 2022-23) to state and territory Legal Aid Commissions under the *Family Violence and Cross-examination of Parties Scheme* (the Scheme). The Scheme helps to protect victims of family violence — who are primarily women — in family law proceedings. The Scheme enables victims of family violence, including those in rural and regional areas, to pursue family law outcomes that prioritise their safety and future economic security.

Court Network Safety Net Service

The Australian Government will provide \$1.2 million over four years from 2022-23 (\$0.3 million in 2022-23) to provide support to the Court Network, a volunteer network which assists family court users to better understand and navigate the court system, through providing non-legal support, information and referrals. Services can be provided in metropolitan and regional courts. Many court users have no legal representation and access to trained volunteers reduces demand on other in-court services, while also reducing the emotional toll on participants in otherwise challenging circumstances.

National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030

The Australian Government has committed \$307.5 million to support the initial implementation of the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030 (National Strategy). The National Strategy is a 10-year, whole-of-nation framework to establish a coordinated and consistent approach to preventing and better responding to child sexual abuse in all settings, including in institutions, in families and online.

The National Strategy is initially being driven by two four-year (2021-2024) action plans:

- The First National Action Plan includes measures that the Australian, state and territory governments will deliver together. It focuses on priorities of shared responsibility between governments and those requiring national coordination, such as education and awareness raising.
- The First Commonwealth Action Plan includes measures that the Australian Government will largely deliver on its own. It focuses on Australian Government priorities and responsibilities, such as preventing and responding to online child sexual abuse.

Measures under both action plans will deliver positive impacts to regional Australians through new and enhanced policies and services focussed on preventing and responding to child sexual abuse. People living in these communities are explicitly listed as a National Strategy priority group, and all relevant measures will be designed and implemented in a

way that supports their engagement. Some National Strategy-funded measures of particular note for this group include:

- preventing child sexual abuse through building child safe capability in sporting organisations and delivering online safety education programs to prevent online harm and promote safe online practices for children and young people
- enhancing support for victims and survivors of child sexual abuse, including expanding the national specialist trauma informed legal service, establishing a specialist national legal online chat service dedicated to young people experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, harm and sexual abuse, coordinating access to support services, resources and information, and developing trauma-informed and culturally appropriate resources and approaches for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- bolstering law enforcement efforts to prevent, disrupt, investigate and combat child sexual abuse, including through community liaison police officers
- enhancing the Government's global partnerships, including to learn from international best practice on how to design and deliver education, support and prevention services for and to geographically dispersed groups and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- improving the evidence base on the prevalence, nature, causes and impacts of all forms of child maltreatment in Australia.

The Australian Government is also continuing to fund the following initiatives:

- \$3.2 million over three years from 2022-23 (\$1.1 million in 2022-23) and \$1.1 million per year thereafter, committed under the 2021-22 MYEFO measure *Attorney-General's Portfolio - additional resourcing*, to maintain a permanent judicial position in the Tasmanian registry of the Federal Court of Australia that will assist to resolve a growing volume of matters across Tasmania.
- \$2.8 million over four years from 2021-22 (\$0.8 million in 2022-23) and \$0.8 million per year thereafter, committed under the 2021-22 MYEFO measure *Attorney-General's Portfolio -additional resourcing*, to appoint an additional judge to the Family Court of Western Australia who will assist the Court to respond family law cases in regional areas including Albany, Broome, Bunbury, Geraldton, and Kalgoorlie.
- \$0.9 million per year for Division Two of the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia to fund private property mediations in regional Australia where Court-based registrar services are limited.

Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water is a new portfolio that has been established to lead and deliver the Government's agenda across climate change, energy, environment, heritage and water. The department and broader portfolio carries a range of complex policy issues that are of critical importance to Australia's future way of life and which require collaborative, innovative and joined-up reform. The department and broader portfolio will play an important role in reinvigorating Australian climate action and leadership, facilitating the smooth transformation of our energy system, capturing the opportunities of a clean energy economy, helping to protect, restore and manage Australia's environment and heritage, and improving the health of our rivers and freshwater ecosystems. In doing this, we seek to achieve both environmental and economic outcomes, including growing our economy and ensuring regional communities continue to thrive.

The 2021 State of the Environment Report found Australia's environment is poor and getting worse. It found that climate change is a major threat to the state of our environment. The Report also found that there is a significant role for our First Nations peoples in environmental stewardship.

The department and broader portfolio will work quickly to address environmental decline and better protect, restore and manage our natural environment, strongly mindful of the impacts of climate change and while ensuring our economy continues to grow more sustainably. We will ensure environmental laws work better for environmental protection and native species conservation, and improve efficiency for business, including through the Government's response to the Samuel Review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. We will also establish an environment protection agency to promote trust in our new environment laws. In the meantime, the department is working to maintain timely environmental assessments to provide certainty for business and deliver better outcomes for the environment.

The department will also establish a nature repair market to encourage new private investment in nature. This voluntary national nature repair market will deliver benefits for landholders, investors and the environment through properly rewarding the restoration and protection of biodiversity.

Partnerships are crucial to protect and restore the health of Australia's natural environment, its oceans, and iconic and heritage-listed places that future generations depend on. Working cooperatively with state and territory governments, First Nations peoples, organisations and private landholders, the department will deliver initiatives that build on this commitment to care for our country. This includes protecting imperilled plants, animals and places through the next phase of the Natural Heritage Trust, the Saving Native Species program, additional support for Indigenous Protected Areas, improving urban waterways and catchments, and investing in up to 1,000 Landcare Rangers. We are working with states and territories to achieve a national target to protect 30 per cent of

Australia's landmass and 30 per cent of our maritime domain by 2030. The Government is also accelerating the protection of the Great Barrier Reef by implementing the Reef 2050 plan and funding catchment and reef restoration projects.

The department will also work to manage and protect Australia's rich cultural heritage, which underpins our national identity and makes an important contribution to wellbeing. We will work to ensure Australia's significant heritage places are recognised and protected, with a particular focus on places of significance to First Nations Peoples.

The department and broader portfolio work to protect the environment and our heritage for current and future generations. We will strengthen our international environmental leadership with a focus on World Heritage, Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction, oceans and Antarctica. The Australian Antarctic Division will continue to play its essential role in the stewardship of Australia's presence in the Antarctic, including our world-leading scientific endeavours there.

The portfolio works to improve the management of Australia's water resources for the environment, communities and agriculture. Climate change will be a key consideration in our water management practices. We will play an important role in improving the health and resilience of the rivers and wetlands in the Murray-Darling Basin. We are aiming to future-proof our water resources to address the escalating impacts of climate change, drive ongoing water reform, safeguard the Murray-Darling Basin and lay the groundwork for the Basin's future. This means the department and broader portfolio will work with Basin States and stakeholders to identify the best options to meet water recovery targets under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, rebuild trust in water resource management, restore transparency, integrity and confidence in water markets, and continue to provide water to support the health of rivers and wetlands. Broadening the National Water Grid Fund investment policy will bring essential town water supplies to regional and remote communities. The portfolio will ensure responsible investment in national water infrastructure projects where business cases stack up, environmentally and economically, to ensure water security for communities, industry and the environment.

The portfolio is working to establish Australia as both an international leader on climate and a clean energy superpower. The energy transformation underway today affects all sectors of our nation and all Australians. We will ensure the transformation is implemented in a way that enhances our energy security and affordability and creates economic opportunities and jobs, particularly for regional Australia. We will support the Government to step up our international engagement on climate change to maximise the prospects of effective global action, which is the only way to minimise the impacts of climate change, which are very real and already being felt in Australia. Our work will also support the Government to deliver its commitment to transparency and accountability on climate action.

Ensuring Australia is on a path to achieving our emissions reduction targets of 43 per cent by 2030 and net zero by 2050 is of paramount importance to the department and broader portfolio. This requires a strong focus on decarbonisation of the electricity sector, electrification of other energy uses, efforts to reduce energy use where it remains carbonised or expensive and support for emissions reductions that are not from energy use.

The department will deliver key commitments through Powering Australia, Rewiring the Nation and the National Energy Transformation Partnership. These will upgrade, expand and modernise our electricity grids to unlock new renewables and storage capacity and drive down power prices over time. We will support the Government in targeting 82% renewables in our electricity grid by 2030.

The department will also reform the Safeguard Mechanism so it drives emissions reductions from the industrial sector, and deliver the first National Electric Vehicle Strategy to reduce transport emissions through electrification. Global climate action will change the demand for our fossil fuel exports and create opportunities in the growth of new low and zero emission industries. The department will establish and administer the Powering the Regions Fund, as part of the Government's focus on facilitating regional transformation, to capture these opportunities.

The department will support the Government's strategy to respond to climate impacts through adaptation and resilience, including working closely with the peoples of the Torres Strait Islands and other First Nations people.

As part of its commitment to transparency and accountability, the Government has legislated through the *Climate Change Act 2022* to provide an Annual Climate Change Statement, which is to be tabled in the Australian Parliament. The Statement must report, among other things, on progress towards meeting emissions targets, the effectiveness of Australian climate change policy, impacts on rural and regional Australia and the risks to Australia from climate change. It has also restored the role of the Climate Change Authority, including tasking it to provide advice on the Annual Climate Change Statement. The department will prepare the annual Statement, taking into account the Climate Change Authority's advice.

Strong, respectful and genuine partnerships with First Nations people are critical to progressing the Government's reform agenda across our portfolio. The department's task will be informed by the knowledge and experience of Australia's First Nations people as we work together to implement policies that achieve the objectives of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

We will engage First Nations people in developing and implementing our responses to climate change and energy transformation. First Nations knowledge will inform how we adapt to climate change, while recognising that many of our Torres Strait Islander peoples are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

Protecting First Nations peoples' heritage is a priority, and the Government is taking immediate action to strengthen Indigenous cultural heritage protection by listing more places for their Indigenous heritage value on the National and World Heritage lists. We will continue to work closely with the National Indigenous Australians Agency to deliver the Indigenous Protected Areas program. We will ensure that at least \$100 million of projects to better manage and protect the Great Barrier Reef are led or delivered by Traditional Owners or Indigenous rangers. Through the Director of National Parks, departmental staff work together with Traditional Owners to manage Australia's Commonwealth national parks, gardens and marine parks. The department supports the

Director of National Parks in managing some of Australia’s most iconic natural heritage places including Kakadu, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park as well as a network of marine protected areas that is among the largest in the world.

As at 31 August 2022, the Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water Portfolio employed 4,728 staff under the *Public Service Act 1999*. Of this total, 2,940 are employed in Canberra, central Melbourne and central Sydney (62 per cent), 1,117 in other capital cities (24 per cent) and 671 in regional areas (14 per cent).

The portfolio comprises the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water as well as 12 portfolio bodies. The portfolio has a regional footprint across Australia, its external territories and Antarctica. Employees span regional and remote locations and major cities and work in a diverse range of settings, including national parks, Antarctica, laboratories and offices. Staff are based in locations such as Mildura, Goondiwindi, Griffith, Hobart, Wodonga, Murray Bridge, Townsville, Alice Springs, Lord Howe Island, Gove, Rockhampton and Norfolk, Christmas and Thursday Islands, ensuring staff are close to the sites, communities and industries that they serve. Several portfolio bodies employ staff under their own legislation and most have staff in locations outside the capital cities.

New Initiatives

Environment and Water

Saving Native Species

The program will provide \$224.5 million over four years from 2022-23 to deliver the Government’s election commitment to save Australia’s most imperilled native species. The program will address priorities under the new Threatened Species Action Plan, koala conservation, yellow crazy ant control in the tropical rainforests of far north Queensland, combat gamba grass in the Northern Territory, improvements to conservation planning under the EPBC Act, and other activities to monitor and improve species recovery.

Funding will be available across Australia, including in the regions. Eligible funding recipients include private landholders, regional communities, First Nations peoples and communities, the not-for-profit sector, and regional land management organisations. Regional community economies will benefit from investments that create employment, increase the value of nature-based tourism, enhance sustainable agriculture, and businesses reliant on natural capital. Remote First Nations communities will benefit from increased investments that create employment or enhance threatened species recovery work on their land.

Urban Rivers and Catchments Program

Under the first phase of the \$200 million election commitment, the Australian Government is investing \$91.0 million over six years from 2023-24 to improve urban waterways and their catchments. The program will fund activities that will restore natural habitats for aquatic species, improve water quality and improve local communities’ access to nature, open green space, and biodiversity.

Projects funded under the program will include the conversion of concrete drains or channels into natural, vegetated creeks and streams; the creation of wetlands and chains of ponds to slow and filter stormwater, and planting native vegetation along riverbanks and creeks to create 'green corridors' for native wildlife.

Next Phase of Natural Heritage Trust Funding

The Australian Government has committed \$1.1 billion over six years for future work under the Natural Heritage Trust. This will provide \$817.7 million in funding for environmental outcomes to a broad range of recipients across Australia supporting regional and rural economies. This includes funding for the Indigenous Protected Areas program which delivers benefits to the environment as well as employment, education and training opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remote and regional areas. Funding will also support training for up to 1,000 Landcare Rangers which will create local jobs in regions, and stimulate economic growth where activities take place. Further investments will be made in protecting our species and landscapes (including the iconic koala), our World Heritage sites and listed Ramsar wetlands.

Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan – implementation

The Australian Government has committed to bringing investment in the protection of the Great Barrier Reef to \$1.2 billion by 2030. This includes investing an additional \$96.9 million over three years from 2023-24 to address critical gaps in implementation of the Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan as part of a broader commitment to protect the Great Barrier Reef and secure Reef jobs. These Reef communities depend upon the ongoing protection of the Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Barrier Reef and the natural capital offered by a healthy Reef.

Key benefits to regional communities in this package include:

- \$36.8 million to decrease risks to protected species listed under the EPBC Act from commercial fishing
- \$13.0 million for state-of-the art monitoring, modelling and reporting through the joint Australian and Queensland Government Paddock to Reef Integrated Monitoring, Modelling and Reporting Program
- \$8.7 million for the Marine Monitoring Program to address critical gaps in implementation of the Reef 2050 Plan and Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan
- \$8.6 million for critical research to inform Reef catchment restoration and industry practice change
- \$29.8 million for Traditional Owners to restore and manage land and sea Country and strengthen their governance arrangements.

Shovel Ready Catchment and Reef Restoration Projects

The Government is providing \$91.8 million over four years from 2022-23 to deliver 'shovel-ready' projects to protect the Great Barrier Reef and secure Reef jobs. This investment will accelerate Reef protection and restoration activities by providing:

- \$40.0 million for catchment-scale land and coastal (blue carbon) ecosystem restoration
- \$20.3 million to accelerate deployment of coral reef adaptation projects
- \$18.3 million to deliver shovel-ready projects identified in local councils' Reef Action Plans
- \$13.2 million for engaging with regional Natural Resource Management organisations, Traditional Owners and landholders, and actions to improve stewardship and care for Reef catchments.

Coastal and Marine Ecosystems Research Centre (Central Queensland University)

The Australian Government is providing \$15.3 million to support the establishment of the Coastal Marine Ecosystems Research Centre (CMERC) at Central Queensland University in Gladstone, to focus on important inner coastal (blue carbon) ecosystems and improve management of the Great Barrier Reef. A one-off grant in 2022-23 will support delivery of the Reef 2050 Plan by improving understanding of Reef ecosystems and strengthening collaboration between Reef managers and researchers. Better management of the Reef will help secure the future of Reef communities, Traditional Owners and industries with more scientists and technicians, expanding CMERC facilities and providing necessary research infrastructure and equipment.

CMERC also supports oil spill response training and existing Reef programs such as the ReefClean marine debris program and the Gidarjil Indigenous ranger program. It also hosts the Gladstone Healthy Harbour Partnership.

Marine Parks Management

The Australian Government is committed to improving ocean and marine park management, particularly in regional and remote areas. The \$10.8 million investment over four years from 2022-23 will deliver complementary initiatives to guide future ocean management in Australia, including First Nations-led integrated coastal and marine park management, marine biodiversity protection and the protection of whales.

A National Sustainable Ocean Plan (\$3.7 million) will be developed to set a strategic and coordinated approach to guide ocean protection, management, and investment to deliver a sustainable ocean economy. The Plan will consider the needs of regional First Nations peoples, industries and communities over the coming decades, and will improve alignment and effectiveness across all states and the Northern Territory.

A new marine park management partnership (\$2.8 million) will be developed, specifically across two contiguous territory and Commonwealth marine parks, building on existing relationships between the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory.

Murray–Darling Basin – delivering on water commitments

The Australian Government is committed to delivery of the Murray–Darling Basin Plan and will provide additional funding to meet water recovery targets. The Australian Government will take action and work with relevant communities on options to recover the remaining water to bridge the gap to Sustainable Diversion Limits. The Government will also work closely with industry to capture the benefits of modern infrastructure and deliver efficiencies to recover 450 gigalitres of additional environmental water. A more flexible approach will ensure the sustainability of the Basin’s ecosystems, regional communities and economy.

Plan for the Murray–Darling Basin – compliance and science

The Australian Government has committed to increasing compliance, improving metering and monitoring of water use, and updating Murray–Darling Basin science ahead of the statutory Basin Plan Review. This measure will provide \$51.9 million over five years from 2022–23 to futureproof the Basin and improve trust in water resource management.

This package of work includes assessing the impact of climate change on Ramsar-listed wetlands, reinstating the Sustainable Rivers Audit and updating the CSIRO Sustainable Yields study.

These studies fill critical science gaps that will enable the Government to answer key questions about the current condition of the Basin, how much water will be available in the future, and how to increase environmental resilience to climate change. The measure will also support effective collaboration and coordination with existing science programs.

Basin communities, local governments, First Nations peoples, environmental groups, scientists and the tourism, fishing and agriculture industries will benefit from updated science and a better understanding of the impacts of climate change in the Basin. This information will help Basin industries and communities to better prepare for climate change, and improve the ability of irrigators and Basin States to manage water resources in the Basin.

Murray–Darling Basin – Water Market Reform

Water in the Murray–Darling Basin is critical to the efficiency and productivity of Australian agriculture, which is a major contributor to our regional economies. The ability to trade water helps ensure people can put it to best use, among the many alternative agricultural, environmental, urban and cultural options for using water.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) released its final report on the Murray–Darling Basin water markets inquiry on 26 March 2021. In response to the ACCC report, the Australian Government will:

- Legislate to regulate the behaviour and conduct of water market participants
- Set data standards, systems and requirements for the provision and reporting of water market information and underpin new conduct regulation
- Improve transparency and understanding of water markets to inform trade decisions.

These reforms will help restore community and agri-business confidence in the integrity of water markets. The reforms will place obligations on trade approval authorities (including Basin states and irrigation infrastructure operators) and intermediaries, which will enable the Commonwealth to effectively regulate market conduct.

Water for Australia Plan

The Australian Government's National Water Reform initiative of \$2.6 million over two years from 2022-23 is a first step towards the goal of future-proofing Australia's water resources. This initial investment will contribute to the Government's commitment to establish a National Water Commission and renew the National Water Initiative.

A National Water Commission can play a positive role in delivering trusted, technically credible and evidence-based water management information. Scoping its potential functions and roles is a critical first step in its establishment.

National Water Grid – Delivering Commitments

The Australian Government has expanded the National Water Grid Fund Investment Framework to allow funding for a broader range of projects, including for essential town water supplies in regional and remote communities. Water infrastructure investment will deliver benefits in the regions and for First Nations peoples, including improved water security, drought resilience, climate resilience, and economic growth.

The Australian Government has committed \$811.0 million over five years from 2022-23 to the first water infrastructure projects under the expanded Investment Framework, delivering on election commitments:

- Paradise Dam Improvement Project (Queensland): \$600.0 million for restoring Paradise Dam to its original 300 gigalitre capacity to support regional water security and agricultural growth.
- Cairns Water Security Project Stage One (Queensland): \$107.5 million for a new drinking water supply to augment existing supplies and increase overall availability to support the community and regional economy

- Mount Morgan Water Supply Project (Queensland): \$3.5 million for detailed design, approvals and construction support services for a pipeline to provide a long-term water security solution for the community
- Tasmanian Pipeline to Prosperity Tranche Three projects: \$100.0 million for further investment towards irrigation projects that will support high-value agriculture

Aviation Meteorological Services – additional funding

The Government will provide \$16.4 million in 2022-23 to enable continued delivery of essential aviation meteorological services, during the slower than anticipated recovery in aviation activity following the COVID-19 pandemic. This funding is additional to the \$55.8 million over two years from 2021-22 and continues to supplement reduced industry revenue from a recovering aviation sector.

The Bureau of Meteorology’s aviation meteorological services are vital to Australia’s aviation function, and are provided for Australia’s airspace (11 per cent of the globe) and around 200 airports, most of which service regional areas. Without these services, virtually all air traffic in Australian airspace would cease within 24 hours. Emergency services, agricultural industries, remote communities and the general public benefit from ongoing flight activity facilitated by continuous delivery of these services.

Climate Change and Energy

Powering Australia - Community Batteries for Household Solar

This measure provides \$224.3 million over four years from 2022-23 to deliver the Government’s election commitment to establish the Community Batteries for Household Solar program, which aims to support deployment of 400 community batteries to lower bills, cut emissions and reduce pressure on the grid.

The program will be rolled out nationally and may be implemented in regional areas. Regional urban areas with high rooftop solar penetration, and regional or remote communities suitable for off-grid energy supply arrangements will be positively impacted. Deploying community batteries can positively impact electricity service access by improving network reliability and lowering consumer costs. Improvements to energy reliability from community batteries will positively affect access to reliable telecommunications and services, potentially including emergency situations such as extreme weather events and bushfires, which may damage network powerlines.

Powering Australia – Solar Banks

This measure provides \$102.2 million over four years from 2022-23 to deliver the Government’s election commitment to establish the Community Solar Bank Fund (the Fund). The Fund will support deployment of community-scale solar and clean energy technologies for 25,000 households unable to access the benefits of these technologies, particularly those who live in low income households, and people in apartments and rental accommodation. The measure also includes \$1 million for the election commitment to deliver clean energy technology for communities on the NSW far south coast.

Regional and remote communities that receive project funding from the Community Solar Bank Fund will benefit from improved energy security, lower electricity prices, and improved infrastructure for local residents and businesses.

Townsville Hydrogen Hub

This initiative provides \$71.9 million over seven years from 2022-23 to deliver the Government's election commitment to establish a green hydrogen hub in the Townsville region of Queensland. This investment will further support the development of Australia's green hydrogen industry, assisting Australia to achieve its emission reduction goals while continuing to grow local industries and support the transition to green energy.

Hydrogen hubs are regions where hydrogen users are co-located, creating efficiencies in supply and focal points for innovation and skills development. The establishment of the hydrogen hub in Townsville is expected to drive economic growth, create jobs and increase the availability of training and skilled opportunities in the region. This measure builds on investments under the Regional Hydrogen Hubs program.

Energy Efficiency Grants for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

This measure provides \$62.6 million over three years from 2022-23 to deliver the Government's election commitment to support energy efficient equipment upgrades for small and medium-sized businesses. This proposal is designed to support businesses to upgrade or replace old inefficient equipment, such as gas boilers with technologies such as heat pumps, to improve their energy efficiency. These upgrades will enable industries to reduce their energy use, manage energy cost volatility in the long term and contribute to Australia's target of a 43 per cent reduction on 2005 emission levels by 2030.

The measure will have a positive impact on regional areas as a high proportion of small and medium businesses are located in suburban and regional areas. Projects will support local jobs and the productivity improvements to businesses. These will be implemented through energy saving measures which will enable investment in the local economy.

Supporting Australian Industry – Whaleback Energy Park Feasibility Study

This measure provides \$2.4 million over three years from 2022-23 to deliver the Government's election commitment to provide a targeted grant to Westcoast Renewable Energy Pty Ltd to undertake a feasibility study into its proposed Whaleback Energy Park. The feasibility study will look at challenges facing the development of a green hydrogen industry, including environmental sensitivities and market sustainability.

The park, when developed, is expected to be located on the west coast of Tasmania. It will consist of a large wind farm, providing renewable energy that is expected to feed into the National Electricity Market and will also support the production of green hydrogen for use in transport with potential industrial off-take. It will provide Tasmania and its north-west region the opportunity for future development of a new domestic and export industrial base, leading to job creation, particularly in the energy, construction, manufacturing, engineering and transport sectors.

Establishing Offshore Renewables in Australia

This measure provides \$0.5 million in 2022-23 to begin development of an industry growth strategy to support the establishment of an offshore renewable energy sector in Australia. The strategy will guide the offshore wind industry to ensure it is successful and able to realise the regional investment opportunities and contribution to decarbonising the electricity sector.

Engaging with First Nations Peoples on Climate Change

The Government will provide \$15.9 million over four years from 2022-23 to design and deliver adaptation and mitigation action, including establishing the Torres Strait Climate Centre of Excellence. It will also create and implement a new model for an enduring dialogue on climate change with Torres Strait Islander and other First Nations peoples across Australia. It will have a positive impact on regional Australians and communities, in particular Torres Strait and other First Nations peoples in the region, by empowering and creating climate change leadership and creating employment opportunities.

First Nations Community Microgrids Program

The Government will provide \$83.8 million over four years from 2022-23 to develop and deploy microgrid technology so First Nations communities can access cheaper, cleaner and more reliable energy. It will give First Nations communities and organisations greater agency and ownership of their energy supply arrangements and is expected to support projects in regional and remote areas across Australia. Microgrids will improve electricity affordability, security and reliability, address technology gaps due to electricity supply constraints, and reduce carbon emissions in First Nations communities.

Powering Australia - Rewiring the Nation

This measure is to establish Rewiring the Nation to expand and modernise Australia's electricity grids at low cost, unlock new renewables and storage capacity and drive down power prices. Most transmission infrastructure will be hosted in regional Australia, which will boost regional economies by creating jobs and lowering power prices. Rewiring the Nation will be delivered by the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and a new Rewiring the Nation Office (RTNO) in the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

The measure includes:

- \$20.0 billion in funding to provide concessional loans and equity to invest in transmission infrastructure projects that will help strengthen, grow and transition Australia's electricity grids
- \$20.0 billion in funding to provide concessional loans and equity to invest in transmission infrastructure projects that will help strengthen, grow and transition Australia's electricity grids.

- \$50.4 million over 4 years from 2022-23, with ongoing funding, to support the operating costs for the CEFC to deliver concessional loans and equity through Rewiring the Nation and manage finance-related negotiations.
- \$18.1 million over 4 years from 2022-23, with ongoing funding, to establish the RTNO to manage coordination, community engagement, and negotiation with the states and territories for the delivery of Rewiring the Nation projects.
- \$9.4 million over 4 years from 2022-23 to deliver reforms to transmission regulations, including the regulatory investment test for transmission, and designate projects as 'Nationally Significant Transmission Projects' to overcome barriers to the delivery of transmission projects.
- \$5.8 million over 3 years from 2022-23 to conduct a review of the Integrated System Plan and transmission frameworks in other jurisdictions, to improve the effectiveness of energy system planning for the transition of the electricity market away from fossil fuels.

Regional Australia will benefit from the significant investment in new transmission infrastructure and resulting jobs, and more affordable and reliable power. Further, the enhanced community engagement will ensure that the voices of regional communities are heard in the planning processes for transmission infrastructure.

Support for Energy Security and Reliability

This measure provides \$157.9 million over six years from 2022-23 (and \$1.1 million per year ongoing) to support the implementation of work streams under the National Energy Transformation Partnership (the Partnership). Funding that will directly and indirectly benefit regional Australia includes:

- \$63.9 million to develop mechanisms to ensure firming capacity for the National Electricity Market, manage future thermal generator closures and support the deployment of one or more, large scale battery projects. As Australia's energy system undergoes a significant transformation and thermal generators retire, it will be important to ensure there is sufficient reliable storage and firming capacity. Many of the impacted areas of the energy transformation will be in Australia's regions with communities and workers likely to be at its core.
- \$23.0 million over 3 years from 2022-23 to make changes to Australian Energy Market Operator's powers and the National Gas Rules to increase the security, resilience and reliability of the east coast gas market. .
- \$18.9 million (and \$1.1 million per year ongoing) to improve energy system planning through a detailed analysis of Australia's regional energy supply and demand. This analysis will provide greater visibility of the expected scale and pace of change in energy demand in regional communities as key industries and energy sectors transform.

- \$15.1 million to enhance Australia’s energy security by identifying and proactively managing emerging energy system risks. Funding will support work to improve the understanding of the impacts of difficult-to-quantify extreme events such extreme weather on energy supply, building resilience into energy systems that will reduce disruption and support faster recovery, which is of particular concern to regional Australians.
- \$9.6 million to establish the Partnership’s governance framework. The Partnership will support Australia’s clean energy transformation and help manage the impacts of the transformation across regions. A robust governance framework will support early engagement with key regions impacted by the energy transformation, to ensure the Partnership can deliver in the best interests of all parties, including across regional Australia.
- \$5.5 million to co-design a First Nations Clean Energy Strategy (the Strategy) in partnership with First Nations communities. The Strategy will empower regional communities, in particular First Nations Peoples, to benefit from the clean energy transformation.
- \$4.6 million to expand and modernise the Greenhouse Energy Minimum Standards program and the Nationwide House Energy Rating Scheme. Lifting the energy performance of homes and appliances will lower energy bills, build climate resilience and better health outcomes for households, including in regional and rural communities.

Powering Australia – Driving the Nation Fund - Establishment

This measure provides \$275.4 million over six years from 2022-23, to deliver the Government’s election commitment to double the Commonwealth’s electric vehicle charging and refuelling infrastructure and fleet investments to \$500 million by establishing a new Driving the Nation Fund. The measure includes:

- \$146.1 million for the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) to support the infrastructure and fleets required to reduce emissions from Australia’s road transport sector.
- \$89.5 million for the Hydrogen Highways initiative to fund the creation of hydrogen refueling stations on Australia’s busiest freight routes, to work with the states and territories to roll out Hydrogen Highways nationally, including \$5.5 million to LINE Hydrogen Pty Ltd for its George Town green hydrogen heavy transport project.
- \$39.8 million to establish a National Electric Vehicle Charging Network to deliver 117 fast charging stations on highways across Australia, in partnership with the NRMA.

Investments under the Driving the Nation Fund are expected to be deployed in regional and remote communities, bringing jobs, skills, tourism and access to clean technologies. It is expected the projects will include consultation with local communities.

The George Town green hydrogen heavy transport project, in northern Tasmania near the Bell Bay advanced manufacturing zone, will have a positive impact on the region through development of a new domestic industrial base and the decarbonisation of the transport sector, leading to job creation, including technicians, tradespeople, engineers and professionals associated with the production, storage and re-fuelling of hydrogen for heavy vehicles.

Powering Australia – Establishing the Powering the Regions Fund

This measure establishes the \$1.9 billion Powering the Regions Fund (the Fund) from 2022-23. The Fund will support industry, regional Australia and communities with the transformation to net zero emissions by 2050. The Fund's four key priorities are to support industry, including facilities covered by the Safeguard Mechanism, to decarbonise; to develop new clean energy industries; to support workforce development; and enable the continued government purchase of Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs).

The establishment of the Fund confirms the Government's commitment to keep Australian industry competitive as the global economy decarbonises, and support regions to thrive through the transition. Regional impacts will be explored through the detailed design of the Fund.

Carbon Capture Technologies for Net Zero and Negative Emissions – Establishment

This measure provides \$141.1 million over ten years from 2022-23 to establish an open competitive Carbon Capture Technologies program. It will accelerate the development and integration of emerging carbon dioxide (CO₂) capture technologies and CO₂ utilisation technologies into Australia's growing CCUS capability. This measure is expected to support research, development and demonstration (RD&D) projects for Direct Air Capture (DAC) technologies, as well as for utilisation technologies that deliver long term storage including in cement or other construction materials. As well as helping to meet climate change objectives, this measure is expected to support the establishment of new, clean, job-creating industries in regional communities.

Carbon Farming Outreach Program

This measure provides \$20.3 million over four years from 2022-23 to deliver an outreach program to empower Australian farmers and land managers, including First Nations peoples, to participate in carbon markets and integrate low emission technologies and practices into their farming operations and land management. The program will provide farmers and land managers across Australia's regions with tailored advice from trusted agricultural advisory groups, such as commercial rural service providers, agricultural research and extension agencies and organisations, natural resource management (NRM) organisations and Indigenous land management groups, regarding carbon markets and low emission technologies.

Current Initiatives

The Environment and Water

Strengthening the Great Barrier Reef through Stewardship and Leadership

The Australian Government committed to bringing total investments to \$1.2 billion by 2030 to protect the Great Barrier Reef, support regional communities and stakeholders dependent on a healthy Reef, and deliver on commitments under the Reef 2050 Plan. Investments include:

- \$252.9 million over nine years from 2021-22 to strengthen management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's key programs
- \$579.9 million over nine years from 2021-22 to improve water quality
- \$56.9 million over nine years from 2021-22 to support ongoing modelling, monitoring and reporting for water quality outcomes
- \$92.7 million over eight years from 2022-23 for Reef restoration and adaptation interventions
- \$37.1 million over eight years from 2022-23 for community and Traditional Owner on-ground Reef protection projects
- \$26.7 million over seven years from 2023-24 for independent data validation for fisheries to protect threatened species and support the future sustainability of the fishing industry, delivered in partnership with fisheries managers and fishers in regional areas.

Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Education at Reef HQ

The Australian Government is providing \$80.1 million over four years from 2019-20 to improve educational offerings and tourism experiences for visitors to the Reef HQ Aquarium – the National Education Centre for the Great Barrier Reef in Townsville, Queensland. The Reef HQ Aquarium will showcase the diversity of marine life within the Reef and the efforts undertaken to ensure its protection for future generations through a range of immersive experiences and revitalised exhibits, including educational activities, hands-on experiences, onsite diving programs, scientific demonstrations and the use of interactive technology. The funding is transforming the Reef To date \$15.4 million has been spent on improvements to animal life support systems such as sand filters, reverse osmosis machines and protein skimmers, improving visitor access to Reef HQ for when the Aquarium reopens, improving electrical infrastructure and addressing critical structural issues associated with building walls. A Traditional Owner working group has been formed and is working through exhibit concepts for inclusion in the facility.

Tourism Reef Protection Initiative

The Great Barrier Reef Package included \$15.1 million over three years from 2021-22 committed to the Tourism Reef Protection Initiative. It will support marine tourism businesses located across the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and range from small to medium-sized enterprises through to large, multifaceted marine tourism businesses. Commonwealth Service Contracts are being formally negotiated with preferred suppliers and will be announced shortly.

Reef protection services will be delivered at 95 prioritised reef locations across the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park until 30 June 2024. Services include:

- Reef health monitoring and provision of data into the Reef Authority's Eye on the Reef data management and reporting system.
- Facilitation of on-country visits for Traditional Owners to support reconnecting with country or cultural heritage mapping activities.
- Crown-of-thorns starfish control at permitted locations.
- Drupella snail removal at high-value tourism sites.
- Development of interpretation content, talks and tours that connect visitors to the values of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

Supporting the Management of Commonwealth National Parks

The Government is investing \$16.1 million in 2022-23 to support the effective management and environmental conservation of Australia's Commonwealth National Parks and the Australian National Botanic Gardens. Additionally, the Australian Government is providing \$10.6 million from 2021-22 to 2025-26 (with \$2.6 million per annum ongoing) to support Traditional Owners and employment throughout the Commonwealth National Parks.

The Director of National Parks manages Australia's six Commonwealth National Parks, the Australian National Botanic Gardens, and Australia's network of 60 Australian Marine Parks. The Director of National Parks employs over 350 staff in regional Australia (as at 30 September 2022). The majority are located in and around Booderee, Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta national parks in the Northern Territory, and in Hobart. There are also small offices in the remote locations of Norfolk Island, Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

Surrounding towns and regions benefit from the Government's investments through the attraction and retention of skilled workers and letting of service contracts to regional businesses. The Government's investment will create 19 positions primarily across the jointly-managed National Parks. This will boost Traditional Owner engagement, increase diversity in Parks Australia's ranger programs and improve regional employment

including employment opportunities for First Nations people. This investment will also benefit regional small and medium businesses through increased tourists and other visitors to the parks.

Investing in Commonwealth National Parks

The Government is providing \$233.4 million over three years from 2020–21 for critical infrastructure in Australia's Commonwealth National Parks. The Commonwealth National Parks investment includes:

- **Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park:** Major upgrades to the cultural centre, renewal of walking tracks (including the Uluru Base Walk) and viewing platforms, upgrades to shelters and water stations at visitor sites. Funding is also supporting investment in essential power, water and sewer infrastructure replacement for the Mutitjulu community.
- **Kakadu National Park:** Upgrades to campgrounds including improved fresh water storage, improvements to the Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre, road repairs, improved staff housing, workshop and utility buildings, improved fuel storage and supply facilities.
- **Booderee National Park:** A new visitor centre to welcome visitors and showcase First Nations culture, upgrades to campground amenities, roads and car parks, the Murrays Beach Boardwalk, walking tracks and viewing platforms.
- **Christmas Island National Park:** Upgraded roads and a new viewing platform at the Margaret Knoll Lookout, a popular birdwatching destination that overlooks the Indian Ocean.

This capital works program supports the ongoing commitment to promoting tourism through improved visitor experiences, resulting in increased visitor numbers and park revenue.

Growing Tourism in Kakadu

Kakadu is a dual World Heritage listed property for its natural and cultural values. Improved visitor infrastructure and activities will attract more visitors to the park, encourage and provide meaningful diverse experiences, drive growth and continue to improve social and economic outcomes for Bininj/Mungguy Traditional Owners.

The Government is providing \$216.0 million over 10 years from 2019-20 for projects to support the growth of tourism in Kakadu National Park. The aim is to enhance and transform the visitor experience, and Bininj/Mungguy opportunities in tourism. This significant investment will support better outcomes for First Nations landowners, create regional employment opportunities and revitalise the tourism industry through improved visitor experiences. The investment in Jabiru and Kakadu has significant benefits for the region, providing employment and economic opportunities for Traditional Owners to build on their vision for supporting tourism on their land.

Work on securing the future of Jabiru Township is being conducted in conjunction with the Northern Territory Government and local organisations and is focussed on the remediation of contaminated sites and repair of essential services infrastructure.

Oceans Leadership Package

The Government's \$100.1 million investment over five years from 2021-22 includes four complementary initiatives that are building ocean health and resilience, while stimulating economic growth through job creation across regional Australia. It will deliver partnerships to support private sector investment in fisheries, tourism and research sectors, and facilitate First Nations management of Sea Country.

The Sustainable Ocean Action initiative (\$18.1 million over four years from 2021-22) delivers on-water and on-ground actions to protect iconic marine species and improve the sustainability of Australian fisheries through reducing bycatch, reducing the threat of invasive species on island ecosystems, stimulating investment in Australia's oceans and blue economy, contributing to Indigenous ranger work programs and supporting the priorities and targets to be identified in the new Threatened Species Strategy's first five-year Action Plan. These projects and future grant programs will support a diverse suite of on-ground management improvements by working with communities, government, Indigenous Rangers, industry, scientists, and the research community.

The Restoring Blue Carbon Ecosystems initiative (\$30.7 million over four years from 2021-22) is funding practical action to restore, conserve and account for blue carbon ecosystems, including tidal marshes, mangroves and seagrasses, in Australia and overseas. Over \$15.0 million is going to five projects restoring coastal ecosystems across the country and measuring biodiversity, climate and livelihood benefits. The projects will enhance regional employment opportunities in restoration work and data collection, and will provide measurement, verification and accounting tools to enable management and financial decision-making, including private sector investment, that will support fishing and tourism operators who rely on these ecosystems to be healthy.

The Australian Marine Park Partnership initiative (\$39.9 million over five years from 2021-22) supports partnerships for marine park management. This measure is funding a third and fourth round of the Our Marine Parks Grants program, which supports and empowers Australia's ocean communities and industries, building their capacity to take an active role in the management of Australian Marine Parks. The Ocean Discovery and Restoration Program leverages co-contributions from the philanthropic and private sectors to invest in innovative research and restoration projects that will support marine parks

management and ongoing ocean health. This initiative is also supporting the transition to new marine parks in the pristine waters around Australia's Indian Ocean Territories, through delivery of a grant program to support engagement of local communities and to implement a range of management actions, including scientific research to establish baselines.

The Expanding Indigenous Protected Areas to include Sea Country initiative (\$11.6 million over four years from 2021-22) creates new Sea Country Indigenous Protected Areas and expands existing terrestrial Indigenous Protected Areas to include seas, providing social, cultural and environmental benefits, while increasing employment opportunities in remote communities. The grants provided will support First Nations-led activities that will protect Australia's unique marine and coastal biodiversity.

Supporting Healthy Oceans – Expanding and Enhancing Management of Australia's Marine Parks

The Government is providing \$28.3 million over four years from 2020-21, and \$7.8 million per year ongoing from 2024-25, to enhance the management of Australia's marine park network, including increased science and monitoring activities, expanded First Nations engagement in park management and enhanced surveillance. As of 30 June 2022, \$12.7 million has been expended, with significant progress in conducting monitoring and health assessments across priority parks; formalising partnerships with Traditional Owners and Indigenous ranger groups; and establishing partnerships for increased compliance patrols, implementation of an audit program and testing of new surveillance technologies, including a drone trial.

Supporting Healthy Oceans – Tackling Ghost Nets in the Gulf of Carpentaria

The Government is providing \$14.8 million over four years from 2020-21 for action to address the challenge of ghost nets (lost, abandoned or discarded fishing gear) and plastic litter in the waters and beaches of the Gulf of Carpentaria, a globally recognised hotspot for ghost nets and marine debris. To date, \$3.0 million has been expended, which has included trialling GPS tracking devices attached to large ghost nets, the removal of 205 ghost nets and more than 210 cubic metres of marine debris by Indigenous rangers, a scoping study for ghost net retrieval and recycling opportunities, and an analysis of ghost net occurrence.

Strengthening Australia's Leadership in Antarctica

Australian Government funding for the Australian Antarctic Program protects and advances the nation's longstanding national interests in the Antarctic region. Funding for the Australian Antarctic Program and Antarctic science ensures critical functions that support Australia's presence and research activities in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean are maintained. The Government is progressing key priorities in the Australian Antarctic Strategy and 20 Year Action Plan. The Government is delivering \$804.4 million over 10 years from 2022-23 to deliver a strong and sustainable Antarctic Program, world-leading Antarctic science and capability improvements. Key funding commitments include:

- \$136.6 million over the next five years for critical activities including environmental protection and management, charting activities for safe navigation and continuation of Australia’s inland (Antarctic traverse) transport for major science campaigns
- \$92.3 million per year from 2026-27 to support Australia’s ongoing Antarctic activities
- \$17.4 million for enhanced marine science in the Southern Ocean.
- These investments position Hobart as the premier scientific research hub and logistics gateway for East Antarctica and the Southern Ocean, and provide more than 100 direct new jobs in Tasmania.

Australia’s Investment in Antarctica

Current key investments include \$1.9 billion over 30 years to operate the world-class icebreaker and research vessel, the RSV *Nuyina*. The icebreaker will be home-ported in Hobart. The Government has also invested \$450.0 million over 10 years for Australia’s Antarctic research facilities, and \$49.8 million over 11 years to substantially upgrade Macquarie Island Research Station. Sub-Antarctic Macquarie Island is part of Tasmania and located in the Southern Ocean around 1,500 kilometres southeast of the state. These works and the ongoing operation of the station through the Australian Antarctic Program will bring economic benefits to Tasmania.

Building Australia’s Circular Waste Economy – Recycling Modernisation Fund – Plastic Technology Stream

National investment under the Recycling Modernisation Fund (RMF) is helping protect our environment, create jobs and support Australians to collect, recycle, reuse, and convert waste into new, high-value resources. Projects under the RMF are being delivered under the National Partnership on Recycling Infrastructure. The \$108.2 million in national funding announced to date has unlocked over \$520 million in additional investment from state and territory governments and industry for new and upgraded recycling infrastructure. Projects already announced under this measure are creating an estimated 956 ongoing jobs, including 257 in regional Australia, and preventing over 1.08 million tonnes of waste from going to landfill per year.

The RMF is supporting waste recovery and processing infrastructure to respond to the ban on the export of waste paper, plastic, glass and tyres, agreed by all Australian governments in March 2020. RMF investments are building and updating regional Australia’s recycling and remanufacturing facilities. To date, the Government has announced funding of \$23.7 million to 38 projects in regional Australia across five states and territories. Funding recycling initiatives in regional and remote areas helps overcome the urban-regional divide and ensures that regional and remote communities can reap the same benefits of recycling their waste into valuable new products as their urban counterparts.

The Australian Government is boosting the RMF through a new \$60.4 million Plastic Technology stream over four years from 2022-23 to deliver state of the art advanced recycling solutions for hard-to-recycle plastics. Boosting Australia's plastic recycling capacity will create long-term, local solutions for the large challenges like distances to recycling infrastructure, and technological barriers that are particularly relevant for managing waste, including in regional and remote areas of Australia.

National Waste Policy Action Plan

The National Waste Policy Action Plan is supported by a \$249.6 million investment over four years from 2020-21. The plan includes seven ambitious targets, underpinned by 80 individual actions, to deliver significant improvements in Australia's recycling and resource recovery performance, including in regional Australia.

Australian, state and territory and local government organisations are working together with industry to deliver a wide range of initiatives under the Plan, to improve Australia's waste and recycling sectors. This includes increasing access to resource recovery and waste management infrastructure for regional, remote and Indigenous communities in every state and territory.

The National Waste and Resource Recovery Hub is making data more accessible for industry, government and the public to inform targeted waste management interventions, innovations and entrepreneurship which will support new jobs in regional Australia.

Modernising Indigenous Cultural Heritage Protections

The Australian Government is investing \$11.0 million over two years from 2022-23 to progress the reform of Indigenous cultural heritage protections in partnership with the First Nations Heritage Protection Alliance and maintain timely decision-making under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984* (ATSIHP Act) during the reform process.

This funding builds on the Australian Government's existing investment of \$0.5 million over 18 months from 2021-22 to engage with stakeholders, including First Nations Australians, on models for improved Indigenous heritage protection. A strategic partnership agreement was signed with the First Nations Heritage Protection Alliance in November 2021, followed by an initial round of consultation on reform options.

In addition, the funding to ensure timely decision-making under the ATSIHP Act builds on the Australian Government's existing investment of \$2.2 million over two years from 2020-21 to reduce the backlog of applications and support the timely administration of new applications under the ATSIHP Act.

National Environmental Science Program

The National Environmental Science Program is a long-term commitment by the Government. The program funds environment and climate research and provides evidence for the design, delivery and on-ground outcomes of environmental programs. It helps decision-makers, including in First Nations communities, build resilience and support positive environmental, social and economic outcomes.

The first phase invested over \$147 million (2014-15 to 2020-21) into six research hubs and emerging priority research projects. The second phase is providing \$149 million (2020-21 to 2026-27) to four new research hubs (Climate Systems, Resilient Landscapes, Marine and Coastal, and Sustainable Communities and Waste).

Research is co-designed with government, industry and the community, including First Nations partnerships, place-based research and locally-led solutions delivered through regional nodes. The hubs are working in urban, rural and remote areas to help improve knowledge and achieve on-ground outcomes for the environment. The program will also support the development of the science community in regional Australia.

Climate Change and Energy

Regional Hydrogen Hubs Program

The \$454 million *Regional Hydrogen Hubs* program aims to support the establishment of hydrogen hubs in regional Australia, and, in turn, support the growth of Australia's clean hydrogen industry. This will assist Australia to achieve its emission reduction goals while continuing to grow our export industries and support regional transition.

Hydrogen hubs are regions where various producers, users and potential exporters of hydrogen across industrial, transport, export and energy markets are co-located. These Hubs are identified in Australia's *National Hydrogen Strategy* as an efficient early-stage approach to create demand and scale up the industry, which will help to support other existing industrial sectors in these regions.

Soil Carbon and Methane Emissions Reduction in Livestock Programs

The Government is investing \$80.7 million over five years from 2020-21 to support voluntary action by farmers to lower emissions while growing their businesses. This includes:

- \$50.0 million for a *National Soil Carbon Innovation Challenge* to help lower agricultural emissions through better soil management. Reducing measurement costs will address a key barrier to widespread adoption of activities that increase soil carbon on agricultural land. The Challenge supports development of low-cost, accurate soil carbon measurement technologies.

- \$5.7 million *National Soil Carbon Data Program* which supports partnerships to improve data in low-cost alternatives for measuring soil carbon. This includes making improvements to the modelling of soil in Australia's Full Carbon Accounting Model.
- The \$20.0 million *Methane Emissions Reduction in Livestock Program* also supports research into the abatement and productivity benefits of livestock feed technologies, and the development of technologies to deliver low emissions feed supplements to grazing animals.

Enabling an Electric Vehicle Ready Grid Package

The *Enabling an Electric Vehicle (EV) Ready Grid Package* will support reforms to integrate battery electric vehicles into the electricity grid and ensure Australia is ready for the forecast rapid uptake of new vehicle technologies. The Australian Government is investing \$10.1 million over four years from 2021-22 to improve understanding of EV infrastructure needs and charging impacts, including in the regions, and ensure investment in network infrastructure is efficient.

Australian Climate Service

The Government is providing \$209.7 million over four years from 2021-22, and \$37.3 million per year ongoing from 2025-26, to establish the new Australian Climate Service, a world-class capability providing climate and disaster risk information and analysis to support Australia's disaster resilience and climate adaptation efforts.

The Australian Climate Service, established mid-2021, draws together and builds on the expertise of the Bureau of Meteorology, Geoscience Australia, CSIRO and the Australian Bureau of Statistics to support national decision-making. The service's initial efforts have been supporting the National Emergency Management Agency to help the Commonwealth prepare for and respond to climate challenges and natural disasters. The service is also leading the development of new and updated national climate projections which will help understand the impacts of climate change at local and regional scales.

Supporting the Port Kembla Power Station

The Australian Government is providing \$30 million over two years from 2021-22 to support Australian Industrial Power to undertake early works on its proposed power station at Port Kembla, New South Wales. This investment is going towards ensuring a final investment decision can be reached for the project. If it proceeds, the power station will support electricity reliability and lower prices in New South Wales.

Snowy Hydro Limited – Hunter Power Project

The Australian Government is providing up to \$600 million in equity to support Snowy Hydro Limited to undertake construction of the Hunter Power Project in Kurri Kurri in the Hunter Valley. The Hunter Power Project will be a 660MW gas peaking power station. When constructed, the power station will support electricity reliability and lower prices in New South Wales.

Renewable Energy Microgrid for the Daintree Community

The Australian Government is providing up to \$19.3 million over three years from 2021-22 to support the deployment of a renewable energy microgrid incorporating hydrogen for the Daintree community in Far North Queensland.

The microgrid will ensure the Daintree community has a more affordable, more reliable and a more resilient electricity supply. It will replace costly diesel generation and provide a cleaner, more reliable and affordable energy supply, an important consideration for this world heritage site. The project will also demonstrate innovative microgrid technologies, helping to accelerate the uptake of microgrids in other regional and remote areas across Australia.

Regional Australia Microgrid Pilots Program

The Australian Government is providing \$67.1 million over six years from 2020-21 to support pilot studies for microgrids in regional and remote areas. This will support feasible microgrid projects to undertake pilot demonstrations to resolve the remaining barriers to final investment and full deployment for those projects. Grants are expected to be between \$1 million and \$5 million and will fund up to 50 per cent of the project value and will be based on community needs and ability to pay. Applicants seeking more than \$5 million need to demonstrate exemplary merit with very broad benefit.

Projects are expected to be deployed in regional and remote communities, stimulating local economies and demonstrating the value of microgrids in areas prone to outages. Microgrids can provide increased energy security, resilience and affordability through integration of distributed energy resources. They can also contribute to lowering emissions, as regional households and businesses lower their reliance on diesel generators by adopting solar and storage systems.

This measure will benefit regional and remote communities connected to pilot sites. The program launched in September 2021.

The Australian Government is also continuing to fund the following initiatives:

The Government is progressing actions under the Trajectory for Low Energy Buildings, a national plan that aims to achieve zero energy and carbon-ready commercial and residential buildings in Australia. Recent changes to the National Construction Code's minimum energy efficiency requirements will benefit households across Australia, including in regional areas, by making homes more comfortable and reducing cost of living pressures. It is estimated the changes will see average energy bill savings of around \$180 per year for each new house.

The Government is investing \$34.3 million over five years from 2021-22 to extend the role of the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner. The Commissioner plays a vital role in handling complaints raised by regional communities and residents about large-scale wind, solar, energy storage and new major transmission projects. The Commissioner also has a role in identifying and promoting best practice recommendations for industry and governments in relation to the deployment of energy infrastructure projects.

The Australian Government continues to provide \$5.3 million per year ongoing since 2018-19 through the flagship Australian Heritage Grants Program to support management of National and Commonwealth heritage places, many of which are in regional Australia.

The Government is extending the life of the \$8.0 million Goyder Water Research Institute program to 2025-26 to investigate the impacts of climate change on the health of the waterways in the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth region in South Australia. This will help identify future threats to water security and develop an integrated approach to water management in South Australia.

The Australian Government is providing \$6.7 million over six years from 2022-23 for renewal works under the Murray-Darling Basin – Improving Infrastructure and Environmental Outcomes – Commonwealth contributions towards critical renewal works for the Hume Dam on the river Murray measure. This is part of the agreed joint venture cost-sharing arrangements with the New South Wales, Victorian and South Australian governments to ensure dam safety requirements are met and water entitlement holders continue to receive delivery of their water allocations through effective management and maintenance of Hume Dam.

The Australian Government is providing \$8.2 million over four years from 2022-23 through the Building Australia's Circular Waste Economy – Implementing a ReMade in Australia scheme measure. This will establish a ReMade in Australia brand for use on products made with Australian recycled content, giving Australians buying products labelled with the ReMade brand confidence they are buying a product made by Australian manufacturers from local recycled material. Funding for the ReMade brand will support our regional manufacturing industry, which employs nearly a third of Australians in manufacturing.

Defence

The Defence Portfolio includes the Department of Defence (Defence), Defence Housing Australia and the Australian Signals Directorate.

As at 31 August 2022, the Defence Portfolio employed 17,634 staff under the *Public Service Act 1999*. Of this total, 9,708 are employed in Canberra, central Melbourne and central Sydney (55 per cent), 5,579 in other capital cities (32 per cent) and 2,347 in regional areas (13 per cent).

Department of Defence

Defence, including the Australian Defence Force (ADF), has a significant footprint in regional Australia, with extensive bases and associated employment and community engagement activities.

Defence both employs and serves the local people in our regions. Defence members and their families are an integral part of regional communities, interacting on official duties and at community activities and events. They contribute to economic activity through spending in regional economies. Defence recognises the economic impact that engaging local contractors and suppliers, where there is the capacity and capability available in the local market, has on regional economies.

Defence maintains strong links with regional Australia through Army personnel undertaking service with Reserve units. Many of Army's Reserve units are headquartered in regional centres with staff and soldiers based in surrounding districts (Army has approximately 20,966 reservists).

The Defence estate consists of 639 owned properties¹ and approximately 416 domestic leases.² Facilities include 70 major bases, training areas and ranges, research facilities and office accommodation including Defence Force Recruitment Centres. Construction and maintenance activity associated with Defence facilities in regional areas provides considerable economic, social and environmental support to regional communities.

¹ The increase in number of Defence owned properties from 400 in 2021 to 639 in 2022 is a result of two factors: Defence registering a number of small islands in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park as assets as per the ANAO Closing Letter for the Department of Defence for the financial year ended 30 June 2021; and the reconciliation of data across multiple data systems.

² The decrease in number of leases on the Defence estate from 958 in 2021 to 416 in 2022 is due to real property activity fluctuations.

Other Defence support provided to regional, rural and remote Australians includes:

- The economic activity stimulated through Defence exercises and major training activities, including joint exercises and collective training with our overseas allies and partners in Australia.
- Defence Assistance to the Civil Community, where Defence provides both emergency support (such as natural disasters) and non-emergency support (such as Public Events of Significance) across Australia.
- Defence Member and Family Services activities to build the capacity of local, urban and regional communities in support of Defence member families.
- Defence engagement with regional indigenous communities, predominantly through employment.
- Defence Youth Programs conducted across Australia as an essential element of nation building.
- Engaging people with disabilities through initiatives and assistance programs to provide them the opportunity for meaningful work.
- Defence industry development, through activities undertaken across Australia to support the vital role that the Australian defence industry plays in delivering leading edge technologies and capabilities required to generate and sustain the future force.
- The economic activity associated with Defence capability and estate projects undertaken in the regions.
- Defence environmental management and cooperation on heritage issues in regional Australia.

Of the total Defence workforce (2021-22), including both those employed under the *Public Service Act 1999* and members of the ADF and Reservists (average full-time total workforce of 75,624 and a headcount of 21,271 Reservists) approximately:

- 40 per cent are located in Canberra, central Sydney and central Melbourne.
- 28 per cent are located in other capital cities.
- 31 per cent are located in other regional areas.
- 1 per cent are located overseas.

A map and list depicting Defence's footprint across Australia is on the following pages at [Figure 1](#).

Defence Housing Australia

Defence Housing Australia (DHA) administers Defence housing policy and provides housing for, and related services to ADF members and their families in support of Defence capability and operational goals. DHA maintains offices in capital cities, major regional centres and on some ADF bases and establishments around Australia, with: 36 per cent of staff located in Canberra Head Office, 10 per cent located in Sydney, 37 per cent located in Regional Offices and 17 per cent located in Contact Centres situated in Adelaide, Townsville and the Hunter Valley. In March 2022, DHA moved the Head Office and Canberra Regional Office to Gungahlin, a regional town centre within the ACT.

DHA manages more than 17,000 properties in capital cities, major regional centres and remote locations of Australia where the ADF has a presence. The majority of properties are integrated throughout the community, close to ADF bases and establishments, and close to a range of amenities and services such as transport, shopping facilities and schools.

To complement its leasing program, DHA acquires property sites throughout Australia to construct suitable accommodation to meet ADF requirements. DHA currently has a number of regional development or construction projects underway which will deliver housing, providing construction work to local communities.

The DHA has two residential development projects in progress in regional Australia. These projects are located in Ipswich, Queensland. The estimated value of the projects on completion is \$136.0 million. Subject to receiving the necessary planning approvals, DHA will undertake a further residential development project in Newcastle, New South Wales. The estimated value of the project on completion is \$123.0 million.

DHA also manages a multi-million-dollar Defence-funded upgrade which is designed to extend usable life of Defence owned properties. DHA is managing 12 current projects in regional Australia. They are located in the ACT (six projects), Alice Springs and Katherine in the Northern Territory (two projects), Jervis Bay and Wagga Wagga in New South Wales (two projects) and Puckapunyal, Victoria (two projects). The estimated value of the projects on completion is \$48.0 million. DHA anticipates undertaking an additional future Defence-funded project in Kapooka, New South Wales. The estimated value of this future project on completion is \$1.0 million.

Figure 1 and the detailed list below depicts the Defence footprint across Australia.



EAST & WEST ZONE	NORTHERN & CENTRAL ZONE	SOUTH EAST ZONE
Australian Capital Territory Australian Defence College Australian Defence Force Academy Brindabella Park Offices Campbell Park Offices HMAS <i>Harman</i> HQ JOC Bungendore Majura Range Fairbairn RMC Duntroon Russell Offices New South Wales Beecroft Weapons Range Beersheba Barracks Tamworth Bullecourt Barracks Adamstown Defence Business Centre – Raymond Terrace Defence Establishment Orchard Hills Defence Plaza Sydney DSTG Redfern Garden Island Precinct – Fleet Base East – Garden Island – HMAS <i>Kuttabul</i> HMAS <i>Albatross</i> HMAS <i>Creswell</i> HMAS <i>Penguin</i> HMAS <i>Waterhen</i> HMAS <i>Watson</i> Liverpool Military Area – Holsworthy – Moorebank Mulwala Myambat RAAF Williamtown RAAF Glenbrook RAAF Richmond Randwick Barracks Singleton Military Area Victoria Barracks Sydney Wollongong Hydrographic Office Victoria Benalla Western Australia Campbell Barracks Fleet Base West – Garden Island Harold E Holt Irwin Barracks Leeuwin Barracks Palmer Barracks RAAF Curtin RAAF Learmonth RAAF Pearce Yampi Sound Training Area	Northern Territory Bradshaw Field Training Area Defence Establishment Berrimah Delamere Range Facility HMAS <i>Coonawarra</i> Larrakeyah Barracks Mt Bunde Training Area RAAF Darwin RAAF Tindal Robertson Barracks Shoal Bay Receiving Station Queensland Army Aviation Centre – Oakey Borneo Barracks Cabarlah Canungra Training Area Cowley Beach Training Area Damascus Barracks Meeandah Gallipoli Barracks Enoggera Greenbank Training Area HMAS <i>Cairns</i> HMAS <i>Morten</i> Joint Defence Establishment – Thursday Island Jungle Training Wing (Tully) Kokoda Barracks Canungra Lavarack Barracks Mount Stuart Training Area Porton Barracks RAAF Amberley – Evans Head Air Weapons Range RAAF Scherger RAAF Townsville Rockhampton Ross Island Barracks Shoalwater Bay Training Area Townsville Field Training Area Victoria Barracks Brisbane Wide Bay Training Area South Australia Cultana Training Area DSTG Edinburgh Hampstead Barracks Keswick Barracks Murray Bridge Training Area Proof & Experimental Establishment Port Wakefield RAAF Edinburgh Warradale Barracks Woodside Barracks Woomera	New South Wales Blamey Barracks Kapooka Defence Service Centre – Cooma RAAF Wagga Tasmania Anglesea Barracks Buckland Military Training Area Derwent Barracks DSTG Scottsdale Fort Direction Stony Head Training Area Victoria Defence Plaza Melbourne AGO Bendigo DSTG Fishermans Bend Fort Queenscliff Gaza Ridge Barracks North Bandiana Gaza Ridge Barracks South Bandiana HMAS <i>Cerberus</i> Latchford Barracks Bonegilla Maygar Barracks Oakleigh Barracks Puckapunyal Military Area RAAF East Sale RAAF Williams Laverton/Point Cook Simpson Barracks Victoria Barracks Melbourne Wadsworth Barracks East Bandiana

New Initiatives

LAND 4502 Phase 1 Additional CH-47F Chinook Facilities

This \$49.9 million project is providing new facilities for 5 Aviation Regiment at RAAF Base Townsville, Queensland to support the introduction and sustainment of new CH-47F Chinook Medium Lift Helicopters. This project is scheduled for completion in early 2024. The budget estimate for 2022-23 is \$10.9 million. This project is maximising opportunities for local industry to be involved as subcontractors throughout the construction of the works.

Military Working Dogs Kennel Facility Upgrade

This \$6.8 million project is upgrading military working dog kennel facilities at RAAF Base Tindal, Northern Territory. This project is scheduled to commence in 2022 and is scheduled for completion in mid-2023. The budget estimate for 2022-23 is \$6.3 million. This project will maximise opportunities for local industry to be involved as subcontractors throughout the construction of the works.

Northern Territory Chamber of Commerce & Industry Inc Awarded SADI Grant

The Northern Territory Chamber of Commerce & Industry Inc has been awarded \$0.2 million from the Skilling Australia's Defence Industry (SADI) Grants Program to upskill defence industry Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) situated in the Northern Territory in core Defence-ready skills. The project will span 10 months from May 2022 to February 2023 and will be delivered in partnership with the International Centre for Complex Project Management. The project will deliver specialist training in complex project management to 40 project managers, engineers and other project professionals from Northern Territory Defence SME's. In turn, this initiative will contribute to the improved performance of complex Defence projects and underpin growth in the Northern Territory by ensuring that these core Defence skills can be sourced locally.

Super Hornet and Growler Training Support

Defence has signed a new \$109.7 million training services contract for the F/A-18F Super Hornet and EA-18G Growler at RAAF Base Amberley, Queensland with Raytheon Australia. This initial five-year \$109.7 million contract will deliver ground-based simulator support, as well as aircrew training and instruction. The new contract will employ up to 49 personnel from Raytheon Australia and an Australian subcontractor, Milskil. The majority of the training services will be delivered from RAAF Base Amberley. The Electronic Attack Air Combat Training Support contract contains more than 95 per cent Australian industry content with the direct economic benefit of more than \$104 million to the Australian economy.

ACT Logistics awarded Defence ICT disposal contract

The ICT asset lifecycle services provider has been awarded the four year contract valued at almost \$10.0 million and is scheduled for immediate commencement in 2022 until 2026. Earlier this year Defence went out to tender for the disposal of sanitised ICT hardware. Australian Computer Traders (ACT) Logistics was the successful respondent and the new agreement commenced on 1 July 2022. ACT Logistics is based in Brisbane and the key objectives of this new agreement is to maximise the resale of sanitised ex Defence ICT hardware and minimise the hardware sent to recycling. A secondary objective is to ensure no sanitised ICT hardware is directly sold to companies that are associated with modern slavery.

Data Centre Facilities

Canberra Data Centres (CDC) has a \$91.5 million 10-year contract from 2022 to 2032 for a facility in Sydney NSW, to meet the sensitive government data storage needs of Defence. The contract supports the migration of Defence sensitive data from Global Switch Ultimo to the CDC Eastern Creek facility in Sydney. The contract includes fit-out of the facility to the specifications required to meet Defence's needs. This will ensure that Defence is able to comply with our Foreign Investment Review Board requirements and the Digital Transformation Agency (DTA) Whole-of-Government Hosting Strategy to ensure data sovereignty.

– Support for Defence and Manufacturing Industries - North Queensland Spark Grant

In the 2022-23 Budget, the Government announced that Defence will contribute \$32.2 million to North Queensland Simulation Park (NQ Spark) over three years from 2022-23 to 2024-25 towards the construction of a collaborative industry hub that will include a military simulation training facility in Townsville, Queensland. The facility will be constructed and owned by the City of Townsville, who will be the recipient of the grant.

NQ Spark will be an industry-led and managed multi-purpose precinct supporting a variety of functions. The Defence element of the proposal will enable simulation training via cutting edge technology, which is aligned with the intent of the *2020 Defence Strategic Update* and *2020 Force Structure Plan*. The broader NQ Spark precinct will include arrangements with universities, hospitals, police, and other emergency services for their respective training purposes.

Support for Defence and Manufacturing Industries – Biofuels Development Grant

In the 2022-23 Budget, the Government announced that Defence will provide a grant of \$5.1 million over three years from 2022-23 to 2024-25 to Licella, a biofuels producer, to further develop and prove its technology and support the development of the domestic renewable fuels industry.

The proposal will increase usage of renewable fuels to contribute to the Australian Government's commitment to net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and to increase fuel security.

Defence will work with Licella to deliver on the Government's commitment by utilising the Business Grants Hub which is managed by the Department of Industry, Resources and Science.

Current Initiatives

Defence Industry Development in Regional Areas

Australia's defence industry plays a vital role in supporting Defence and delivering leading edge technologies and capabilities required to generate, mature and sustain the future force.

Between 5 December 2016 and 30 September 2022, the Defence Innovation Hub has awarded 62 contracts totalling over \$123.8 million to small and medium enterprises and universities based in regional Australia. This accounts for almost 24.8 per cent of all contracts awarded since the Hub was established. These contracts have supported approximately 350 jobs for regional Australians.

The 28 Defence Innovation Hub projects for regional businesses and universities, worth a total of \$75.6 million, are expected to remain active into the 2022-23 financial year. This includes 14 contracts in the Australian Capital Territory (valued at \$40.7 million), nine in regional New South Wales (valued at \$20.7 million), two in regional Queensland (valued at \$5.9 million), one in regional Victoria (\$5.1 million), one in regional South Australia (valued at \$1.1 million) and one in Tasmania (valued at \$2.1 million).

These contracts include: a \$3.7 million contract with Cubic Defence Australia in Queensland, to develop a deployable waste-to-energy system, with the potential to convert waste into sanitised biofuel to provide additional power to bases; and a \$2.1 million contract with A.M.C Search Limited in Tasmania, to develop a set of sovereign sensor modules for autonomous underwater vehicles, which could improve the efficiency and endurance of maritime platforms.

Since its launch in 2018, the *Sovereign Industrial Capability Priority (SICP) Grants Program* has supported opportunities to drive Australian innovation, making small businesses more competitive and supply chains more secure. As at September 2022, 120 *SICP Grant* applications have been approved across Australia to the value of \$74.6 million. Eleven of these *SICP Grants* have been awarded to small businesses in regional and rural Australia to the value of \$6.0 million.

As at 29 September 2022, 72 *Defence Global Competitiveness Grant* applications have been approved across Australia to the value of \$11 million. Nine of these *Defence Global Competitiveness Grants* have been awarded to small businesses in regional and rural Australia to the value of \$1.8 million. Since its launch in 2019, the *Defence Global*

Competitiveness Grants Program has supported the development of a stronger, more sustainable and globally competitive Australian defence industry by supporting eligible Australian SMEs to build export capability.

Launched in 2020, the *Skilling Australia's Defence Industry (SADI) Grants Program* has supported Australian businesses to invest in their workforces through skilling and re-training. As at 31 August 2022, across Australia, 152 SADI applications have been approved to almost \$10.0 million. Nine of these SADI Grants have been approved for small to medium businesses in regional and rural Australia to the value of \$0.7 million.

On 26 November 2021, the Office of Defence Industry Support (ODIS) was officially opened, replacing the Centre for Defence Industry Capability as the one-stop shop for Defence industry support and guidance.

The core function of ODIS, through its offices in capital cities and regional locations across Australia, is to provide advisory, guidance and mentoring services to Australian small and medium enterprises (SMEs) looking to enter or expand their footprint in Defence industry. This includes a dedicated regional SME support team to ensure there is a focus on regional businesses in Defence. ODIS also works with State and Territory agencies, industry associations and Defence business partners, to position the Defence industry to deliver capability that equips and sustains the Australian Defence Force.

Mulwala Administration Complex Replacement

This \$11 million project will replace the function of five existing 1940s administration type buildings that surpassed their useful life and have been identified for demolition through the Mulwala Decommissioning and Demolition Project. The project will progress through planning and design during 2022-23 with completion of delivery phase planned for 2023-24. It is anticipated local industry will be utilised throughout the delivery phase via sub-contract arrangements.

North Queensland Army Training Centre

In December 2021, a Townsville defence company, Cubic Defence Australia, signed a \$319.8 million contract to continue its delivery of training support to the Australian Army's Combat Training Centre for up to 14 years. Cubic continues to provide and support the integrated live simulation, range instrumentation and information systems used to run major national and international exercises in Townsville. The contract created nine new jobs in Townsville, and supports the ongoing employment of 35 Australians, most of whom are ADF veterans.

Additional CH-47F Chinook procurement and Ongoing Sustainment

In July 2022, the Australian Army accepted the final two of four additional CH-47F Chinook helicopters that will be based in Townsville, Queensland with the existing fleet of 10. The expanded fleet is expected to increase the number of contracted positions in Townsville and Oakey on top of the 52 positions from Boeing Defence Australia, CAE,

Sigma Bravo and Collins Aerospace that currently support the CH-47F Chinook fleet. The introduction into service plan for this expanded capability is currently under review, with decisions on specific workforce requirements and associated investment in the region to be confirmed.

Canberra Company Awarded Air Defence Radar Contract

Canberra-based company CEA Technologies is building four new Air Defence radars as part of the Australian Government's \$2.7 billion investment in Defence's new Joint Air Battle Management System. The contract will directly contribute an element of growth of the CEA Technologies workforce from 530 staff to over 800 in coming years.

Regional Maintenance Centre North East

In January 2022, a five-year, up to \$70 million-dollar contract was awarded to Cairns-based NORSTA Maritime, a 100 per cent Australian owned and controlled joint venture between Norship, Tropical Reef Shipyard, Nova Systems and Secora, as the new Regional Maintenance Provider – North East. NORSTA is charged with managing the maintenance of Navy and other government vessels in Cairns, Queensland. This contract operates under the umbrella of the Regional Maintenance Centre North East, which coordinates and schedules maintenance for the current and future Navy vessels based in Cairns and for the Guardian class patrol boats operated by our Pacific Island partners. Support for the Evolved Cape class patrol boats will commence from late 2022. The Regional Maintenance Centre North East will tap into the talent of the more than 4,000 people employed in the Cairns' maritime precinct and create additional jobs for local workers.

Regional Maintenance Centre North – Darwin

The stand-up of the Regional Maintenance Centre North that will service Navy and other government vessels in Darwin, Northern Territory will commence by end of 2022. Establishment of a multiyear contract for the Regional Maintenance Provider North, the industry partner responsible for coordinating and scheduling maintenance and developing local industry, is on track for mid-2023. The estimated value of the contract is expected to be approximately \$160 million over the first five years. The Regional Maintenance Centre North will lift local business capabilities and is expected to engage more than 130 local businesses currently supporting the Darwin maritime industry and create additional jobs for local workers.

Embarked Flight Deck Support

An \$11 million contract has been signed with OPSTAR Pty Ltd that is providing embarked flight deck support on MV *Sycamore* and in the Nowra region. The contract commenced in mid-2022 through to mid-2025 with options to extend up to five years.

Uncrewed Aircraft System

In support of Maritime Uncrewed Aircraft Systems, orders for the delivery in 2022-23 of additional Schiebel S-100 Uncrewed Aircraft Systems have been placed. The S-100 will be operated in the Nowra region and be valued at \$9.8 million. To support training of personnel on the S-100, an interim tactical trainer at a cost of \$10.3 million has been procured for delivery in 2022-23. This investment shows the importance placed on the contribution of personnel based at HMAS Albatross and the criticality of the capability to Navy and Defence.

Sail Training Ship *Young Endeavour* Replacement

In March 2022, a contract was awarded to Birdon Australia of Port Macquarie, New South Wales to build the replacement for Navy's sail training ship *Young Endeavour* in 2024. *Young Endeavour* was a bicentennial gift from the UK Government in 1988, and over 35 years has played an important role in youth development around the country with more than 14,000 young Australians benefitting from leadership opportunities. The program is valued at over \$37.0 million over 3 years and will contribute approximately 50 new shipbuilding and support jobs in the Port Macquarie region.

Defence Marine Support Services

The Defence Marine Support Services Program delivers auxiliary maritime services and support for training, logistics, trials, rescue, and Fleet ship movements nationally. The program is valued at over \$510 million over six years and will contribute approximately 250 seafaring, maintenance, and support jobs across Australia, including Rockingham Western Australia, Darwin Northern Territory Cairns Queensland, Jervis Bay Australian Capital Territory, Westernport Victoria and Sydney New South Wales together with services from a range of smaller ports around Australia. The program ensures the strong continued support to Navy, whilst providing the long-term foundation and partnership with industry from which to enable investment in local training and skills in key maritime and regional locations across Australia.

ARMY Safety Watercraft

On 24 March 2021, the Australian Government announced that a contract was awarded to two Cairns-based businesses in Far North Queensland, Tropical Reef Shipyards and BME NQ, to produce seven new safety watercraft for Army. The contract is valued at \$4.1 million and will strengthen the Army's amphibious capability. The prototype boat build commenced in June 2021, with the first boat delivered in Townsville in May 2022. The final Army safety watercraft delivery is expected in March 2023.

TRADOC – Future Ready Training System Program

The Future Ready Training System Program (FRTS) is delivering up to \$10 million of development annually across regional Army units and training centres. This includes the provision of training resources to unit hubs in Townsville and Brisbane, Queensland and

Darwin, Northern Territory and in regional training centres such as Puckapunyal and Albury-Wodonga, Victoria. Funds are allocated to various other capability programs across Army to enable training and sustainment. The majority of FRTS funding will be expended from 2025 as recipient programs are realised.

SEA 2400 – Hydrographic Data Collection Capability

Defence's Hydrographic Data Collection Capability (Project SEA 2400) includes the *HydroScheme Industry Partnership Program* (HIPP). The HIPP is a partnership with industry for delivery of the national hydrographic survey function to meet Defence's responsibilities for the provision of hydrographic services. The HIPP was approved by the Australian Government in December 2019, with initial funding of \$154.4 million over five years from 2019-20 to 2023-24. HIPP has expended \$68.0 million to the end of 2021-22. The budget estimate for 2022-23 is \$49.3 million.

Protected Mobile Fires Project (LAND 8116)

In 2019, the Australian Government announced Defence would acquire a new self-propelled artillery system to be produced in the Geelong region, Victoria. The Protected Mobile Fires project (LAND 8116 Phase 1) was approved by government on 6 December 2021, and acquisition and support contracts with Hanwha Defense Australia were signed on 13 December 2021. The project will deliver 30 Self-Propelled Howitzers, 15 Armoured Ammunition Resupply Vehicles, Weapon Locating Radars and supporting systems. Protected Mobile Fires will deliver persistent, lethal, mobile, survivable and networked indirect fire capability that delivers artillery effects in support of armoured and mechanised forces in mid-to high-intensity warfare. Hanwha Defense Australia is building an armoured vehicle centre of excellence at Avalon, Victoria. The \$1 billion Protected Mobile Fires LAND 8116 Phase 1 project will create a minimum of 300 jobs spread across facility construction, acquisition and maintenance, as well as generating ongoing support opportunities for Australian industry until the late 2040s.

Strategic Domestic Munitions Manufacturing (SDMM)

Commencing on 1 July 2020, Thales Australia and the Australian Government signed a 10-year Strategic Domestic Munitions Manufacturing contract for \$1.4 billion. The contract is for the ongoing management and operation of Australia's munition factory in Benalla, Victoria, and explosive factory at Mulwala, New South Wales providing job certainty for more than 650 highly skilled regional workers. The agreement provides surety of supply for key munitions and components to the ADF, and guarantees the Australian manufacture and supply of selected strategic munitions to the ADF and enables Thales to manufacture and export munitions, explosives and munitions components to over 17 countries around the world.

Approximately \$121.7 million will be spent in 2022-23 for facilities operation, asset and facilities renewal works. Facilities operating costs include labour, utilities and maintenance, with the majority of expenditure going to local jobs and businesses. An additional \$66.5 million is forecast for munitions orders for Defence. The focus for 2022-23 is the

establishment of further new manufacturing capability in consultation with Defence stakeholders, including end users of munitions products and the Defence Capability Manager.

Munitions Manufacturing Arrangement

Commencing on 1 July 2020, NIOA Munitions (NIOA) and the Australian Government signed a new 10-year contract establishing NIOA as a direct tenant to Defence alongside Thales Australia for part of the Benalla munitions factory in Victoria.

Tasmanian Defence and Maritime Innovation and Design Precinct

Following an election commitment in April 2019, Defence signed an agreement with the University of Tasmania (UTAS) in July 2020 committing \$30 million over three years to develop the Defence and Maritime Innovation and Design Precinct at the UTAS Australian Maritime College campus in Launceston.

The commitment is supporting the implementation of new, updated or modified capabilities at the Australian Maritime College, including fit for purpose laboratories and workshops that can be used for both Defence and the wider Maritime Community, with a focus on the Southern Ocean and Antarctic environments.

To date, \$18 million has been spent, with \$3 million in 2020-21 on the design and definition phase, and \$15 million spent in 2021-22 spent on significant infrastructure upgrades and capital works. In 2022-23, \$12 million has been budgeted for further significant infrastructure and capital works.

An estimated 50 additional jobs are expected to be created during construction and the development will create further employment opportunities across a broad range of science and technology capabilities beyond maritime-specific solutions, drawing researchers and industry from across the country to use the world-class facilities and promote collaboration between Defence, academia and industry.

This commitment is to build additional infrastructure over 2021-2024 in the form of a new Engineering Service Centre at the Australian Maritime College. The three-year program expands the capability of the Australian Maritime College and other UTAS organisational entities to meet the growing research and development needs of Defence, and its industry supply chains.

Current Estate and Infrastructure Projects being delivered in Regional areas in 2022-23

Defence estate and infrastructure investment is funded by the Defence Integrated Investment Program via Defence's existing annual appropriation. Approved projects with works at one or more regional locations are outlined below. Fifty-six subcontractor packages with an approximate total value of \$122.6 million were awarded to Indigenous subcontractors, with a further \$20.7 million expended under Indigenous prime contractors, during 2021-22.

RAAF Base Tindal Redevelopment Stage 6 and United States Force Posture Initiatives RAAF Base Tindal Airfield Works and Associated Infrastructure

This \$1.2 billion program is delivering a range of enhanced facilities and infrastructure, including airfield improvements at RAAF Base Tindal, Northern Territory. This program of works commenced construction in late 2020 and is scheduled for completion in late 2027. The budget estimate for 2022-23 is \$186.8 million. This project is maximising opportunities for local industry to be involved as subcontractors throughout the construction of the works. This project awarded two subcontractor packages to Indigenous subcontractors valued at approximately \$54.0 million during 2021-22.

Navy Capability Infrastructure Sub-Program

This program of works is providing new and upgraded facilities and infrastructure around Australia to support the introduction into service and sustainment of the Hunter class frigates, Arafura class offshore patrol vessels, and Supply class replenishment ships. This program is maximising opportunities for local industry to be involved as subcontractors throughout the construction of the works. This project awarded 20 subcontractor packages valued at approximately \$43 million to Indigenous subcontractors during 2021-22 while one of the prime contractors for this program is also an Indigenous prime contractor with \$3.4 million expended in 2021-22. This program includes:

Arafura Class Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) Facilities (SEA 1180 Phase 1)

This \$918.5 million project is providing berthing, training, maintenance, logistics, and support facilities to support the introduction into service of the new Arafura class frigates at various locations including HMAS *Coonawarra*, Northern Territory; HMAS *Cairns*, Queensland; and HMAS *Stirling* and Henderson Maritime Precinct, Western Australia. This project commenced construction in early 2021 and is scheduled for completion in late 2026. The budget estimate for 2022-23 is \$218.8 million.

Hunter Class Frigate Program Facilities (SEA 5000 Phase 1)

This \$915.5 million project is providing upgraded facilities and infrastructure to support the introduction of the new Hunter class frigates to replace the current Anzac class frigates at various locations including HMAS *Stirling* and Henderson Maritime Precinct, Western Australia. This project commenced construction in early 2021 and is scheduled for completion in mid-2027. The budget estimate for 2022-23 is \$219.9 million.

Maritime Operational Support Capability Facilities (SEA 1654 Phase 3)

This \$208.5 million project is providing new and upgraded facilities and infrastructure to support the introduction of the Supply class replenishment ships at various locations including HMAS *Stirling*, Western Australia. This project commenced construction in late 2018 and is scheduled for completion in early 2024. The budget estimate for 2022-23 is \$20.4 million.

Maritime Patrol Aircraft Replacement (AIR 7000 Phase 2B)

This \$792.6 million project is providing new and upgraded facilities and infrastructure to support the introduction of the P-8A aircraft at various locations including RAAF Base Edinburgh South Australia, RAAF Base Townsville Queensland, RAAF Base Pearce Western Australia, and HMAS *Stirling*, Western Australia. The project commenced construction in late 2019 with the works progressively scheduled for completion at each base up to early 2026. The budget estimate for 2022-23 is \$69.5 million. This project is maximising opportunities for local industry to be involved as subcontractors throughout the construction of the works. This project awarded one subcontractor package at approximately \$0.2 million to Indigenous subcontractors during 2021-22.

United States Force Posture Initiatives (USFPI) Northern Territory Training Areas and Range Upgrades

This \$747 million project is providing upgraded range facilities and associated infrastructure at the Bradshaw Field, Kangaroo Flats, Mount Bunday and Robertson Barracks Close training areas, Northern Territory. This includes range control, training camp accommodation, small arms and ranges, roads, and supporting facilities and infrastructure. This project commenced construction in early 2022 and is scheduled for completion in mid-2026. The budget estimate for 2022-23 is \$117.1 million. This project is maximising opportunities for local industry to be involved as subcontractors throughout the construction of the works. This project awarded two subcontractor packages at approximately \$8.1 million to Indigenous subcontractors during 2021-22.

Larrakeyah Defence Precinct Redevelopment Program

This \$506.9 million program is upgrading critical base infrastructure, improving the working environment, delivering new facilities, and supporting future growth on the Larrakeyah Defence Precinct, Northern Territory. This program is also delivering a new wharf, fuel storage and refuelling capabilities to support Navy's major surface combatant ships and Army watercraft operating in the north of Australia. This program of works commenced construction in late 2018 and is scheduled for completion in late 2023. The budget estimate for 2022-23 is \$60.1 million. This project is maximising opportunities for local industry to be involved as subcontractors throughout the construction of the works. This project awarded one subcontractor package at approximately \$1 million to Indigenous subcontractors during 2021-22.

HMAS Cerberus Redevelopment

This \$465.6 million project is upgrading engineering services, refurbishing living-in accommodation, constructing a new logistics precinct, upgrading the gym, refurbishing training facilities and galley, and demolishing redundant buildings at HMAS *Cerberus*, Victoria. This project commenced construction in early 2018 and is scheduled for completion in mid-2023. The budget estimate for 2022-23 is \$41.3 million. This project is maximising opportunities for local industry to be involved as subcontractors throughout the construction of the works. This project awarded three subcontractor packages at approximately \$1.1 million to Indigenous subcontractors during 2021-22.

AIR555 Phase 1 Airborne Intelligence Surveillance Reconnaissance Warfare Capability Facilities Works

This \$293.7 million project is providing fit-for-purpose facilities and infrastructure to support the introduction into service of the MC-55A Peregrine Airborne Intelligence Surveillance Reconnaissance Electronic Warfare capability at various locations including RAAF Base Edinburgh, South Australia; RAAF Base Townsville, Queensland; and Territory of Cocos (Keeling) Islands. This project commenced construction in late 2020 and is scheduled for completion in mid-2024. The budget estimate for 2022-23 is \$111.9 million. This project is maximising opportunities for local industry to be involved as subcontractors throughout the construction of the works. This project awarded four subcontractor packages at approximately \$2.7 million to Indigenous subcontractors during 2021-22.

Facilities to Support LAND 19 Phase 7B Short Range Ground-Based Air Defence

This \$266.1 million project will provide new working accommodation, operational support, storage, training and living-in-accommodation facilities to support new air defence capability at RAAF Base Edinburgh in South Australia. This project is scheduled to commence construction in early 2023 for completion in late 2024. The budget estimate for 2022-23 is \$15.5 million. This project will maximise opportunities for local industry to be involved as subcontractors throughout the construction of the works.

Joint Health Command Garrison Facilities Upgrades

This \$251.8 million project is providing fit-for-purpose, contemporary Garrison Health Facilities around Australia. This project commenced construction in late 2018. The majority of the works are complete except for those at RAAF Darwin, Northern Territory, which is scheduled for completion in mid-2024. The budget estimate for 2022-23 is \$12.4 million. This project is maximising opportunities for local industry to be involved as subcontractors throughout the construction of the works. This project awarded one subcontractor package at approximately \$0.1 million to Indigenous subcontractors during 2021-22.

Armoured Fighting Vehicles Facilities Program Stage 1

Stage 1 of this \$248.5 million project is providing fit-for-purpose facilities and infrastructure to support, sustain, and train Army personnel on the next generation of Armoured Fighting Vehicles capability at Lavarack Barracks, Queensland; Edinburgh Defence Precinct, South Australia; and Puckapunyal Military Area, Victoria. Stage 1 commenced construction in early 2021 and is scheduled for completion in late 2023. The budget estimate for 2022-23 is \$91.4 million. This project is maximising opportunities for local industry to be involved as subcontractors throughout the construction of the works. This project awarded three subcontractor packages at approximately \$1.4 million to Indigenous subcontractors during 2021-22.

Point Wilson Waterside Infrastructure Remediation Project

This \$218.9 million project is remediating waterside infrastructure at Point Wilson, Victoria to enable the recommencement of bulk Explosive Ordnance importation operations. This project is refurbishing the existing jetty, and providing a new wharf, amenities building, landside infrastructure and engineering services. This project commenced construction in early 2020 and is scheduled for completion in early 2023. The budget estimate for 2022-23 is \$44.8 million. This project is maximising opportunities for local industry to be involved as subcontractors throughout the construction of the works.

LAND 121 Phase 5B Facilities Project

This \$183.3 million project is providing fit-for-purpose facilities and infrastructure to support and sustain vehicles, modules, and trailers at various bases around Australia. The bases include Robertson Barracks, Northern Territory; Lavarack Barracks and Porton Barracks, Queensland; and Puckapunyal Military Area, Victoria. This project commenced construction in mid-2021 and scheduled for completion in mid-2024. The budget estimate for 2022-23 is \$73.7 million. This project is maximising opportunities for local industry to be involved as subcontractors throughout the construction of the works.

Airfield Capital Works P0008 (RAAF Williamtown)

This \$181.3 million project is maintaining aircraft pavements, aeronautical ground lighting and airfield drainage, and delivering associated airfield upgrade works at RAAF Base Williamtown New South Wales. This project commenced construction in early 2022 and is scheduled for completion in late 2023. The budget estimate for 2022-23 is \$102.6 million. This project is maximising opportunities for local industry to be involved as subcontractors throughout the construction of the works. This project awarded 12 subcontractor packages at approximately \$5.9 million to Indigenous subcontractors during 2021-22.

DEF101 Data Centre Upgrade

This \$131.5 million project is providing infrastructure to support and ensure ongoing communications capability at HMAS *Harman*, Australian Capital Territory through expansion and fit out of existing facilities. This project commenced construction in mid-2020 and is scheduled for completion in mid-2023. The budget estimate for 2022-23 is \$27.5 million. This project is maximising opportunities for local industry to be involved as subcontractors throughout the construction of the works. This project awarded four subcontractor packages at approximately \$3.1 million to Indigenous subcontractors during 2021-22.

North Queensland Mid-Term Refresh Program: RAAF Townsville Mid-Term Refresh Project

This \$72.8 million project will upgrade engineering services including potable water and power, refurbish working accommodation, and provide additional transit living-in accommodation at RAAF Townsville, Queensland. This project is scheduled to commence construction in early 2023 for completion in early 2025. The budget estimate for 2022-23 is \$28.7 million. This project will maximise opportunities for local industry to be involved as subcontractors throughout the construction of the works.

North Queensland Mid-Term Refresh Program: Townsville Field Training Area Mid-Term Refresh Project

This \$22.8 million project will upgrade engineering services including power, sewerage, stormwater and ICT, and construct a new entry point at the Townsville Field Training Area, Queensland. This project is scheduled to commence construction in early 2023 for completion in early 2025. The budget estimate for 2022-23 is \$17.3 million. This project will maximise opportunities for local industry and Indigenous companies to be involved as subcontractors throughout the construction of the works.

North Queensland Mid-Term Refresh Program: HMAS *Cairns* Mid-Term Refresh Project

This \$15.6 million project will upgrade engineering services including firefighting systems, potable water, sewerage and stormwater, and deliver minor building refurbishment works at HMAS *Cairns*, Queensland. This project is scheduled to commence construction in early 2023 for completion in early 2025. The budget estimate for 2022-23 is \$11.1 million. This project will maximise opportunities for local industry and Indigenous companies to be involved as subcontractors throughout the construction of the works.

Facilities to Support SEA 2273 Fleet Information Environment Modernisation Project

This \$58.6 million project will provide an upgraded information system that supports maritime and naval operations at various locations including HMAS *Cerberus* Victoria, HMAS *Stirling* Western Australia, HMAS *Coonawarra* Northern Territory and HMAS *Cairns* Queensland. This project commenced construction in mid-2022 and is scheduled for completion in late 2023. This project is maximising opportunities for local industry and Indigenous companies to be involved as subcontractors throughout the construction of the works.

Anglesea Paterson Project

This \$57.4 million project will upgrade engineering services and refurbish buildings at Anglesea Barracks and Youngtown Depot, Tasmania and construct new facilities in North Launceston, Tasmania. This project is scheduled to commence construction in early 2023 for completion in mid-2024. The budget estimate for 2022-23 is \$39.8 million. This project will maximise opportunities for local industry and Indigenous companies to be involved as subcontractors throughout the construction of the works.

Puckapunyal Military Area Mid-Term Refresh

This \$45.8 million project is addressing condition, capacity and compliance issues with existing infrastructure at the Puckapunyal Military Area, Victoria including remediating and upgrading engineering services and constructing a new storage facility. This project commenced construction in mid-2021 and is scheduled for completion in early 2023. The budget estimate for 2022-23 is \$21.5 million. This project is maximising opportunities for local industry to be involved as subcontractors throughout the construction of the works.

This project awarded one subcontractor package at approximately \$2 million to Indigenous subcontractors during 2021-22 while one of the prime contractors for this program is also an Indigenous contractor with \$17.3 million expended in 2021-22.

Puckapunyal Combined Arms Heritage and Learning Centre

This \$41.2 million project will provide exhibition space, storage, restoration and administration facilities to support heritage collections, and demolish existing redundant facilities at the Puckapunyal Military Area, Victoria. This project is scheduled to commence construction in early 2023 for completion in late 2024. The budget estimate for 2022-23 is \$11.7 million. This project will maximise opportunities for local industry and Indigenous companies to be involved as subcontractors throughout the construction of the works.

Puckapunyal Health and Wellbeing Centre

This \$39.8 million project is providing a new-fit-for purpose health and wellbeing centre at the Puckapunyal Military Area, Victoria. This project commenced construction in mid-2021, and is scheduled for completion in early 2023. The budget estimate for 2022-23 is \$18 million. This project will maximise opportunities for local industry to be involved as subcontractors throughout the construction of the works. This project awarded two subcontractor packages at approximately \$0.1 million to Indigenous subcontractors during 2021-22.

Plan MURA — General John Baker Complex Capability Assurance Project (Public Private Partnership)

Ensuring a secure and resilient Australia requires modernising Joint Operations Command (JOC). Plan MURA will be the means of this modernisation, and will provide JOC with pathway to continuous modernisation. This project is delivering the infrastructure to modernise JOC facilities as a component of Plan MURA. This will include extensions, upgrades and new inclusions, and will create a world's best practice, fit-for-purpose site that will enable efficient and effective support for operational constructs. The purpose-built facility will be specifically designed to house the future workforce, securing the JOC capability now and into the future.

The facilities at the Bungendore, New South Wales site were originally constructed, and continue to be operated, through a Public Private Partnership (PPP) with Praeco Pty Ltd.

Tranche One was approved by Government on 1 July 2020 and by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works on 5 February 2021.

- Tranche One work commenced in February 2022 and is valued at \$31.7 million. Tranche One will deliver additional car parking, interim security accreditation works, site preparation for future works and the construction of a solar power farm.
- Tranche Two will deliver a collaboration facility, on-site accommodation and amenities, and an extension to the existing main operations building.

Mulwala Decommissioning and Demolition

This \$47.3 million project is decommissioning and demolishing 116 aged and contaminated redundant factory buildings at the Mulwala Propellant and Explosives Facility, New South Wales. This project is being delivered through a number of tranches and is scheduled for completion in mid-2025. This project maximises opportunities for local industry to be involved as subcontractors throughout the construction of the works.

Defence Base Service Contracts

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

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

In the 2021-22 calendar year, Defence, through its ten Base Services Contractors, engaged 2,279 Australian-based businesses with expenditure totalling \$2.1 billion, which included 741 businesses engaged in regional areas across Australia with expenditure totalling \$533.9 million. During the same period, 86 Indigenous businesses were engaged with total expenditure of \$483.4 million of which 44 were engaged in regional areas across Australia with expenditure totalling \$246.4 million.

Other current initiatives

The Australian Government is also continuing to fund the following initiatives:

- \$30 million for DEF799 Phase 1, Geospatial Intelligence Satellite capability-enhanced Commercial Access from 2022 to 2030
- \$8.6 million for Navy Aviation Technician training in the Nowra region from 2022 to 2025
- \$1.8 million for Pentarch Industrial – New Ammunition Disposal System from 2021 to 2023
- \$15.0 million for Pentarch Industrial – New Ammunition Container Contract from 2020 to 2026
- \$12.1 million for Mulwala Renewable Energy (solar farm) Project from 2022 to 2024

- \$1.5 billion for New Air Combat Capability Facilities Project (AIR 6000 Phase 2A/B) from 2015 to 2023
- \$370.4 million for Battlefield Airlifter Facilities (AIR 8000 Phase 2) from 2016 to 2022
- \$135.4 million for Shoalwater Bay Training Area Remediation Project from 2020 to 2022
- \$95.3 million for Airfield Capital Works P0006 (Curtin, Tindal and Townsville) from 2016 to 2026
- \$61.9 million for AIR 2025 Phase 6 Jindalee Operational Radar Networks (JORN) Facilities Project from 2019 to 2023
- \$31.6 million for SEA 1397 Phase 5D Nulka Assembly and Maintenance Facilities Project from 2021 to 2022
- \$31.3 million for Oakey Mid-Term Refresh from 2021 to 2022
- \$30.7 million for Holsworthy Mid-Term Refresh from 2021 to 2024
- \$29.6 million for LAND 555 Phase 6 Force Level Electronic Warfare, Signals Intelligence and Vehicles from 2020 to 2023
- \$16.7 million for LAND 2110 Phase 1B – Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defence (CBRND) Facilities from 2021 to 2023
- \$12.4 million for Space Domain Awareness Project Mirror Recoating Facility from 2022 to 2023.

Education

The Education portfolio contributes to economic prosperity and social wellbeing by creating opportunities and driving better outcomes through access to quality education and learning. The portfolio is comprised of the: Department of Education (DoE); Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA); Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL); Australian Research Council (ARC); Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), and the Australian National University (ANU).

Education and access to the opportunities it provides are essential for our diverse regional communities, whether a student chooses to remain, or move away, from their hometown or region to study and work. The Australian Government is improving support and enabling economic development and growth in Australia's thriving regional communities to ensure education and training opportunities, including early learning, are available to all Australians, regardless of where they live.

The Education portfolio helps families with the cost of early childhood education and care by providing grants and programs for early childhood education and care services in disadvantaged, regional and remote communities. The Government's Plan for Cheaper Child Care will improve affordability and access to early childhood education and care. More affordable early childhood education and care will reduce barriers for parents – particularly women – to participate in the workforce, study or volunteer, thereby providing wider benefits for families and the economy. Improved access will also benefit children, providing greater support in those early years irrespective of their background. Further reforms to the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) will improve affordability and support greater access to early learning for First Nations children, to make real gains towards meeting our Closing the Gap targets.

The Australian Government continues to provide record needs-based funding to schools, including additional funding for schools in regional and remote locations, in recognition of the additional costs of educating students in these areas. To ensure that regional and remote areas have a supply of new teachers, up to 5,000 new students will be offered up to a \$40,000 bursary to support them during their teaching degree, with students from regional areas identified as a target cohort for this support. A further top-up payment of \$2,000 will be available to students who do their final year placements in remote or regional areas to assist in closing the regional education gap.

The Education portfolio also delivers programs to help students in regional and remote areas continue their education or access higher education without having to leave their community. This includes scholarships and other financial support to help undergraduate and postgraduate students in regional and remote Australia. The Australian Government is delivering 20,000 extra Commonwealth supported places (CSP) in 2023 and 2024. Students from regional and remote Australia are a priority group to receive these places.

In delivering on its outcomes, the portfolio works closely with other government agencies, state and territory governments, international organisations, regulators, businesses, education institutions, peak bodies, providers, industry and the community. This engagement and strong working relationships ensure policy development, program delivery, services and evaluation are grounded in, and reflect the needs of, the sectors, stakeholders and the Australian public, including those living in regional and remote communities.

As at 31 August 2022, the Education Portfolio employed 1,632 staff under the *Public Service Act 1999*. Of this total, 1,543 are employed in Canberra, central Melbourne and central Sydney (94.55 per cent), 82 in other capital cities (5.02 per cent) and 7 in regional areas (0.43 per cent).

The department has a presence across Australia including all capital cities and a regional footprint with staff located in Alice Springs, Newcastle, Mackay, and Townsville.

New Initiatives

Cheaper Child Care Plan

The Australian Government is fulfilling commitments in the 2022 federal election to make early childhood education and care more affordable for around 96 per cent of families currently using care, with no families being worse off. The changes are estimated to benefit around 265,000 families in regional and remote Australia.

From July 2023, Child Care Subsidy (CCS) rates for a first child in care will increase for all eligible families with annual incomes up to \$530,000, up to a maximum of 90 per cent. The higher CCS for families with a second and subsequent child aged 5 or under in care will also be retained.

The Australian Government has commissioned the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) with conducting a Price Inquiry to investigate the drivers of rising early childhood education and care prices. Findings from the ACCC's Inquiry will inform a broader Productivity Commission review of the early childhood education and care sector, with the aim of implementing a universal 90 per cent subsidy for all families.

Additional 20,000 places

The Australian Government is providing a one-off boost of 20,000 commencing CSPs over 2023 and 2024, totalling \$485.5 million over four years to 2025-26. These CSPs will be directed to students from underrepresented groups, such as low-socioeconomic (low-SES), regional and remote students, those who are first in family to study at university, those living with a disability and First Nations people, to enable them to enrol in CSPs in areas of national priority and identified workforce shortage.

Teacher Shortages

Teachers have the greatest in-school impact on student learning and improving the supply of quality teachers is vital to the success of Australia's schools and the outcomes of students. The Australian Government will deliver a package of measures that seeks to address teacher shortages. This includes:

- \$56.2 million to provide 5,000 bursaries of up to \$40,000 to encourage the best and brightest into teaching. Bursaries will be available to high school leavers who achieve an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank of 80 or above, First Nations students, and students from regional areas. There will also be a further top up payment of \$2,000 available for students who do their final year placements in a remote area, to help close the regional education gap
- \$68.3 million will be provided to expand the High Achieving Teachers program to support up to an additional 1500 high-quality candidates, including mathematicians and scientists, into the teaching profession. This will help to fill gaps in the teaching workforce in subjects like science and maths, and in regional and remote areas
- \$27.6 million to implement recommendations from the Quality Initial Teacher Education (QITE) Review, with a focus on attracting quality candidates to study and become teachers, and to improve retention by ensuring Initial Teacher Education programs and degrees are high-quality, and better support the early career needs of new teachers.

Additional Hours of Subsidised Early Learning for First Nations Children

From July 2023, the Australian Government is also increasing subsidised early childhood education and care to a minimum of 36 hours per fortnight for families with First Nations children, regardless of activity levels. The Australian Government's total investment will be \$33.7 million over four years, and will commence in tandem with broader CCS changes under the Government's Plan for *Cheaper Child Care*. It will improve affordability by reducing out of pocket costs for the families of First Nations children who do not otherwise qualify for 36 subsidised hours per fortnight and support greater access to First Nations children, who are underrepresented in early learning relative to their share of the population. It is expected 6,600 First Nations families will benefit from these measures over the first year as their minimum level of subsidised hours increases from zero or 24 to 36 hours per fortnight.

Delivering the Startup Year

The Australian Government is providing \$15.4 million over four years to deliver *Startup Year*, a new program designed to accelerate job growth and economic productivity through the creation of new firms based on the innovation found in Australian universities, including those located in regional areas. The program will support advancement in areas of national priority to boost Australia's sovereign capability. *Startup Year* will provide up to 2,000 income-contingent loans per year for students to access university-based accelerator programs to develop their novel start-up ideas.

First Nations Languages

The Australian Government has committed to a \$14.1 million plan over four years to 2025-26 to teach First Nations languages in primary schools across Australia, to help lift the uptake of First Nations language learning by young Australians and keep First Nations language alive.

The funding will support local First Nations community and school partnerships, to enable the development and placement of 60 First Nations Educators to support the learning and teaching of First Nations languages in our schools. The Australian Government is committed to developing this initiative in partnership with First Nations communities. Schools will be able to apply to participate, with priority granted to schools with high First Nations student enrolments and based on need.

First Nations communities will be placed at the centre of the plan and part of the decision-making process at every step of the way, including determining whether they want to share their language and culture with local schools.

Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership

The *Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership* (the Partnership) will drive genuine shared decision-making between the Australian Government, state and territory governments and First Nations representatives. It will be a key First Nations forum for the Australian Government to engage in genuine shared decision-making to support improved outcomes in early childhood education, maternal and child health and child safety in line with Closing the Gap Outcomes. The Australian Government will provide \$10.2 million over three years, with the Partnership expected to develop recommendations that will have positive impacts for First Nations Australians, including those who reside in regional Australia.

Office for Youth

Young people in Australia will be able to influence the future of policy through a \$10.5 million new Youth Engagement model. The new Youth Engagement model will ensure young people from diverse and at-risk cohorts are specifically represented in consultations and engagement with government, including First Nations young people. The model will be co-designed with the Youth Steering Committee, comprised of 15 young Australians. Regional, rural and remote youth will be represented in the model to ensure the unique issues young people in the regions face are heard in Australian Government policy and program design.

The new model includes the establishment of an Office for Youth, five youth advisory groups to work directly with Australian Government agencies on policy and program development and a Youth Engagement Strategy to be delivered in 2024. The Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC) will also be supported in its critical role in youth advocacy, engagement, and research.

Current Initiatives

Schools funding

The Australian Government continues to provide record needs-based funding to schools. The Government will provide \$25.3 billion in 2022, and \$318.9 billion over 2018 to 2029 in recurrent funding to Australian schools. Of this, \$71.5 billion is benefitting students in regional and remote schools. This includes an estimated \$5.7 billion funding to regional and remote students in 2022 (up from \$4.4 billion in 2018) and an estimated \$7.3 billion in 2029. Additionally, \$217 million over 2020–2029 of the \$1.2 billion Choice and Affordability Fund is quarantined to specifically support non-government schools in regional and remote locations.

Increasing higher education access and participation

The Australian Government continues to support increased access and participation to higher education for students from under-represented backgrounds, including those from regional and remote areas. The *Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program* (HEPPP) assists universities to deliver strategies and activities to support students from underrepresented backgrounds to access, participate and succeed in higher education. The *Regional Partnerships Project Pool Program* (RPPPP) will enable universities and Regional University Centres to co-design and deliver higher education outreach initiatives with regional communities. These programs, along with the regional loading program, are consolidated within the Indigenous, Regional and Low SES Attainment Fund (IRLSAF).

Closing the Gap in education

The Australian Government's *Closing the Gap Implementation Plan* includes \$1.1 billion for a range of measures to support outcomes under the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*, including initiatives to improve educational outcomes of First Nations people.

The Government will continue measures including:

- providing a further \$81.8 million over four years to expand the *Connected Beginnings* program by an additional 27 sites, helping First Nations children to be safe, healthy and ready to thrive in school by the age of five
- expanding the *Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) Restricted program* with \$29.9 million to fund additional early childhood education and care services in predominantly remote and very remote communities to support First Nations children
- providing \$9.5 million over four years to establish four trial sites of an intensive early childhood education and care model to improve school readiness and educational and health outcomes for young children facing family stress and social disadvantage, including a dedicated First Nations site

- providing \$1.9 million over four years from 2021–22 to trial an early learning teaching model that strengthens literacy and numeracy learning in early childhood education and care settings and undertake an evaluation of the outcomes
- providing \$74.9 million over four years (2021–22 to 2024–25) to build three new boarding schools and enable the upgrade of a fourth facility in remote areas under the Studio Schools Australia model, providing more options for local secondary education on Country
- providing \$25.9 million over three years from 2021–22 to establish *City-Country Partnerships* between high performing independent schools and remote schools with a high proportion of First Nations students
- providing \$25 million over four years from 2021–22 for evidence-based literacy and numeracy programs to improve the educational outcomes of First Nations students.

Improving affordability and access to early childhood education

Australians in regional and remote areas benefit from the Australian Government providing record funding through the early childhood education and care system, with \$11 billion estimated to be spent in 2022–23, including \$10.6 billion in CCS expenditure.

The CCCF grants further provide \$452 million over the next four years to early childhood education services in vulnerable and disadvantaged communities. The CCCF funds around 900 services of which 507 services are in regional and remote Australia, receiving 60 per cent of CCCF funding.

Other higher education support for regional Australia

The measures below seek to increase higher education access and attainment for regional Australians and to support higher education providers in regional Australia to grow their local economies and include:

- \$146 million over four years to increase Commonwealth Grant Scheme funding for regional university campuses by 3.5 per cent a year.
- \$48.8 million over four years to establish new partnerships between regional universities and other higher education providers or industry to undertake innovative research projects.
- \$17.1 million over four years to provide demand driven Commonwealth Supported Places to eligible higher education providers for First Nations students from a regional or remote area.
- The *Tertiary Access Payment* (TAP) will continue to support Year 12 school leavers with the costs of relocating to study a higher-level tertiary qualification (Certificate IV or above). Over \$190 million is available under the TAP from 2022–23 to 2025–26.

Support for research and commercialisation outcomes in the regions

The Australian Government is providing an additional \$362.5 million over four years from 2022-23 for the Trailblazer Universities Program to build new research capabilities and invest in new industry engagement opportunities, in strategic priority areas. One of these projects is regionally headquartered at the University of Southern Queensland and a further two, led by Curtin University and Deakin University, will deliver significant impact in regional Australia.

Additional support for Northern Territory schools

The Australian Government is providing an additional \$78.5 million in transitional support for Northern Territory Government schools from 2018 to 2027 to support school education. The additional funding is intended to support students in the Northern Territory to achieve their best, in recognition of the greater challenges they face in comparison to other states and territories.

Central Coast Health and Wellbeing Precinct

The Australian Government provided \$12.5 million over six years from 2017-18 for the Central Coast Health and Medical Campus of the University of Newcastle to assist with the establishment of the Central Coast Medical School at Gosford Hospital. The funding is in addition to \$32.5 million in capital support for the construction and fit-out of the new Central Coast Health and Wellbeing precinct.

This measure supports jobs and increasing higher education accessibility and participation in the region. The medical school precinct will build regional health workforce capacity and provide access to world class facilities to meet the health care demands of the Central Coast's growing and ageing population.

Increased access to quality boarding and scholarship support

The Australian Government is continuing to support boarding students from predominantly remote and very remote areas to access school education and enabling boarding providers to best support the wellbeing and engagement of First Nations boarding students with funding of \$29.4 million over four years.

Administered funding of \$17.3 million supports a one-year extension of the *Indigenous Boarding Providers* grants program to better support First Nations boarding students and improve their educational outcomes. This builds on the 2021-22 Budget measure *Schools and Youth – supporting students, teachers and young Australians* cross-portfolio package.

The Australian Government is providing \$10.9 million over four years to establish a *Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program*. The scholarship program supports the families of up to 200 students from low socio-economic status regional and remote communities with the cost of boarding school fees. Scholarships provide \$15,000 per year for three years.

Regional University Centres (RUC) program

Regional University Centres are community owned and operated facilities that support regional and remote students to undertake tertiary studies externally (online/distance education) whilst remaining in their local community.

There are currently 26 RUCs in operation around Australia, with additional RUCs to be operational from 2023.

The Australian Government has also recently committed \$25.6 million over four years from 2022–23 to support the continued operation of the first cohort of 16 RUCs. More than \$100 million has been committed to the RUC program since 2018.

Investing in the regional medical workforce

In the 2022–23 Budget, the Australian Government is investing \$11.3 million over the forward estimates to commence a competitive process to allocate up to 80 new commencing CSPs each year from 2023–24 for universities with existing medical schools to deliver full medical school programs from new or existing rural training locations.

The Government will also provide \$3.0 million over three years from 2023–24 (and \$31.0 million over 11 years) for up to 20 additional commencing Commonwealth supported medical places per year for James Cook University, as part of the Department of Health-led measure *Rural Health and Medical Training for Far North Queensland*.

To support doctors delivering primary care in rural and remote Australia, in the 2021–22 MYEFO the Australian Government reduced *Higher Education Loan Program* (HELP) debts and waived indexation for eligible rural doctors or nurse practitioners who meet length of service requirements while working in a rural, remote, or very remote location in Australia. The Australian Government is committed, subject to legislation, to extending the existing *FEE-HELP* loan fee exemption by 12 months in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This exemption allows undergraduate students in full-fee paying courses to access Australia's world class higher education loan scheme without paying a fee for access to that loan. Regional students studying full-fee paying courses further benefit from this extension.

Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships

The *Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships program* has completed five rounds of scholarships since 2018 to support 4,180 students from regional and remote Australia to study undergraduate, postgraduate and vocational education courses. The scholarships are valued at up to \$18,000 each, with a further \$500 available to support an internship. Round six of this program includes more than 1,000 scholarships to be awarded for study commencing in 2022.

Supporting National Disaster Response

Increased funding under the CCCF Special Circumstances from \$4.0 million each year to \$22.4 million in 2021-22 and \$7.7 million in 2022-23 is available to assist early childhood education and care services to recover from catastrophic flood events and ongoing impacts of the pandemic.

Promoting regional study – Destination Australia Program

The Australian Government will rebuild Australia’s international education sector and supports students’ access to study in the regions through the *Destination Australia Program*. This program offers scholarships worth up to \$15,000 per student to incentivise both domestic and international students to study in regional Australia.

Supporting students’ personal and professional development

The Australian Government provided \$8.1 million over four years from 2021-22 for *Together for Humanity* to deliver learning programs to educate students, teachers, and parents to foster greater inter-cultural understanding and a sense of belonging. The program operates across Australia, including in regional and remote areas.

The Australian Government has invested \$3 million to enable people aged 14 to 24 years who require additional assistance to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh International Award over three years to 2023-24. This measure, the *Disadvantaged Youth Program*, provides additional support to young people with disability, young First Nations people, disadvantaged young people from refugee backgrounds, regional and remote communities, and marginalised youth to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Awards.

Supporting access to early childhood education in the regions

The Australian Government is running an additional competitive grant round of the CCCF *Program* specifically targeting areas where there are gaps in the supply of early childhood education and care in disadvantaged regional and remote communities. This Program supports the establishment of new services nationally, facilitating engagement in early childhood education, outcomes for local children, and increasing workforce participation in these regions.

The Australian Government is also continuing to fund the following initiatives:

- Investment of \$9.8 million over four years in the 2021–22 Budget to improve the quality of teaching to lift school and student performance, including in regional, rural and remote areas
- The Australian Government is providing \$2.4 million over four years from 2019–20 to extend the removal of *HELP* debt for teachers working in very remote locations of Australia to include early childhood teachers. From 2019, *HELP* debts for early childhood teachers will be extinguished after four years of employment in very remote locations of Australia. Additionally, indexation on *HELP* debt will no longer accrue for early childhood teachers while working in these locations

- \$6 million is being provided over four years (from 2020-21) to support a Regional Education Commissioner. The Commissioner brings a national focus and direction to regional and remote education
- The Australian Government will continue to provide \$5.8 million over four years from 2020-21 to develop, implement and evaluate a pilot program by Good to Great Schools Australia (GGSA) to support up to 10 remote and very remote schools to expand their *Direct Instruction* literacy program to include numeracy and science. An additional \$5 million has also been provided to GGSA as part of the Closing the Gap – Scaling Up Proven Primary Reading Programs measure, to expand the literacy subject area of the pilot program to an additional 10 schools. Total funding of \$10.77 million is being provided over five years to 2024-2025 to support up to 20 schools in the pilot program as well as program evaluation.
- The Australian Government invested in the school-based arts education program *Bell Shakespeare's National Education Program* to provide live theatre performances at schools and professional development opportunities for teachers. Annually, the program aims to reach 80,000 students and teachers in regional and remote areas and deliver a minimum of 350 live performances in schools across Australia
- \$0.7 million over four years to improve Fares Allowance so eligible students can visit their homes and families.

Employment and Workplace Relations

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (the department) enables access to quality skills, training and employment to support Australians find secure work in fair, productive and safe workplaces – supporting individuals and our nation to prosper.

The department provides advice to its Ministers and effectively implements Government policies and programs to drive future economic growth, boost wages and contribute to a safe, secure and responsive employment sector. The department works to enable an employment sector where more workers have continued employment and employers are able to retain a productive, reliable and skilled workforce. In doing this, the department draws on the best available research, evidence and data and works collaboratively with other Commonwealth government agencies, state and territory governments, international organisations, regulators, businesses, peak bodies, providers, unions, industry and the community. This engagement and strong working relationships ensure policy development, program delivery, services and evaluation are grounded in, and reflect the needs of our stakeholders and the Australian public, including those living in regional and remote communities.

The department is leading the implementation of key Budget measures. The employment, skills and workplace relations initiatives in the 2022–23 October Budget deliver on both the Government’s election commitments and outcomes of the Jobs and Skills Summit. The Government’s plan to drive productivity growth, expand the capacity of the economy to alleviate supply side pressures, boost wages and secure work, and tackle gender inequity are reflected in these key Budget measures.

As at 31 August 2022, the Employment and Workplace Relations portfolio employed 5,396 staff under the *Public Service Act 1999*. Of this total, 4,304 are employed in Canberra, central Melbourne and central Sydney (80 per cent), 925 in other capital cities (17 per cent) and 167 in regional areas (3 per cent).

The department has a presence across Australia including all capital cities and a regional footprint with staff located in Bendigo, Newcastle, Orange, Rockhampton, Cairns and Townsville.

New Initiatives

Additional In-Training Support Places

The Government has committed to an investment of \$22.6 million for additional In-Training Support places for apprentices in regional and remote areas. In-Training Support services are based on assessment of individual need and may include pastoral care, mentoring, counselling, career guidance, industry mentoring, conflict resolution and referral to other specialist services. For Australians in regional and remote areas, apprenticeships and traineeships provide critical pathways to meaningful work. This support ensures they can complete their training while also filling regional skills shortages.

Skills for now and the future

The Government is committed to building a stronger economy, improving community wellbeing, and creating skills and training opportunities for all Australians, including those in regional Australia. The Government is collaborating with state and territory governments, unions, employers, training providers and civil society to support a trusted, high quality and accessible education and training sector with TAFE at its heart, so students and workers can get the skills they need to thrive now and in the future.

12-month Skills Agreement

The Government is negotiating a \$1 billion (12-month) Skills Agreement, cost shared with the States and Territories. From January 2023 this will respond to immediate skills needs and provide opportunities for Australians to get the skills they need for secure and rewarding jobs now. This commitment includes \$493 million to deliver 180,000 Fee Free TAFE and vocational education places. The Agreement will target industries with severe skill shortages, including the care sector, technology and digital, hospitality and tourism, construction, agriculture, and industries important to sovereign capability. Fee Free places will be made available through public TAFEs and public dual sector providers and other providers in exceptional circumstances where TAFE does not have adequate existing capacity, including for example, by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-owned registered training organisations. The Agreement includes \$24 million to support the success of students with complex needs, and additional funding of \$50 million for the TAFE technology fund to provide modern facilities including in regional Australia and \$7 million for essential vocational education and training (VET) data infrastructure reform.

National Skills Agreement

The Government is committed to reforming and providing stable long-term funding for the vocational education and training sector through a new five-year National Skills Agreement with the States and Territories. This agreement will commence on 1 January 2024 and place TAFE at its heart. It will support the provision of high-quality, responsive, and accessible education and training. It will support Australians to obtain the relevant and transferable skills they need to participate in secure and rewarding employment, and to prosper in the modern economy.

Jobs and Skills Australia

The Government is delivering on its election commitment to establish Jobs and Skills Australia through the Jobs and Skills Australia Bill 2022 with an investment of an additional \$12.9 million. Through both its governance and approach to exercising its functions Jobs and Skills Australia will embody the Government's commitment to tripartism. Jobs and Skills Australia will be required to work closely with the State and Territory governments, employer associations, unions, and other key stakeholders including education and training providers and regional organisations.

The Government has undertaken extensive consultation on the design of Jobs and Skills Australia, including through the Jobs and Skills Summit. It will continue to consult on how Jobs and Skills Australia will undertake its work, including the development of annual workplans. Jobs and Skills Australia will provide independent advice about current, emerging, and future skills, and labour market needs and evidence. It will bring together national leadership and expertise, industry knowledge, cutting edge data analytic capability to understand workforce trends and partner with policy and decision makers across sectors on skills and workforce development strategies. Workforce planning and advice that will address skills shortages in regional, rural, and remote Australia will be a core part of this work.

Australian Skills Guarantee

The Government will deliver the Australian Skills Guarantee (the Guarantee) as a key election commitment under the Government's *Secure Australian Jobs Plan*. The Guarantee will ensure one in 10 workers on major, federally funded government projects are an apprentice, trainee, or paid cadet, with a particular focus on supporting women through specific targets for participation.

The Clean Energy Workforce

The Government has committed \$100 million over ten years to support 10,000 *New Energy Apprenticeships*, including investing \$62 million allocated over four years to deliver the *Skilling the Clean Energy Workforce* as a key component of the *Powering Australia Plan*. To address Australia's growing skills demands in the clean energy sector, the Skilling the Clean Energy Workforce will provide financial support, assistance and mentoring directly to New Energy Apprentices and fit-for-purpose training pathways for new energy industry jobs through the New Energy Skills Program.

National Study on Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Skills

Higher literacy and numeracy skills are associated with increased wellbeing, better employment outcomes and increased wages. To support this the Government will task Jobs and Skills Australia with undertaking a National Study on Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Skills. The study will assess the current literacy and numeracy levels of adults across Australia, as well as looking at ways to better assist the participation of First Nations Peoples.

Employment services

Workforce Australia, the new employment services model, commenced on 1 July 2022. Workforce Australia includes a digital platform that is designed to become a single front door for all government employment and skills programs and initiatives, and a network of providers to deliver case management.

Workforce Australia services centre on helping Australians to find and keep a secure job, change jobs or create their own job and connect employers with job seekers. This is particularly important in regional Australia which has tended to experience relatively lower employment rates and participation rates than major cities.

Expanding the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme

The Government has committed \$25.8 million over four years for the department to expand and reform the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme, including measures to make the scheme more attractive for workers and Australian industry. The PALM scheme helps Australian businesses by offering employers access to a pool of reliable workers, where there is unmet labour demand. It also allows Pacific and Timor-Leste workers to take up jobs in Australia, develop their skills and send income home to support their families and communities. The Government will:

- allow long-term PALM workers to bring their immediate family to Australia, subject to Australian employer sponsorship, with additional funding for social supports to ensure PALM scheme families have a positive experience in Australia;
- enable a further 500 PALM scheme workers to complete their Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing) to support the aged-care sector in Australia;
- underwrite flight costs for seasonal workers in circumstances where employers are unable to recoup these costs from workers and look to reduce obstacles for smaller businesses to participate in the scheme.
- As part of the Government's commitment to relocate the Australian Agriculture Visa under the PALM scheme, adjust the scheme's settings to allow more businesses to recruit PALM scheme workers where there are proven worker shortages
- continue to work closely with industry and worker representatives to co-design changes to PALM scheme settings to reflect the needs of the agriculture sector.

Improving program delivery

The Government will provide \$34.8 million to move the Skills for Education and Employment, Self-Employment Assistance, and Harvest Trail Services programs to the Workforce Australia Digital Platform. This will result in improved program delivery, better participant engagement and achieve easier provider administration and reporting on program activities and outcomes.

Current Initiatives

Australian Apprenticeships Incentive System

The Australian Government provides support to apprentices and their employers to commence and complete apprenticeships through the *Australian Apprenticeships Incentive System*. From 1 July 2022 the Government is providing \$2.4 billion over five years to apprentices and their employers, including those in regional, rural and remote Australia. Employers can access a wage subsidy set at 10 per cent in the first year, 10 per cent in the second year and 5 per cent in the third year. A direct payment up to a total of \$5,000 is available to Australian Apprentices in priority occupations for the first two years of the

apprenticeship. For all employers of apprentices in other occupations, a Hiring Incentive of \$3,500 is also available. Around 36 per cent of apprentices and trainees supported by the Australian Apprenticeships Incentive System live and work in regional and remote areas.

Local Jobs program

The *Local Jobs Program* supports regions to coordinate employment and training solutions at a local level with a focus on reskilling, upskilling and employment. This assists job seekers to connect with employment and training opportunities and helps employers to fill job vacancies. The program also supports innovative initiatives that help address structural or other barriers to employment and/or complement job creation to get Australian jobs seekers into work.

Funding of \$149.1 million has been provided over the next three years to June 2025 for the program which covers all 51 employment regions around the country.

Launch into Work

The Launch into Work program supports the delivery of pre-employment projects, including in regional areas. These projects prepare eligible individuals for specific entry-level roles within a business. The project is co-designed with the department and the hiring employer.

The Government is investing \$19.8 million for projects each financial year from July 2022 until June 2028.

Workforce Specialists

The Workforce Specialists program aims to deliver projects to meet the workforce needs of identified industries and occupations, including in regional areas, connecting them with eligible individuals in Workforce Australia Services (including Online Services) and Transition to Work. Funding of \$12.5 million each year is available for projects under the initiative.

Self-Employment Services

The Australian Government continues to support and encourage self-employment and small business growth. Self-employment helps create jobs, grow the economy and improve labour market outcomes by offering an alternative to traditional employment, particularly in areas with a weak labour market or high unemployment. Self-employment services can assist by identifying the self-employment opportunities and labour force needs in a region and aligning these with a participant's skills, experience and interests.

From 1 July 2022, the Self-Employment Assistance program (replacing the New Business Assistance with NEIS program) was provided \$673.9 million over four years to support self-employment and small business opportunities across 51 Employment Regions, including in regional areas.

Further, Entrepreneurship Facilitators provide support to Australians through connection to the small business ecosystem, local labour market expertise, group events including workshops and networking and light touch one on one support. From 1 July 2022, the program was provided \$21.7 million over four years to support service delivery across 23 Regions, including in regional areas.

Foundation Skills for Your Future Remote Community Pilot

The *Foundation Skills for Your Future Remote Community Pilot* provides \$9.9 million from 1 July 2019 for three years to fund place-based support for adult language, literacy, numeracy and digital skills training in remote communities. Four unique pilot programs are being delivered in four remote communities in the Northern Territory, Western Australia, South Australia and northern Queensland.

National Careers Institute (NCI)

Established in July 2019, the NCI provides people, including those in regional and remote Australia, with access to authoritative and accurate careers information to enable them to actively manage their career pathways irrespective of their age or career stage. This includes collaborating with industry and promoting partnerships, as well as delivering career services and the Your Career website. Since the 2019–20 Budget, the NCI has been allocated \$35.2 million in administered funding.

Transition to Work

The Government is committed to providing targeted support to improve youth employment outcomes. The youth unemployment rate has continued to be higher than for the general population, including in regional Australia.

Transition to Work provides intensive, time-limited assistance to young people aged 15 to 24 years who are at risk of not transitioning into employment or further education. The program has funding of \$1.3 billion over four years from 2022–23 to expand the youth employment services program for young people needing assistance from a provider in Workforce Australia. The service will continue to help disadvantaged young people to make positive transitions from school to work by promoting work experience and training participation and providing intensive assistance to young people experiencing multiple barriers to achieving successful labour market participation.

These services benefit disadvantaged young people in regional areas and support regional employers to recruit young employees and access support in implementing youth-focused employment pathways.

Fair Entitlements Guarantee

The Fair Entitlements Guarantee (FEG) is a scheme of last resort that guarantees unpaid employee entitlements of eligible employees retrenched due to liquidation or bankruptcy of their employer, where there is no other source of available funds. The entitlements of all

Australians, including those in rural and regional Australia, are protected under the FEG. FEG covers unpaid wages (up to 13 weeks), annual leave and long service leave, payment in lieu of notice (up to 5 weeks), and redundancy pay (up to 4 weeks per year of service). Changes have been introduced to support FEG claimants affected by natural disasters.

Skills for Education and Employment

Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) provides training to help participants build their reading, writing, maths and basic computer skills. The training is delivered across Australia, from metropolitan and regional areas, right through to remote communities. SEE caters to various groups including First Nations People, youth, people with disabilities, mature aged people, and job seekers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. SEE is funded on an ongoing basis, with \$547.5 million allocated over four years from 2022-23. Approximately 33 per cent of this funding goes to SEE providers in regional and remote locations.

Women in non-traditional trades

The Government is also providing \$38.6 million over four years from 2022-23 to encourage women to take up apprenticeships in non-traditional trade occupations. These additional services will help encourage more women to commence, and complete, apprenticeships in male-dominated trades like plumbing and bricklaying.

Harvest Trail Services

\$42.7 million has been provided for the Harvest Trail Services over the four years from 2022-23. Harvest Trail Services connect workers with employers in harvesting areas across rural and regional Australia. Workers can mix work with travel and learn new skills or start a career in agriculture.

The Australian Government is also continuing to fund the following initiatives:

- \$10.7 million for the *Digital Skills Cadetship Trial* over the three years from 2021-22.
- \$2 million for the *Reading Writing Hotline* over the four years from 2021-22.
- \$2.7 million for the National Careers Institute's *AgATTRACT-Attracting Australian workers* to modern agriculture over 2 years from 2021-22
- \$16.2 million for the *Project Agreement for Energising Tasmania* over the five years from 2019-20.

Foreign Affairs and Trade

The Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio works to make Australia stronger, safer and more prosperous. The portfolio comprises the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Australian Trade and Investment Commission (Austrade), Export Finance Australia (EFA), the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), Tourism Australia, and the Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS).

Australia's international environment is more contested and unpredictable than it has been for many years.

Geostrategic tensions, a weakening global economy, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine are producing greater instability. Advancing Australia's national interests to support our security and prosperity has become more challenging – yet more important – than ever. The Foreign Affairs and Trade Portfolio will continue to lead the Government's efforts in protecting and advancing Australia's interests globally.

The Portfolio will work across the Australian Government and internationally to support a region that is stable, prosperous, resilient and respectful of sovereignty. We will engage – including by listening intently – with our partners in the Pacific and Southeast Asia to underpin resilient nations and regional institutions. New energy and more resources will be brought to the Pacific to build a stronger and more united Pacific family. The whole-of-government Office of the Pacific will continue to lead Australia's efforts to meet shared challenges with our Pacific partners and achieve our shared interest in a prosperous and resilient region. We will collaborate with the United States and other partners, including through the Quad and AUKUS, to shape the strategic equilibrium that will underpin peace and security.

To support Australia's post-pandemic economic recovery, the Foreign Affairs and Trade Portfolio will continue to negotiate trade and investment agreements, creating export opportunities and jobs, reducing the cost of doing business overseas and providing Australian consumers with greater choice. Work continues on supporting businesses to reduce supply chain vulnerabilities and diversify trade. The department will strengthen our trade and tourism, including First Nations interests in both, and will showcase them on the world stage at Osaka Expo 2025.

Trade, tourism and investment remain crucial to Australia's economic prosperity. The Portfolio has continued to work through all channels to create new opportunities and reduce barriers to trade for Australian exporters and importers; and to assist businesses in regional areas to pursue commercial opportunities overseas. Through EFA, the portfolio provides financial expertise and solutions to help regional businesses take advantage of overseas export and investment opportunities. The portfolio also develops marketing campaigns to attract tourists to Australia, including into regional areas.

The Portfolio promotes international support and respect for global trade rules embodied in the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement. These rules are vital for access to global markets by rural producers and businesses. The portfolio also negotiates trade and investment agreements and supports the effective implementation and utilisation of Australia's Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). Australia currently has 16 FTAs in force with 26 economies, providing new opportunities for regional businesses. Australia is seeking to expand the current FTA network by negotiating and implementing new agreements, including with the United Kingdom, India and the European Union. Australia's FTA network opens new export opportunities for Australia's producers and makes the overseas-sourced inputs used in Australian production more affordable. Australia's FTAs also deliver a greater range of goods and services to Australian consumers at more competitive prices. The Government will continue to promote awareness and use of FTAs through active engagement with stakeholders.

Recognising the economic opportunities for Australia over the coming decades that lie in Southeast Asia, DFAT is leading the development of a Southeast Asia Economic Strategy to 2040. This strategy will map trade and investment opportunities across Southeast Asian markets, with practical measures to boost economic engagement by Australian businesses, including for many businesses located in regional Australia.

DFAT also leads negotiations on new kinds of trade agreements, including the Green Economy Agreement (GEA) with Singapore and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). The GEA is a world-first agreement that combines Australia's economic, trade, investment, and climate change policy objectives. Practical collaboration under the GEA will support economic growth, create jobs in green sectors, promote decarbonisation of economic activities and mainstream sustainability.

IPEF will seek to strengthen regional economic cooperation and integration to address new and emerging challenges in the Indo-Pacific. In consultation with domestic stakeholders, Australia will seek to develop innovative solutions to some of our region's most pressing challenges, including climate change and supply chain disruptions, while also helping to secure new opportunities for Australian businesses, workers, and consumers, including in regional Australia.

Drawing on market insights from our global network, DFAT continues to deliver, in partnership with the Export Council of Australia and Austrade, virtual Global Market Insights seminars, to promote market expansion and diversification opportunities to businesses, including regional businesses. There have been approximately 1,500 participants in multiple seminars, with at least a third of participants from regional Australia.

As a further contribution to Australia's economic recovery, DFAT is running the third in a series of capacity-building programs for economic development officers across rural and regional Australia. In partnership with the Regional Australia Institute, the program guides the participants through the development of international trade, tourism and investment attraction strategies.

The Australian Government also works to secure and maintain access for our agricultural products under other countries' technical and biosecurity regulations. The Government continues to lead whole-of-government efforts to remove non-tariff barriers, assisting exporters in accessing new markets and further expanding into existing ones. Throughout COVID-19, the Government has worked closely with key trading partners to minimise the impact of, and remove, export restrictions on important supplies.

The portfolio is also supporting rural and regional Australia by facilitating access to a reliable and productive workforce through the *Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme*. COVID-19 has presented unprecedented challenges to labour mobility and significant resources have been dedicated to ensuring Pacific workers were supported to work in critical industries including agriculture, meat processing, tourism and aged care in rural and regional locations.

During the COVID-19 pandemic Australia fielded 15 Australian Medical Assistance Team (AUSMAT) missions to assist partners in the region respond to the crisis. These missions were deployed by the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre (NCCTRC) in Darwin which draws on its geographic advantage and access to a highly trained workforce. The Australian Government is continuing its work with NCCTRC to strengthen NCCTRC's capacity to respond to health emergencies in the Pacific and Timor-Leste, including health system preparedness to respond to future disasters. As part of this, Australian medical specialists from the NCCTRC will also deliver training to partners in the Indo-Pacific region.

As at 31 August 2022, the Foreign Affairs and Trade Portfolio employed 5,582 staff under the *Public Service Act 1999*. Of this total, 4,168 are employed in Canberra, central Melbourne and central Sydney (75 per cent), 306 in other capital cities (5 per cent) and 1,108 in all other locations (20 per cent).

The portfolio also has staff in each state and territory, working from offices in Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide, Darwin, Hobart, Sydney, Melbourne, and Thursday Island and Austrade has offices in Wollongong and Newcastle.

The portfolio co-funds the TradeStart Network, a partnership with 13 State, Territory and local governments, and chambers of commerce that delivers export advice and support to Australian businesses via Austrade's overseas offices. The TradeStart Network co-funds 41 experienced advisers in 31 locations across rural, regional and metropolitan Australia.

New Initiatives

Expanding and Improving the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme

The PALM scheme is the primary temporary migrant workforce solution for unskilled, low-skilled and semi-skilled labour shortages in regional Australia and a centrepiece of Australia's Pacific engagement, supporting the economic development of our region. The Government will continue to expand and improve the scheme by investing \$67.5 million in

measures to increase the attractiveness of the scheme for regional employers, workers and our broader Pacific family. This includes:

- relocating the former Australian Agriculture Visa (AAV) under the PALM scheme and supporting growth of the scheme in rural and regional Australia by investing in measures that enable more workers to be mobilised to meet business needs
- allowing long-term PALM scheme workers (1-4 years) to bring their families (with the agreement of their employer) to Australia and providing access to Government assistance to ensure workers are well-supported in the community
- expanding existing aged care training pilots to deliver 500 additional aged care workers under the PALM scheme in 2023
- making the scheme more attractive to employers of seasonal workers by underwriting upfront travel costs that cannot be recouped from seasonal workers.

Family accompaniment will commence with a staged approach to test settings and ensure families are well supported in regional communities. The initiative will add a cultural richness and diversity to regional communities, with PALM scheme workers already contributing to the social fabric of their communities through their participation in community, sporting and religious activities. Expanded aged care pilots will deliver tangible outcomes for regional aged care providers in this crucial sector and the regional communities in which they operate.

Tourism and Traveller Sector Support

The Australian Government will provide \$47.9 million over four years, made up of five sub-measures for the tourism and travel industry to return it to its economic powerhouse status. Tourism has a larger contribution to some regional economies than metropolitan economies, generating jobs and livelihoods for people in regional Australia.

Attracting workers to Australia's tourism industry

Workforce and skills issues have been identified by industry as one of the greatest barriers to recovery. This has been particularly pronounced in regional areas that have traditionally relied on domestic and international workers, often on a seasonal basis to meet visitor needs. The Australian Government will seek to attract workers to the tourism industry by promoting the tourism sector, including to under-utilised cohorts such as people with disability, as a career of choice.

Expand 'The Hub'

The Australian Government will assist in expanding the Hub platform, including in regions, to connect people to vacancies, offering skill development and showcasing career pathways in tourism.

The online Hub platform, a portal run by the Accommodation Association of Australia, connects businesses, workers, and students to information for a career in the visitor economy across all jurisdictions. The Australian Government will assist in expanding the Hub to address workforce and skill shortages experienced in regions by developing a platform to connect key players with vacancies, skill development and showcasing the tourism industry, particularly in regional areas.

In 2022-23 and 2023-24 the Australian Government will support tourism businesses to undertake marketing and promotional activities to attract and drive visitation from key markets to Australia, including the regions.

Enhancing the Australian Tourism Industry Council's Quality Tourism Framework

The Quality Tourism Framework (QTF) is a business improvement program that helps tourism businesses grow and develop their products. Improving the standard of tourism products and experiences in regional Australia will increase visitor experiences, length of stay, accessibility and business resilience and sustainability. It is estimated that 60 per cent of current businesses in the QTF program are in regional Australia.

Upgrading infrastructure for Australian caravan parks

In 2022-23 and 2023-24 the Australian Government will help uplift infrastructure facilities at selected caravan parks nationally in both regional and metropolitan areas, with strong regional benefits. Caravanning is booming across Australia: 2022 data shows that 89 per cent of trips take place in regional areas. In 2019, 31 per cent of all trips in regional Australia involved caravans or camping. 92 per cent of all trips in the recreational vehicle industry are undertaken in regional and rural Australia. Prior to March 2020, caravan parks made up more than 37 per cent of holiday nights spent in commercial accommodation.

Singapore-Australia Green Economy Agreement Initiatives

The Green Economy Agreement will enhance two-way trade in environmental goods and services including through collaboration between Australian and Singaporean businesses to develop innovative green products, services, and technology. Both countries will contribute funding to support small and medium enterprises in joint initiatives which will help create new, skilled jobs in green growth sectors, including in regional Australia. Austrade and Enterprise Singapore will also manage a *Green Business Partnership* to promote and facilitate business, trade and investment in green economy sectors. From 2022-23 the Government will provide \$19.6 million over four years to implement key initiatives under the agreement.

Trade Diversification

The enhanced focus on trade diversification will directly support business in regional Australia by providing increased opportunities for regional based business to export to more markets, particularly in the region and in the United Kingdom and the European Union. The focus on agriculture exports will be of particular value to regional communities

and businesses. The Government's efforts to create a Trade 2040 Taskforce that is cross-sectoral and include representation from a wide range of stakeholders will ensure regional Australia's interests are better reflected in the formulation and implementation of Australia's trade and investment policy. The Government has committed \$4 million over 2022-23 and 2023-24 for this initiative.

Current Initiatives

Critical Minerals Facility

The \$2 billion Critical Minerals Facility was established in September 2021 to provide finance to critical minerals projects where private sector finance is unavailable or inadequate. Growing Australia's critical minerals sector and building our industrial base will help secure the vital supplies of resources needed to support the global clean energy transition, help create secure well-paid jobs and drive regional development.

The Critical Minerals Facility is managed by Export Finance Australia and reports to the Minister for Trade and Tourism. It operates on the National Interest Account for 10 years or until finance equivalent to \$2 billion has been provided. To date, the Government has approved three loans worth \$1.49 billion under the Facility to Ecograp Limited, Iluka Resources and Renascor Resources.

Australia-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement

The Australia-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement was signed on 17 December 2021. The Government is now working to bring the Agreement into force so that both countries can secure the maximum benefit from it. The Agreement contains commercially significant commitments that will support farmers and regional Australia by eliminating tariffs on over 99 per cent of Australian goods exports to the UK. For example, producers across the country will benefit from immediate elimination of tariffs, on produce, food and beverages including wine, short and medium grain rice, honey, nuts, and olive oil. Other gains include immediate access to duty free transitional quotas for key agriculture products, including beef and sheep meat, sugar, wheat and barley, and dairy, with eventual tariff elimination. The Agreement contains commitments which will support growth in services and digital trade, and promote investment with the UK, and enhances opportunities for Australian and UK nationals to live and work in each other's country.

Australia-India Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement

The Australia-India Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (AI-ECTA) was signed on 2 April 2022. The Agreement provides Australian businesses, including in regional Australia, with important new opportunities for diversifying their export markets. AI-ECTA will immediately eliminate tariffs on 85 per cent of Australia's goods exports to India – including agricultural goods such as wool, cotton, oats, barley, seafood, certain horticulture, nuts and oilseeds, crude canola oil and hides and skins, rising to 90 per cent over 7 years. Tariffs will also be eliminated on key resources including coal, LNG, alumina, metallic ores, nonferrous metals and critical minerals (zircon, titanium, manganese, copper,

cobalt, nickel aluminium and tin ores). This will significantly benefit around \$14.8 billion of Australian goods exports to India each year, with an estimated tariff saving of roughly AU\$500 million per annum. The Agreement will also support growth in services trade and labour mobility outcomes designed to enhance our growing people to people links.

Like the Australia-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement, the Government is seeking to advance entry into force of the Agreement as soon as possible, to deliver immediate benefits for both countries.

Simplified Trade System

The Simplified Trade System (STS) Implementation Taskforce (Taskforce). leads the Government's efforts to simplify cross-border trade to improve the experience for Australian businesses, while strengthening border and biosecurity protections. The Taskforce will continue working across government at all levels of Government and engaging closely with business to co-design regulatory, process and digital reforms. This work is helping to simplify Australia's cross-border trade environment and directly supports the Government's broader trade diversification and digital agendas. It will have a positive impact on regional Australia by reducing trade and border related regulatory costs and facilitating trade. Many Australian traders are based in regional Australia, especially agricultural exporters.

The Government has committed \$187.1 million over four years in the 2022-23 Budget to deliver a world class cross-border trade system for Australia. This includes:

- \$26.9 million for the Taskforce, Australian Border Force and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to develop a second pass business case for regulatory, digital and process improvements to simplify trade interactions with government
- \$11.7 million to expand the Trade Information Service to cover more products across priority export sectors, to help Australian business navigate complex regulatory and international market requirements.

Other Budget STS measures include proposals to build a technical foundation for modernising Australia's core trade systems and further investment in improved delivery of regulatory services for agricultural export under the *Digital Services to Take Farmers to Markets*. These will be led by the Australian Border Force, the Department of Home Affairs and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF).

Strengthening our engagement in the World Trade Organization

The multilateral rules-based trading system, with the World Trade Organization (WTO) at its core, is critical for Australia's future prosperity. The Government has been encouraging WTO Members to continue to respect those rules so they provide a platform for economic growth. The Government has also been using the WTO dispute settlement system to enforce trade rules and defend Australian trade measures in the WTO. The Government's

approach will promote a more secure and predictable environment for Australian regional businesses to export and invest overseas and allowing these businesses to compete fairly in Australia and markets around the world.

At the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference in June 2022, the Government played an important role in securing a number of updates to global trade rules. The outcomes achieved will support global economic recovery through boosting trade, including digital trade. They also pave the way for reforming the WTO so that it can better protect the interests of Australian regional producers and businesses to benefit from trade.

Agri-Business Expansion Initiative

The Australian Government is investing \$85.9 million over three years from 2020-21 in the Agri-Business Expansion Initiative (ABEI) to help Australian farming, forestry and fishing exporters to expand and diversify their export markets.

ABEI is being jointly delivered by Austrade and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF). Austrade is delivering scaled-up support to over 2,000 agri-food exporters each year through Austrade's export services, including:

- one-on-one exporter services to 800 clients per annum, and
- group services delivered to approximately 1,500 clients per annum through a variety of mechanisms including 'one to many' and 'one too few' events, digital platforms and Austrade's Advisory Centre.

The agri-business industry operates outside the metropolitan regions and underpins rural economies. The initiative delivers services to exporters across diverse sub-sectors of the industry including, but not limited to, grains, seafood, wine, forestry, horticulture, dairy, red meat, packaged food, cotton and wool. ABEI reaches and benefits exporters in every Australian state and territory.

The ABEI is helping Australian farmers, fishers, and agri-food producers understand and mitigate risks in an increasingly uncertain trading environment. The initiative builds on the Australian Government's work to expand FTAs and market access for Australia's globally competitive and market-based agriculture sector.

ABEI is benefitting regional communities by growing agricultural and food exports – helping to connect Australia's regional agricultural industries to new markets and position them for long-term growth.

- 'Surge' Agriculture Counsellors have been deployed to Washington DC, Seoul and Riyadh to boost intelligence, build relationships and accelerate market access outcomes.
- Roll-out of \$22 million in grant funding provided for an expanded Agricultural Trade and Market Access Cooperation grants program is progressing well. Grants worth over \$10 million have been committed since ABEI commenced, to agricultural export industries including red meat, wine, grains, seafood, dairy, cotton, wool, nuts and berries.

- 23 separate technical market access activities and 15 projects supporting technical access or scientific cooperation have been undertaken.

The balance of the program is being delivered by DAFF and includes expansion of the *Agricultural Trade and Market Access* program, expansion to the short-term Agriculture Counsellor network, investment in enhanced scientific and technical market access capability and improvements in the dissemination of practical market intelligence.

Business Events Grants Program

The business events sector saw almost a 100 per cent loss in revenue due to COVID-19. The program provides between \$10,000 and \$250,000 to cover up to 50 per cent of costs incurred in participating at pre-approved business to business events as exhibitors, buyers or sellers. 355 eligible events were published on the Schedule of Approved events. At the time of applications closing, the program was oversubscribed with 1,739 eligible applications requesting \$56,803,797.

In August 2021, \$6 million was committed for those eligible but unfunded applicants. A further extension was announced in September 2021 to allow postponed events to reschedule until 30 June 2023. There are currently 116 postponed events scheduled for 2022-23. As at September 2022, approximately \$54.1 million has been paid to 1,659 eligible applicants, while 82 applicants have withdrawn or were ineligible. 72 per cent of grantees businesses are located in regional areas of Australia.

Export Market Development Grants

Export Market Development Grants (EMDG) is the key Australian Government financial assistance scheme for exporters. The Government invested, \$144.7 million in 2021-22 and \$169.7 million in 2022-23 in EMDG which has been operating since 1974. The program is administered by Austrade and provides financial assistance to small and medium-sized exporters (SME) for marketing expenses related to promoting their Australian products and services offshore. Grantees are able to access up to eight years of assistance.

From 1 July 2021, the EMDG program has been simplified and streamlined to a forward-looking grants program that gives upfront funding certainty to eligible SMEs. The program provide grants for those exporting for the first time, for those expanding, and for those making a strategic shift in their export activities, including to diversify into new markets.

In Round One of the EMDG program (2021-22), 949 rural and regional businesses applied for EMDG, representing around 18 per cent of all applicants. These rural and regional businesses represent 65 different industries and bring significant benefits to their regions, through export earnings and employment. Austrade estimates rural and regional EMDG grantees delivered \$781 million in exports and provided over 11,500 regional jobs in 2020-21. Regional Representative Bodies are particularly active in EMDG, receiving funding to promote their members internationally and support members to become export ready.

Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement

The Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (IA-CEPA) entered into force on 5 July 2020. The IA-CEPA secures preferential access for Australian exporters for a range of key agricultural goods. For example, cattle producers in Northern Australia are benefitting from reduced tariffs on live cattle and beef. Under IA-CEPA, certain agricultural products have improved access into the Indonesian market and reduced tariffs. Australia and Indonesia also agreed to a skills package that includes a work and holiday visa outcome, skills exchange program and workplace skills training program. These outcomes enhance our people-to-people links and broaden relationships and opportunities for both Indonesia and Australia.

The Government is rolling out a \$40 million five-year economic cooperation program *Katalis* to support IA-CEPA implementation until 2025. Through *Katalis*, both governments are working together to help businesses identify and start new investments to create jobs, enhance inclusion, and increase prosperity in both countries. The program is currently identifying opportunities for Australian businesses in the electric vehicle industry, as well as supporting an Australian health provider to expand its presence in Indonesia.

Regionally-based and agricultural businesses seeking to diversify their export markets through opportunities in Indonesia will benefit from outreach activities designed to promote IA-CEPA. For example, the Australia-Indonesia Business Council's National Industry Series 'Indonesia- It's time to take a fresh look' has delivered a range of state-based seminars designed provide practical and strategic guidance for Australian businesses to deepen their trade and investment with Indonesia.

Health and Aged Care

Australians should have access to quality healthcare, no matter where they live. The data, however shows that Australians living in rural, regional and remote areas, on average, have shorter lives, higher death rates, higher levels of disease and injury, and poorer health outcomes compared with people living in metropolitan areas. At the same time, the ratio of health professionals in rural, regional and remote areas is much lower than in the cities. Outcomes for First Nations people living in rural, regional and remote areas are even worse with a life expectancy of up to 14 years less than non-Indigenous Australians.

The primary care sector faces significant challenges particularly in rural, regional and remote Australia. This is highlighted by the fact that only about 15 per cent of young medical graduates are choosing a career in general practice. Increasing the number of doctors choosing to become GPs and improving the health of general practice more broadly is a key priority for this Government. This Budget demonstrates the Government's commitment to make it easier for Australians to see a doctor, regardless of postcode, by rebuilding a better distributed, sustainable and skilled healthcare workforce. New initiatives supported through this Budget include:

- more trials of new innovative models of primary care in rural and remote areas;
- increasing placements in clinical training programs targeted at boosting the workforce practising in rural and remote Australia;
- additional training posts for rural generalist registrars, GP registrars, and fellowed GPs to undertake advanced skills training; and,
- greater incentives for GPs, nurses and allied health professionals to practice in rural areas under the Workforce Incentive Program, and incentivise the delivery of multidisciplinary care.

Strengthening Medicare is one of the Government's top priorities, with measures in the Budget addressing the growing challenges in primary care, and keeping pressure off hospitals. Primary care is the cornerstone of the Australian health system. The Strengthening Medicare Taskforce will also identify the best ways to boost affordability, improve access, and deliver better support for patients with ongoing and chronic illness, backed by the \$750 million Strengthening Medicare Fund.

The Australian Government is delivering on all First Nations Health Election Commitments announced during the 2022 election campaign. The Government has set out an ambitious agenda to deliver real change for First Nations peoples, by implementing in full the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* and improving a wide range of social and economic outcomes through the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*, in particular life expectancy, improving healthy birth weights and reducing suicide. This will require a genuine lift in effort given the health disparity that is currently faced by First Nations peoples, who continue to experience a burden of disease 2.3 times greater than non-Indigenous Australians. Chronic diseases cause 64% of this burden. Despite improvements, life expectancy for First Nations women is approximately 8 years less and for males 9 years less.

The initiatives being delivered as part of this Budget are designed to specifically target key areas that will deliver a steep change in many areas of First Nations health delivery through:

- Improved access and care for First Nations peoples in high need locations through improved infrastructure, as well as directly targeting key chronic diseases that are disproportionately impacting on First Nations peoples' health.
- Growing the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) sector and First Nations health workforce by working in partnership to design and deliver the proposals.

The Australian Government is continuing to focus on increasing support for the aged care sector, through our response to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, including in regional and remote Australia. In this Budget, the Government will invest \$68.5 million to respond to Recommendation 8.6 of the final report of the *Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety* to expand the State and Territory network, within the Department of Health and Aged Care, to strengthen and facilitate local connections and integration across systems, and support implementation of aged care reforms at the local level. This new investment will have positive impacts on older people, their families and carers. It will create employment opportunities outside of capital cities, including for First Nations people and people from other diverse communities who wish to work and live in their community.

As at 31 August 2022, the Health and Aged Care Portfolio employed 8,365 staff under the *Public Service Act 1999*. Of this total, 6,840 are employed in Canberra, central Melbourne and central Sydney (81.8 per cent), 1,514 in other capital cities (18.1 per cent) and 11 in regional areas (0.1 per cent).

New Initiatives

Rural and Regional Health

Investment to Boost Rural Doctor Workforce – Additional Workforce Incentives for GPs

The Australian Government is investing \$74.1 million from 2022-23 to 2025-26 to implement the Government's election commitment to boost the primary care workforce by increasing financial incentives to rural GPs and generalists with additional advanced skills to practice in rural and remote communities.

Restoring Loading to Regional Psychiatry Telehealth Services

The Australian Government is committing approximately \$12 million a year from 2022-23 to implement the Government's election commitment to restore a 50 per cent loading to bulk-billed Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) services delivered by video telehealth to regional and rural patients.

This will incentivise the delivery of bulk billed psychiatry consultations delivered by video telehealth, for eligible patients, located within:

- a regional and rural area (outside of metropolitan areas)
- patients who are care recipients in a residential care service, and
- patients of an Aboriginal Medical Service or an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service.

This proposal will assist rural and regional psychiatry patients facing affordability and access challenges, for example patients with a disability which limits their ability to travel to access face to face services, to receive the mental health support they require with no cost to the patient.

Improved Access to Nurses and Allied Health Professionals in Rural Healthcare Teams

The Australian Government is investing \$29.4 million from 2022-23 to 2025-26 to implement its election commitment to improve the *Workforce Incentive Program (WIP) – Practice Stream* to increase access to nurses, allied health practitioners and First Nations health workers and practitioners working as part of multidisciplinary teams. This will be achieved through changes to the existing program, which provides salary support payments to allow primary care practices to employ health staff. The changes would commence on 1 November 2022, with first payments to be made in line with the WIP-Practice Stream February 2023 quarter payment. The changes include:

- expanding the list of health professionals eligible for salary support to include a broader range of allied health and auxiliary health professionals for practices located in Modified Monash (MM) locations 2 to 7 areas giving practices the ability to employ a greater range of health workers as part of quality multidisciplinary teams to meet the increasingly complex health needs of patients, and
- increasing the rural loading on payments paid to practices in MM 3 to 7 locations by 10 per cent, up to a maximum loading of 60 per cent for MM 7 practices, and
- giving practices the ability to employ a greater range of health workers as part of quality multidisciplinary teams, and support the need to meet the increasingly complex health needs of older people and people living with complex chronic conditions.

Investment to Boost Rural Health Workforce – Expanded Innovative Models of Care Program

The Australian Government is investing \$24.7 million from 2022-23 to 2025-26 to implement its election commitment to expand the existing *Innovative Models of Care (IMoC)* program to trial a broader set of innovative models aimed at addressing health workforce shortages and improving patient health outcomes in rural and remote Australia.

The IMoC program supports organisations and communities to trial practical, sustainable, and locally supported proposals for new primary care models. It also contributes to the attraction and retention of rural health professionals – encouraging individuals to operate across their full scope of practice, the use of multidisciplinary teams, telehealth, different employment models, block funding, and shared healthcare resources between small connected communities.

Expansion of the John Flynn Prevocational Doctor Program

The Australian Government is investing an additional \$5.6 million in 2025-26 (and \$11.2 million per year ongoing) to implement its election commitments to improve access to critical health services for Australians in regional, rural and remote communities.

This initiative increases the number of John Flynn Prevocational Doctor Program (JFPDP) rotations from 800 (200 FTE) in 2025 to 1000 (250 FTE) by the 2026 training year. During rotations, junior doctors will deliver primary care services to rural and remote communities, improving access to care for these communities and giving more junior doctors positive experience of rural general practice at a formative stage of their careers.

Advanced Skills Training Posts for Rural Generalists and GPs

The Australian Government is investing \$8.4 million from 2022-23 to 2025-26 to implement its election commitment to increase support for Rural Generalist (RG) and General Practitioner (GP) registrars and doctors in regional, rural and remote Australia to attain advanced skills through funding 30 new advanced skills training posts. This proposal will increase the number of highly skilled GPs and RGs in rural areas who can provide extended clinical skills to their communities.

Boost for Rural Health in Northern Queensland – James Cook University

The Australian Government is investing \$13.2 million from 2022-23 to 2025-26 to provide a long-term approach to alleviate medical workforce shortages in Northern Queensland through the establishment of a new medical training campus and Commonwealth-funded medical training places in Cairns, Queensland.

Funding will be provided to James Cook University (JCU) to expand its rural medical training by establishing a full medical school program in Cairns. Funding will support capital works, establishment costs, recurrent funding and 20 new commencing medical Commonwealth Supported Places (CSPs).

More Access to Medical Resonance Imaging

The Australian Government is investing \$12.4 million from 2022-23 to 2025-26 to implement its election commitment to provide full Medicare eligibility for magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machines located at three locations:

- the new Maitland Hospital at Metford Road, Metford NSW
- Wyong Hospital at Pacific Highway, Hamlyn Terrace NSW, and
- Hawkesbury Hospital at Day Street, Windsor NSW.

Ensuring MRI machines at Maitland, Wyong and Hawkesbury are Medicare eligible will provide more options for patients requiring MRI scans in these locations. This change is expected to support an additional 2,000 patients per year who are currently unable to access MRI services through Medicare at each of these locations.

Establishment of a Birthing Unit and Maternity Ward at Yass District Hospital

The Australian Government is investing \$4.7 million in 2023-24 to deliver its election commitment to work with the NSW Government to restore maternity services to Yass District Hospital, including a new maternity ward with a fully fitted-out birth room and a postnatal room for overnight stays.

Restoring maternity services to Yass District Hospital will positively impact expectant mothers from Yass and surrounding areas and their families. Currently they are required to travel to Goulburn, Canberra or Queanbeyan (approximately an hour away) to give birth. The restoration of maternity services to Yass District Hospital will enable mothers to give birth closer to home where they have better access to family support.

Health and Medical Research Centre for Launceston, Tasmania

The Australian Government is investing \$4.0 million from 2023-24 to 2027-28 to develop a medical research centre in Launceston, Tasmania. The commitment consists of \$2 million to refit the 1,300 square metre site on the first floor of the Northern Integrated Care Service building, and a contribution to operational costs at \$400,000 per year for five years.

The new centre will help improve research governance within the Tasmanian Health Service, while delivering benefits for rural and regional communities. These improvements will better enable the Launceston General Hospital to engage with existing national clinical trial networks and leverage the experience and expertise of already established research communities.

Primary Care Infrastructure Grants Improving Access in Rural and Regional Queensland

The Australian Government is investing \$3.1 million for two years from 2022-23 to implement two election commitments to improve access to primary health care in rural areas of Queensland through infrastructure grants:

- \$2.8 million to build a Central Highlands Allied Health Clinic in Emerald, Queensland. The twin-building facility will include 10 practice rooms, a large measurement and assessment room, and dedicated training facilities, and
- \$150,000 in 2022-23 to refurbish the facilities at Impact Community Health, a primary health care service for Agnes Water and Seventeen Seventy, Queensland.

Radiation Therapy Centre in the new Eurobodalla Hospital

The Australian Government is investing an additional \$1.8 million from 2024-25 to deliver its election commitment to work with the NSW Government to expand on funding available through the current *Fighting Cancer – additional infrastructure services* initiative to deliver its election commitment to provide \$8 million for a radiation therapy centre in the new Eurobodalla Regional hospital at Moruya.

The establishment of a radiation therapy centre in the new Eurobodalla Hospital will ensure that patients living in the Eurobodalla region have access to cancer treatment and support services. The radiation therapy centre will include the development of physical infrastructure and acquisition of a linear accelerator, a specialised machine that is used to treat cancer tumours.

Reopening of the Kaden Centre

The Australian Government is investing \$1.1 million from 2022-23 to 2025-26 to deliver its election commitment to reopen and revitalise the operations of the *Kaden Centre* in the Hunter Region of New South Wales. The Centre is a purpose-built, not for profit multidisciplinary facility that delivers targeted oncology exercise programs to people experiencing all stages of cancer and chronic conditions.

Reopening the Kaden Centre will provide people with cancer living in Newcastle and the Hunter, and their families, access to specialised allied health physiotherapists, exercise physiologists, and individualised cancer exercise programs. This includes support for people in rural areas, from non-English speaking backgrounds and First Nations people.

Single Employer Models for Rural General Practice Trainees

The Australian Government is investing \$0.8 million from 2022-23 to 2025-26 to implement an election commitment to increase the number of GP and rural generalist registrars training in regional, rural and remote Australia through trials that address the discrepancy between public hospital and primary care remuneration and employment conditions. This will improve the availability of high quality comprehensive medical care in rural communities.

This proposal will deliver more Single Employer Model (SEM) trials across states and territories, commencing progressively from 1 July 2023. Up to ten new SEM trial sites in rural locations will be identified through an expression of interest process.

Boosting Cancer Care in North Tasmania

The Australian Government is investing \$642,000 in 2022-23 to deliver its election commitment to support a new cancer support pilot program at the W.P Holman Clinic in the Launceston General Hospital. The program will help cancer patients in northern Tasmania better manage their symptoms and access the psychological care and ongoing support they need to live well.

A full time Clinical Nurse Consultant will be funded to provide specialist clinical advice to patients, their families and other health care professionals relating to cancer survivorship. The Nurse Consultant will also coordinate and run support groups in conjunction with Non-Government Organisations and community partners, and link patients to local resources promoting self-efficacy

Guaranteeing Medicare and Primary Care

Strengthening Medicare GP Grants Program

The Australian Government is investing \$229.7 million through the Strengthening Medicare GP Grants Program to support general practices, including Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, to provide better care and see more patients. One-off grants of up to \$50,000 will be available for innovation, training, equipment and minor capital works to improve patient access. This funding also recognises the additional pressures placed on GPs through the COVID-19 pandemic, including those in rural and regional areas.

Medicare Urgent Care Clinics

To take pressure off overworked doctors, nurses and staff in our hospital emergency departments, \$235 million will support new models to establish a network of 50 Medicare Urgent Care Clinics across the country. This includes \$100.0 million over 2 years from 2022–23 to co-develop and pilot innovative models with states and territories to improve care pathways and inform program roll out. The new models of care will make it easier for Australians to see a healthcare professional when they have an urgent, but not life threatening, need for care. Establishing Urgent Care Clinics across Australia will also provide communities in regional areas with improved access to urgent care.

Cheaper Medicines

The Government is making medicines cheaper for Australian households. For the first time in its 75-year history, the maximum cost of general scripts under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) will be reduced, falling from a maximum co-payment of \$42.50 to \$30, through investment of \$787.1 million, from 1 January 2023.

Listing cemiplimab (Libtayo®) \$343.5 million and nivolumab (Opdivo®) \$459.1 million on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) in this budget means that thousands of Australians living with cutaneous squamous cell carcinoma and advanced gastro-oesophageal cancers will benefit from cheaper access to vitally important treatment. For some patients, listing these medicines on the PBS will save them in some cases up to hundreds of thousands of dollars per treatment course.

In addition to this, a variety of medicines are added and amended on the PBS every month, and these other listings from July to October are covered in a further \$611.7 million investment in this budget.

These changes benefit all eligible Australians equally.

Strengthening First Nations Health

First Nations Health Infrastructure

The Australian Government is investing \$164.3 million from 2022-23 to 2025-26 to deliver 17 election commitments for First Nations health infrastructure projects. These capital works projects focus on investment in modern, high-quality health clinics in areas of large and growing First Nations populations, as well as carefully targeted smaller investments to build capacity to target chronic disease treatment and rehabilitation. Of these, six projects (totalling \$59 million) are in regional and remote areas:

- Hydrotherapy facilities in Orange for Orange Aboriginal Medical Service – \$4 million
- New build clinic in Ceduna for Yadu Health – \$13.35 million
- New build clinic in Bunbury for South West Aboriginal Medical Service – \$18.3 million
- Two new clinics and renovation of existing health infrastructure in Central Australia for Central Australian Aboriginal Congress – \$19 million
- Aboriginal and Multicultural Health Centre in Queenstown for Rural Health West – \$1.42 million, and
- Solar Pilot Project for four Aboriginal Health Services in Western Australia – \$2.9 million.

This proposal will address Priority Reform Two: Building the Community Controlled Sector under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, and support the government's commitment to raise ambitions and ensure sustained progress on the National Agreement.

Better Renal Services for First Nations Peoples

The Australian Government is investing up to \$45 million from 2022-23 to 2025-26 to implement its *Better Renal Services* election commitment to deliver up to 30 four-chair dialysis units. This amount includes up to \$15 million for dialysis related small scale water infrastructure to ensure appropriate quality of water supply to the dialysis units.

Additional dialysis chairs will benefit First Nations peoples with end-stage kidney disease by providing dialysis treatment closer to their homes, increasing the likelihood of more regular treatment, continued support and care from family, and better management of patient health. The unique needs of each community who receive dialysis chairs, will be delivered in partnership with the community and the ACCHS sector, recognising that the delivery of culturally safe care and community buy-in is critical to the uptake of this service.

First Nations Health Worker Traineeship Program

The Australian Government is investing \$48 million from 2022-23 to 2025-26 (\$54.3 million over five years from 2022-23) to implement its election commitment to support up to 500 First Nations trainees to undertake Certificate III or IV accredited training as First Nations health workers or practitioners. There may be opportunities to broaden the qualifications offered under the program to take account of shortages and need in other areas/sectors including, but not limited to, mental health, aged care, disability care and early childhood.

Waminda Birthing on Country Centre of Excellence

The Australian Government is investing \$22.5 million from 2022-23 to 2024-25 to deliver its election commitment to build a dedicated *Birthing on Country Centre of Excellence* (the Birth Centre) at Waminda, an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service in Nowra, New South Wales (NSW). The Birth Centre will provide culturally safe continuity of care and wraparound support services for First Nations families in the perinatal period and across the life course. It will be operational by 2025-26.

This proposal directly contributes to Target Two of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (by 2031, increase the proportion of First Nations babies with a healthy birthweight to 91 per cent) by ensuring access to culturally safe perinatal services through Birthing on Country models of care and growing the First Nations maternal health workforce to support a culturally safe health system. This proposal will help increase the availability of culturally safe maternity services, which evidence demonstrates are essential to improving maternal and infant health outcomes.

Strengthening First Nations Health – Rheumatic Heart Disease

The Australian Government is investing \$14.2 million from 2022-23 to 2024-25 to increase the current funding to the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) to combat Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD) in high-risk communities, those with high incidence and prevalence of Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD). The proposal delivers on the Australian Government's election commitment and would fund:

- Increased service delivery for RHD treatment and prevention activities in high-risk communities – \$12 million to combat RHD which will allow more at-risk communities to access prevention and treatment programs.
- Improved detection of RHD, and increased screening rates – \$1.5 million to purchase portable echo-cardiogram machines and associated training.

Supporting Indigenous Health in the Northern Territory – Guaranteeing Rescue Services and Emergency Aeromedical Services through CareFlight.

The Australian Government is investing \$10.1 million in 2022-23 to implement the Government's election commitment to boost CareFlight's capacity to deliver urgent medical services and provide essential rescue services by funding the purchase and modification of a second-hand rescue helicopter.

The top-end region of the Northern Territory currently has only one rescue helicopter which is unavailable to provide services all the time, due to essential maintenance requirements. This means that the helicopter is unavailable approximately 30 per cent of the year. A second helicopter will double the capacity of CareFlight's Top-End helicopter responses to critical emergency situations and provide vital care and transport to injured and sick Territorians, enabling year round services.

Dialysis Treatment Buses for Far West New South Wales

The Australian Government is investing \$1.1 million in 2022-23 to deliver its election commitment to supply the Far West NSW region with two dialysis treatment buses to service Wilcannia, White Cliffs and Menindee.

The dialysis treatment buses will support end stage kidney disease patients in the far west NSW region to access dialysis treatment without the need to travel significant distances, and saving patients' significant financial and time costs. Broken Hill is the closest dialysis centre. Round trips from the identified areas are between 200 and 500km with some patients needing to travel for dialysis 3 times per week.

Improving Renal and Cardiac Care at Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation and Redfern Aboriginal Medical Service

The Australian Government is investing over \$0.8 million in 2022-23 to improve the quality of care, and health and wellbeing outcomes for First Nations peoples by upgrading or purchasing much needed medical equipment.

This will support the care of patients with chronic disease attending two Aboriginal Medical Services – Redfern Aboriginal Medical Service (Redfern AMS) and the Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation Aboriginal Medical Service (Tharawal AMS). The facilities at these Aboriginal Medical Services do not currently have the equipment needed to provide quality cardiac and renal healthcare services to First Nations patients with chronic conditions, including cardiovascular disease and chronic kidney disease.

Ageing and Aged Care

Strengthening Regional Stewardship of Aged Care

The Australian Government is investing \$68.5 million from 2022-23 to 2025-26 to respond to Recommendation 8.6 of the final report of the *Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety* (Royal Commission).

This investment will expand the initial rollout of regional stewardship in 8 Primary Health Network regions (South East NSW, Gold Coast, East Melbourne, Country Western Australia, Adelaide, Tasmania, the Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory) funded for 18 months in the 2021-22 and March 2022-23 Budgets. The expanded resources will support implementation of expansions to Multi-Purposes Services in regional areas, as well as innovative solutions to service access challenges in thin markets.

This new investment will have positive impacts on older people, their families and carers by strengthening and facilitating local connections and integration across systems, and support implementation of aged care reforms at the local level.

Putting nurses back into nursing homes, and increasing resident care time

The government is providing \$2.5 billion over 4-years from 2022-23 to support all residential aged care services to have a registered nurse onsite 24 hours a day 7 days a week from 1 July 2023 and increase care minutes to a sector average of 215 minutes per resident per day, including 44 minutes with a registered nurse by 1 October 2024.

This funding will be delivered by:

- the introduction of an RN supplement from 1 July 2023, available to all services of 60 residents or less, and
- an increase in Australian National Aged Care Classification (AN-ACC) basic daily subsidy funding from 1 October 2024.

The RN supplement provides up to \$733,000 in funding per annum to rural and remote services in Modified Monash Model (MMM) 5-7 areas, and is paid at a higher rate to these services recognising the increased costs in attracting nurses to work in rural and remote areas. The supplement is expected to be available to around 90 per cent of MMM 5-7 services, compared to just under 40 per cent of services in MMM 1-4 areas.

Reforms to Residential Care Funding to Drive Better Care and a Viable System

From 1 October 2022, the government introduced a new funding model for residential aged care, the Australian National Aged Care Classification (AN-ACC). The AN-ACC is a significant reform that will drive better care and establish a more sustainable, efficient and transparent system.

The AN-ACC supports rural, remote and very remote services by providing additional funding in line with the extra cost of delivering care in these areas. It also removes an issue within the current funding model, whereby limited access to allied health professionals outside of metropolitan areas restricted their funding levels.

Funding for individual facilities

The Australian Government will provide \$26.1 million in targeted funding to improve services for First Nations Elders, older people from diverse communities, people living with dementia and older people in regional areas. This support will increase access to culturally safe care. To direct funding where it is needed most, individual homes and providers will receive one-off project funding to address critical gaps in their infrastructure and services, including:

- \$2.8 million for Community Care Tasmania, who have a focus on multicultural and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or intersex (LGBTI) clients, for the implementation of the final stages of a purpose built facility in Launceston for both training and respite.
- \$100,000 for the Kalymnian Brotherhood Darwin to develop a detailed business case for the establishment of a Greek Seniors Retirement Village.
- \$100,000 for a feasibility study into an 8 to 10 bed dementia unit in Campbell Town, Tasmania, to determine whether a suitable dementia unit facility can be built.

COVID-19

The Government will continue to protect the most vulnerable in the community from COVID-19 and take pressure off our hospitals and the economy. The Government is providing \$2.6 billion to adapt Australia's COVID-19 response to the current state of the pandemic. Funding will ensure continued supplies of personal protective equipment and access to vaccines and treatments for at-risk cohorts.

Extension of the National Partnership on COVID-19 Response

The Australian Government has invested \$759.9 million in 2022-23 on the National Partnership on COVID-19 Response.

The Partnership:

- supports state and territory governments to deliver COVID-19-related care outside of hospital, and for medical related transport costs for rural, remote and/or indigenous patients through the State Public Health Payment, and
- ensures the equitable distribution of vaccines in regional Australia and supports outreach activities to administer primary course and booster dose vaccinations in rural and remote communities.

National Nurse and Midwife Health Service

The Australian Government is investing \$25.2 million from 2022-23 to 2026-27 in health support for nurses and midwives. The National Nurse and Midwife Health Service (NNMHS) will provide free, confidential and independent advice, support, information, treatment and specialist referrals for nurses, midwives and undergraduate nursing and

midwifery students. All nurses and midwives including students in regional and rural communities will be able to access the program.

The national program will be modelled on the Nursing and Midwifery Health Program Victoria (NMHPV). It will provide health related counselling and support services for nurses and midwives and nursing and midwifery students. The health service will be delivered by nurses and midwives for nurses and midwives.

Supporting Palliative Care in Anam Cara House, Geelong and Launceston Hospice

The Australian Government is investing \$23 million from 2022-23 to 2025-26 to deliver two election commitments to provide funding for palliative care facilities that improve end of life care options for residents of Geelong and Launceston:

- \$20 million over four years from 2022-23, to support the construction of a new 10 bed hospice, located within the Launceston General Hospital Precinct, to improve palliative care in Northern Tasmania. This will be the first dedicated, stand-alone hospice facility in the region since the closure of the previous hospice in 2007, and
- \$2.95 million, paid over three years from 2022-23, to improve access to quality end-of-life care at the newly established Anam Cara House palliative care facility in Waurin Ponds, Geelong. The funding will support the establishment of a research and training partnership with the School of Medicine and Faculty of Health at the Deakin University to allow on-site workforce education and training. Funding will also help to attract, up-skill and retain volunteers to assist in the delivery of services, purchase a specialised bus for end-of-life day trips and establish a secure power supply to ensure service continuity and care is available at all times for patients at the end of life.

Queanbeyan Respite Care Facility

The Australian Government is investing \$1.1 million in 2022-23 to deliver its election commitment to contribute to the operating costs of the Yvonne Cuschieri House respite care facility in Queanbeyan, New South Wales. The facility will provide critical respite care to adults aged 18-60 years with chronic illness from the Queanbeyan community and surrounding regional areas of NSW. The measure will also support the families and carers of adults with chronic conditions in the region.

Strengthening and expanding the headspace network

The Australian Government is strengthening and expanding the headspace network by investing \$23.5 million to establish new headspace services, including satellite sites in Kiama and Bribie Island. Access to youth mental health support has never been more important. This new measure will improve access to multi-disciplinary, youth-focused primary care in the community for young people aged 12-25 years with mild to moderate mental ill-health.

Mental health and wellbeing support for flood impacted communities in NSW

The Australian Government is investing \$13 million in targeted mental health support for NSW communities impacted by the devastating recent floods. This will provide dedicated funding for the Hawkesbury region and other areas severely impacted by recent floods so they can receive the support they need to recover.

Sport4All

The Australian Government is investing \$10.3 million over four years from 2022-23 to expand the Sport4All pilot project into a nationwide program which includes a focus on First Nations people living with disability.

The Sport4All program is delivered by Get Skilled Access, and places people with a disability (and others with relevant lived experiences, such as First Nations people or people connected directly with these communities) in roles as ‘inclusion coaches’ in Local Government Area (LGA) councils. Inclusion coaches provide local schools and sporting clubs with resources, training, and support to create and deliver inclusive environments for all Australians.

Beach Safety Equipment Fund

The Australian Government is investing \$5 million over three years from 2022-23 for Surf Life Saving Australia’s Beach Safety Equipment Fund. The funding assists with the purchase of vital rescue equipment including rescue boards, life jackets, rescue manikins, inflatable rescue boats, all-terrain vehicles, defibrillators, first aid and medical supplies. Funding will be available to each of the 314 Surf Life Saving Clubs across Australia.

AFL in the Northern Territory

The Australian Government is investing \$2.2 million over three years from 2022-23 to support community participation in AFL football training and competitions across the Northern Territory, and the delivery of activities through the Michael Long Learning and Leadership Centre, managed by AFL Northern Territory.

Current Initiatives

Guaranteeing Medicare and Primary Care

Ongoing telehealth

The Government is providing \$106 million over four years from 2021-22 to permanently retain Medicare telehealth services that were introduced in response to COVID-19. This measure was implemented on 1 January 2022.

Telehealth services are available for GPs, nurse practitioners, midwives, nurses, First Nations health practitioners, specialists and allied health professionals. Primary care telehealth services have continued largely unchanged with the reintroduction of specific Medicare items for GP telephone consultations longer than 20 minutes for patients in Modified Monash Model (MM) 6 to 7 regions (remote and very remote communities).

Telehealth has been found to increase accessibility, reduce travel time, and reduce waiting times for patients, leading to increased productivity. Importantly, telehealth also assists many Australians, such as those living in rural and remote areas, First Nations peoples, people with disability, and residents of aged care facilities, to access care which may have otherwise been unavailable.

Supporting patient access to Magnetic Resonance Imaging

The Government is investing \$66 million to remove the longstanding magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) equipment eligibility requirements, often referred to as ‘licencing’, in regional, rural and remote areas from 1 November 2022. From 1 November 2022, patients in regional, rural and remote areas will be able to access Medicare-funded MRI services on any MRI machine located at an accredited practice in a Modified Monash Model (MM) 2 to 7 area that also offers at least x-ray, ultrasound and computed tomography services. Patients will benefit from having increased access to affordable, high quality MRI services closer to home, with lower out-of-pocket costs and reduced travel times to obtain Medicare-funded MRI services.

It is estimated that more than 40,000 regional, rural and remote patients per year will benefit from this initiative.

Rural Bulk Billing Incentive

From 1 January 2022, Medicare included a progressive incentive schedule for doctors to provide bulk billed services in rural and remote areas, with an estimated cost of \$65.8 million over four years.

By increasing the *Rural Bulk Billing Incentive* according to remoteness, the government recognises the challenges of delivering healthcare in smaller rural communities and remote communities. The *Rural Bulk Billing Incentive* has been increased in rural and remote areas (MM 3 to 7) progressively from its current 150 per cent loading up to 190 per cent in very remote areas.

Royal Flying Doctor Service – Strategic Partnership and Additional Funding

The Australian Government will shortly enter into a 10 year Strategic Partnership with the RFDS and is providing additional funding of \$33.3 million from 2022-23 to 2025-26 (\$81.1 million over 10 years) for the RFDS to:

- fund up to 25 per cent of the cost of replacing 21 RFDS aircraft over the next 10 years, and
- increase the RFDS funding base for primary health clinics and emergency primary aeromedical evacuation including indexation.

This builds on the Australian Government’s existing annual investment of \$84 million in the RFDS to provide primary aeromedical evacuations, primary health clinics (including Bass Strait Islands), dental and mental health services across Australia in areas beyond normal medical infrastructure and in areas of market failure.

Health Workforce

Building on the Government’s Investment in Rural Medical Training

The Australian Government is investing \$114.2 million over four years from 2022-23 to better manage the supply of medical school graduates.

This measure involves establishing a competitive process, using the Assessment Framework, to fund existing medical schools to deliver the full medical school program at rural campuses. This will help increase self-sufficiency in training local doctors and address maldistribution of the medical workforce. An additional 80 Commonwealth Supported Places will support the establishment of up to eight fully rural medical programs.

Funding will also be allocated for:

- the RHMT program to Charles Sturt University (CSU) to deliver a Rural Clinical School
- establishing an ongoing evaluation of the Murray-Darling Medical Schools Network (MDMSN), and
- a grant opportunity process is to be held in 2023 to select an administrator to continue the *National Rural Health Students Network* (NRHSN), with current administrator (NSW Rural Doctors Network) arrangements to be extended for a further year.

Extension of the Rural Health Workforce Support Activity

The Australian Government is investing \$53.4 million from 2020-21 to 2023-24 to extend the *Rural Health Workforce Support Activity* administered by Rural Workforce Agencies. The program:

- supports quality, continuous primary health care access for rural and remote communities
- contributes to addressing health workforce shortages and maldistribution through workforce assessment and planning, and
- provides a contemporary and jurisdictional approach to the specific issues and concerns in attracting, retaining training and supporting the health workforce.

Health Workforce Scholarship Program

The Australian Government is investing \$33 million from 2020-21 to 2023-24 for the *Health Workforce Scholarship Program* (HWSP). The HWSP increases access to health services in rural and remote areas that are experiencing skill shortages, by providing scholarships and bursaries to health professionals committed to rural service.

Scholarships and bursaries are prioritised to address local needs and increase the skills, capacity and/or scope of practice of existing health professionals. Most scholarship types also include a return of service obligation to provide a greater return on investment.

Remote Vocational Training Scheme

Australians living in remote Australia are better able to access doctors under the *Remote Vocational Training Scheme* (RVTS) *Targeted Recruitment Pilot*. The expanded RVTS is funded through to 2024 and delivers structured distance education and supervision to doctors while they provide medical services in First Nations communities and rural and remote locations throughout Australia. The pilot aims to assist in the provision of medical services to locations that have had difficulty in recruiting doctors and have been identified as having a high medical workforce need. The government will conduct an evaluation of the RVTS pilot, scheduled for 2024, to identify the impact of the initiative on attracting GP trainees to work and train in areas of high workforce shortage, and increase access to essential medical services.

Rural Procedural Grants Program

The Australian Government provides more than \$19 million each year to the *Rural Procedural Grants Program*. This program enables vocationally recognised procedural GPs and registrars practising in rural and remote locations to access grants to attend training and up-skilling in emergency and procedural medicine. Grants are also available for GPs working in emergency medicine to maintain their skills in emergency mental health. The government is also exploring options to streamline and expand the scope of this program.

Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program

The long-standing *RHMT* program aims to improve the recruitment and retention of health professionals in rural and remote Australia. In the 2021 calendar year, there were over 15,270 allied health, nursing and dentistry placements across Australia – equating to over 79,820 placement weeks in rural and remote Australian communities. There were over 1,160 graduating medical students that undertook a year or more of rural clinical training.

The recent evaluation found the *RHMT* program has successfully supported rural training experiences for students across a wide range of health disciplines for the past two decades, demonstrating the capacity of universities to provide students with high quality clinical training in locations outside of metropolitan locations. The evaluation also found that the program is an appropriate response to addressing rural health workforce shortages, and strengthening the social and economic fabric of communities.

The RHMT program supports 21 universities, currently forming a national network of 19 Rural Clinical Schools (RCSs), 17 University Departments of Rural Health (UDRH) and 26 Regional Training Hubs to provide infrastructure and academic networks for teaching and training medicine, nursing, allied health and dentistry students and to support pathways to rural practice, as well as funding activities under the *Northern Territory Medical Program*.

A new agreement has been reached with all participating universities for the next three calendar years (2022-24), that will see a total of \$625.2 million provided. The Government is investing \$48.3 million from 2021-22 to 2024-25 to expand UDRH activities, including the establishment of the 17th UDRH (James Cook University), multiple activities in more rural and remote locations and aged care facilities, and the conducting of a feasibility study to explore options to increase dental and oral health training outcomes within the RHMT program.

National Rural Generalist Pathway

The Government is investing \$62.2 million from 2019-20 to develop the *National Rural Generalist Pathway* (the Pathway) – a medical training pathway to attract, retain and support doctors in regional, rural and remote areas. This funds three core initiatives:

- coordination units in each state and the Northern Territory for rural generalist training
- expansion of the *Rural Junior Doctor Training Innovation Fund* to support the Pathway, and
- an application to the Medical Board of Australia for specialist recognition of Rural Generalist Medicine within the specialty of General Practice.

All elements of the Pathway have been or are currently being implemented. An external evaluation of the Pathway commenced in May 2021 to develop an evaluation framework and collect baseline data and conduct a preliminary evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the Pathway in the short term (2–3 years) with a final report due 30 June 2023.

Seventh Community Pharmacy Agreement Rural Support Programs

The Australian Government funds a range of rural and other pharmacy programs under the Seventh Community Pharmacy Agreement (7CPA) including the *Rural Pharmacy Workforce Program*, which aims to support the recruitment, training and retention of pharmacists in rural and remote areas. The 7CPA *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce programs* aim to support the First Nations pharmacy workforce, access to medicines and the quality use of medicines.

The 7CPA also increased the investment in regional, rural and remote pharmacies through the *Regional Pharmacy Maintenance Allowance* (RPMA) program. This increased investment in the RPMA program was implemented 1 January 2021.

Health Infrastructure

Rural, Regional and Remote Clinical Trial Enabling Infrastructure Program

The Australian Government is investing \$125 million from 2020-21 to 2024-25 to improve access to innovative clinical trials for Australians living in rural, regional and remote areas. The *Rural, Regional and Remote Clinical Trial Enabling Infrastructure Program* removes barriers to participating in clinical trials by:

- improving facilities, equipment, services and systems in rural, regional and remote Australia
- reducing the burden, costs and risks for patients and their families related to clinical trial participation, and
- increasing research capacity.

This grant program, funded under the MRFF, is giving patients access to clinical trials where they live.

Block Funding for Small Rural and Regional Hospitals

The Australian Government, together with the state and territory governments, signed the Addendum to the National Health Reform Agreement for the years 2020-21 to 2024-25 which will provide an additional \$33.7 billion for public hospitals.

Under the new five-year Addendum, the government is investing an estimated \$6.1 billion over five years from 2020-21 in block funding contributions to states and territories to support services provided by small, rural and regional hospitals. This funding ensures rural and regional communities continue to have access to vital public hospital services.

Community Health and Hospitals Program

The Australian Government has been investing \$1.25 billion in the *Community Health and Hospitals Program* (CHHP), in addition to more than \$669 million to fund projects and services in every state and territory, to support patient care while reducing pressure on community and hospital services. Through delivery of the 92 CHHP and 60 other 2019-20 Budget measure projects, \$247.6 million and \$136.3 million, respectively, will be committed in the 2022-23 financial year and will provide improved health facilities and services in a number of regional and remote communities.

The CHHP emphasises a commitment to ensuring a high quality, sustainable health system, with investment in public hospitals, PHNs, community organisations and other health providers, to ensure all Australians can access health services where and when they need them.

Approximately 30 per cent of the projects funded through the CHHP and other Budget measures contribute to infrastructure and services in rural and regional areas to support health priorities such as cancer, palliative care, eating disorders, chronic disease, injury, mental health, maternal and paediatric services and hospital infrastructure.

Closing the Gap

Closing the Gap in Life Expectancy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People – Health Infrastructure

In 2021, the Australian Government committed \$254.4 million from 2021-22 to 2024-25 to address seriously deteriorating or non-existent health infrastructure for the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service (ACCHS) sector.

This investment responds to the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* (CtG) Priority Reform Two: Building the community-controlled sector. Consistent with the National Agreement, the CtG measure was co-designed with the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) on behalf of the ACCHS sector.

The measure comprises two streams of work: the annual *Service Maintenance Program* (SMP) – minor capital and the *Major Capital Program*, both of which will strengthen the ACCHS sector through improved infrastructure.

Through the SMP, priority is being given to projects in remote and very remote Australia. The *Major Capital Program* supports clinical staff housing in outer regional, remote and very remote Australia in addition to supporting new and refurbished health clinics nationally.

It is anticipated that the infrastructure measure will deliver up to 120 new clinics, housing and major refurbishments, as well as up to 230 small scale repair, maintenance and security projects.

Closing the Gap in Life Expectancy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People – Healthy Mums, Healthy Bubs

In 2021, the Australian Government announced \$45 million from 2021-22 to 2024-25 for the *Healthy Mums, Healthy Bubs* measure to support First Nations mothers and babies and contribute to achieving *Closing the Gap Target Two*, that babies are born healthy and strong.

As part of the *Healthy Mums, Healthy Bubs* measure, the government is investing \$12.8 million to expand the existing *Australian Nurse-Family Partnership Program* (ANFPP) to two additional sites, from 13 to 15 sites. The ANFPP is a strengths-based, intensive, nurse home visiting program that supports women pregnant with an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander baby during pregnancy and continuing until their child is two years old.

The remaining \$32.2 million is being provided to support redesign and delivery of maternal health services for First Nations people, including further expansion of Birthing on Country models of care that provide culturally safe continuous midwifery care to women pregnant with an First Nations baby, and growing the First Nations maternal health workforce. Of this funding, \$20.9 million has been invested in the Djakamirr project in Galawin'ku, Northern Territory, delivered by the Molly Wardaguga Research Centre within Charles Darwin University, the Institute of Urban Indigenous Health's Birthing in Our Communities project in QLD, and to support Waminda's workforce transition plan to ensure a ready maternal workforce when the Birthing on Country Centre of Excellence

open. The department is working in partnership with the NACCHO and key sector stakeholders to deliver these activities and co-design maternal and child health policies and programs that best support First Nations families to thrive.

Indigenous Australians' Health Programme

More than \$4.5 billion will be provided through the *Indigenous Australians' Health Programme* (IAHP) from 2022-23 to 2025-26, building on our work in partnership with First Nations peoples to improve health outcomes.

First Nations peoples living in Remote areas have an avoidable mortality rate of more than double the rate of those living in major cities and 1.7 times the rate of those living in regional areas. As such, the IAHP has a strong focus on improving health outcomes in rural and remote areas, this includes:

- funding for specific initiatives to address the prevalence of preventable diseases, such as acute rheumatic fever, rheumatic heart disease and trachoma, that disproportionately affect First Nations peoples living in regional and remote areas
- dedicated support to services outside major cities, through funding to Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services in regional, rural and remote areas which deliver high quality comprehensive primary healthcare to the communities they serve
- medical outreach to improve access to health services for First Nations peoples living with chronic disease, particularly those living in regional, rural and remote areas
- specific initiatives to support children and families to thrive, including in regional and remote contexts where additional barriers exist, such as the *Connected Beginnings* program, the *Australian Nurse-Family Partnership Program* and activities to improve children's ear and hearing health.

First Nations mental health National Crisis Services and Support

The Australian Government is prioritising mental health, wellbeing and suicide prevention outcomes of First Nations people and communities, especially as the Uluru Statement of the Heart implementation commences. This includes actions designed and led by First Nations people, in partnership with governments, and will align with delivering Priority Reforms under the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*.

The Government is continuing to implement a number of significant initiatives, including:

- the *National Closing the Gap Social and Emotional Wellbeing (Mental Health) Policy Partnership* in partnership with Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia (Gayaa Dhuwi), to reduce the impact of mental ill-health and suicide on First Nations people, families and communities
- the Culture Care Connect Program in partnership with the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO). The Program will establish

aftercare, suicide prevention and wellbeing service networks to 31 locations across the country, as well as provide mental health first aid training and support to network services

- the national 24/7 national crisis telephone support service for First Nations people – 13 YARN – led by Lifeline and Gayaa Dhuwi, and
- the Red Dust program to continue and expand to more rural and remote communities across the Northern Territory and border communities. Red Dust designs and delivers mental health and wellbeing programs in partnership with communities based on their needs, and provides local employment opportunities to deliver the programs.

The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Capability Review* will commence in mid-2022 which will examine the capacity of, and ways to strengthen, the First Nations health sector's delivery of mental health services for community members.

The Government also continues to support Gayaa Dhuwi, as the national peak for First Nations mental health, suicide prevention and social and emotional wellbeing, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lived Experience Centre based at the Black Dog Institute to support the inclusion of people with lived experience in the co-design, implementation and evaluation of suicide prevention activity.

Strengthening primary health care for First Nations peoples

As highlighted above, First Nations peoples living in rural and remote areas have shorter lives, higher levels of disease and injury and poorer access to and use of health services, compared with people living in metropolitan areas. The Practice Incentives Program – Indigenous Health Incentive aims to promote best practice, culturally safe care for First Nations peoples with chronic disease by providing eligible ACCHS and general practices with a range of financial incentives, which includes those delivering services in rural and remote areas.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Hearing Health

The Australian Government is investing \$100 million under the *Indigenous Australians Health Program* from 2022-23 to 2025-26 to support ear and hearing health activities for First Nations peoples. Improving the ear and hearing health of First Nations peoples is critical to achieving better health, education and employment outcomes.

This investment supported the continuation of six existing ear and hearing health programs, including the *Hearing Assessment Program – Early Ears* which provides audiology assessments and follow up treatment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children before they start school, as well as continuation of funding, specialist outreach services, ear health coordination, specialist hearing health training, provision of ear screening equipment and ear health promotion activities.

In line with commitments under the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*, this investment will enable greater participation in program design and delivery by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sector, represented by the NACCHO. An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ear and Hearing Health Partnership Committee has been established, comprising representatives from the department, NACCHO and Hearing Australia as well as experts in the field, to drive a strategic approach to delivering long term outcomes.

Additionally, the Australian Government is continuing its investment for a further two years to 30 June 2024 under the National Partnership Agreement on Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment (NTRAI) to reduce the prevalence of ear disease, hearing problems and oral health problems for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the Northern Territory. The extension of the NTRAI will enable the Australian Government and the Northern Territory Government, working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, to undertake an evidence-informed exercise to inform future arrangement options. Total investment for hearing and oral health under the NTRAI is \$61.3 million over 10 years since 2012-13.

Remote Area Aboriginal Health Service Program

The *Remote Area Aboriginal Health Services* (RAAHS) Program enables people living in remote communities, who may have limited access to a community pharmacy, to access essential PBS medicines from their Aboriginal Health Service upon consultation, at no cost and without a PBS prescription. In 2020-21, more than 1.6 million PBS items were supplied to approved RAAHS' at a total cost of \$41.6 million.

Mental Health

Targeted regional initiatives for suicide prevention

The Australian Government is continuing to establish targeted regional initiatives for suicide prevention through Primary Health Networks (PHNs). These initiatives will facilitate transition from the National Suicide Prevention Trial environment which targeted 12 regions, to building the capacity of all areas to implement systems-based, person centred and community led regional approaches to suicide prevention across Australia, including in regional, rural and remote locations.

Protecting the mental health of, and preventing suicide in young Australians

The Australian Government is continuing to invest in initiatives to reverse the decline in mental health of children and young Australians. These initiatives will have a positive impact on children, young people and their families in regional, rural and remote areas where they may not have access to other supports.

This includes the expansion and enhancement of the national headspace network and other youth mental health services, including in partnership with state and territory governments. This will address a number of gaps in the current delivery of youth mental health services to priority groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

Ensuring Continuity of Psychosocial Support for Australians with Severe Mental Illness Not Supported by the National Disability Insurance Scheme

The Australian Government is investing \$237.8 million from 2021-22 to 2022-23 for the continuation of psychosocial support services for people with a severe mental illness who are not supported by the NDIS. This includes a regional loading to funding for PHNs to commission services under the *Commonwealth Psychosocial Support Program*. The regional loading is in recognition of the higher costs of service delivery in regional, rural and remote communities. It is intended to incentivise service commissioning and improve service availability for people with severe mental illness living in these communities.

Eating disorder treatment and support

The Australian Government is continuing support for a range of specialised eating disorder treatment services, including virtual treatment programs to improve access to services for people in regional, rural and remote areas.

Supporting Mental Health Nationally through additional Psychological Therapies

The Australian Government is continuing to support people to access Medicare-subsidised psychological services under the *Better Access to Psychiatrists, Psychologists and General Practitioners through the Medicare Benefits Schedule* (MBS) initiative (Better Access), including via telehealth.

Strengthening Access to and Connection between Mental Health Services via Digital Means

The Australian Government continues to support a range of initiatives to ensure all Australians, including those in regional, rural and remote areas, have greater access and choice in engaging with high quality, free and low cost digital mental health services. This includes digital mental health services regional Australians depend on, including eheadspace to support the mental health of young people aged 12-25 years, and Lifeline Australia's telephone, text and online crisis service, which is accessible from anywhere in Australia.

Intergenerational Health and Mental Health Study

The Australian Government continues to support the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to undertake the Intergenerational Health and Mental Health Study (IHMHS).

In 2020-21 the ABS conducted the first cohort of the National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing (NSMHW). Information collected in the NSMHW will be used to help understand the mental health of Australians, including their use of services and their social and economic circumstances. First insights from the NSMHW were released on 8 December 2021.

More comprehensive results were released in mid-2022, including the number of Australians with mental disorders such as depression and anxiety. Further detailed analysis of state and territory estimates using a second (2021-22) cohort of the NSMHW is expected to be published in mid-2023.

In addition to the IHMHS, the government continues to support measuring mental health in the First Nations population. The survey will be co-designed and implemented with First Nations people, to ensure it is culturally appropriate and meets the needs of the community.

The National Health Survey (NHS) component of the IHMHS commenced in January 2022, with the Australian Bureau of Statistics conducting interviews in 23,000 households across Australia, in all States and Territories. Interviews and data collection undertaken in remote, rural, and regional Australia is an important part of this study and will support better understanding of the health needs of people living in these communities.

Preventive Health

Extension of the National Ice Action Strategy

The government is providing \$343.6 million from 2022-23 over four years under the *National Ice Action Strategy* (NIAS) to extend critical prevention, treatment and research activities. Ice use impacts rural communities at disproportionate rates when compared to urban communities, with these communities facing greater difficulties in accessing treatment and support services. Factors that contribute to higher rural alcohol and other drug use in general include lower educational attainment, low socio-economic status, higher unemployment and isolation. NIAS funding is weighted towards rural and regional areas in acknowledgement of this impact. Under the NIAS, more than 600 additional drug and alcohol treatment projects have been made possible to date, greatly increasing access across Australia. This continued investment will help ensure communities receive treatment for the drug or alcohol use, helping to improve health and social outcomes.

Ageing and Aged Care

Aged Care Infection Prevention and Control Training Measure

This Australian Government initiative (\$40 million over two years from 2022-23) will support all aged care providers, regardless of location, to enhance the training of their nursing staff to improve infection, prevention and control capabilities. It may also reduce barriers to nurses in regional and remote locations undertaking additional training.

More equitable access to aged care for First Nations people and special needs groups

The government is investing \$630.2 million over five years from 2020-21 in more equitable access to aged care. Older Australians, including First Nations peoples, those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and those living in rural and remote locations will benefit from increased choice and sustainability of services, assistance with accessing aged care and improved infrastructure to meet consumer expectations.

This funding includes an investment of \$396.9 million over four years from 2021-22 to enable aged care providers to make needed improvements to their buildings and build new services in areas where older Australians currently have limited access or where staff caring for their needs do not have suitable housing. Communities will benefit significantly from construction projects and increased aged care services. Projects will provide around 1400 construction jobs and benefit 471,000 older Australians living in rural and remote locations. The first round of funding in 2021-22 has been targeted at National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Services.

This funding will allow evaluations of this measure to identify service gaps within regional, rural and remote Australia to assist with addressing areas of greatest demand, giving particular focus to First Nations peoples and consumers with special needs.

These capital infrastructure measures are ongoing, with \$130 million per annum to be made available from 2025-26.

An investment of \$64.1 million is also being provided over four years from 2021-22 to support the delivery of viable, high quality integrated care to older Australians in regional and remote locations (\$19.6 million is available in 2021-22).

The funding model for the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program* has been updated, including an additional \$62 million over four years from 2021-22 to support delivery of viable, high quality care to older First Nations peoples. From 1 July 2021, funding is being provided to ensure residential aged care consumers can stay connected to Country and culture, as well as meeting the travel costs of any people needed to provide clinical or other assistance to a resident.

An investment of \$64 million is also being provided over four years from 2021-22 to support the delivery of viable, high quality integrated care to older Australians in regional and remote locations by broadly aligning the funding for Multi-Purpose Services with the new AN-ACC funding model.

Aged care service providers located in remote areas or who provide support to First Nations peoples will be given professional support to improve the organisations workforce capability and financial sustainability. This has been made available through a \$5 million investment in 2021-22 to expand the Remote and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Service Development Assistance Panel.

The government is also investing \$25.1 million over three years from 2021-22 to assist rural and remote aged care providers experiencing high turnover and sudden departures by expanding the *Rural Locum Assistance Program* to provide:

- access to a surge locum workforce for an interim period while recruitment is undertaken
- assistance with recruiting permanent staff with the requisite skills and experience, and
- a new incentive scheme to increase the retention of permanent staff.

This investment supports older Australians in regional and remote Australia who have expressed a strong preference to stay in their homes and communities for as long as possible.

Providing More Home Care Packages

The Government will release an additional 40,000 Home Care Packages (HCPs) in 2022-23 to support older Australians to stay in their homes for longer.

The release of additional home care packages is supported by the *Home Care Workforce Support Program* which aims to attract 13,000 new personal care workers to home care including in regional and remote areas. The Australian Government committed \$91.8 million for two years from 2021-22 for the delivery of this program. Six organisations are being provided funding to deliver this program with an additional dedicated grant focussed on growing the Indigenous workforce.

Multi-Purpose Services

The Australian Government continues to support 177 Multi-Purpose Services (MPSs) to deliver flexible aged care across rural and remote Australia in all states and territories (except the Australian Capital Territory) and Norfolk Island. The Multi-Purpose Service (MPS) program is a joint initiative of state and Commonwealth governments to provide health and aged care services in thin markets. The government funds MPS aged care services under the *Aged Care Act 1997*, and the states and territory governments fund the health services.

In 2021-22, through its payment agreements with 29 providers which are largely state and territory health departments, the department is providing funding of \$238.9 million to support the MPS program.

Structural Adjustment Program

In the 2021-22 Budget, the Australian Government announced a new *Structural Adjustment Program* to run until 30 June 2023. Building on the \$101 million that has already been awarded through the *Business Improvement Fund*, an additional \$66.1 million has been invested to support residential aged care providers to improve their operations, or where appropriate, to sell or close their business.

The program primarily supports regional, rural and remote approved aged care providers to help them transition to a more competitive market and improve the sector's sustainability and capability. The program is delivered through two separate grant opportunities:

- the *Business Improvement Fund for Residential Aged Care – Round 2* to support providers to improve their financial viability, and
- the *Structural Adjustment Fund* to support providers to sell, transition or exit from the residential aged care sector.

The intended outcomes of the program are to:

- support providers, with priority given to regional, rural, and remote Australia, to ensure they are financially viable to continue to deliver residential aged care services in their local community
- ensure service continuity and quality care for older Australians should a provider decide to sell to another residential aged care provider, and
- ensure residents are transitioned in a safe and orderly manner to a new residential aged care facility if their provider exits the market.

COVID-19

COVID-19 Vaccines and Treatments – Vaccine Rollout

The rollout of COVID-19 vaccines into regional, rural and remote communities continues to be a vital part of the Australian Government's vaccine strategy to protect our regional, rural and remote communities. The Australian Government has invested a total of over \$17 billion on Australia's vaccine and COVID-19 treatment supply as part of the COVID-19 health response, with an additional \$578 million committed in 2022-23.

The Australian Government will continue to focus on ensuring Australians in regional and remote communities are protected with their primary course and booster doses.

The Australian Government is continuing funding to 31 December 2022 to *Vaccine Administration Partners Program* services to deliver targeted vaccinations for priority populations, including vaccination of First Nations communities, especially in remote and very remote locations.

The Australian Government also extended the operation of Commonwealth Vaccination Clinics (CVCs) to meet continued demand for vaccinations. From 1 July 2021 to 31 December 2021, CVCs provided 1.7 million vaccinations, with an additional 373,368 thousand vaccinations from 31 December 2021 to 30 June 2022. Funding of \$13.9 million has been provided to 31 December 2022 to ensure CVCs can continue to provide vaccinations in remote locations.

COVID-19 Vaccines and Treatments – Distribution of Oral Antiviral Treatments

The Government has made significant investments to ensure Australians have access to a range of COVID-19 treatments to manage different stages of disease.

The first oral treatments for COVID-19 in Australia, Lagevrio® (molnupiravir) and Paxlovid® (nirmatrelvir + ritonavir), were provisionally approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) on 18 January 2022.

Lagevrio® and Paxlovid® were listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) on 1 March 2022 and 1 May 2022, respectively. PBS listing means that Australians can access these treatments via community pharmacies. From July 2022, the eligibility criteria for the COVID-19 oral treatments available through the PBS, nirmatrelvir and ritonavir (Paxlovid®) and molnupiravir (Lagevrio®), were expanded to update age limits and risk factors.

In addition to supply through the PBS, the Government, through the National Medical Stockpile, deployed supplies of both oral antiviral treatments to all state and territory health departments, for supply to high priority groups. Each state and territory is responsible for distribution of this supply within its jurisdiction following its COVID-19 care arrangements. The Government also pre-placed antiviral treatments in residential aged care facilities (Lagevrio® only), Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and the Royal Flying Doctor Service to ensure the most vulnerable can readily access these treatments across Australia.

COVID-19 General Practitioner Led Respiratory Clinics

As part of the COVID-19 response, the Australian Government is continuing its investment in General Practitioner led Respiratory Clinics (GPRCs) with funding of almost \$900 million provided over the period March 2020 to 31 December 2022. The GPRCs provide dedicated assessment and treatment services for people with COVID-19 symptoms.

More than half of GPRCs have been established in regional/remote areas and since their inception in early 2020 GPRCs nationally have provided in excess of 3.5 million respiratory assessments and 2.8 million tests.

In addition to the GPRC funding, \$19.5 million in 2021-22 was provided to the NACCHO to support its Sector Support Organisations member services and other First Nations health services to coordinate efforts around Australia's COVID-19 response, and in particular facilitate cultural safety measures in the respiratory clinics. An additional \$10.9 million was provided to NACCHO in 2022-23 to support Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services to respond to the pandemic and vaccine rollout to 31 December 2022.

Living with COVID measures

COVID-positive care pathways are being maintained in every region of Australia through collaboration between the PHNs and their corresponding local hospital networks. These provide clear plans on where and how COVID-positive people will be managed through primary and community services or through hospitals. These ensure that clinical pathways are relevant to local availability of health care services.

Funding for PHNs includes home visits for some COVID-positive patients, with a particular focus on regional and rural areas. Funding may be used to commission visits from medical deputising services, GPs, Aboriginal Health Workers, nurse practitioners and practice nurses. Patients can be seen for treatment of COVID symptoms, or for other medical needs that cannot be delivered by telehealth.

Provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) and pulse oximeters from the National Medical Stockpile (NMS) supplies (excluding the costs to the NMS of purchasing PPE/pulse oximeters) – distributing NMS supplies of pulse oximeters and PPE for general practice, with a focus on strengthening the supply chain for rural and remote practices. Between 14 February 2022 and 16 October 2022, over 5.4 million units of PPE were provided for primary care, including 1.8 million p2/n95 masks for GPs across Australia.

COVID-19 Remote Community Preparedness and Retrieval

COVID-19 continues to disproportionately impact First Nations and remote communities. Part of the additional funding to extend the national COVID-19 health response to 31 December 2022 included \$43.3 million for the ongoing support to rural and remote communities to respond to outbreaks of COVID-19.

The Transitioning of COVID-19 Remote and Indigenous Response measure:

- Provides ongoing funding to the RFDS for the *Remote Community Preparedness and Retrieval* measure. The measure assists with early retrieval and evacuation for people with potential COVID-19, staffed mobile respiratory clinics and remote health service support. The early evacuation of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases allows isolation of cases where no or minimal quarantine facilities exist, which is essential to effectively managing outbreaks in locations with minimal health services.
- Supports in community testing via continuation of the *Remote Point of Care Testing (POCT) Program*. The program provides POCT for over 150 rural and remote communities.
- Provides critical supports and services that assist First Nations and remote Communities to access COVID-19 tests and vaccines, provides critical support for access to COVID-19 services including testing and vaccination supported by Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and funding for the NACCHO to support COVID-19 preparedness, response and vaccine rollout in the community controlled sector and in remote communities.
- Provides funds for tailored communication resources and public relations activities to continue primary course and booster vaccinations encouraging people in regional and remote areas to come forward for their vaccination opportunity and informing communities of options to access a vaccination.
- Supports rural and remote First Nations and remote communities living with COVID-19 whilst ensuring there is a renewed focus on other infectious disease health risks.

Research

Medical Research Future Fund

The Australian Government will disburse \$6.3 billion from the *Medical Research Future Fund* (MRFF) between 2022-23 and 2031-32, through a refreshed 10-year Investment Plan announced as part of the March 2022-23 Budget. The 10-year Investment Plan provides funding for 21 initiatives across four themes: Patients, Researchers, Missions and Translation.

The *Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy 2021–26* acknowledges the importance of funding research in areas of unmet medical need as a guiding principle, with a focus on achieving equity in health outcomes, including for people in rural and remote communities. Research investment to support better rural health outcomes has been embedded in a range of MRFF open and competitive grant opportunities through the 10-year Investment Plan. This includes the:

- 2022 *Dementia, Ageing and Aged Care Grant Opportunity*, which includes a stream worth up to \$9 million for implementation research focused on addressing inequalities in uptake of prevention activities to support healthy ageing and quality of life for three priority populations: First Nations people; rural, regional and remote populations; and culturally and linguistically diverse populations.
- 2021 *Primary Health Care Grant Opportunity*, which will provide up to \$5 million for projects that test the effectiveness of new point-of-care testing delivery models in rural, regional and/or remote areas and/or through mobile delivery.
- 2021 *Primary Health Care Digital Innovations Grant Opportunity*, which will provide up to \$5 million for projects that develop novel digital health tools and technologies to improve access to primary health care services in disadvantaged and/or vulnerable populations (including rural, regional and remote populations).

It is anticipated that all Australians will benefit from the outcomes of research funding by the MRFF both in terms of improved health outcomes through access to new therapies, drugs and devices and the associated outcomes through access to business that follows the translation and commercialisation of research.

The Australian Government is also continuing to fund the following initiatives:

- \$45.5 million over five years from 2020-21 for the *Fighting Cancer – Regional Cancer Treatment Centres for Radiation Therapy* program to expand cancer treatment capacity throughout regional Australia by enhancing existing and investing in new health infrastructure.
- \$29.5 million from 2021-22 to 2025-26 to create a funding pool for non-GP medical specialist training in 2022 that helps overcome identified barriers to deliver better distribution and supply of specialists matched to local community health needs.

- \$19.1 million from 2021-22 to 2024-25 to continue and improve the Australian Government's trachoma elimination program by extending agreements with Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory.
- \$17.2 million over four years to extend funding to *Heart of Australia* to operate five mobile health clinics in Queensland.
- \$13.9 million over two years from 2022–23 to deliver 150 additional scholarships each year under the *Puggy Hunter Memorial Scholarships Scheme*.
- \$12 million from 2021-22 to 2024-25 to continue and improve the *Rheumatic Fever Strategy* by extending National Partnership Agreements with Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory.
- \$11.2 million from 2020-21 to 2024-25, and \$2.1 million per year on an ongoing basis from 2024-25, to continue and expand the office of the *National Rural Health Commissioner*.
- \$6.5 million over three years from 2022-23 to establish The Shepherd Centre facilities in Launceston, Hobart, and the Macarthur region of south-western Sydney, and provide online resources to support children with hearing loss.
- Up to \$6.3 million in 2022-23 to continue the *Remote Area Health Corps* program. This program aims to increase access to primary health care services in remote First Nations communities in the Northern Territory by addressing identified workforce shortages.
- \$6 million in 2020 through to 30 June 2023 for establishment of the *Remote Health Workforce Surge Capacity Program* to respond to the potential impact of COVID-19 in remote and very remote Indigenous communities across Australia.
- \$5.9 million over two years from 2021-22 for the *Workforce Advisory Services Program* for residential aged care and home care service providers to assist providers, particularly those in regional, rural and remote areas, to develop more coordinated approaches to workforce planning.
- \$4.1 million over four years to fund *Little Wings – Hospital Flights and Medical Wings* program.
- The *Supporting GP Training* measure (2021-22 MYEFO) will help to ensure we have a sustainable supply of well-trained GPs throughout Australia.

Home Affairs

The Department of Home Affairs is responsible for the centralised coordination, strategic and policy leadership of the Home Affairs Portfolio (the portfolio).

The portfolio comprises the Department of Home Affairs (the department) including the Australian Border Force (ABF), the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

The portfolio has diverse responsibilities in supporting a secure, prosperous, and united Australia, comprising a range of national security and national resilience functions. These include cyber security, countering terrorism and foreign interference, managing Australia's migration program, emergency management, disaster preparedness, response and recovery, social cohesion and democratic resilience, the protection of Australia's sovereignty, the integrity of the border, and critical infrastructure. A strategy-led and coordinated approach ensures the portfolio delivers outcomes for Australia's rural and regional community on behalf of the Australian Government.

The portfolio remains central to Australia's economic recovery from COVID-19. The portfolio will continue to support Australia's regions and drive economic growth by facilitating the flow of travellers through the international border and promoting Australia as a competitive destination for migrants, tourists and students. The department is reimagining the purpose, structure and objectives of Australia's immigration system to bolster the Australian economy in the long term, address skills shortages and strengthen the migration system.

The portfolio works with partners across all levels of government to improve Australia's capacity to anticipate, mitigate, respond, and recover from emergencies. This includes emergency management and disaster risk reduction, climate security and options to strengthen Australia's civil contingency capabilities to better enable the Government to respond to domestic crises. Through the NEMA, the portfolio delivers a whole-of-nation approach to disaster risk reduction and emergency response. This strengthens the Commonwealth's capacity across the disaster management and recovery continuum, and provides a single point of authority for all disaster management strategies, programs and operations.

The portfolio's functions include supporting the safety and security of communities and strengthening Australia's social cohesion and democratic resilience. The portfolio builds on Australia's success as a strong and cohesive multicultural society through well-targeted multicultural programs. The portfolio continues to provide social cohesion, citizenship, and settlement programs to support the cohesion of Australia's inclusive society and build Australia's democratic resilience. This ensures that Australian society remains united, and our liberal democratic institutions and values are resilient, in the face of external threats.

The portfolio continues to engage with industry and academia, and work with likeminded international partners to uplift cyber security standards and shape global norms. The portfolio is leading the Government's proactive response to the growing threat of

ransomware by increasing operational efforts against cybercriminals, strengthening our engagement with international counterparts and exploring legislative avenues to ensure Australia is a hard target for cybercriminals.

As at 31 August 2022, the portfolio employed 14,044 staff under the *Public Service Act 1999*. Of this total, 9,288 are employed in Canberra, central Melbourne and central Sydney (66.1 per cent), 4,280 in other capital cities (30.5 per cent) and 476 in regional areas (3.4 per cent).

The portfolio has a footprint in over 50 locations nationally, including all Australian capital cities, and staff deployed geographically to regional centres and remote regional areas.

New Initiatives

Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)

The Australian Government is committing \$20.0 million of additional funding over four years from 2022-23 to the AMEP to support individual learners with flexible delivery and case management.

50,000-60,000 students access the AMEP each year at 257 locations across Australia, including in 109 regional and remote locations.

This measure increases flexible access and case management support in the AMEP, by investing in more online learning and teaching resources, improving access to case management and increasing community and work-based delivery. Each of these initiatives will benefit migrants settling in regional Australia.

This measure will support a range of multicultural community organisations across the nation through grants for enhancement or upgrading of community spaces. The measure will support multicultural communities to celebrate and participate in important cultural events, to showcase their culture, build connections with the broader community, and foster social cohesion.

Community Language Schools

The Australian Government will provide funding of \$18.2 million over four years from 2022-23 to strengthen the cohesion and prosperity of Australia's successful multicultural society by supporting more young Australians to acquire a second language:

- connecting them to the languages of their parents, grandparents and broader communities
- enabling their participation in a broader range of jobs in an economy closely integrated into a global market of diverse trading partners.

A Government that works for multicultural Australia

The Australian Government will provide \$1.0 million over two years from 2022-23 to establish a Multicultural Policy Review, to ensure policy settings and institutional arrangements are fit for purpose in building Australia's social cohesion, supporting our multicultural society, and harnessing the talents of all Australians. The Review will consider the policy settings and institutional arrangements required to strengthen our social cohesion and meet the needs of our multicultural society at the Commonwealth level.

Local Multicultural Projects

The Australian Government is committing \$6.2 million over four years from 2022-23 to bring Australians together through building stronger multicultural communities, and support multicultural communities to connect, contribute and thrive. This initiative will strengthen cohesion at the local level, boost civic participation, and enable new and established multicultural communities to connect with the wider Australian community.

Ukrainian community and settlement support (UCASS)

The Australian Government, in recognition of work already commenced, and to effectively target identified need amongst the Ukrainian cohort, will allocate \$0.6 million of additional funding in 2022-23 to Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations (AFUO) member organisations.

The funding will be used for a small grants program to AFUO member organisations, to facilitate their provision of settlement and integration support to Ukrainian nationals in Australia, including those in regional locations. It will also cover administration of the grant and provide capacity building support to funded organisations.

The funding for this grant round under the UCASS program is in addition to a \$450,000 grant provided in March 2022 to the AFUO under the UCASS program to assist with the settlement of newly arrived Ukrainian humanitarian entrants in Australia.

Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme

The Australian Government acknowledges the important role Pacific and Timor-Leste workers play in contributing to the Australian economy and in supporting Australia's critical industries.

Currently, there are more than 27,500 workers in Australia from nine Pacific countries and Timor-Leste (as of 31 August 2022).

The PALM scheme remains a key program for eligible employers to meet workforce shortages in low and semi-skilled occupations, particularly throughout regional Australia.

The Government has committed to a number of visa reforms as part of a broader package of commitments to deepen Australia's relationship with the Pacific – this includes improving working conditions for PALM participants.

The Department is working closely with other federal government agencies on options to best give effect to the Government's commitments to expand and improve the PALM scheme, including:

- relocating the Australian Agriculture Visa program within the PALM scheme
- minimising the burden of upfront travel costs for employers of seasonal workers and reducing red tape for all PALM employers
- allowing PALM workers on long-term placement to bring their partners and children to Australia
- improving workplace standards for PALM workers and implementing recommendations of the Migrant Workers' Taskforce.

Further information on this scheme can be found in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade chapter.

Pacific Engagement Visa (PEV)

As part of the plan to boost Pacific permanent migration to Australia and build a stronger Pacific family, the Australian Government will establish the Pacific Engagement visa (PEV) from 1 July 2023.

Each year, up to 3000 places will be available to eligible migrants from Pacific countries and Timor Leste. Individual access to the program will be determined by a visa ballot, with successful ballot entrants and their immediate family members invited to apply for a PEV.

The Government will provide additional support to assist PEV holders find employment, settle in Australia, and build their skills through access to education and training. This includes support arrangements, to be managed by DFAT, to connect PEV applicants with employers looking for labour in some key sectors, including in regional Australia.

Outcomes of the Jobs and Skills Summit

On 1 and 2 September 2022, the Australian Government convened a Jobs and Skills Summit (Summit), which brought together Australians, including: unions, employers, civil society and governments, to address our shared economic challenges.

The immediate outcomes out of the Summit, as relevant to migration, included:

- an increase to the 2022-23 permanent Migration Program planning level to 195,000 places, to help ease widespread critical workforce shortages where the skilling of Australians is not yet able to keep pace with industry demand
- an increase to the duration of post study work rights by allowing two additional years of stay for recent graduates with select degrees in areas of verified skills shortages to strengthen the pipeline of skilled labour in Australia, informed by advice from a working group
- an extension to the relaxation of work restrictions for student and training visa holders.

On 2 September 2022, the Minister for Home Affairs, the Hon. Clare O'Neil MP, announced a comprehensive review of Australia's migration system. This review will outline the objectives of our immigration system and guide future reform- with a focus on Australian productivity, unlocking the potential of all migrants, the need for a streamlined and internationally competitive visa process, and sponsorship opportunities for emerging jobs and industries.

National Emergency Management Agency

Established on 1 September 2022, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) brings together disaster response, recovery and risk reduction efforts and is at the forefront of ensuring Australian communities are better prepared for future disasters. NEMA has a network of regional officers and brings together disaster risk management and program delivery expertise.

NEMA advocates for transformative change across the Australian Government's disaster risk management continuum by providing guidance and supporting best practice activities, aiming to embed resilience into governance arrangements, policies, programs and practices.

NEMA works collaboratively with all levels of government, third parties and communities to identify and design appropriate and effective mechanisms for response, recovery and long-term strategies to enable communities to be better positioned to respond to future disasters.

NEMA collaborates with stakeholders to create and promote greater access to data to assist Australian communities in disaster recovery and preparedness, such as the Online Recovery Map and Recovery Connect that provides localised data to individuals, communities and government. Data sharing is crucial to support the understanding of disasters and identify opportunities to increase resilience.

The work of NEMA is critical in supporting all hazards recovery, and reducing the risk and impact of future natural disasters, throughout rural and regional Australia.

Disaster Ready Fund

The Australian Government has committed to establishing the Disaster Ready Fund (DRF) and investing up to \$200 million per year, matched by states and territories where possible, on disaster risk reduction and resilience, starting from 1 July 2023.

The DRF will be the Government's flagship disaster risk reduction initiative to reduce potential disaster loss and damage (physical, economic, psychological) experienced by Australian communities, nationally, while at the same time creating opportunities in predominantly regional areas. The Insurance Council of Australia's 2022 report *Building a more resilient Australia* noted that without increased annual funding of \$200 million to make Australians more resilient to natural hazards, the risk profile of communities exposed to extreme weather will not change.

This commitment ensures the Australian Government has an enduring resilience-funding source to better prepare all Australians – both in urban and regional areas – against future natural hazards. CSIRO found that for every \$1 spent reducing disaster risk saves between \$2 – \$11 in post-disaster recovery and reconstruction. Projects funded under the DRF will not only help to reduce individual harm, it will also reduce future climate and disaster impacts on vulnerable and exposed regional communities.

The Government has also committed to \$29.4 million in 2022-23 for resilience initiatives announced ahead of the 2022 Federal Election, supported by \$1 million in 2022-23 to implement these commitments.

Disaster Relief Australia

The Australian Government has committed \$38.3 million over four years from 2022-23 for Disaster Relief Australia (DRA) to upscale their organisational capacity and operations, providing a significant increase of 5,200 additional volunteers to their existing disaster volunteer workforce by covering the uplift costs associated with recruitment, deployment, equipment and training.

The increased frequency, intensity and cross-jurisdiction nature of natural disasters and compounding crisis events have stretched and increasingly overwhelmed emergency response capabilities. In response to the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements, a commitment was made by the Government at the time to ensure the Commonwealth can better support states and territories to prepare for, respond to and recover from natural disasters. DRA harnesses the skills and experiences of civilians including Australian Defence Force (ADF) veterans and emergency responders to rapidly deploy disaster relief teams, providing a skilled volunteer base capable of integrating into existing emergency management arrangements. An enhanced and expanded DRA volunteer base will offer increased flexibility and capacity to these arrangements – including in regional communities and go some way to reducing the reliance on the ADF.

In doing so, the Australian Government will increase volunteer capacity for relief and clean-up activities, noting that DRA have already delivered strong outcomes in regional communities (including in Northern New South Wales). Increasing the capacity of DRA will improve recovery and relief services to regional communities, and support improved recovery times, which can support economic benefit for regional communities. Increased on-the-ground support will also improve access to services for communities. This will ensure clean-up and other activities can happen faster, to support people to return to their homes or communities after a bushfire, flood, cyclone or natural other disaster.

Hazards Insurance Partnership (HIP) and strategic insurance projects

Rising insurance premiums are one of the biggest concerns for communities impacted by disasters. The Government is committed to assisting with, and putting downwards pressure on, rising insurance premiums. The Government has committed \$22.6 million over four years from 2022–23 for a package of reforms to better target mitigation investment to help improve insurance affordability and availability over time, and establish partnerships with the insurance sector to progress data sharing arrangements and to see risk mitigation recognised with reduced premiums.

As a result of climate change, disaster risk is increasing across Australia. This is driving up the cost of insurance and creating issues of underinsurance and un-insurance. This has a particular impact on regional Australia, especially across northern Australia. The proposal to assist with rising insurance premiums will identify and seek to target the most pressing insurance issues. This will result in economic benefits by putting downward pressure on insurance premiums, and decreasing issues surrounding insufficient insurance following disasters, which could potentially include decreasing the costs of recovery.

Through the Hazards Insurance Partnership, the Australian Government will establish an enduring partnership to work with industry to address insurance issues driven by natural disasters. By enhancing governance between the Commonwealth and the insurance industry, there will be better outcomes regarding data and program development, which will support regional Australians.

This strategy to assist with rising insurance premiums will seek to better target mitigation investment to help improve insurance affordability and availability and support better consumer outcomes. Access to insurance for regional Australians could be improved by harmonising data and building partnerships that enable better risk reduction investment decisions, and improving consumer education and understanding of insurance products.

Current Initiatives

2022-23 Migration Program

The *2022-23 Migration Program* will deliver 34,000 permanent regional visas and 31,000 state and territory nominated visas, more than doubling their respective planning levels of 2021-22. The significant increase in regional visa and state and territory nominated visa places, in conjunction with the Government's commitments to further expand and improve

the *Pacific Australia Labour Mobility* schemes, will help address workforce shortages in regional areas, including for regional small businesses. The increased planning levels will help deliver access to services and infrastructure across our non-metropolitan areas. It will also enable jurisdictions and regional employers to nominate visa applicants who can best meet local and regional needs, and support the retention of temporary migrants who have worked or studied in regions to contribute to local growth.

COVID-19 Response Package – Working Holiday Maker program arrangements

From 5 March 2022, former Working Holiday Maker (WHM) visa holders who were onshore on 20 March 2020 can apply for a replacement visa, without associated visa application charges. On 1 July 2022, the Government also implemented new WHM arrangements for a number of participating countries. In addition, in 2022-23 there is a one-off, non-reciprocal 30 per cent increase to the cap on first visas for all partner countries with which Australia has a capped Work and Holiday (subclass 462) visa arrangement (excluding Brazil and Mongolia).

The WHM program provides substantial benefits to the Australian economy, including tourism revenue and job creation. The program supports Australian employers including employers in regional Australia with their labour needs, as working holiday makers can work at any skill level and in any occupation without the need for formal employer sponsorship.

2022-23 Humanitarian Program

The 2022-23 *Humanitarian Program* will be maintained at a ceiling of 13,750 places over the forward estimates, the same level as in 2021-22. This will ensure we can provide permanent resettlement to those in need, and provide appropriate support for the travel and resettlement of refugees and others requiring Australia's protection.

In recognition of our sustained commitment following Australia's two decades of operations in Afghanistan, 16,500 additional places for Afghan nationals under the *Humanitarian Program*, announced in the March 2022-23 Budget, will be equally allocated over the next four years (4,125 places per year between 2022-23 and 2025-26) and delivered in parallel and in addition to the annual Humanitarian Program intake. There are 10,000 places allocated to Afghan nationals within the offshore Humanitarian Program between 2021-22 and 2024-25. This brings the total number of places available to Afghan nationals to 31,500, which comprise 26,500 places under the Humanitarian Program and 5,000 under the Family stream of the Migration Program.

The Department is responsible for the primary settlement of humanitarian entrants that arrive in Australia on refugee and humanitarian visas, and current policy is to prioritise regional settlement where possible. Afghans have traditionally settled in metropolitan or larger regional locations, with the majority settling in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Perth, Brisbane and Canberra. These locations have established settlement services and other supports in place to support new arrivals. Many Afghans declare family/friend links in existing settlement locations before they arrive in Australia, or chose to move post-arrival

to reside more closely to identified family/friend contacts. It is Departmental policy to settle humanitarian entrants close to their families and connections in Australia, as this provides new arrivals with valuable social support in their early settlement period. Humanitarian entrants are permanent residents and are able to move freely once they arrive in Australia. With broader humanitarian travel resuming, the Department is working closely with service providers on exploring retention strategies in regional locations for this and other cohorts.

There are 24 primary settlement locations. For settlement purposes Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane (including Logan) are categorised as metropolitan locations and all other locations are categorised as regional. The Government remains committed to supporting regional settlement locations. Many humanitarian entrants settle directly in the 21 regional settlement locations. The number of humanitarian entrants settled in regional locations was 42.4 per cent in 2018-19, 43.7 per cent in 2019-20, 58.0 per cent in 2020-21 and 21.5 per cent in 2021-22, noting greatly reduced arrivals during border closures.

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Government progressed visa applications from Ukrainian nationals as a priority, particularly those with Australian community connections, across temporary and permanent visa categories. The Government made available (between 8 April 2022 and 31 July 2022) an offer of Temporary Humanitarian Concern (subclass 786) visas to all Ukrainian temporary visa holders in Australia. This visa will be valid for three years and allow people to work, access Medicare and appropriate associated support services. School-aged children will also be able to continue their education, whilst in Australia.

Countering Violent Extremism Initiatives

The Australian Government is allocating \$61.7 million over four years from 2021-22 to further strengthen national *Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Initiatives* through five key measures:

- investing \$24.5 million to expand existing CVE intervention programs, including into rural and regional Australia
- establishing a \$13.8 million national program to rehabilitate and reintegrate violent extremists in custody or in the community, including those who have returned to Australia from overseas conflict zones
- establishing a Centre of Excellence for CVE Research, Risk Assessment and Training that will ensure frontline workers can access the best training and tools to do their jobs
- supporting communities to increase their awareness and build resilience to violent extremism, with particular focus on rural and regional Australia, through a new \$10.7 million *CVE Community Grants Program*
- strengthening strategic communications to address the threat posed by nationalist and racist violent extremist groups, and provide vulnerable people with positive, alternative narratives.

These initiatives will have a positive impact on CVE awareness and access to treatment services in regional areas through a targeted community engagement function and via the new *CVE Community Grants Program*. The online *CVE Strategic Communications Program* will continue to reach Australians across the country, taking a primary prevention approach to divert individuals from extremist ideologies before their beliefs become entrenched. State and territory governments are critical in the delivery of CVE programs to ensure an effective and cooperative national effort.

National Aerial Firefighting Capability

As part of the *National Aerial Firefighting Program*, the government has provided an annual funding boost of \$4 million per annum to base a Large Air Tanker (LAT) in Australia, ensuring a national aerial firefighting capability is available to reduce the impact of bushfires on Australian communities, particularly in regional areas. This brings the government's annual investment in aerial firefighting to more than \$30 million. The national LAT arrived in Australia on 23 December 2021 and was deployed to fight fires in Western Australia on 24 December 2021. The national LAT has significantly enhanced Australia's ability to combat earlier starting and later finishing fire seasons by reducing our reliance on overseas aircraft. This funding supports recommendation 8.1 of the *Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements* for a sovereign aerial firefighting capability. The National Aerial Firefighting Centre arrangements allow state and territory operational fire chiefs and commissioners flexibility in accessing the right type and mix of aircraft in line with the seasonal fire risk. The additional funding will increase access for jurisdictions to specialised aerial firefighting resources, including large air tanker capability.

Extension of North West Point Immigration Detention Centre on Christmas Island

The cohort profile at North West Point Immigration Detention Centre (NWPIDC) continues to comprise of males of mostly high or extreme security risk, including those identified as vulnerable due to the nature of their offending.

Due to the high risk cohort profile, NWPIDC remains the only facility within the Immigration Detention Network (IDN) that is available to accommodate this cohort. It is anticipated that NWPIDC will be required to hold up to 300 high risk detainees until 30 June 2024

Securing Australia's Future Connectivity

Funding of \$31.7 million over four years from 2021-22 was allocated in the 2021-22 Budget to support the *Securing Australia's Future Connectivity* initiative as part of its Digital Economy Strategy (DES). The initiative is supporting Australia's future connectivity through a number of programs, the two most prominent of which are the '*Secure-G*' *Connectivity Test Lab* and the *6G Future Connectivity and Development Program*.

When operational, the '*Secure-G*' *Connectivity Test Lab* will provide an environment for telecommunication network providers and vendors to undertake testing on measures, protocols, standards and software-based technologies that form part of Australia's 5G security architecture. In doing so, the program will encourage activity and innovation by supporting market and supply chain diversification achieved by reducing barriers to entry. This program is actively under development, with a prime delivery partner for the *Test Lab* to be announced in late 2022, before operationalising the lab in 2023.

The *6G Future Connectivity and Development Program* will accelerate the commercialisation of connectivity technologies and security offerings by funding foundational research into 6G technology requirements and identifying the market incentives to build sovereign, exportable findings upon which the development of future telecommunications will be based. The CSIRO Data61 will deliver projects under the program that will support solutions and build capacity in the sector to deliver Australia's secure 6G future.

The *Securing Australia's Future Connectivity* initiative will benefit the community and industry Australia-wide, including small and medium sized businesses in regional areas, by increasing innovation and competition in the telecommunications sector. This will help to ensure that all Australians, including those in regional areas, can leverage the productivity, economic and social benefits instantaneous, ultra-fast, high-bandwidth 5G mobile and wireless internet connectivity promises. This supports the government's overall priority to bridge the digital divide between metropolitan and regional Australia.

Coastal and Estuarine Risk Mitigation Program

Funding of \$50 million in 2022-23 was allocated to the *Coastal and Estuarine Risk Mitigation Program* as part of the March 2022-23 Budget. The program targets high priority locally and nationally significant coastal and estuarine disaster risk mitigation projects.

Coastal hazards, such as inundation, storm surges and erosion threaten a diverse set of social, natural and cultural assets, including public and private property and valued recreational and tourist areas, with flow-on social and economic impacts. The program will help drive long term resilience and sustainability by delivering priority projects that mitigate the impact of disasters on communities and economies.

Areas of focus for the program include:

- adaptation and resilience actions, including investment in grey infrastructure and green blue infrastructure (which includes nature based solutions)
- planning, including local and regional risk assessments and mapping, business case development, preparation of community focused regional coastal management programs
- investment in monitoring infrastructure and activities to understand the coastal and estuarine zone over time.

The program opened for applications on 8 March 2022 and closed on 17 June 2022. Funding will be provided to successful applicants in 2022-23.

Flood Recovery and Resilience Package

A large number of regions and communities in Queensland and New South Wales were severely impacted by the flooding that occurred in February and March 2022 – nearly 10.5 million people live in the 85 Local Government Areas (LGAs) impacted by the event, with over 100,000 people residing within the path of the floods.

In addition to the activation and delivery of a number of support programs through the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements, and Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payments and Disaster Recovery Allowance, the National Emergency Management Agency is responsible for a number of other measures to support recovery including:

- Additional payments to LGAs catastrophically impacted by the flood events, in the form of special supplements to the *Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment and Disaster Recovery Allowance*.
- \$11.2 million over two years to deliver, in conjunction with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), the *Floods Package – Northern Rivers Resilience Initiative* to inform the identification of options and opportunities for mitigating risks, incorporating local experience to develop solutions to support recovery activities and strengthen resilience for future disasters in the Northern Rivers region.
- Accessing the \$150 million recovery and post-disaster resilience component of the Emergency Response Fund to support activities in affected communities in both 2021-22 and 2022-23, with the funding in 2022-23 informed by the *Floods Package – Northern Rivers Resilience Initiative*.
- \$10 million over four years to support the mental health of school-aged children in the Northern Rivers regions affected by the recent flood event, under the *Resilient Kids* program.
- An additional \$0.8 million in 2022-23 for the extension of the *Regional Small Business Support Program* to support areas affected by the flood event.

Rural Financial Counselling Service

From 2021-22 to 2023-24 the Australian Government will provide \$61.9 million to provide free and independent financial counselling to eligible primary producers under the *Rural Financial Counselling Service* (RFCS) program.

Other current initiatives

The Australian Government is also continuing to fund the following initiatives:

- Implementation of a *Cell Broadcast National Messaging System* (CBNMS) over three years. This system will allow messages to be sent to all compatible mobile phones in the country or within a geolocation in the event of a disaster, for example. CBNMS is intended to complement the existing Emergency Alert Platform, which sends messages to landlines and mobile phones.
- \$9.2 million over four years from 2021 to implement reforms to the *Community Support Program* and establish the *Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot*, to improve settlement and integration outcomes for refugees and humanitarian entrants.
- Investing \$10 million in 2022-23 for the initial establishment and implementation of a *National Emergency Management Stockpile (NEMS) of Critical Disaster Stores*. The NEMS will enhance national disaster preparedness and response capabilities in support of state and territory emergency management responses.
- \$8.1 million in 2022-23 for the *Social Cohesion Grants Program - Fostering Integration Grants* (FIGs). Applications submissions closed on 14 June 2022. Applications are under assessment and successful applications will be announced by the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs.

Industry, Science and Resources

The Department of Industry, Science and Resources (the department) and its agencies support the economy to become more resilient, productive, science and technology-enriched. Among other things, the portfolio aims to create high-value and sustainable jobs for all Australians. The department sets the foundations for Australia's future by capitalising on our strengths, increasing our science and technology capabilities, and helping industry build capability. We also help create new industries by driving innovation, unlocking greater value from our resources, and enhancing trusted international partnerships.

The portfolio plays a key role in providing a positive investment environment for businesses and industry to create economic growth and jobs in our regions. The portfolio has responsibility for policy and programs across a number of sectors that underpin the Australian economy. Australian resources will continue to reinforce traditional industries, as well as promoting a revitalised manufacturing sector and science and technology innovation. Initiatives to support and grow both these and emerging industries, will unlock investment, create jobs and have tangible economic benefits for Australians living in rural and regional areas.

The Australian resources sector provides vital, high paying regional employment opportunities. More than a quarter of a million Australians are directly employed by the sector, with many in regional areas. While global trends will have an impact on traditional resources and energy industries, changing the mix of these industries over the longer term, the Australian resources sector will continue to play a major role in domestic and global energy security and the wealth of regional Australia. Critical minerals will underpin the technologies needed for the global transition to net zero and products such as batteries, magnets and semiconductors that power clean energy technologies. Iron ore, metallurgical coal and copper will continue to support infrastructure and contribute to Australia's export earnings. In this Budget a number of new resources initiatives will expand the capabilities of our resources sector to value add across the supply chain, and enable and capitalise on the global transition.

Establishing the *Australian Critical Minerals Research and Development Hub* (the Hub) addresses barriers across the critical minerals sector, with the Hub to work with industry to focus research and development efforts on national and strategic priorities. This will grow Australia's critical minerals sector and help the sector capture new opportunities, supporting economic development in remote and regional areas.

In addition, the *Critical Minerals Development Program* will stimulate the development of the sector by investing in early to mid-stage projects to support efforts to reach net zero, generate new jobs and drive regional economic growth.

The establishment of the *National Reconstruction Fund* (NRF) will support economic growth in new and developing sectors while also promoting high-value, sustainable jobs of the future across seven priority areas, critical to the continued development of regional Australia. This \$15 billion fund is a vital investment to accelerate growth in sectors that

play to Australia's strengths and build capacity and capability in areas that today may be considered gaps.

The \$14.2 million *National Rail Manufacturing Plan* will support regional Australia by ensuring more trains are built in Australia and support skilled manufacturing jobs.

Grant initiatives under the *Local Industry Grants* measure are part of the Government's commitment to back local manufacturing and mobilise Australia's science and technology capabilities. Seven of the eight grants under this initiative in the Industry, Science and Resources Portfolio are being provided to critical and strategic businesses in regional communities that will support local jobs, help business to transition to net zero and strengthen supply chains.

Science and technology play a critical role in the Australian economy to foster innovation and growth in businesses. The Government continues to invest in measures that build Australia's science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) capabilities and workforce. Questacon's *Education Outreach* will help Australians living in diverse, remote and regional communities access high-quality STEM resources. The portfolio and science agencies also continue to work in and with regional communities, including Traditional Owners, to deliver significant initiatives such as the Square Kilometre Array Observatory in the Mid-West region of Western Australia.

Importantly, access by regional businesses to information and opportunity across all portfolios and levels of government is enabled by the AusIndustry Outreach Network. The Network of 28 Regional Managers, located across regional centres and capital cities, deliver front line, face-to-face services to businesses and stakeholders. The Network provides local businesses with information about programs, grants, and services available across portfolios and governments. AusIndustry Regional Managers work closely with other local, state and Australian Government agencies in their regions to facilitate business collaborations, opportunities and economic growth. The Network is in a unique position to gather insights from the business community and economic environment on current and emerging regional issues, that then feed into policy and program design.

Additionally, the department, through AusIndustry, is continuing to support communities and businesses to recover from the devastating 2022 floods in New South Wales and Queensland.

As at 31 August 2022, the Industry, Science and Resources Portfolio employed 5,511 staff under the Public Service Act 1999. Of this total, 4,646 are employed in Canberra, central Melbourne and central Sydney (84 per cent), 810 in other capital cities (15 per cent) and 55 in regional areas (1 per cent).

Outside of capital cities, the Department has regional offices in:

- New South Wales — Newcastle, Tamworth, Coonabarabran, Lismore, Wagga Wagga, Orange, Bathurst, Griffith and Wollongong.
- Queensland — Toowoomba, Southport, Cairns, Rockhampton, Coolumb, Maroochydore, and Townsville.
- South Australia — Mount Gambier, Kimba and Port Pirie.
- Tasmania — Launceston and Devonport.
- Victoria — Bendigo, Bairnsdale and Geelong.
- Western Australia — Pinjarra.

In addition, the portfolio includes agencies that employ staff around the country under their respective legislation, including the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO), and Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO).

As at 31 August 2022, these agencies combined employed 7,010 staff, of which 4,173 (60 per cent) were employed in Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney, 2,121 (30 per cent) in other capital cities, and 716 (10 per cent) in regional Australia.

New Initiatives

National Reconstruction Fund – establishment

The Australian Government will establish the \$15 billion *National Reconstruction Fund* (NRF) to diversify and transform Australia's industry and economy to secure future prosperity and drive economic growth. The NRF will target investments across seven priority areas:

- Value-add in resources
- Value-add in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors
- Transport
- Medical science
- Renewables and low emission technologies
- Defence capability
- Enabling capabilities.

Regional industries supported through NRF investments will be positively impacted through improved growth and competitiveness. Strategic investments in high value-adding projects in NRF priority areas, including in sectors that have a strong regional presence – such as resources, agriculture, defence and renewables – will drive scale and growth, creating high-value jobs across Australia. Investments – including those targeting emerging opportunities – will help regional areas diversify their economies and workforce to create sustainable jobs of the future.

Supporting Australia's Resources – Australian Critical Minerals Research and Development Hub

The Australian Government will invest \$50.5 million from 2022-23 to 2025-26 to establish the *Australian Critical Minerals Research and Development Hub* (the Hub). The Hub will build on Australia's world-leading research capabilities by drawing together expertise held within CSIRO, Geoscience Australia and ANSTO.

The Hub will prioritise and advance strategically significant critical minerals projects, work with the research community and industry to build and commercialise Australian IP, and collaborate with Australia's international partners. It will help Australia to seize downstream supply chain opportunities in clean energy technologies, including domestic battery manufacturing. This will help grow Australia's critical minerals sector and position it to capture new opportunities, supporting economic development in remote and regional areas, including northern Australia.

Supporting Australia's Resources – Critical Minerals Development Program

The Australian Government will invest \$99.8 million from 2022-23 to 2024-25 for the *Critical Minerals Development Program*. The program will advance the development of Australia's critical minerals sector by delivering targeted, small-scale grants to help strategically significant early and mid-stage critical mineral projects overcome technical and market barriers.

These investments will support the transition to net zero and will strengthen jobs and economic opportunity in regional Australia, including in northern Australia. The program will help foster a steady pipeline of projects and develop new capabilities in downstream critical minerals processing, where regional communities will benefit from increased investment and job creation.

Supporting Australian Industry – Local Industry Grants

The Australian Government will invest \$111.2 million over four years from 2022-23 in the Industry, Science and Resources Portfolio, to support local industry projects, delivering on election commitments to back local manufacturing and rebuild Australia's industrial base. This includes support to seven recipients based in regional communities totalling \$101.1 million:

- \$50 million to upgrade the Nyrstar Hobart zinc smelter in Tasmania
- \$17.2 million to establish a pilot Food Manufacturing Innovation Hub on the Central Coast of New South Wales
- \$12.6 million to support Cytiva’s Springfield BioPark project in Ipswich, Queensland
- \$11.1 million to support upgrades to Ingham’s Sorell poultry facility in Tasmania
- \$6.1 million to upgrade the Waverly Wool Mill in Launceston, Tasmania
- \$2.1 million to support a feasibility study to replace the coal-fired boiler at the Norske Skog Boyer mill in Tasmania
- \$2.1 million to support an expansion of the Costa Group berry distribution centre in East Devonport, Tasmania.

These projects will support major employers in regional areas in Tasmania, New South Wales, and Queensland to preserve local jobs and grow regional employment opportunities. The grants will assist recipients to improve capabilities and contribute to innovation and growth in the region.

In addition, each grant will have positive regional impacts:

- Funding for Nyrstar Hobart and Norske Skog will ensure continuing national manufacturing capability and contribute to reducing supply pressures.
- The Food Manufacturing Innovation Hub will grow the Central Coast NSW region as a major contributor in the national food processing industry by becoming a competitive food manufacturing and innovation destination.
- Ingham’s Sorell’s upgrade will preserve the environmentally significant Lagoon by reducing current water operations risks.
- The Waverley Mills development will open up local training opportunities and unlock the site as a heritage tourist attraction.
- Costa Group’s expansion will strengthen North-West Tasmania as a competitive agriculture and food-processing destination.

This investment is complemented by the *Supporting Australian Industry* investment in the Climate Change and Energy Portfolio. Further information on this investment can be found in the Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water chapter.

Supporting Australian Industry – National Rail Manufacturing Plan

The Australian Government will invest \$14.2 million over four years from 2022-23 to implement a *National Rail Manufacturing Plan* (NRMP) to stimulate the Australian rail industry by ensuring more trains are built in Australia and supporting skilled manufacturing jobs.

The NRMP includes:

- Establishing the *Office of National Rail Industry Coordination* (ONRIC) to undertake a national audit of the adequacy, capacity and condition of passenger trains and develop priority plans for rail manufacturing. ONRIC will develop and deliver a *National Rail Procurement and Manufacturing Strategy* in consultation with state and territory governments and key rail industry stakeholders.
- Appointing a *Rail Supplier Advocate* to champion initiatives that foster interstate and overseas trade and commerce opportunities for Australian rail manufacturers.
- Establishing a *Rail Industry Innovation Council* to help address research and development, skills and capability needs in the Australian rail manufacturing sector.

The NRMP will support the local rail industry, which contributes around \$30 billion to the broader Australian economy by directly or indirectly employing more than 165,000 workers from around 900 businesses across the country, including regional Australia.

Supporting Talent and Leadership in Australian Science and Technology – Extending Questacon’s Education Outreach

The Australian Government will invest \$10.0 million over three years from 2022-23 to extend Questacon’s national science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) engagement, education and teacher support through its *Questacon Science Circus* and *Engineering is Elementary* programs.

Regional, remote and low socio-economic areas, where Questacon’s national activities are targeted, will benefit from continuation of face to face and online services. Under-served and disadvantaged communities will benefit from access to otherwise unavailable STEM learning and skills development programs and strengthened local learning networks.

Girls and women, youth, Indigenous Australians, schools and universities will benefit from Questacon’s continued cultivation of STEM learning ecosystems that increase regional connections and support future participation in communities.

Resources Centre of Excellence

The Australian Government will invest \$2.0 million in 2022-23 to support the Isaac Regional Council's initiative to establish a site for a future *Resources Centre of Excellence*, and the Northern Bowen Basin Mines Rescue Station and Training Centre. This contribution will help fund planning and site preparation works at the precinct in Moranbah, Queensland, and deliver on the government's election commitment to invest in the Centre, supporting the Isaac region.

Current Initiatives

CSIRO's ON Program

CSIRO's \$37.4 million *ON Program* helps foster an entrepreneurial culture in the research workforce, and prepares and trains researchers to take research out of the lab and into the market through the commercialisation of products and services. Launched on 1 August 2022, CSIRO invited applications from Australian universities, including regional universities, and science agencies, for the ON Prime and ON Accelerate streams.

Data Driven Discoveries

Under the \$30.9 million *Data Driven Discoveries* initiative, Geoscience Australia is currently collating and applying modern analysis techniques to reprocess old geoscientific information and data, some from as far back as the 1960s, and will be collecting new geoscientific data, to deepen our knowledge of a key underexplored area of south-west Queensland. It will help discover potential for hydrogen storage, critical minerals, groundwater, and carbon capture and storage, stimulating new investments in the region.

Former British Nuclear Testing Site at Maralinga – maintenance

Site investigation and remediation activities continue at the former British nuclear testing site on the Maralinga Tjarutja lands in South Australia. This work will identify and remove non-radiological hazards at site and support Maralinga Tjarutja traditional owners to maximise the long term economic potential of Maralinga.

Satellite Based Augmentation System – additional funding

\$521.8 million over 20 years will enable delivery of the *Satellite Based Augmentation System*, known as the Southern Positioning Augmentation Network (SouthPAN), to provide precise positioning services across Australia and New Zealand, including in regional and remote areas. SouthPAN will deliver significant benefits to regional and remote Australians, guaranteeing access to precise positioning even in areas without mobile reception.

Square Kilometre Array Radio Telescope Project

The Australian Government is investing \$589 million over 10 years from 2022-23 to 2031-32 (with \$35 million per year ongoing from 2032-33). This investment provides Australia's share of construction and operations of the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) telescopes, supporting 350 jobs during construction and a further 230 ongoing jobs, the majority of which will be based in the Western Australian Mid-West region. The SKA telescopes will help Australian scientists make vital scientific breakthroughs – such as a better understanding of the origin and future of stars and galaxies, and the structure of the universe.

The investment will support Australia's hosting of the SKA-Low telescope by:

- establishing the Australian SKA Regional Centre to enable the SKA's high value science and data activities to be carried out in Australia
- meeting Australia's commitment to provide the SKA Observatory with an appropriate site to build the SKA-Low telescope
- installing a fibre optic link from the existing Murchison Radio-astronomy Observatory (MRO) fibre link (which runs from Geraldton to the MRO) to the Pia Wadjjarri Remote Aboriginal Community (which lies within eight kilometres of the link) and the Murchison Settlement (which lies within 52 kilometres of the link).

Rum Jungle Rehabilitation Project

Australian Government funding continues to support rehabilitation of the former Rum Jungle mine site in the Northern Territory. Rehabilitation activities will address environmental contaminants and hazards resulting from historical uranium and copper mining at Rum Jungle.

The investment will deliver a significant economic impact in the Batchelor/Coomalie region, supporting around 61 full-time jobs and creating significant indirect employment and local supply opportunities. Training, employment and other engagement opportunities for the site's Traditional Owners will support their participation in delivery of works and land management. The Northern Territory Government is responsible for delivery of the project, under a Federation Funding Agreement, and has commenced key procurement activities.

Junior Minerals Exploration Incentive

The \$200 million *Junior Minerals Exploration Incentive* (JMEI) supports greenfield mineral exploration across Australia. Greenfield mineral exploration underpins Australia's mining industry by finding new mineral deposits and ensuring a strong investment pipeline. Exploration predominately occurs in remote and rural areas across Australia, providing jobs and economic activity in regional communities. The JMEI will encourage more exploration activity, supporting future resources development.

Unlocking Australia's Resources Potential – Exploring for the Future

The \$225 million *Exploring for the Future* program provides pre-competitive data about potential mineral, energy and groundwater resources across Australia. Projects include three deep-dive projects in the geological regions of Officer-Musgrave in central-west Australia, Darling-Curnamona-Delamerian in south-east Australia, and Barkly-Isa-Georgetown in north-east Australia. Three continental-scale projects that have national applications but with a focus in southern Australia are also included.

The program is delivering on-the-ground data collection and field work activities in regional and remote Australia, including local contract positions in the mining, equipment, technology and services sector. *Exploring for the Future* will continue to unlock new resource-rich regions across the country. Development of those regions will provide ongoing economic growth across Australia and create short, medium, and long-term jobs in regional communities.

Digital Atlas of Australia

Led by Geoscience Australia, the \$40.2 million *Digital Atlas* will be the front door to government data on geography, people, economy, and the environment. It will bring together trusted datasets from across government in a free, interactive, secure, and easy-to-use online platform, using location as the connecting thread.

The *Digital Atlas of Australia* prototype will launch in mid-2023. Exploring data by location will empower governments, businesses and communities to make better informed decisions about planning, infrastructure and investment at the local, regional and national level.

Cyber Security Skills Partnership Innovation Fund

The *Cyber Security Skills Partnership Innovation Fund* is providing up to \$70.3 million in grant funding that supports innovative local projects delivered in partnership with industry, academia and government to increase the pipeline of Australian cyber security professionals, including in regional Australia.

Entrepreneurs' Programme

The *Entrepreneurs' Programme* builds business competitiveness and productivity at the firm level. The program delivers advice and grants to enable businesses, including in regional and remote areas, to strengthen, grow, innovate and commercialise.

Boosting Female Founders Initiative

The *Boosting Female Founders Initiative* provides co-funded grants to majority women owned and led start-ups to help them scale into domestic and global markets. It also provides access to expert mentoring and advice for women entrepreneurs. Grant recipients for Rounds One and Two have been announced, with 89 women led start-ups sharing in over \$23 million in grant funding.

The *Boosting Female Founders Initiative* offers more generous matched funding to underrepresented groups, such as women founders who are from regional or remote locations, to ensure greater support and access to capital.

Cooperative Research Centres Program

The *Cooperative Research Centres (CRC) Program* is a competitive, merit-based grant program that supports industry-led collaborations between industry, researchers and the community. The *CRC Program* has two streams:

- CRCs, which undertake medium to long term, industry-led high quality collaborative research.
- CRC Projects (CRC-Ps), which undertake a short-term, industry-identified and industry-led collaborative research project.

Businesses investing in research and development through CRCs and CRC-Ps are increasing their income, competitiveness and productivity. The *CRC Program* continues to support CRCs and CRC-Ps that have impacts on rural and regional Australia.

Currently, the CRC stream has 22 CRCs nationally receiving over \$1 billion in grant funds over the life of project terms. Of these, several impact regional and rural Australia. The CRC-P stream currently has six projects led by partners located in regional Australia that are receiving over \$11.4 million in *CRC Program* grant funding.

CRCs and CRC-Ps contribute to strengthening rural and regional development in areas such as agriculture and mining industries, farming systems and improving health outcomes for Indigenous Australians. Regional businesses (including small and medium-sized enterprises), Rural Research and Development Corporations, universities and other research organisations are part of a number of CRCs and CRC-Ps and their activities.

Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia

The *Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia* is receiving \$75 million over 10 years to help northern businesses generate new ideas and innovation that leverage the north's strengths and address its challenges. The *Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia* operates in Townsville and has three focus areas: agriculture and food (including aquaculture), northern Australia health service delivery and Traditional Owner-led business development. Industry situational analysis is occurring on the beef sector, broadacre cropping, aquaculture, horticulture, rice, forestry, bush foods, sugar and health sectors in northern Australia.

National Research Centre for Natural Hazards and Disaster Resilience

The Australian Government is providing \$88.1 million over 10 years to extend and scale up funding for critical research into natural hazards. The funding includes \$85 million for a new, world class research centre for natural hazard resilience and disaster risk reduction, *Natural Hazards Research Australia*, to deliver and scale up applied research to inform Australia's disaster recovery and resilience effort.

The work of *Natural Hazards Research Australia* is supporting businesses and communities across Australia, including in regional Australia. This research will benefit regional Australia as the regional landscape is at a heightened risk of impact from natural hazard events such as bushfires and flooding.

The Australian Government is continuing to fund the following initiatives:

- Round 3 of the *Community Benefit Program* provides \$2.0 million in grants for the Kimba community to support social-cohesion and economic development during the site selection process for the National Radioactive Waste Management Facility.
- The *Community Skills and Development Program*, provides \$8.0 million over four years to build community skills and business capacity to enable Kimba to maximise the benefits that will come from construction and operation of the National Radioactive Waste Facility.
- The *Strengthening Business* service provides on-the-ground support, meaningful information and advice to small businesses directly impacted by the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires, COVID-19 and flood emergencies in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia. With a footprint of 45 facilitators (including six digital solutions specialists) covering 63 LGAs across New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia, the service has worked with over 900 businesses to date, helping to recover and strengthen business systems, operations and strategies.

Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

The Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts portfolio contributes to the wellbeing of all Australians through the design and implementation of the Australian Government's regional development, infrastructure, transport, communications, digital economy and arts and culture policies and programs.

The scope of the portfolio's work touches the lives of every Australian. It underpins the economic and social activity of our community nation-wide, from the transport and communications networks that Australians use every day, to our cultural expressions. It supports services and entities delivering crucial national economic infrastructure, such as national road, rail, aviation and shipping infrastructure including water infrastructure, communication systems and services such as Australia Post and NBN Co and support for the Arts. In particular, the portfolio is responsible for national policy initiatives on regional development, providing for programs and initiatives that assist regional communities around the country including a focus on Northern Australia. The portfolio also supports services to Australia's territories such as Norfolk Island, and Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

The new initiatives in the October 2022 Budget detailed below have been designed to continue to support government investment in regional Australia, but also to refocus the approach to investment.

The Government has decided to replace the current suite of much-criticised regional grant programs with new programs with enhanced integrity and transparency. To deliver election commitments, the Government has committed \$349.9 million over five years from 2022-23 for a new community infrastructure grants program – *Investing in our Communities*. This will support the Government's local community, sport and infrastructure election commitments for investments under \$5 million. A second program, the *Priority Community Infrastructure Program* is committing \$1 billion over five years from 2022-23 to deliver the Government's larger scale (generally over \$5 million) infrastructure election commitments. A further \$1 billion will be provided for two new programs, the *Growing Regions Program*, and the regional *Precincts and Partnerships Program* to support community and place-based investment in regional Australia through both a competitive grants program and collaborative partnerships program

Through the October 2022-23 Budget, the Australian Government has committed \$698.1 million (and \$1.9 billion in equity) over seven years from 2022-23 to implement a number of major strategic infrastructure projects in Northern Australia and elsewhere. This includes \$1.5 billion in planned equity to build marine infrastructure at the Middle Arm Sustainable Development Precinct near Darwin to help support the creation of a major new export hub for clean energy, including green hydrogen and \$100 million to support the Port of Newcastle and the Hunter region become hydrogen ready. The Port of Newcastle is the largest coal export hub in the world and this investment will help the broader Hunter region transition from thermal coal exports towards new industries based on clean energy like green hydrogen.

Funding in the October 2022 Budget further includes more than \$28 billion supporting 410 ongoing major Infrastructure Investment Program projects in regional Australia, with a further 52 which will benefit regional and urban communities.

The portfolio also continues to enable improvement in digital connectivity in regional, rural and remote Australia. Our focus on effective, safe and accessible communications services will accelerate the long and difficult economic recovery in response to COVID-19 and other challenges, like drought and other natural disasters, which particularly impact regional communities.

Connectivity is an enabler of economic development in regional and rural areas. Better mobile coverage will also improve public safety, as access to telecommunications services is critical before, during, and immediately after disasters. In addition to existing measures, the Government's *Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia* (the Better Connectivity Plan) is providing \$656 million over five years to improve digital infrastructure in regional communities, including boosting mobile coverage, investing in place-based connectivity projects, expanding wireless connectivity across farms, improving the resilience of communications infrastructure and undertaking a national audit of mobile coverage. Overall, the Government is committing \$757.7 million in the Budget for new regional communications initiatives. Including the \$480 million grant to NBN Co to enhance its fixed wireless technology, the Government's regional communications commitments in the Budget total over \$1.1 billion.

The Australian Government is committed to supporting resilient and sustainable economic growth to secure a strong future with economic and social parity for people who live and work in Northern Australia (all of the Northern Territory and any parts of Queensland and Western Australia that are north of or intersect with the Tropic of Capricorn, as well as the Indian Ocean Territories of Christmas, Cocos and Keeling Islands). The Office of Northern Australia – as the Australian Government's area of expertise on northern development – partners with all levels of government, economic development enterprises, First Nations leaders, industry peak bodies and other entities to align resources and deliver long-term, sustainable growth in the north.

The portfolio includes key national cultural institutions such as the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), the National Library (NLA), the National Gallery of Australia (NGA), and the Australia Council for the Arts. Regional communities across Australia are further supported in the October 2022 Budget by a number of initiatives to assist the arts sector to get back in business following the disruptions caused by COVID-19. Additional funding decisions for the sector will be set out in a new National Cultural Policy, which will be delivered before the end of the year.

As at 31 August 2022, the Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts Portfolio employed 4,090 staff under the *Australian Public Service Act 1999*. Of this total, 3,843 were employed in Canberra, central Melbourne and central Sydney (94 per cent), 180 in other capital city locations (4 per cent) and 67 in regional areas (2 per cent).

The portfolio's footprint includes Newcastle, Townsville, Cairns, Coffs Harbour, Toowoomba, Narooma, Orange, Dubbo, Wodonga, Moree, Alice Springs, Port Augusta, Launceston, Christmas Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Norfolk Island and the Jervis Bay Territory, as well as Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide, Hobart, Darwin and Canberra.

The portfolio also has oversight responsibilities for Australia Post, which maintains an extensive retail network of over 4,000 Post Offices, with more than 2,500 of these in regional, rural and remote areas of Australia.

New Initiatives

Strategic Investment in public infrastructure for economic growth

Through the October 2022-23 Budget, the Australian Government has committed expenditure of \$ 698.1 million over seven years from 2022-23 (and \$1.9 billion in planned equity) to implement a number of major enabling public infrastructure projects to support sustainable and resilient growth in regional Australia and harness regional competitive advantages while providing diverse and improved employment opportunities across the country. There are two parts to this investment as follows:

Northern Australia and Queensland projects:

- \$1.5 billion in planned equity to build marine infrastructure at the Middle Arm Sustainable Development Precinct near Darwin to help support the creation of a major new export hub for clean energy, including green hydrogen. This enabling infrastructure will allow more goods and services in and out of the region, and will provide a significant economic boost for Darwin and Northern Australia.
- \$440 million in planned equity to build new regional logistic hubs in Tennant Creek, Katherine and Alice Springs to support vital supply links to export sites like Middle Arm. These hubs will provide employment opportunities in Central Australia and provide support to the resources sector to move their goods to market.
- \$565 million to invest in common user port facilities in the Pilbara to boost the region's readiness for new green hydrogen markets and its transition to renewable energy.
- \$7.7 million to develop common-user infrastructure at the Port of Bundaberg in Queensland to support industry diversification.

Supporting clean energy in the Hunter:

- \$100 million to support the Port of Newcastle and the Hunter region become hydrogen ready. The Port of Newcastle is the largest coal export hub in the world and this investment will help the broader Hunter region transition from thermal coal exports towards new industries based on clean energy like green hydrogen.

In addition to these projects, the Government has also committed \$32.0 million to progress strategic planning and water security with the Queensland Government, with funding to be transferred for this purpose to the National Water Grid Fund in the Water portfolio.

Albury Wodonga Regional Deal

The Australian Government will deliver funding of \$80 million to support projects in the Albury Wodonga region. The Australian Government will work with delivery partners to determine the project scopes and delivery.

Lansdown Eco-Industrial Precinct

The October 2022-23 October Budget has repurposed \$22 million for enabling infrastructure to support the development of the Lansdown Eco-Industrial Precinct and fulfil a commitment made prior to the 2022 Federal Election. This funding is in addition to a commitment of \$12 million for the Precinct made by the former Government in 2021.

The Precinct, located near Townsville and being developed by Townsville City Council, will support the next generation of advanced manufacturing jobs, as well as economic growth for Townsville and North Queensland. It will host businesses involved in a range of advanced manufacturing and eco-industrial activities, such as green hydrogen production and lithium-ion battery manufacturing.

Regional Development in Cairns – Election Commitments

In the 2022-23 October Budget, the Australian Government will deliver on its election commitments to the Cairns region by committing \$200 million to expand the Cairns Marine Precinct (CMP) (\$150 million) and to construct a new Central Queensland University (CQU) campus in Cairns' CBD (\$50 million).

The Government's investment in the CMP has the potential to support Far North Queensland's capacity to meet the forecast increase in demand for marine-related services and further diversify the local economy. Support for CQU is expected to have a number of immediate and longer-term benefits for Cairns and Far North Queensland by providing better access to tertiary education and the development of skilled workers, and also improving liveability and creating new industries and opportunities for the local economy and community.

Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility

As part of the 2022-23 October Budget, the Government has confirmed an additional appropriation of \$2 billion into the *Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility* (NAIF), bringing the total capital appropriation for the NAIF to \$7 billion through to 2026. This additional investment reaffirms the Government's commitment to Northern Australia and will enable the NAIF to continue investing in projects that support economic growth and positive Indigenous outcomes in Northern Australia.

The Government will also expand the definition of Northern Australia under the *Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility Act 2016* to include the Indian Ocean Territories (IOTs). This will support opportunities through the NAIF for local businesses in the IOTs to diversify and create new jobs.

Legislative changes will be required to implement the additional \$2 billion capital appropriation for the NAIF and to expand the geographical bounds of NAIF's activities.

Investing in our Communities Program

Through the 2022-23 October Budget, the Australian Government has committed \$349.9 million over five years from 2022-23 to deliver the Government's local community, sport and infrastructure election commitments for investments under \$5 million.

The new program will fund election commitments with enhanced integrity and transparency through a program design that includes proportionate and robust assessment criteria for all projects. The program will be temporary, with a one-off, closed, non-competitive round of applications from the list of 2022 election commitments.

Growing Regions and Regional Precincts and Partnerships Programs

Through the 2022-23 October Budget, the Australian Government has committed a combined \$1 billion for regionals grants and partnerships. *Growing Regions*, a new community infrastructure program, will deliver strategic investment in the regions, with enhanced integrity and transparency.

Growing Regions will help drive regional economic prosperity by providing equitable and fair access to funding for capital works for community infrastructure across Australia's regions. The program will run an open, competitive grants round, which will deliver a higher standard of integrity by awarding grants on a merit basis, separating capacity building, assessment and delivery, increasing accountability of ministerial discretion in decision-making, recommendations and decisions. The program will award grants to construct or upgrade community infrastructure.

The regional *Precincts and Partnerships Program* will provide a strategic, nationally consistent mechanism for larger-scale infrastructure investment, aimed at transforming regions, regional cities and rural communities

The Government will work with state, territory and local government to come together in genuine collaboration in a Precinct Partnership. It will allow the different levels of government to jointly invest in a longer-term and targeted way to meet their respective priorities via a precinct-focused, partnerships model. A precinct is defined as a constrained geographic area or cluster, with initiatives shaped around a specific use or theme.

Priority Community Infrastructure Program

Through the 2022-23 October Budget, the Australian Government has committed \$1 billion over five years from 2022-23 to deliver the Government's larger scale election commitments.

Proponents with election commitments within this program will only be invited to apply after an initial merit review process. The program design includes enhanced integrity and transparency and robust assessment criteria for all projects. The program will be temporary, with a one-off, closed, non-competitive round.

Regional Australia Institute

The Government is providing a \$5 million one-off grant to the Regional Australia Institute (RAI) over three financial years from 2022-23. The new funding fulfils the Government's election commitment to bolster the RAI's research and data capacity. This improved research base will provide publicly-available data and evidence on key regional issues as they emerge. Regional communities will benefit from RAI's activation and education activities which aim to encourage business investment and population growth in regional areas.

Better Connectivity Plan

The *Better Connectivity Plan* is a five-year, \$656 million package that will deliver:

Mobile Coverage and Communications Resilience initiatives

The Government will invest a total of \$400 million from 2022-23 to 2026-27 to boost multi-carrier mobile coverage on regional roads, improve mobile coverage in rural and remote communities that are currently underserved, and improve the resilience of essential communications services.

Regional Connectivity Program

The measure also includes \$200 million for further rounds of the *Regional Connectivity Program* (RCP). The RCP is a place-based initiative that is targeting investment in telecommunications projects that improve digital inclusion and deliver social and economic opportunities for regional communities.

The measure will bring broad benefits to the wider community in terms of enhanced connectivity which supports economic and social activity and public safety.

On Farm Connectivity Program

The Government has committed \$30 million to support rural Australia through the *On Farm Connectivity Program* over three years from 2022-23 to 2024-25.

This program will enable farmers to extend connectivity in their fields and take advantage of connected machinery and sensor technology. Improving connectivity will enable Australian agricultural businesses to use digital technologies to increase productivity and efficiency; and to improve safety for farmers at work.

Independent audit of mobile coverage

The Government has committed \$20 million to an independent audit of mobile coverage to examine local coverage gaps, with a key component delivered in partnership with Australia Post leveraging its nationwide fleet of vehicles and partners. The audit will establish a stronger evidence base to guide future mobile coverage investment priorities and inform future policies to benefit consumers.

Regional Tech Hub

The Australian Government has committed a further \$6 million over three years to extend the *Regional Tech Hub* to support better consumer awareness and better information regarding digital services including mobile coverage and performance. The *Regional Tech Hub* provides independent and factual information to help people in regional and rural Australia get connected and stay connected more easily. The Hub includes a website, online helpdesk, phone support line and social media access through Facebook and Twitter.

This will extend previous funding of \$3 million for the measure's initial three-year term, which commenced in 2020.

Shortland Terrestrial Television Transmission

The *Shortland Terrestrial Television Transmission* initiative will improve viewer access to free-to-air television services in the Shortland electorate, for households in the area which have reported issues with television reception since the digital switchover.

This initiative funds a field reception study to be undertaken by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to identify the cause of reception difficulties and to recommend solutions. Funding will be provided by way of a grant to establish the necessary new or upgraded television transmission infrastructure identified by the ACMA. Funding of \$2.5 million is allocated across three years 2022-23 to 2024-25.

NBN full-fibre access upgrades

The Australian Government will provide \$2.4 billion in equity funding to NBN Co to provide around 90 per cent of the NBN fixed line footprint with access to gigabit broadband speeds by 2025. As part of this initiative, NBN Co will provide access to full fibre upgrades to approximately 1.5 million additional fibre to the node (FTTN) premises across Australia. Over 660,000 of these premises are expected to be located in regional areas.

Like NBN Co's fibre upgrade investment that commenced in 2020, residents and businesses will be able to take advantage of faster broadband speeds, through an upgrade of the last mile copper to a fibre connection directly to their premises. The upgrade will be available on demand when a customer in an eligible premise seeks a higher speed service than would be currently be available to them.

Boost education opportunities for 30,000 families with no internet at home initiative

The Australian Government is providing NBN Co a \$4.5 million grant to support the delivery of free NBN services for up to 30,000 unconnected families with school aged children for 12 months.

Families will be nominated by schools, education authorities and partnering community organisations as they are best-placed to identify students who are in-need and would benefit from a home broadband connection. NBN Co will validate that nominated families do not have an active NBN service before completing the connection.

The initiative will be provided across the entire NBN network, including in regional and remote areas served by NBN fixed-wireless and Sky Muster. Families living in regional and remote areas are disproportionately affected by affordability barriers, and this initiative will provide access to reliable, fast broadband connectivity to support the education of their children.

First Nations Digital Inclusion

The Australian Government is providing \$2.5 million in funding over five years to establish a new initiative, the First Nations Digital Advisory Group (the Advisory Group). The purpose of the Advisory Group is to provide strategic advice to the Minister for Communications on issues relating to digital inclusion for First Nations people. An important regional benefit of the initiative will be to provide strategic advice on how to address remote challenges to First Nations digital inclusion in relation to access, affordability and digital ability.

The Advisory Group's advice will be guided by the objective and priorities set out in the National Agreement on *Closing the Gap* and the Indigenous Digital Inclusion Plan, including the importance of shared decision-making in the design, implementation and monitoring of digital inclusion measures and progress. The Advisory Group will work in partnership with First Nations people and communities, and will make sure its work aligns with broader efforts across government to support the *Closing the Gap* agenda and digital inclusion more generally.

Tourist and heritage operators' rail safety regulation

Subject to final agreement by Infrastructure and Transport Ministers to legislate a new cost recovery framework for rail regulation, the Australian Government will contribute funding (together with state and territory governments) for cost associated with rail safety regulation for tourist and heritage rail operators. This is a component of a new cost recovery model to be implemented by the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator. Many tourist and heritage rail operators are in regional communities and contribute significantly to regional tourism and economies. The Commonwealth will meet 30 per cent of the cost of regulating the sector, ensuring ongoing safety of these operations.

Independent Review of Inland Rail

Delivering on its election commitment, the Australian Government has commissioned an independent review to take a closer look at the planning, governance and delivery of Inland Rail to help get this nationally important project back on track.

The Review will consider a number of aspects, such as the process for selecting the Inland Rail route, including stakeholder consultation, and assess the project's scope, schedule and cost. The review will also assess opportunities for enhancing community benefits along the route as well as having regard to existing studies, such as the Toowoomba to Gladstone Inland Rail Extension Business Case.

Establishing a Strategic Fleet

Recognising the vital role that shipping plays in the nation's economic and social wellbeing, the Australian Government has committed to rebuilding Australia's shipping capabilities by establishing a strategic fleet of up to 12 vessels. A Taskforce has been appointed by the Government to provide advice to guide its decision-making on establishing the fleet.

The Taskforce will consider opportunities for the strategic fleet to contribute to the prosperity of regional-based industries such as cement, metal smelting, fertiliser, agriculture and mining by providing improved shipping services and capabilities. The Taskforce will also consider options for the fleet to provide relief to regional communities during periods of supply chain disruption or in response to emergency situations such as flooding, bushfires and cyclones.

The Government will provide up to \$6.3 million in the October 2022-23 Budget to support the Taskforce to provide advice to the Government by 30 June 2023.

Aviation White Paper

The Government is committing \$7 million across 2022-23 and 2023-24 to deliver a new Aviation White Paper to set the scene for the next generation of growth and development across Australia's aviation sector out to 2050.

The White Paper will examine the safety, competitiveness, sustainability and efficiency of the aviation sector. While the White Paper will deal with aviation sector as a whole, general and regional aviation will be a key focus. Working with industry and the community, the White Paper will deliver for regional Australia an understanding of regional aviation's role in economic development, future workforce and skills requirements and help ensure regulatory frameworks promote sustainability of regional operations over the long-term.

Per-and Poly-fluoroalkyl Substances Airports Investigation Program

The 2021-22 Budget committed \$130.5 million over three years from 1 July 2021, to establish a *Per-and Poly-fluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) Investigation Program* at up to 37 civilian airports where the site (and surrounds) may be contaminated by PFAS in aviation rescue

firefighting foam used by Commonwealth agencies. The program will undertake whole of site investigations to determine the nature and extent of any contamination, and support airports to develop management plans as required.

The 2022-2023 Budget extends the PFAS Investigation Program by an additional three years to 30 June 2027. Extending the program's timeframe to 30 June 2027 allows sufficient time to conduct robust, and effective investigations, and stage the number of airports participating in the program to better manage market capacity constraints and risks.

While a national program, 21 of the 37 airports identified for the PFAS Airports Investigation Program are considered regional, or remote. Regional airports are disproportionately affected by PFAS due to the likelihood of groundwater usage, smaller scale airports and additional costs to investigate. The program will provide confidence to regional Australians, airport owners, operators and tenants that PFAS contamination is identified and effectively managed.

Newcastle Airport International Terminal Upgrade Grant

The Australian Government has committed \$55 million over two years from 2022-23 to support the upgrade of the international passenger terminal at Newcastle Airport. The upgrade will provide economic and connectivity benefits to the city and the Hunter region boosting international tourism, trade and education through facilitating more direct international flights, accelerating regional recovery from COVID-19 impacts.

Hobart Airport Runway Upgrade

The Australian Government has committed \$60.0 million over two years from 2023-24 to support the upgrade of the runway and airfield facilities at Hobart Airport. The runway upgrade is expected to enable the airport to service long-distance freight and wide-body international passenger flights, opening up direct flights to Asian destinations to benefit export industries and the visitor economy.

Regional and Local Newspaper Publishers Program

On 13 May 2022, the Australian Government announced a total of \$15 million in grants to support regional, independent suburban, First Nations and multicultural print publishers.

Funding will be delivered to eligible applicants under two streams with Stream 1 providing \$10 million funding for regional print publishers producing core news content and Stream 2 providing \$5 million funding for independent suburban, First Nations and multicultural print publishers producing core news content.

On 1 August 2022, the Minister for Communications announced the opening of the Regional and Local Newspaper Publishers Program (RLNP).

The grant opportunity closed for applications on 19 August 2022 with the department receiving 222 applications. On 28 September 2022, Minister Rowland announced that 208 applicants were deemed eligible to receive funding across the four funding streams. The department will negotiate funding agreements with successful applicants and make initial payments to successful grantees in Quarter Two 2022-23.

News Media Assistance Program

On 13 May 2022, the Australian Government announced it would develop a *News Media Assistance Program* (News MAP) to secure the evidence base needed to inform long term media policy interventions and to develop measures to support public interest journalism and media diversity.

The Government is providing \$4 million in 2022-23 to the News MAP for investment in early initiatives that help build an evidence base on the state of the news media sector as it adjusts to a changing media environment. These initiatives will include improved measurement of media diversity to guide the design, delivery and targeting of measures supporting the sector, including in regional areas.

Double J Expansion Feasibility Study

The ABC will receive funding of \$0.5 million in 2022-23 to conduct a feasibility study into the expansion of Double J to FM radio. The feasibility study will examine options to increase the listenership of Double J and promote Australian music and artists to a wider audience, particularly in regional areas.

Safe Kids are eSmart Kids

The Australian Government will partner with the Alannah and Madeline Foundation (AMF) to support the development and national roll out of digital and media literacy learning products to all Australian schools – including those in regional areas.

The Australian Government has committed \$6 million over three years to allow AMF to develop and make available to schools the Junior Digital Licence+, and provide free access to the supporting Digital Licence+ and Media Literacy Lab products. Together, these online learning tools will help to equip young Australians living in regional areas with the skills they need to be critical, responsible and active citizens online.

Transfer of Creative Partnerships Australia's functions to the Australia Council

From 2023-24, Creative Partnerships Australia's functions will be transferred to the Australia Council. Creative Partnerships Australia's funding of \$15.2 million over three years from 2023-24 and \$5.2 million ongoing and indexed from 2026-27 will also be transferred to the Australia Council. These functions include growing a culture of giving to the arts, assisting artists and arts organisations to attract and maintain support from donors and businesses and encouraging and celebrating innovation and excellence in giving to,

and partnerships with, the arts and cultural sector. This transfer will harness the Australia Council's expertise and reach as Australia's principal arts investment body to better support artists and arts organisations, including in regional areas, to attract private sector investment. It will also facilitate coordinated and integrated support for the arts sector.

NAISDA Dance College – Facilities upgrade to help develop the next generation of artists

The Australian Government will provide funding of \$5 million in 2022-23 to NAISDA Dance College to upgrade training facilities at its campus on the New South Wales Central Coast. NAISDA Dance College is funded to provide specialist, accredited training in traditional and contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dance to talented young people seeking careers in dance and arts. Its current buildings range in age from circa 1912 to early 2000. Some of these buildings are not currently fit for purpose and the physical condition of the heritage buildings requires maintenance. Upgraded facilities will ensure that NAISDA's students, including those from regional and remote Indigenous communities, have appropriate and fit for purpose facilities and will allow NAISDA to better meet students' mental, physical and cultural needs.

Support for the National Performing Arts Training Organisations

The Australian Government provides funding to support seven *National Performing Arts Training Organisations* to operate as national centres of excellence and provide world-class training and career pathways for Australia's most talented performing artists. From 2022-23 additional funding of \$4.2 million will be provided over four years. This will bring the total 2022-23 investment to \$33.7 million. Funding enables the national performing arts training organisations to provide world-class training and career pathways for Australia's most talented performing artists. Their national reach ensures they provide access to all aspiring Australian performing arts students, including those in regional and remote Australia. The seven organisations include, the National Institute of Circus Arts, National Institute of Dramatic Art, Flying Fruit Fly Circus, Australian National Academy of Music, Australian Ballet School, Australian Youth Orchestra, and NAISDA Dance College.

Support for the National Institute of Dramatic Art

The Australian Government will provide supplementary funding of \$5 million in 2022-23 to the National Institute of Dramatic Art. The Australian Government provides funding to the National Institute of Dramatic Art to deliver world-class training to talented young people who aspire to national and international careers in performing arts. NIDA's programs are open to all Australians, including those from regional and remote Australia. The organisation also plays a central role in developing Australia's professional capacity in the performing arts and screen production sectors. This funding will contribute to the National Institute of Dramatic Art's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and will support its ongoing viability.

Bundanon Trust

The *Bundanon Trust* is a wholly-owned Commonwealth company limited by guarantee, established in 1993 to own and manage the properties and art collection donated to the Commonwealth by Arthur and Yvonne Boyd 'as a means of a gift to the nation'. The *Bundanon Trust* supports arts practice and engagement with the arts through a diverse range of programs such as its artist in residence, education, performance and environmental programs which have long-term cultural, economic and social benefits for the New South Wales Shoalhaven region and beyond.

The Australian Government will provide supplementary funding of \$2.4 million to *Bundanon Trust* in 2022-23 as a one-off investment targeted at ongoing sustainability. This is in addition to \$4.5 million in operational funding for 2022-23, timed to coincide with the completion of its government-supported masterplan to create greater access to the collection, increase visitation and secure Bundanon as a leading attraction in regional Australia. The new facilities, which include a subterranean Art Museum and storage facility to display and protect the Trust's \$46 million art collection, and a Bridge for Creative Learning that also incorporates visitor accommodation, opened to the public on 29 January 2022.

Highlights for Northern Australia

Northern Australia has a significant role to play in growing national prosperity.

The Australian Government continues to support the developing Northern Australia agenda through investment in sustainable and resilient growth across Australia's north.

Highlights of the Australian Government's new investments in Northern Australia through Budget 2022-23 are summarised below.

Initiative	Investment	Portfolio
Strengthening community safety in Central Australia for early intervention project and improving security infrastructure in public spaces.	\$14 million	Attorney-General's Department
Cairns Water Security	\$107.5 million	Department of Climate Change, Energy and the Environment and Water (DCCEEW)
Townsville Hydrogen Hub	\$71.9 million	DCCEEW
Great Barrier Reef: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing the 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan; and Shovel Ready Catchment and Reef Restoration Projects 	\$96.9 million; \$91.8 million	DCCEEW
Australian Critical Minerals Research and Development Hub Critical Minerals Development Program, supporting economic development in remote and regional areas, including Northern Australia.	\$50.5 million; \$100 million	Department of Industry, Science and Resources

Initiative	Investment	Portfolio
Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia to improve accessibility, reliability and inclusion.	\$656 million	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA)
Establish the First Nations Digital Advisory Group to provide strategic advice to the Minister for Communications.	\$2.5 million	DITRDCA
Additional \$2 billion appropriation for the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility (NAIF)	\$2 billion	DITRDCA
Cairns Marine Precinct; and Central Queensland University Cairns Campus	\$150 million; \$50 million	DITRDCA
Kuranda Range Road upgrades	\$210 million	DITRDCA
Landsdown Industrial Precinct (Townsville)	\$22 million	DITRDCA
Inland Freight Route upgrades between Charters Towers and Mungindi to improve efficiency and safety.	\$400 million	DITRDCA
Queensland Beef Corridors to upgrade road infrastructure on the Dawson, Burnett and Leichhardt Highways.	\$400 million	DITRDCA
Gladstone region: Upgrades to the Bruce Highway between Rockhampton and Gladstone.	\$200 million; \$100 million; \$15 million; \$10 million;	DITRDCA
Common user port facilities in the Pilbara to boost the region's readiness for new green hydrogen markets and its transition to renewable energy.	\$565 million	DITRDCA
Delivering priority upgrades to the interstate Tanami Road through the Freight Highway Upgrade Program (Western Australia) .	\$434.2 million	DITRDCA
Middle Arm Sustainable Development Precinct.	\$1.5 billion in equity	DITRDCA
Tanami Road and Central Arnhem Road – additional funding for continued upgrading.	\$350 million	DITRDCA
Northern Territory Regional Logistics Hubs in Tennant Creek, Katherine and Alice Springs.	\$400 million in equity	DITRDCA
Northern Territory Homelands and Remote Housing to assist with housing pressures and overcrowding.	\$100 million	Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Current Initiatives

Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program

Phase 4 of the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure (LRCI) Program, will deliver \$750 million worth of investment in roads and community projects, building on the \$2.5 billion investment through Phases 1, 2 and 3. Funding under Phase 4 will be prioritised towards rural, regional and remote Local Government Areas through a new allocation methodology and guidelines that acknowledge the additional challenges often faced by councils in these areas.

Infrastructure Investment Program – major projects

The Australian Government is continuing its investment in road and rail infrastructure projects to support regional development and our local communities. The 2022-23 Budget reflects a new approach to infrastructure investment that responds to market capacity constraints, creating a more sustainable infrastructure pipeline while continuing to support priorities for communities. At the 2022-23 Budget, the Government is providing more than \$28 billion supporting 410 major Infrastructure Investment Program projects in regional Australia, with a further 52 which will benefit regional and urban communities.

The Australian Government is making a substantial investment in regional Australia through commitments to a number of priority projects including:

- \$125 million to the Barwon Heads Road Upgrade – Stage 2 in Victoria. This project will help communities with quicker and safer travel to and from home by duplicating Barwon Heads Road from Reserve Road to Lower Duneed Road at Armstrong Creek.
- \$500 million for the High-Speed Rail Authority to start corridor acquisition, planning and early works to make high speed rail connections between Sydney, the Central Coast and Newcastle in New South Wales a reality. The High-Speed Rail is to be established by legislation, and will continue work on faster rail, with the functions of the National Faster Rail Agency absorbed into the Authority and the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts.
- \$434.2 million for a rolling program of upgrades to seal the Tanami Road, a nationally significant freight route in Western Australia.
- \$350 million of additional funding for sealing Tanami Road and upgrades to Central Arnhem Road, in the Northern Territory. Additional funding for these projects will allow continuation of strategic upgrades to support Indigenous and remote communities and businesses, as well as improving flood immunity and reliability.
- \$586.4 million to upgrade the Bruce Highway between Anzac Avenue and Uhlmann Road, in Queensland. This will involve widening the highway from six to eight lanes between Anzac Avenue and Uhlmann Road.
- \$200 million to upgrade the Bruce Highway between Gladstone and Rockhampton in Queensland. This project will deliver new passing and dual lanes, new overtaking lanes on the Gavial-Gracemere link, and a range of other improvements on the highway between Gladstone and Rockhampton.
- \$540 million to upgrade Tasmania’s important road corridors, including the Bass Highway, Tasman Highway and the East and West Tamar Highways.
- \$400 million of additional funding for Inland Freight Route upgrades between Mungindi and Charters Towers in Queensland, bringing the total Australian Government commitment to \$800 million. These upgrades will improve freight efficiency and road safety, and support critical supply chains in the region by ensuring a high-standard alternative freight corridor to the Bruce Highway.

- \$400 million to Queensland Beef Corridors to upgrade beef road infrastructure across key roads in the network - sealing unsealed roads, and upgrading of heavy vehicle freight routes on the Dawson, Burnett and Leichhardt Highways.
- \$210 million to upgrade the Kuranda Range Road, which will go towards widening lanes, installing additional guardrails and reinforcing roadsides to prevent landslides on the Kennedy Highway between Smithfield and Kuranda.
- \$100 million towards improving access to the Port of Gladstone for heavy vehicles and improve safety by reducing congestion for all road users.

Roads of Strategic Importance

The Australian Government is continuing to invest in the Roads of Strategic Importance (ROSI) initiative to support the upgrade of key freight routes, and to help connect regional businesses to local and international markets, and better connect regional communities. Through the October 2022-23 Budget, the Australian Government is committing an additional \$180.8 million to the ROSI initiative.

ROSI is ensuring our key freight roads efficiently connect areas of regional and remote economic activity to ports, airports and other transport hubs. This initiative is delivering works such as road sealing, flood immunity, strengthening and widening, pavement rehabilitation, bridge and culvert upgrades and road realignments.

Improved access provided through ROSI is providing substantial social and economic benefits, including opportunities for greater regional employment and business growth.

Remote Roads Upgrade Pilot Program

The Australian Government is providing \$150 million of funding for projects under the *Remote Roads Upgrade Pilot*. The program targets road improvements for regional communities, and addresses significant deficiencies on key regional and rural roads that limit community access, pose safety risks and impact the economic development of the surrounding area.

The program will assess the social and economic benefits to communities of undertaking these projects.

Bridges Renewal Program

The Australian Government is providing at least \$85 million per year through the *Bridges Renewal Program* (BRP).

The program supports the upgrading of bridges across the nation to deliver improvements in productivity and community access.

Since it commenced in 2015, more than 85 per cent of funding under the BRP has gone to projects located in rural and regional areas.

Roads to Recovery Program

The Australian Government is committing \$500 million each year to the *Roads to Recovery Program* (RTR). This ongoing program supports the maintenance of the nation's local road infrastructure assets, facilitating greater accessibility and improved safety and economic and social outcomes for Australians. The program operates uniformly across Australia providing funding to all local governments and to states and territory governments in unincorporated areas.

For the current program life from 2019-20 to 2023-24, the Australian Government will provide \$2.6 billion of RTR funding. Flexibility is built into the program with funding recipients having responsibility for choosing road projects on which to spend their RTR funding, based on their local priorities.

Black Spot Program

The Australian Government is providing at least \$110 million per year to the *Black Spot Program* to fund safety works in places where there have been serious crashes or where serious crashes are likely to occur.

More than 60 per cent of road deaths and a significant proportion of serious injuries occur outside of metropolitan areas. In line with national road safety policy objectives, approximately 50 per cent of *Black Spot Program* funds in each state (other than Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory) have been set aside for projects in non-metropolitan areas. The *Black Spot Program* continues to deliver reductions to fatal and serious injury crashes at treated sites by up to 30 per cent. Each state and territory receives a share of the total funding based on crash data, population and vehicle kilometres travelled.

Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program

The Australian Government is providing at least \$65 million per year through the *Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program* (HVSPP), which provides funding to infrastructure projects that improve productivity and safety outcomes of heavy vehicle operations across Australia. More than 90 percent of projects delivered through the HVSPP are in regional areas.

The Australian Government is also delivering its election commitment of \$80 million dedicated funding to Heavy Vehicle Rest Areas through the HVSPP. This funding, in addition to the \$60 million already set aside to fund rest areas, and supplements the existing HVSPP funding. A steering committee including truck drivers will be established to provide expertise for targeted rest area projects.

Increasing job and business opportunities for Indigenous Australians in Regional Australia

All states and territories agreed to the Australian Government's National Partnership Agreement on Land Transport Infrastructure Projects in 2019, which introduced the Indigenous Employment and Supplier-use Infrastructure Framework. The Framework aims to create opportunities for Indigenous job-seekers and businesses on Australian Government funded infrastructure projects under the *Infrastructure Investment Program*.

The Framework aligns with Outcome Seven and Eight of the National Agreement on *Closing the Gap*, by improving socio-economic participation through the provision of increased opportunities for Indigenous businesses and individuals to work in the road and rail construction industry.

Under the Framework, funding recipients (state, territory and local governments) are required to develop an Indigenous Participation Plan establishing employment and supplier-use targets for: new construction projects receiving \$7.5 million or more of Australian Government funding; projects funded under the ROSI initiative in Northern Australia; and where there is high potential to support Indigenous outcomes.

As at 1 September 2022 more than 230 projects under the *Infrastructure Investment Program* have agreed employment and supplier-use targets in place under the Framework. Over the life of the projects, this is estimated to represent nearly 1,400 jobs for Indigenous Australians and hundreds of millions of dollars for Indigenous businesses.

Office of Road Safety

The Office of Road Safety (ORS) was established on 1 July 2019 and continues to facilitate national efforts to improve road safety outcomes for all Australians. The Australian Government is working closely with local state and territory governments in managing the delivery of safety treatments to reduce road trauma. ORS is contributing to the implementation of the National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 (the Strategy), which was released in December 2021, and is leading the development, in conjunction with states and territories, of the Strategy's accompanying Action Plan. Regional road safety, and remote road safety are two of the nine priorities under the Strategy.

ORS is focused on supporting the achievement of zero fatalities and serious injuries on our roads by 2050 by promoting innovation, and facilitating collaborative activities including research and awareness outcomes. ORS also delivers multiple non-infrastructure and infrastructure programs of national significance, including the *Road Safety Program* which makes a significant contribution to proactively detecting and treating deficiencies in road infrastructure, including in regional areas. ORS is focused on the elimination of road trauma across all Australian environments, noting that two thirds of road deaths consistently occur in regional and remote areas.

Road Safety Program

As part of the Australian Government’s ongoing commitment to improving road safety for all Australians, approximately \$2 billion has been committed to Tranche One-Three projects from 2020-21 nationwide through the *Road Safety Program*. Additionally, \$1 billion will be available across 2023-24 and 2024-25 to deliver further key road safety projects.

The *Road Safety Program* is delivering road safety improvements towards more than 1,400 projects nationwide across the first three tranches and is contributing to reducing death and serious injury road crashes. The Program is scheduled to terminate on 30 June 2025. To date this program has seen safety improvement works delivered to more than 23,000 kilometres of the national road network and has supported approximately 12,000 jobs.

This initiative will positively benefit the economy and is expected to materially reduce road casualty rates across predominantly regional communities, which disproportionately bear the brunt of fatal and serious injury road crashes. Regional communities suffer 10 deaths per 100,000 persons compared to metropolitan areas who suffer 2 deaths per 100,000 persons.

Road safety treatments include:

- shoulder sealing and installation of audio tactile line markings, to support the safe return of vehicles from the shoulder into the travel lane
- physical barriers to prevent run off road crashes
- median treatments to prevent head-on vehicle collisions
- pedestrian safety measures including cycleways and vehicle separation.

The application of these road safety treatments is raising road safety standards on high risk roads.

Road Safety Innovation Fund

The *Road Safety Innovation Fund* (RSIF) is providing \$24 million in grants over four years from 2019-20 with projects expected to be completed by June 2025.

The RSIF provides grants for innovative research and new and improved existing technologies and products that enhance road safety under the safe systems approach. This includes research and development in priority areas such as regional road safety, driver distraction from mobile devices, protecting vulnerable road users and reducing drug driving. Through two funding rounds, 53 projects have been approved. Four projects are complete and the remaining 49 projects are in delivery. While funded projects will benefit all road users, three projects have specific application to regional Australia.

Keys2drive

The Australian Government has committed \$16 million to deliver the *Keys2drive* program over four years from 2019-20.

Keys2drive is a national learner driver program which aims to improve the safety of young drivers by helping them gain effective driving experience before they graduate to a 'P-plate' licence. The program contributes to road safety outcomes by providing a free theory and practical lesson to learner drivers and supervisors. The program has been enhanced to expand uptake in regional and remote areas where young drivers are over-represented in road crashes.

Regional Australia Level Crossing Safety Program

The Australian Government's *Regional Australia Level Crossing Safety Program* (RALCSP) will provide around \$180 million in 2025-26 to improve safety at level crossings in regional areas nationwide. Due to the growing freight task nationally, including demand for agricultural goods, which are primarily transported through regional Australia on trains and heavy vehicles, the risk of level crossing accidents is expected to increase.

The RALCSP includes funding for regional level crossing safety treatments like improved signage, boom gates, flashing lights and road rumble strips. The RALCSP will also support: greater awareness of the risks associated with level crossings; data improvements to inform risk assessments of level crossings; and research and technology trials for low cost level crossing safety innovations that can be quickly deployed.

Narrabri to Turrawan Line Upgrade

The Australian Government is providing \$44.7 million to the ARTC to upgrade 35 kilometres of the Narrabri to Turrawan Line between the Hunter Valley Coal Network and Inland Rail. The upgrade is expected to be completed in late 2023 allowing longer and heavier freight trains travelling from Northern New South Wales – transporting grain and cotton – to access the ports of Newcastle and Sydney.

Southern Highlands Overtaking Opportunities

The Australian Government is providing \$41.6 million to the ARTC to deliver overtaking facilities on the Southern Highlands Line in New South Wales. Providing more overtaking opportunities is expected to reduce transit time for rail freight services between Melbourne and Sydney, in addition to increased service reliability, and promote modal share shift from road to rail. The project is expected to be completed by late 2024.

Grade Separating Road Interfaces in New South Wales

The Australian Government is providing an additional \$300 million commitment for Grade Separating Road Interface projects, bringing the total project funding to \$562.5 million. The project is being delivered by the Australian and New South Wales Governments

commencing 2022-23, with funding being split \$450 million and \$112.5 million, between the Australian and state governments respectively. The project is expected to enable additional grade separations along the Inland Rail alignment in New South Wales.

Work already being progressed in 2022 includes the scoping and prioritisation phases of the Project, which will consider the strategic merits of the 22 identified sites, with a detailed focus on the four highest priority projects already identified.

National Freight Data Hub

The Australian Government is committed to the establishment of the *National Freight Data Hub*. A prototype website was launched in May 2021 as a practical demonstration of the value of a freight data resource for industry and governments. A prototype website was launched in May 2021 as a practical demonstration of the value of a freight data resource. The prototype website has been visited by over 16,000 users since it was launched and is being regularly updated while an enduring website is built with inputs from industry and others over 2022-23.

Freight transport plays a significant and wide-ranging role in across regional Australia. The National Freight Data Hub is making more data available through a curated data catalogue to support the freight industry. The National Freight Data Hub is also delivering 13 core data projects across all freight modes, that reflect industry's priorities and answer important freight and supply chain questions.

Many of the priority data projects will help inform regional businesses and communities with more detailed import and export commodity data; harmonised data about roadworks, road closures, rest areas and road infrastructure; and a National Location Registry – a digital 'address book' that provides more accurate and reliable location data, including physical pickup and delivery locations of farm sites and mines.

Automatic Dependent Surveillance – Broadcast Rebate Program

The \$30 million *Automatic Dependent Surveillance – Broadcast (ADS-B) Rebate Program* is providing grants in 2022-23 to incentivise voluntary uptake of ADS-B equipment in Australian-registered aircraft operating under Visual Flight Rules (VFR), many of which operate in regional Australia. The program provides 50 per cent of the cost, up to \$5,000, to aircraft owners for the purchase, installation and certification of eligible equipment. The equipment will result in improved safety and efficiency of Australian airspace, through better situational awareness for pilots by improving visibility of nearby airborne VFR aircraft; enhanced search and rescue capabilities through improved air traffic information; and air traffic controllers having additional and accurate automated aircraft position information of VFR aircrafts. The technology offers particular safety benefits for general aviation pilots operating in regional Australia, who often rely on seeing and avoiding nearby air traffic.

Regional Airports Screening Infrastructure Program

The \$94.5 million *Regional Airports Screening Infrastructure (RASI) Program* assists eligible regional airports with the cost of enhanced mandated security screening requirements required under transport security regulations. The RASI program funds the minimum necessary capital works costs to accommodate enhanced security screening equipment funded under the Department of Home Affairs' *Regional Airport Security Screening Fund (RASSF)*, and a portion of initial operational costs.

While regional airports receive the funding, it is ultimately regional communities that benefit through improved security measures for travellers and an easing of cost pressures on airlines and air tickets through initial screening cost assistance. The Program commenced in 2020, and is expected to conclude on 30 June 2023.

Most capital works projects have been completed. However, a number of projects were delayed due to the impact of COVID-19. The 2022-23 Budget has reprofiled program funding across financial years accordingly.

The Remote Air Services Subsidy Scheme

The *Remote Air Services Subsidy (RASS) Scheme* is part of the Australian Government's *Regional Aviation Access Program*. RASS is an ongoing scheme with an annual appropriation of \$15.5 million in 2022-23. The Scheme subsidises weekly flights to remote communities across Australia. The flights carry passengers, as well as goods such as educational materials, medicines and medical equipment, fresh foods and other urgent supplies. The flights often provide the only access to goods and services for communities in remote areas cut off by flood waters during the wet season.

The services are contracted by the Government and operate to around 270 communities in Queensland, Northern Territory, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania, including many Indigenous communities.

Regional Airports Program

The \$100 million *Regional Airports Program* is a competitive grants program to support upgrades to infrastructure and deliver improved aviation safety and access to regional airports. The program runs until June 2025.

The Regional Airports Program helps improve the safety for aircraft, operators and passengers using regional airports or aerodromes, helps meet the operational requirements of aeromedical and other emergency services, facilitates improved delivery of essential goods and services such as food supplies, health care and passenger air services and improves the connectivity of Australia's regions to domestic and global market opportunities.

In June 2020, 61 successful projects were announced with \$41.2 million in funding under Round One of the program. As of 1 October 2022, 33 Round One projects had been completed.

In July 2021, 89 successful projects, receiving \$53.5 million, were announced under Round Two of the program. As at 1 October 2022, 16 Round Two projects are complete.

Round Three of the program, with up to \$29 million, was open for applications in the first half of 2022. A number of projects across Rounds One and Two have been delayed by the impacts of COVID-19 and natural disasters. The 2022-23 Budget has reprofiled program funding not fully expended due to these delays from 2021-22 to 2022-23 to enable completion of these projects.

Remote Airstrip Upgrade Program

The *Remote Airstrip Upgrade Program* is a competitive grants program to support safety and access upgrades at airstrips in remote and very remote areas of Australia. For 2022-23, \$19.8 million in funding is allocated for grants from Rounds Six to Nin. \$3 million is allocated to the program in 2023-24.

Projects funded under the program improve safety for aircraft, operators and passengers. Safe, operational airstrips are vital for the delivery of essential goods and services in remote communities, particularly where road access can be disrupted for extended periods due to seasonal weather conditions. The airstrip supports the delivery of health care services such as those provided by the Royal Flying Doctor Service or other aeromedical providers and offers access to work and education opportunities for remote communities.

Round Nine of the program opened in the first half of 2022, with 55 successful projects, for \$14.9 million, announced on 4 August 2022.

Since 2011-12, over \$100 million has been approved for 449 remote airstrip projects.

A number of projects funded under the program have been delayed by the impacts of COVID-19 and natural disasters. The 2022-23 Budget has reprofiled program funding not fully expended due to these delays from 2021-22 to 2022-23 to enable completion of these projects.

Emerging Aviation Technology Partnerships Program

The Australian Government has committed \$32.6 million in 2022-23 and 2023-24 to establish the *Emerging Aviation Technology Partnerships Program* (the EATP Program). The objective of the EATP Program is to help fast-track the Australian emerging aviation technology sector by encouraging the development and deployment of innovative emerging aviation technologies and demonstrating the benefits stemming from use of the technology for Australian businesses and communities, particularly in regional Australia. The EATP Program is intended to improve supply chain and market efficiency and improve connections with regional and remote communities, with a particular focus on improving outcomes for Indigenous communities.

Under the EATP Program, the government is partnering with industry to test emerging aviation technology and the underpinning frameworks through pilot projects across five focus areas, all of which have a regional focus:

- digital farming
- connecting regional communities
- boosting regional supply chains
- improving outcomes for remote indigenous communities
- manufacturing in emerging aviation technology.

Round One of the EATP program was open from 20 December 2021 to 31 March 2022 and projects are expected to commence in late 2022. A second funding round is expected to be announced in 2023.

National System for Domestic Commercial Vessel Safety

Australia's domestic commercial vessel industries are mainly located in coastal and regional Australia and are an important part of tourism, transport and fishing.

The Independent Review of Domestic Commercial Vessel Safety Legislation and Costs and Charging Arrangements (the Review), commenced in January 2022 and is being conducted in two phases, with Phase One focusing on the safety legislation framework, and Phase Two considering national system delivery costs and future funding options. Phase One is partially complete, with a Draft Interim Safety Report released for public consultation on 8 August 2022. Work on Phase Two has commenced, with stakeholder consultation on delivery costs and future funding options planned over the coming months.

A review of the Australian Maritime Safety Authority's (AMSA) costs and charges was deferred as part of the 2021-22 Budget due to the impacts of COVID-19 on maritime businesses. A further deferral was necessary as safety findings from Phase One of the Review may impact consideration of delivery costs during the second phase.

To ensure AMSA can continue delivering vital safety regulation for our maritime industries, the Australian Government provided \$12.6 million funding in 2022-23 to AMSA for the operation of the national system while the review is completed.

Bass Strait Passenger Vehicle Equalisation Scheme

In 2022-23, the *Bass Strait Passenger Vehicle Equalisation Scheme* (BSPVES) is forecast to provide \$54.5 million in rebates for the transport of eligible passenger vehicles.

Since its introduction by the Australian Government in 1996, the BSPVES has supported the Tasmanian economy and regional Australia by reducing the cost of sea travel across Bass Strait for passengers accompanying an eligible passenger vehicle and the transport of eligible passenger vehicles between King Island and the mainland.

Assistance under the BSPVES is provided in the form of a rebate available through Bass Strait services currently operated by TT-Line and Bass Island Line, which reduces the fare paid by passengers for transport of their eligible passenger vehicles.

Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme

In 2022-23, the *Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme* (TFES) is forecast to provide \$178 million in assistance for eligible goods.

In 1976, the Australian Government introduced the TFES to support Tasmanian and regional businesses by providing financial assistance to reduce the higher cost of shipping non-bulk goods across Bass Strait.

The objective of the Scheme is to provide Tasmanian and regional businesses with equal opportunities to compete in other markets, recognising the lack of road and rail transport options for shippers across Bass Strait compared to those on the mainland.

Universal service

Premises across Australia continue to have reasonable access to broadband, telephone and payphone services. Voice and payphone services receive \$270 million per annum under the *Telstra Universal Service Obligation Performance Agreement*, which runs to 2031-32. Under statutory infrastructure provider (SIP) arrangements introduced from 1 July 2020, SIPs must connect premises and supply services so that retailers can offer broadband services to consumers of at least 25/5 Mbps.

Regional Connectivity Program

The *Regional Connectivity Program* (RCP) is targeting investment in telecommunications projects that will improve digital inclusion, social and economic opportunities for regional communities from 2020-21 to 2023-24. These projects could include improved mobile voice and data coverage, targeted fibre deployments, and improved microwave and fibre backhaul capacity.

Round 1 of the RCP is providing \$116 million in Commonwealth funding for 130 place-based telecommunications infrastructure projects across Australia, providing regional communities with significant upgrades to voice and data services.

Round 2 is providing up to \$137.2 million, including \$69.6 million of dedicated funding for projects in Northern Australia under the Connecting Northern Australia initiative.

Mobile Black Spot Program

The *Mobile Black Spot Program* (MBSP) provides funding to mobile network operators and infrastructure providers to invest in telecommunications infrastructure for improved mobile coverage and competition across Australia. Rounds One to 5A of the MBSP are funding delivery of more than 1,270 new mobile base stations across regional, rural and

remote Australia, with over 1,045 base stations now on air. The MBSP is supported by co-contributions from the Commonwealth, state and local governments, mobile network operators, businesses and local communities and has leveraged a total investment of more than \$875 million.

The Government will implement a new \$40 million round of the Program, the *Improving Mobile Coverage Round*. This round will improve mobile connectivity at 54 target locations across regional, rural and peri-urban Australia, including a number of major road transport corridors. Funding will be awarded on a competitive grants basis for the costs of deploying new telecommunications infrastructure that addresses identified mobile coverage and quality of service issues at these target locations.

Australian Postal Corporation – supporting regional communities

The Australian Postal Corporation -Australia Post - provides essential postal services to consumers and businesses across Australia. Australia Post has the largest retail network in Australia and post offices provide access to a variety of vital products and services to communities across Australia, including rural, regional and remote areas. In addition to letter and parcels services, post offices also offer financial and banking services, identity services and a range of state and federal government services, including passport renewals.

Viewer Access Satellite Television

The Australian Government has provided \$172.7 million in total funding towards *Viewer Access Satellite Television* from 2009-10 to 2023-24. Of this amount, \$14.1 million is allocated in 2022-23 and \$14.3 million in 2023-24. Over 262,000 households across Australia, primarily in regional and remote areas, rely on a *Viewer Access Satellite Television* (VAST) service for access to free to-air television by direct-to-home satellite. This includes 38,000 travellers who also use the VAST service when travelling through areas where there is no signal from a terrestrial broadcast transmission site. The Australian Government provides funding to the commercial broadcasters through grant agreements to support the provision of commercial free-to-air television services on VAST. ABC and SBS television and radio services are also available on VAST, which is supported through funding appropriations for the national broadcasters. Through funding provided by the National Indigenous Australians Agency, the VAST platform also carries Indigenous Community Television (ICTV) and 14 Indigenous radio services.

NBN Co Fixed Wireless and Satellite Upgrade

The Australian Government provided NBN Co with a \$480 million grant towards upgrade of the NBN fixed wireless network, with benefits also flowing to NBN Sky Muster satellite users, in June 2022 in line with its election commitment. The Government's contribution is part of an overall \$750 million upgrade by NBN Co of these networks. The upgrade will improve services available to the more than one million premises able to access NBN fixed wireless and satellite services by 2024.

The upgrade will extend the reach of the fixed wireless footprint to cover an additional 120,000 premises that have previously been able to access the NBN via Sky Muster satellite services.

For the 755,000 premises then able to access the NBN fixed wireless network, typical busy hour download speeds will increase to at least 50 megabits per second (Mbps). Peak wholesale speed plans available will increase to 100 Mbps with NBN Co also set to develop a new higher speed tier whereby 85 per cent of premises will be able to order speeds of up to 250 Mbps.

With premises moving off the NBN Sky Muster service to fixed wireless, this will free up capacity for users remaining on Sky Muster. NBN Co has already increased average data allowances to 55 Gigabytes (GB) – up from 50GB. Average data allowances for Sky Muster users will be further increased to 90GB once the fixed wireless upgrade is complete. The Government has also asked NBN Co to examine the feasibility of further decongesting satellite beams to potentially allow average data allowances to be increased to 100GB.

Cell Broadcast National Messaging System

The *Cell Broadcast National Messaging System* (CBNMS) will provide the Commonwealth with the ability to send emergency messages to the public, or targeted sections of the public, in relation to emergencies or disaster events, including events of national significance.

CBNMS will deliver warning messages to mobile phones, locally, regionally and nationally, in near real time. It will support use by state and territory emergency service Organisations giving them the ability to reliably send critical warnings and alerts in their jurisdictions in near real time. The overall policy objectives are to provide:

- The Commonwealth with the ability to send targeted warning message in emergencies to the public through a cell broadcast messaging capability as well as providing longevity for Australia's emergency warning capability.
- Address the current needs and limitations of the existing emergency alert platforms, including network congestion

Regional and remote areas are disproportionately affected by natural disasters. CBNMS will provide a new capability to send emergency warnings to these communities.

CBNMS will also address the findings of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements (Royal Commission) regarding current warning system limitations. It will bring Australia into line with other five eyes countries.

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts and the Department of Home Affairs (National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)) initiated an approach to market on 12 August 2021 to obtain tender quality prices for the implementation of CBNMS. Interim recommendations are now Delegate approved and the system is intended to be implemented in readiness for the 2023-24 high risk weather season.

Investments in the National Broadband Network

NBN Co Limited (NBN Co) announced in its 2021-2024 Corporate Plan that it would invest \$4.5 billion by 2023 to deliver better outcomes for residential and business broadband consumers. These investments include:

- \$700 million Business Fibre initiative to offer wholesale symmetrical speeds of up to 10 gigabits per second (Gbps) on-request at no up-front build cost to 90 per cent of business premises. This includes the establishment of over 300 Business Fibre Zones to provide metro-equivalent priced enterprise grade broadband to businesses around Australia, of which over 300,000 are located regionally.
- \$3.5 billion network upgrade program that will provide 75 per cent of NBN fixed-line premises with access to ultra-fast broadband (of up to one Gbps) by 2023 by 30 June 2022, 48 per cent of the fixed line network had been upgraded.
- \$300 million development fund to co-invest with local, state and federal governments to boost connectivity in regional Australia

For regional Australia, the investments by NBN Co are already underway and expected to result in:

- around 950,000 Fibre-to-the-Node (FTTN) premises in regional areas outside the five largest capital cities having access to speeds up to one Gbps on demand by 2023
- over 300,000 regional businesses located in Business Fibre Zones with access to ultra-fast broadband capability and metro-equivalent wholesale pricing
- more fixed-line broadband infrastructure into the NBN Satellite and Fixed Wireless footprints
- an estimated 10,000 additional regional jobs and an estimated 2,800 new regional businesses by 2024
- an expected \$1.5 billion in additional gross domestic product annually for regional Australia by 2024
- a \$50 million FTTN line speed uplift program to resolve in-home wiring issues
- a commercial model to facilitate the creation of future Business Fibre Zones based on co-investing in partnership with local and state and territory governments.

NBN Co is funding these current upgrades through existing and new private debt facilities.

Strengthening Telecommunications Against Natural Disasters Package

In May 2020, the Australian Government announced the \$37.1 million *Strengthening Telecommunications Against Natural Disasters (STAND)* package to prevent, mitigate and manage telecommunications outages in natural disasters. This initiative will increase network resilience and preparedness so communities can better deal with future emergencies and natural disasters.

The measures within the STAND Package include:

- \$10 million for temporary telecommunications infrastructure deployments, comprising a \$1.7 million tied grant to NBN Co for the purchase of five new NBN Road Muster satellite trucks and 12 portable satellite kits and competitive grants open to national carriers for facilities such as cells on wheels (COWS) and mobile exchanges on wheels (MEOWs)
- \$7 million to deliver NBN Co Sky Muster satellite services to rural and country emergency service depots and evacuation centres across the country at locations nominated by state and territory governments
- \$2.1 million to improve government information to communities about access to telecommunications in emergencies.

The STAND measures are being successfully rolled out, with a number of assets being in place ahead of the 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23 high risk weather seasons. These assets have enabled regional communities to remain connected during recent natural disasters such as the March 2022 East Coast Floods, where Road Muster trucks and satellite fly away kits were deployed to provide emergency connectivity for flood-impacted communities.

Other elements of the STAND package are currently being finalised, such as further communications materials, more temporary telecommunications facilities and the deployment of all remaining NBN Sky Muster Satellite Services. Both the NBN Sky Muster Satellite Service and temporary infrastructure components of STAND have been extended into the 2022-23 financial year, to support the completion of these programs.

As part of the STAND Package, the Australian Government has committed \$21.9 million from 2020-21 to 2022-23 to the *Mobile Network Hardening Program* (MNHP). The MNHP is funding over 1,000 projects to improve the resilience of regional telecommunications networks against the impacts of power outages and damage during natural disasters.

Funded upgrades under the MNHP comprise the deployment of new portable and permanent power generators, upgrades to battery systems to increase power capacity, the addition of battery extension devices to enhance power capacity, improvements to transmission resilience within mobile network 'clusters', and the physical hardening of telecommunications sites against bushfire damage. All projects are scheduled to be completed by June 2023.

Enhanced News Gathering program

The Australian Government will maintain funding from the March 2022-23 Budget for the ABC of \$45.8 million (2022-23 to 2024-25). The funding will strengthen local public interest journalism in regional communities by continuing the *Enhanced News Gathering* (ENG) program. ENG funding has been provided to the ABC since 2012-13, with \$43.7 million provided during the 2019-20 to 2021-22 funding triennium.

ABC will use this funding to support regional journalist positions in regional bureaux throughout Australia to deliver tailored, local news across an array of digital channels as well as traditional TV and radio platforms. Funding will also support positions in capital cities responsible for delivering regional news.

Australian Associated Press Newswire Service

The *Australian Associated Press (AAP) Newswire Service* has received a total of \$20 million under the *Public Interest News Gathering* (PING) program, consisting of \$5 million provided as part of the PING COVID-19 relief funding in September 2020 and a further \$15 million allocated in the 2021-22 Budget. This funding provided continued support for AAP's services over 2021-22 and 2022-23. AAP provides national, state and regional news to over 250 regional news mastheads across Australia. The funding enabled the reopening of AAP bureaux in Townsville and Darwin.

Community Broadcasting Program

The Australian Government has provided funding of \$20.9 million in 2022-23 to support the community broadcasting sector, through the *Community Broadcasting Program* (CBP). In the 2022-23 Budget, the Government committed an additional \$4 million per annum ongoing from 2023-24 to maintain CBP funding at current levels. This is in addition to the existing funding of just over \$16 million per annum - which will continue to be provided from 2023-24 - bringing total annual funding over \$20 million each year.

More than 450 non-profit, community-based organisations deliver community broadcasting services across Australia with 70 per cent of these stations located in regional or remote areas. Community radio supports communities in regional Australia by broadcasting local news, telling local stories, and providing a platform for local voices and music. The Australian Government is committed to supporting community broadcasting to continue to realise these benefits for Australian communities.

Be Connected Program Extension

The Australian Government has provided \$11.9 million over three years from 2021-22 to 2023-24 for the Digital Literacy for Older Australians Be Connected Extension. This program helps senior Australians to build the skills and confidence needed to engage safely online, no matter where they may live. The program provides access to free online learning resources, maintained by the eSafety Commissioner and available through the Be Connected Website.

Protecting women in the regions experiencing online harm

The Australian Government will maintain funding for initiatives announced in the March 2022-23 Budget to protect women online and to support women experiencing technology-facilitated abuse. This funding includes:

Technology-Facilitated Abuse Phone Line Service

\$16.6 million over four years (2022-23 to 2025-26) will allow the eSafety Commissioner to establish a team of experts with specialist expertise in detecting and addressing technology-facilitated abuse. The new phone line service will accept referrals from front line domestic and family violence workers to help victim-survivors of technology-facilitated abuse wherever they may live.

Online Safety Community Grants Program

\$10 million over five years (2022-23 to 2026-27) will fund community grants to support online safety education and projects focussed on women and children. The grants program will provide opportunities for non-government organisations across the country, such as community groups, sporting groups and faith communities, to apply for funding to deliver online safety projects in areas of need.

Women's Safety Communication Activities

\$5 million over five years (2022-23 to 2027-28) will further increase awareness among women of the support and resources offered by the eSafety Commissioner under the Government's new online safety laws. This funding will extend the National Online Safety Awareness Campaign, which aired in 2021-22, to raise awareness across Australia of the new protections available for people who have experienced serious online abuse

In addition, \$21 million (2021-22 to 2022-23) was provided for Women's Online Safety Initiatives to allow the eSafety Commissioner to deliver targeted measures that respond to the online harms that disproportionately impact women and children. This funding boosted eSafety's capacity to investigate and respond to reports of cyber abuse, allowed the assessment of new software to identify intimate images that have been shared without consent and funded the development of new resources for frontline workers to identify technology-facilitated abuse involving children.

Northern Australia Agenda

The Australian Government is leading an agenda for developing Northern Australia that will focus on resilient and sustainable economic growth. The agenda will focus on social infrastructure and community-led development, while still supporting industries to expand and create sustainable regional jobs.

The Government has re-established the Northern Australia Ministerial Forum to work cooperatively with States and Territories in progressing key priorities for the north and affirmed continuation of the Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group.

Northern Australia Development Program

The Australian Government is investing \$111.9 million in the *Northern Australia Development Program* (NADP) to support Northern Australian businesses to scale-up and diversify by providing co-investment grants to businesses for a range of activities including infrastructure, assets, feasibility studies and business planning. The investment is supported by the Strengthening Northern Australia Business advisory service (SNAB). The SNAB helps grant recipients and eligible applicants who did not receive a grant to build capability and resilience and to maximise their growth potential. The *Northern Australia Business and Community Growth Program* expands grant eligibility to a broader range of entities including northern based business and community organisations. It operates in parallel to, and shares a funding envelope with, the NADP.

Connecting Northern Australia

The Australian Government is providing \$68.5 million over 2 years from 2022-23 in dedicated funding to improve telecommunications infrastructure across Northern Australia through the Regional Connectivity Program. The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts is responsible for the delivery and administration of this initiative.

The investment supports telecommunications infrastructure projects which maximise economic and social opportunities in regional, rural and remote northern Australia. The investment will improve the commercial viability of telecommunications projects in high cost, low population density locations including remote Indigenous communities.

Regional and regional city cross-government partnerships

The Australian Government has committed to honour previously signed deal commitments. These are being delivered in Townsville, Launceston, Darwin, Western Sydney, Hobart, Geelong, Perth, Adelaide and South East Queensland. Regional deals are being delivered in the Hinkler and Barkly regions. Existing deal commitments being delivered with a total Australian Government commitment of around \$9.4 billion. The Australian Government commitment has leveraged around \$10.7 billion of additional investment from other partners. The Australian Government will also provide funding of \$80 million over five years to support projects in Albury Wodonga and \$667.7 million in the South East Queensland region

Stronger Communities Programme

In the 2022-23 March Budget the Australian Government will provide \$22.7 million over two years from 2022-23 for Round Eight of the *Stronger Communities Programme* (SCP) bringing the total commitment for this program to \$167.8 million between 2015-16 and 2023-24.

The SCP provides funding of between \$2,500 and \$20,000 for small capital projects that deliver social benefits for local communities across Australia. Grant funding will be available for up to 50 per cent of eligible costs. Applicants will be required to provide matched cash or in-kind co-funding contributions which can be funded from any source include state and local government.

Input from the community is a key element of the SCP. Each Member of Parliament is required to establish a community consultation committee to identify projects for consideration under the program. Funding of up to \$150,000 is available in each of the 151 federal electorates. Round Eight will feature a more robust project nomination process with increased transparency and accountability measures, to deliver a fairer distribution of funds under the program.

Over 15,000 community-based projects have secured funding under the first seven rounds of the program. Applications for round seven closed in February 2022, and contracts for approved projects were awarded in the first half of 2022.

Local Government Financial Assistance Grant

The *Local Government Financial Assistance Grant* program is established under the *Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995* and provides untied financial assistance to local governments across Australia to enable them to meet their priorities. The Australian Government is continuing the Financial Assistance Grant program, which will provide an estimated \$10.3 billion to local government over the period 2022-23 to 2025-26.

The funding is untied and consists of two components:

- A general-purpose component distributed between the states and territories according to population.
- An identified local road component distributed between the states and territories according to fixed historical shares.

Supplementary Local Roads Funding for South Australia

In addition to the Financial Assistance Grant program allocation, the Australian Government has provided South Australia with supplementary funding of \$20 million in 2022-23. This is to address an inconsistency in the initial calculations of the local road component of the program for South Australia.

Regional Development Australia Committees

The Regional Development Australia (RDA) network comprises 53 Regional Development Australia Committees (RDAs) including the Indian Ocean Territories Regional Development Organisation (IOT RDO). They provide decision-makers with intelligence about issues facing regional communities and enable cooperation and coordination across

all levels of government, industry and business, which drives regional development and locally-led solutions.

RDAs comprise local leaders who utilise their skills, experience and networks to:

- facilitate regional economic development outcomes, investment, local procurement and jobs
- promote greater regional awareness of and engagement with government policies, programs and research
- improve Commonwealth regional policy making by providing intelligence and evidence-based advice to the Australian Government on regional development issues
- coordinate the development of a strategic regional plan, or utilise suitable existing regional plans that align with the Commonwealth's regional priorities.

Better Data Use to Support Delivery for Regional Australians

The Australian Government has invested \$13.7 million over four years commencing in 2020-21 for the *Better Data Use to Support Delivery for Regional Australians* program to provide government and community decision-makers with better access to data on regional Australia. As part of this program the *Regional Data Hub* will make location-specific data publicly accessible and searchable, building on existing regional data resources such as the Progress in Australian Regions and Cities dashboard.

Building on a nation-wide consultation in 2021 that identified data and information priorities of people in Australia's regions, the Australian Government has continued to work with Commonwealth, state, territory and local government officials and community and business leaders to develop the *Hub*. In July 2022, a prototype website was developed and is currently undergoing user testing and consultation, including drawing on advice from its expert External Advisory Panel. An early version of the *Regional Data Hub* is expected to be released in the first half of 2023 and the program is expected to be completed by 30 June 2024.

Services to Norfolk Island

Since passing legislation which extended Commonwealth laws to Norfolk Island from 1 July 2016, the Australian Government has continued to invest in improvements to service delivery for the Norfolk Island community. In 2022-23 the Australian Government is providing \$95.4 million in base funding for essential services to Norfolk Island. The Australian Government is also providing \$16.5 million in base capital funding in 2022-23 across the non-self-governing Territories, which includes Norfolk Island, for the improvement of Commonwealth infrastructure assets. This funding will support and improve the delivery of essential education, health support services, and related internet bandwidth, the design of a wastewater treatment plant, and the upgrade of a sewer system in and around the Kingston and Arthur's Vale Historic Area.

Services to the Indian Ocean Territories Program

The Australian Government supports the communities of Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands (CKI) through the provision of essential services and funding for major infrastructure. Services are delivered by the Australian Government, either directly via agreement with the Western Australian Government or under contract to the private sector, including healthcare, education, power, water, ports, and airports. In 2022-23, the Australian Government is providing \$158.2million in administered funding to support the delivery of these essential services. The Australian Government is also providing \$16.5 million in base capital funding across the non-self-governing Territories, which includes the Indian Ocean Territories for the improvement of Commonwealth infrastructure assets.

The Australian Government is also providing \$17.4 million over three years from 2021-22 to improve both water security and the treatment of wastewater on CKI through the installation of a seawater reverse osmosis desalination plant and an upgrade to the existing wastewater treatment plant. The funding will support future economic development on the CKI and provide essential infrastructure to support the Department of Defence's upgrade to the CKI airfield.

Services to the Jervis Bay Territory

The Australian Government supports the community of the Jervis Bay Territory (JBT) by funding the provision of state-level and local government type services. In 2022-23 the Australian Government is providing \$9.1million in funding for service delivery and has also allocated \$16.5 million in base capital funding across the non-self-governing Territories, which includes the JBT for the improvement of Commonwealth infrastructure assets. State-level services, such as education, justice, and welfare are delivered by the Australian Capital Territory Government under a service delivery agreement.

The Australian Government is also providing \$15.8 million over four years from 2021-22 and ongoing funding of \$0.1 million per annum thereafter for the connection of JBT to the neighbouring Shoalhaven City Council (SCC) water networks to secure a more cost-efficient and sustainable method of delivering these utilities to the JBT.

National Capital Authority Scrivener Dam

The Australian Government is providing \$38.6 million over four years from 2022-23 to undertake critical infrastructure upgrades to Scrivener Dam in the Australian Capital Territory.

The upgrades will remediate the structural issues and deficiencies of the Scrivener Dam dissipator, so that it is fit for purpose and its life is extended for another 100 years. The upgrade will mitigate the risk of Scrivener Dam failing while creating jobs in the regional construction industry.

Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support

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

In 2022-23, the *Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support* program will contribute \$27.6 million to the operations of more than 89 Indigenous owned and governed art centres across Australia, with 82 per cent of art centres in remote or very remote areas. It will also support a number of art fairs, regional hubs and industry service organisations that, with Indigenous art centres, 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 professional opportunities for more than 8,000 Indigenous artists and 500 Indigenous arts workers to generate income and participate in the nation's economy.

Australia Council

The Australia Council continues to provide targeted investment for the presentation of creative works in rural, regional and remote areas through government initiatives and frameworks. Funding is delivered through grants for individuals, groups and organisations, national touring programs, and strategic national development and capacity building programs. The Australia Council also continues to support a range of First Nations' arts and cultural activities in regional and remote areas including textile design and fashion, music, visual arts and literature initiatives.

The Australia Council has supported communities in the Northern Rivers region of NSW and southeast Queensland affected by flooding by re-allocating funding. This has enabled artists and arts organisations to continue artistic activities and for audiences also affected by the floods to continue to engage in arts and cultural practices.

The Australia Council is on track to deliver a similar level of investment to regional Australia in 2022-23.

Cultural Gifts Program

The *Cultural Gifts Program* (CGP) offers tax incentives to encourage donations of cultural items to Australian public collections. Donations include visual and decorative arts, Indigenous arts and cultural items, and social history and scientific artefacts. The program helps eligible institutions to build their collections and benefits the Australian public by increasing access to culturally significant items, particularly in regional Australia.

In 2020-21, 539 CGP donations were made (total value of \$110.3 million), with 18.7 per cent of these donations made to institutions in regional Australia (total value of \$6.9 million), and 37 per cent of donations were made by the artist or creator of the item.

Indigenous Languages and Arts Program

The *Indigenous Languages and Arts* (ILA) program will invest \$27.5 million in 2022-23 to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to express, preserve and maintain their cultures through languages and arts activities throughout Australia.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, the ILA program provides annual operational funding to a network of 23 Indigenous language centres, 20 of which are based in regional and remote communities. These place-based, Indigenous-led organisations work with Indigenous language groups to reclaim, revitalise and sustain traditional First Nations languages. The ILA program also supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to develop, produce, present, exhibit or perform Indigenous arts activities that showcase Australia's traditional and contemporary Indigenous cultural and artistic expressions.

The *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* includes Target 16 that specifically nominates a target to increase the number and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages being spoken by 2031. The National Agreement also commits parties to establishing policy and place-based partnerships which respond to local priorities, including in regional Australia.

The ILA program funding in 2022-23 includes additional *Closing the Gap* investment of \$7.5 million to: increase annual operational funding for existing ILA-funded Indigenous language centres; establish three new Indigenous language centres; develop place-based partnerships between Indigenous language centres and local service delivery partners in health and early childhood; and increase support for projects that protect the most at-risk Indigenous languages.

The United Nations has designated the period between 2022 and 2032 as the International Decade of Indigenous Languages. The Australian Government is a member of the Global Task Force for organising the Decade. Australia acted as Co-Chair of the Steering Committee from March 2021 to June 2022. The Australian Government has also established an International Decade of Indigenous Languages Directions Group, comprising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives who are working in partnership with the Government to shape Australia's involvement in the Decade. The Directions Group comprises 13 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people from around Australia, including nine from regional and remote Australia.

Register of Cultural Organisations

The *Register of Cultural Organisations* is a list of over 1,900 cultural organisations that can receive tax deductible gifts. The Register aims to strengthen private sector support for the arts and encourages Australians to contribute to the nation's vibrant cultural life. Australian organisations, including those in regional areas where other sources of philanthropic funding may be more difficult to secure, can be listed on the Register if their principal purpose is to promote cultural activities in Australia.

Support for the Australian Music Industry

The Australian Government has continued support to grow Australia's thriving music industry, with a package of measures from 2019-20 to 2023-24. The programs are supporting the provision of live music to Australian communities and ensuring local artists can expand into lucrative international markets. The package includes funding for:

- a grants program to support live music festivals and venues to increase performance opportunities for musicians and regional audiences
- a development program for Indigenous musicians and bands to support touring, recording and the set-up of touring circuits
- a mentorship and training program aimed at empowering women working in the Australian music industry by assisting them to build skills and develop relationships they need to get a foot in the door and take the next step to establish and build their careers.

Location Incentive Program

The Australian Government is providing \$540 million over eight years from 2019-20 under the *Location Incentive Program* to attract large budget international screen production to Australia, bringing international investment and providing local employment and training opportunities. Some production will take place in regional areas, benefiting local communities and businesses through significant expenditure and employment opportunities, as well as potential tourism benefits. For example, *The Tourist* was filmed in regional areas of South Australia, showcasing its unique landscape to international audiences. *Australian Survivor* has filmed in Cloncurry and Charter's Towers. This put a fresh lens on these regional Queensland locations to domestic and international audiences, and provided significant work for Australian crew and local businesses.

The Australian Government is also continuing to fund the following initiatives:

- *Northern New South Wales Inland Port - Narrabri*: the Australian Government continues to support the delivery of the Northern New South Wales Inland Port project through \$7.8 million of additional funding to improve freight productivity and connectivity between regional New South Wales and key markets. The project involves the construction of a rail siding and associated infrastructure to facilitate loading and storage of freight.
- *Toowoomba to Gladstone Inland Rail Extension*: The Australian Government committed \$10 million in 2021 to develop a business case investigating an extension of Inland Rail from Toowoomba to Gladstone. The business case is expected to identify a preferred route, delivery approach, benefits and costs, in order to optimise network connectivity through regional Queensland to the Port of Gladstone. The business case will also explore commercial development and private sector funding opportunities.

- *Investigation of options for upgrading the Maroona to Port of Portland Freight Rail Line:* \$2.2 million was provided to investigate options for upgrading the Maroona to Port of Portland Freight Rail Line. A business case is underway and includes the analysis of the project benefits, identifying a suitable funding strategy, and provision of detailed analysis examining costs and transit time. The final business case is expected to be submitted to the Australian Government for consideration in late-2022.
- \$8.9 million from July 2016 to June 2023 as part of the Infrastructure Investment Program, to support the *Australasian New Car Assessment Program's* safety ratings.
- \$8 million in grants over six years to June 2025 to the *Road Safety Awareness and Enablers Fund*. This funding contributes to reducing road trauma in Australia by increasing road safety awareness, education and collaboration nationally.
- \$6 million from 2022-23 over two years to deliver the *Amy Gillett Foundation Program* to target cycle safety and aim to reduce death and injury of cyclists. The Program will deliver long-term road safety benefits by improving cycling safety knowledge, resources and tools within local governments.
- \$5.5 million to the establishment of a *National Road Safety Data Hub* (the Hub). The Hub aims to provide data that is accurate, robust and available in a timely manner, which will inform best practice road safety policy, guide government investment in road infrastructure and measure the effectiveness of these efforts in reducing fatal and serious injuries, noting the majority of fatalities occur on regional roads.
- up to \$4.3 million to expand the Supply Chain Benchmarking Dashboard and underlying Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation's (CSIRO) Transport Investment Strategic Investment Tool to model critical supply chains, include resiliency measures, and develop scenario planning capabilities to model disruptions and options for optimisation.
- \$9.8 million over five years to 2023 for the *National Heavy Vehicle Charging Pilot*, testing more direct methods of charging heavy vehicles for road use compared to current fuel consumption and registration fees. On-road trials are running this year with up to 100 heavy vehicle operators participating, including regional and remote operators.
- \$12.1 million over three years to 2023-24, for the *National Heavy Vehicle Regulator* (NHVR) to deliver stage two of the Strategic Local Government Asset Assessment Project (SLGAAP). SLGAAP provides funding to the NHVR to assist local government road managers to undertake capacity assessments of bridges and culverts on key heavy vehicle routes to help better understand road infrastructure operating limits and support heavy vehicle access where safe.
- The Government has committed \$5.6 million under Round 7 of the *Heavy Vehicle Safety Initiative* (HVSI) in 2022-23, taking total funding for this program to approximately \$33.6 million since its commencement in 2016-17. HVSI provides funding to the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) to support industry-led projects to improve

heavy vehicle industry safety. Projects funded under Round 7 include encouraging safer behaviour through telematics and delivery of high quality, holistic training to attract new drivers to the industry.

- *Measuring Broadband Australia* - the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) will be provided with \$1.8 million in 2022-23, with costs recovered in full via the Annual Carrier Licence Charge, administered by the ACMA.
- \$6 million in grants in the 2022-23 financial year will assist regional and First Nations media organisations to hire new cadet journalists.
- \$3 million over four years (2021-22 to 2024-25) under the Australian Government's *National Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse* will allow eSafety to continue to develop targeted online safety education materials for parents, careers and families to build community resilience to child safety issues online, including child sexual abuse.
- \$10 million over four years (2019-20 to 2022-23) for the *Online Safety Grants Program* to allow eSafety to continue to support the delivery of online safety education to children, young people and their communities, or training to those who work with them.
- Rebuilding Regional Communities (RRC), a stream within eight rounds of the Strengthening Rural Communities program, managed by the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR). The Australian Government provided \$5.7 million to the FRRR to provide grants of up to \$50,000 to not-for-profits, for projects assisting regional communities until 2025.
- *Building Resilient Regional Leaders initiative* (BRRLi) – The Australian Government has provided \$5 million to the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation (ARLF) to train and develop 240-260 regional leaders, plus a network of 500-800 people until 30 June 2023.
- *Regional Cooperative Research Centres Projects* (RCRC-P) – The Australian Government is providing \$5.8 million, with a completion date of 2024. The projects will see space rockets (DefendTex) and future foods (Nourish Ingredients) manufactured in regional Australia to deliver benefits for local communities.
- *Tackling Tough Times Together* (TTTT) – The Australian Government has provided \$15 million to the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) to fund 430 community projects. All projects are due to be completed by 30 June 2023.
- \$2.2 million in 2022-23 for the Australian Capital Territory Government National Capital Functions.
- \$2.7 million in 2022-23 for the Norfolk Island Kingston and Arthurs Value historic area.

- *Indigenous Repatriation*: This ongoing initiative receives approximately \$700,000 of Australian Government funding each year to facilitate the voluntary and unconditional return of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains (ancestors) held overseas and domestically, to facilitate the return of ancestors and secret sacred objects to their communities of origin from the eight major Australian museums.
- *Community Heritage Grants* program: This ongoing program receives \$490,000 of Australian Government funding each year to deliver grants of up to \$15,000 to community groups to support the preservation of publicly accessible heritage collections which are locally owned and nationally significant.
- *National Cultural Heritage Account*: This ongoing program is established under the *Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage Act 1986* and receives \$500,000 of Australian Government funding each year to support cultural organisations to acquire Australian protected objects for display and safe-keeping.
- *National Collecting Institutions Touring and Outreach* program: This ongoing program provides \$1 million annually to assist the National Collecting Institutions to develop and tour exhibitions of Australian and international cultural material, especially to regional communities. It also aims to promote international awareness of Australia's cultural heritage through overseas tours.
- *Visions of Australia* program: This ongoing program provides approximately \$2.6 million annually to improve access to Australian cultural material, particularly in regional and remote areas. Funding can be used for the costs of developing and touring exhibitions of material with historic, scientific, design, social or artistic significance.
- *Treasured Voices*: The Australian Government has provided \$10 million over four years from 2019–20 to support the digitisation of parts of the National Library of Australia's collection.
- *Creative Partnerships Australia*: In 2022–23, the Australian Government will provide \$4.8 million to *Creative Partnerships Australia* to help artists and arts organisations, including in regional areas attract private sector giving. From 2023–24, *Creative Partnerships Australia's* functions and funding will be transferred to the Australia Council (see New Initiatives).
- *Regional Arts Fund*: This ongoing program provides support for sustainable cultural development in regional and remote Australia. For 2022–23, the Australian Government has allocated \$3.7 million to the *Regional Arts Fund*.
- *Festivals Australia*: This ongoing program provides support for arts projects that encourage partnership and collaboration across the arts sector and community participation in arts activities at festivals and one-off community events in regional and remote areas. In 2022–23, \$1.3 million will be provided through *Festivals Australia*.

- *Maritime Museums of Australia Project Support Scheme (MMA PSS)*: This annual ongoing program contributes \$105,000 to support the Australian National Maritime Museum's grants to regional museums and organisations that are undertaking the important role of collecting, conserving and exhibiting Australia's rich maritime heritage, and for internships.
- *Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA) Bursary program*: This ongoing program provides \$22,000 to support AMaGA to make grants to museum staff and volunteers from regional and remote areas in Australia and Indigenous Australians to attend AMaGA's annual National Conference as a delegate or a speaker.

Prime Minister and Cabinet

The Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) Portfolio improves the lives of Australians by providing high quality advice and support to the Prime Minister, the Cabinet, portfolio ministers and assistant ministers. It takes a coordinated and innovative approach to the development and implementation of Australian Government policies, including those that impact regional and remote communities. The portfolio coordinates and develops policy across the Australian Government on issues pertaining to women including economic security, safety and leadership; Indigenous affairs; economic, domestic and international issues. This includes programs that prioritise the wellbeing of people who live in regional communities such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

As at 31 August 2022, the Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio employed 4,343 staff under the *Public Service Act 1999*. Of this total, 3,252 are employed in Canberra, central Melbourne and central Sydney (74.9 per cent), 457 in other capital cities (10.5 per cent) and 634 in regional areas (14.6 per cent).

The portfolio's footprint includes office locations in Alice Springs, Batemans Bay, Broome, Cairns, Ceduna, Coffs Harbour, Derby, Dubbo, Geraldton, Halls Creek, Kalgoorlie, Katherine, Kununurra, Lismore, Mount Isa, Newcastle, Nhulunbuy, Nowra, Port Augusta, Rockhampton, Shepparton, South Hedland, Tamworth, Tennant Creek, Thursday Island, Toowoomba, Townsville, and Wagga Wagga.

The portfolio is responsible for setting the direction of Indigenous affairs policy across the Australian Government as well as delivering a number of specific funding programs. It includes programs aimed at ensuring Indigenous Australians are able to take up the full range of opportunities our nation has to offer. Measures encouraging workforce participation, economic development, educational success and safety at home the foundations of successful communities, are some of these.

The portfolio works closely with local service providers and communities to design and deliver services to improve the lives of Indigenous Australians across metropolitan, regional and remote locations. Regionally-based staff are critical to service delivery as 62 per cent of Indigenous Australians live outside the major cities and more than 17 per cent live in remote and very remote locations (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Census).

The portfolio supports regional Australia through new and ongoing initiatives, as outlined below.

New Initiatives

Northern Territory Homelands

This initiative delivers on the government's commitment to reduce overcrowding and address poor conditions in the Northern Territory's (NT) First Nations homelands.

The measure provides for an immediate boost of \$100.0 million to NT homelands to address urgent housing and essential infrastructure needs, based on recommendations of the NT homelands audit. This may include improvements to water, power and community facilities, as well as housing upgrades, extensions, and new builds.

Funding is allocated across the 2022-23 (\$25.0 million) and 2023-24 (\$75.0 million) financial years.

Laverton Short Stay

The Australian Government will provide \$0.8 million in 2022-23 to develop a short stay accommodation facility in Laverton, Western Australia, which delivers on a 2022 Election Commitment.

Laverton, Western Australia (WA) is a service hub for a number of very remote locations, including but not limited to the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. First Nations people regularly travel to Laverton to access services not available in their communities, and there are limited accommodation options available, which exacerbates overcrowding and can be disruptive to residents in Laverton.

This measure will help reduce overcrowding in the town and contribute to improved health, social and economic outcomes in regional WA.

Borroloola Ablution Blocks

The Australian Government will provide \$1.0 million over two years from 2022-23 to build new ablution blocks in the four town camps around Borroloola, Northern Territory, which delivers on a 2022 Election Commitment.

Living conditions in the town camps around Borroloola, Northern Territory, are poor and many residents have limited access to running water, increasing the risk of health issues. These facilities are essential for better health outcomes, which will also improve outcomes, and create employment opportunities in regional NT.

Investment in the Warlpiri Cultural Project

The Australian Government will provide \$0.5 million in 2022-23 for Stage 1 of the Warlpiri Cultural Project, which delivers on a 2022 Election Commitment. Funding will support a concept plan for the Warlpiri Cultural Centre in Yuendumu, Northern Territory. The Centre will support repatriation and storytelling of Warlpiri cultural objects, in partnership between the Warlpiri community and the South Australian Museum.

In addition to housing repatriated Warlpiri cultural material, the Centre will be a place for learning and sharing First Nations cultural heritage with local community members and national and international visitors. It will also provide an opportunity for economic growth and employment outcomes in Yuendumu. The return of cultural heritage material is fundamental to the processes of truth-telling and reconciliation and helps maintain culture and build community resilience.

Scotdesco – Water Security Feasibility Study

The Australian Government will provide \$0.5 million over two years for the investigation and delivery of a permanent water security solution at the remote community of Scotdesco, South Australia.

Scotdesco is a remote community in the South Australian Far-West region. The community has experienced ongoing and sustained water security issues due to drought conditions, further exacerbated by its location.

The funding will provide clear options for long-term water security by the end of June 2024 and bring essential town water supplies into the remote community with a long history of unstable water supply issues.

Funding for Six Rivers Aboriginal Corporation

The Government will provide \$0.6 million over three years from 2022-23 to the Six Rivers Aboriginal Corporation. This funding will improve the operation of the Tiagarra Aboriginal Cultural Centre and Museum and enable Tiagarra to open full-time to promote cultural engagement, and foster stronger outcomes for First Nations people in the North West of Tasmania.

Replacing the Community Development Program with a New Jobs Program – Trial

The Australian Government has committed to replacing CDP with a new remote employment program with real jobs, proper wages and decent conditions – to be developed in partnership with First Nations people. The new program will give communities more control to determine local projects and increase economic opportunities and jobs in remote areas. To support the transition to a new program, Government will consult widely with First Nations people and other stakeholders about what a new jobs program could look like to ensure it is fit-for-purpose and maintains a focus on real jobs in remote communities.

As an early step, CDP providers will be able to test new ideas as we increase flexibility within the current program. At the Remote Employment Roundtable held in Canberra on 31 August 2022, the Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Hon Linda Burney MP announced the opportunity for providers to redirect around 25 per cent of their CDP payments to trialling new approaches to supporting job seekers into real jobs. These approaches will be undertaken across CDP regions and tailored to local circumstances and regional priorities to achieve real job outcomes. Learnings from these innovations will inform design of the new program that will replace the CDP.

Restoring funding for the National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum

As part of its election commitment to First Nations Peoples, the Australian Government will provide \$3.0 million over three years from 2022-23 to support the work of the National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS) Forum (the Forum) and FVPLS providers, who deliver legal assistance and non-legal support to First Nations victim-survivors, especially women, of family and domestic violence and sexual assault.

This funding will enable the Forum to strengthen its current resource capabilities within the Forum Secretariat and increase the Forum's ability to represent and advocate for First Nations peoples at the national level. The support will assist the Forum to strengthen and deliver increased data analysis capabilities and support the FVPLS providers in a broader range of ways. The sixteen FVPLS providers operate across all states and territories and receive Australian Government funding through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy.

The Forum is a member of the Coalition of Peaks and is one of five peak organisations engaged in the Justice Policy Partnership. The funding will support the Forum implement its policy priorities for First Nations women, families and communities, who face multiple and layered forms of discrimination and experience unacceptably high rates of family and domestic violence, sexual assault, child removal and incarceration. This funding will increase access to family and domestic violence and sexual assault support services and will be delivered in areas of high need, including rural, remote and very remote communities.

Expanded Family and Domestic Violence Support and Services for Alice Springs and Surrounds

On 17 August 2022, the Australian Government announced \$3.0 million over two years from 2022-23 for Initiative *Expanded Family and Domestic Violence Support and Services for Alice Springs and Surrounds*. The Government's project will fund existing First Nations community controlled Indigenous Advancement Strategy service providers in Alice Springs to deliver community safety patrols, youth services and family and domestic violence (FDV) support services.

Community Safety Patrols – up to \$1.4 million additional community safety patrols and associated services in and around Alice Springs, to contribute to community safety outcomes. Community safety patrols operate during the day or night, and offer culturally sensitive assistance and transportation to a safe place for First Nations peoples at risk of harm.

Youth Diversion and Support – up to \$0.6 million for early intervention support for First Nations young people to address underlying drivers of anti-social behaviour. Investment will improve individual and community social and emotional wellbeing in order to strengthen First Nations families, support recovery from intergenerational trauma and divert individuals from entering the criminal justice system.

FDV support services – up to \$1.0 million to support First Nations women and children in Alice Springs (and surrounding areas) to access holistic wrap-around services that address the impacts of violence. Investment will increase prevention activities that support young people and adults to develop healthy relationships.

Current Initiatives

Closing the Gap Package

The *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* came into effect on 27 July 2020, which commits to building the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector, recognising that services delivered by this sector can achieve better results, employ more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and are often preferred over mainstream services.

At the 2021-22 *Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook* (MYEFO), the government provided \$1.1 billion from 2021-22 to 2024-25 (and \$127.9 million in 2025-26) for a range of measures to support the new *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* (the *Closing the Gap Package*). The government is also funding a financial and wellbeing package to support Stolen Generation survivors from the Northern Territory, the Australian Capital Territory and the Jervis Bay Territory.

The *Closing the Gap Package* will have a positive impact on regional Australia. The measures included in this package are aimed at improving the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across urban, regional, and remote Australia. A larger proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live outside Greater Capital City areas, with 62.9 per cent (511,403 people) living in the rest of the State or Territory (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Census).

Individual measures under the *Closing the Gap Package*, which are detailed below will result in increased employment opportunities in regional and remote areas, as well as improved education, childhood development, health and justice outcomes:

Justice Policy Partnership

The Justice Policy Partnership was established in 2021 and will focus on reducing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in incarceration and improving community safety for all Australians, including those in regional Australia. The Commonwealth has committed \$7.6 million over three years to directly support the policy partnership.

Strengthening Indigenous Languages and Culture, and Creating Regional Jobs

This measure strengthens the network of Indigenous Language Centres, which currently encompass regional areas in all Australian states and the Northern Territory and supports artists in regional and remote Australia.

Health Infrastructure

This measure will improve access to comprehensive primary health care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in regional, rural and remote areas through providing new or renovated health clinics and associated housing for health professionals. The national roll-out will include around 250 infrastructure projects targeted to areas with the poorest quality infrastructure and/or highest growth in population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Scaling up Success

This measure will expand access to programs that have been successful in addressing key drivers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student education outcomes.

Remote School Partnerships

This measure incentivises and supports large, high-performing independent schools to engage in new formal partnerships with remote independent and government majority Indigenous schools. These formal partnerships may take different forms, from taking operational control of a school to agreeing to provide targeted support in key areas (for example, staffing or instructional coaching).

Improving Multidisciplinary Responses

This measure will address and reduce the drivers of child abuse and neglect in the home, working with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and Indigenous stakeholders in the re-design of services based on locally successful approaches.

Developing the Cultural Competency and Trauma Responsiveness Workforce

This measure focuses on building workforce capability in Department of Social Services (DSS) funded child and family support services including to ensure culturally appropriate services and to break down barriers to access DSS mainstream services.

Assessing the Needs and Increasing the Involvement of ACCOs in the Child and Family Sector

This measure will address barriers identified by ACCOs to having greater involvement in family support services and strengthen partnerships with mainstream organisations.

Culturally Safe Family Dispute Resolution for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families

This measure will fund Family Dispute Resolution (FDR) services to Indigenous families in regional and remote areas of high need.

Preventing Harm in Prisons

This measure funds jurisdictions to ensure places of detention are regularly inspected and monitored to improve conditions for detainees across Australia in line with the *Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services Support Coronial Inquiries

This measure provides additional funding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) to represent clients, involved in complex and expensive litigation. It will also identify opportunities for justice system reforms through the coronial process to reduce levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander incarceration and deaths in custody.

Strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Alcohol and other Drugs Treatment Services

This measure will increase funding for alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment services, to address support for the AOD treatment sector and its workforce.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Safety Services – extension

On 29 March 2022 the former Australian Government announced \$127.8 million over two years from 2022-23 for Initiative *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Safety Services – extension*, to extend funding for up to 18 providers currently funded under the Third and Fourth Action Plans (3AP and 4AP) of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022*. This Initiative extends the 2019-20 Budget Initiative titled *Support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities under the Fourth Action Plan*.

3AP programs – funding is provided to 11 service providers across Australia and includes regional, remote and very remote areas. Services deliver one or more of the four categories: trauma-informed therapeutic services, men’s behaviour change programs, intensive family case management, and victim services through legal service providers.

4AP programs – funding is provided to nine difference service providers across Australia to deliver culturally appropriate and trauma-informed, place-based service delivery models in remote areas that meet the requirements of both of the Indigenous-specific measures under the 4AP.

The Australian Government’s investment will continue support for critical Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family violence support services as part of the commitment to improving family safety. This includes additional funding for two years and an evaluation to be undertaken in the same period, building on previous evaluation activities to support future funding decisions.

Stage Three of the Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) Project

At the 2021-22 MYEFO the government provided \$2.8 million over three years from 2021-22 to deliver the final stage of the *Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) Project* (the project). Project funding will support a national summit focused on women's leadership, decision-making and addressing family, domestic and sexual violence. In addition, the project will undertake research to identify effective strength based programs and approaches to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls.

This measure will have a positive impact on women and families including regional and remote Australian communities as it calls for empowerment of women's leadership at the local level, local and regional engagement, government responses' that focus on healing from intergenerational trauma and action to eradicate racism.

This measure will have a positive impact on access to services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and families in locations with critical service gaps, including in regional and remote Australia.

Supporting Healing for Families

The Australian Government is investing \$10.9 million for First Nations healing initiatives as part of the first phase of Commonwealth funding under the *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030* (National Strategy).

The *Supporting Healing for Families* program will co-design, deliver, and evaluate Indigenous-led, place-based healing initiatives to support First Nations victims and survivors of child sexual abuse and their families in five locations - Alice Springs, NT; Derby, WA; West Metro Adelaide, SA; Townsville, QLD; and Latrobe, Vic.

An Indigenous Expert Group comprising First Nations healing experts has partnered with the NIAA to ensure decision-making about the design, implementation and evaluation is First Nations-led, trauma-aware and healing-informed and centred on Indigenous values and priorities.

Development of Future Support for Improved Outcomes of Indigenous Australians in the Northern Territory

The Government will provide \$183.7 million over three years from 2021-22 to support a range of activities which aim to improve economic, social and health outcomes for Aboriginal Australians in the Northern Territory, particularly those living in remote communities. Funding includes:

- \$173.2 million over two years from 2022-23 to extend critical services offered under the National Partnership on the Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2024, which will continue the engagement of service providers and related employment for around 440 people, including 200 Aboriginal people in at least 60 remote communities.

- \$7.5 million in 2022-23 to transition the administration of the remote community store licensing scheme to the Northern Territory Government.
- \$3.0 million to support Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory to work with the Australian Government and Aboriginal people to develop a strategy for future investment in the Northern Territory.

Indigenous Voice – Local & Regional Voice Implementation

The Australian Government will provide \$31.8 million in 2022-23 to commence preparations for implementation of *regional voice arrangements*, building on the *Local & Regional Voices* proposal from the Indigenous Voice Co-design Process Final Report (the Final Report). *Regional voice arrangements* will contribute to the government's regionalisation agenda through a comprehensive network of First Nations regional governance structures working in partnership with governments, businesses and others across a region to lead on their priorities and link up with other region-wide work.

Indigenous Rangers – Capacity Building

The Australian Government will provide \$636.4 million over six years from 2022-23 to expand the *Indigenous Rangers Program* and related activities. The measure will fund competitive approaches for grant opportunities to identify new ranger groups and to expand and diversify current ranger groups.

As part of the package, the Government is also providing funding for new junior ranger projects to support students' engagement with their schooling and learning on-country. This will enable new generations of First Nations peoples to connect to and care for Country, while completing their schooling and gaining qualifications.

The measure will impact a large number of regional areas nationally. In particular, First Nations organisations in regions that currently lack ranger presence and which are vulnerable to natural disasters, such as bushfires and floods, will be encouraged to apply.

The measure complements the 2021-28 extension to the Indigenous Rangers Program for existing provider organisations and will deliver on the Government's commitments to double the number of First Nations rangers by the end of the decade and to work towards gender equality in ranger positions.

The measure will have a positive impact through the creation of Indigenous ranger jobs, in remote and regional areas where labour markets are thin and welfare reliance is pervasive. These jobs will provide a meaningful opportunity for First Nations jobseekers to move from unemployment to work.

The measure will also have positive impact on regional communities' access to Indigenous ranger-led fire mitigation and land management services, enabling them to be better positioned to reduce or respond to future bushfire or other natural catastrophes.

Indigenous Business Mentoring/Governance Training

The Australian Government will provide \$21.9 million over four years from 2022-23 to support the next generation of Indigenous leaders. This investment will support thousands of Indigenous individuals and many organisations to realise their potential as participants in the rapidly expanding Indigenous sector. The measure includes:

- \$13.8 million for the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME) to continue its operations and implement a strategic plan for expansion to support young Indigenous Australians to undertake leadership roles, further education and employment.
- \$6.4 million for Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC) to develop and deliver culturally appropriate governance and capacity building activities for Indigenous organisations to improve their ability to participate effectively in the Indigenous sector.
- \$1.7 million to the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) to provide scholarships for Indigenous Australians to undertake company directors' courses, and to monitor and evaluate the entire package.

Northern Territory Aboriginal Investment Corporation – establishment

The Australian Government is establishing a new, Aboriginal-controlled corporate Commonwealth entity, the Northern Territory Aboriginal Investment Corporation (NTAIC). The NTAIC will decide on and administer grants and investments from the Aboriginals Benefit Account (ABA) and is established following amendments to the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (ALRA). The interim Board is taking steps necessary for the NTAIC to commence by December 2022.

The NTAIC will increase economic activity in the Northern Territory by unlocking an initial \$500.0 million of ABA funding and \$60.0 million per annum for the next three years, with ongoing funding beyond the forward estimates, for projects that benefit Northern Territory Indigenous communities, with flow on benefits throughout the Northern Territory.

Women in Leadership

The Australian Government has introduced a range of measures to support women to reach leadership positions. The government is committed to encouraging more women into leadership positions in the private and public sector, including through programs that support women at all stages of the leadership pipeline to help create long-term cultural change.

Women living in regional Australia will benefit from programs such as *Future Women's Jobs Academy*. This program will provide online training and mentoring to enable women all over Australia to find a job, transition to a new career, upskill, gain more hours of work, or start their own business. The government is providing \$9.1 million over four years for this program under the Women's Leadership Package.

Through the Women's Leadership Package, the government is also providing \$9.0 million over three years to continue funding the *Future Female Entrepreneurs Program*, which supports women and young women in STEM and entrepreneurial fields. The expansion will target cohorts that are historically under-represented in business ownership, including young women and girls from regional and remote areas.

Growing Regional Data and Digital Talent for Australia's Growth and Recovery

The government has committed \$18.6 million over three years from 2022-23 to pilot APS digital and data training and employment opportunities for people living in regional areas and areas outside Canberra.

The pilot establishes specialised digital and data APS Academy Campuses alongside universities that host the necessary talent, acting as a bridge from university into entry-level positions within the APS. Onsite supervisors will support the accelerated development of new talent in digital and data roles, alongside exciting opportunities to solve real world challenges while staying connected to their local community.

APS Academy Campuses will also be linked to the government's centrally coordinated entry-level programs, including new internships and cadetships, allowing students and recent graduates from diverse backgrounds to pursue a data or digital career without the need to leave their region.

Jobs and Wealth Creation Package – Advancing Indigenous outcomes

The Jobs and Wealth Creation package will contribute to economic recovery and growth for Indigenous Australians following COVID-19 through building a robust and resilient economy, improving food security in remote Australia, and supporting Indigenous job seekers in remote areas into jobs through skill development and educational attainment. The package encompasses the following initiatives:

- \$36.7 million investment from 2021-22 to 2024-25 to expand the support provided to Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBCs) that hold and protect native title rights and interests. This will ensure PBCs can operate more effectively and allow traditional owners to take advantage of opportunities for economic development or engage in transactions involving land subject to native title (much of which exists over land in regional and remote Australia).
- \$42.8 million per year from 1 July 2022 for the Indigenous Skills and Employment Program (ISEP) which will be rolled out across Australia, including in regional areas to support Indigenous Australians into skills, jobs, and career advancement pathways. It will also support businesses to realise the potential of the Indigenous Australian workforce and provide locally-informed, placed-based investment to better suit local labour markets and respond swiftly to emerging employment opportunities. Consultations (including with regional Australia) were held over the second half of 2021 and the insights have informed the design of ISEP. Core design elements include a focus on regionally identified priorities to ensure investment is directed to where it can add most value.

- \$5.0 million in 2021-22 for a grant program targeting the continuous and sustainable supply of food and essential items in remote community stores, which have low resilience to interruption in the supply-chain. The investment to purchase forklifts, electrical upgrades, satellite communications and ability to improve warehouse infrastructure for stock and merchandise will improve the performance and financial viability of remote stores most of which are small businesses operating in a very high cost environment to provide food security for remote Australians. It will reduce the need for future government emergency response coordination of the remote supply-chain (as was required during COVID-19), and government intervention to provide food assistance if natural disasters or abnormal seasonal weather impacts the supply chain.
- \$10.0 million grant program over two years from 2021-22 targeted to activate economic opportunities by providing increased access for Indigenous enterprises and community organisations in remote Australia to reliable and affordable infrastructure, such as off-grid solar power systems, and plant and equipment to support improved water security. The program will build local capacity, support Indigenous enterprises and help create jobs for Indigenous Australians in primary industry and land management.
- \$63.5 million over four years from 2020-21 to increase support for Indigenous Australian girls and young women to participate in girls' academies to achieve Year 12 attainment, which improves their long term employment opportunities and promotes social participation. The investment maintains 9,895 existing places, in addition to providing 2,700 new places by December 2023. Girls' academies are located in a variety of school locations nationally, with a large proportion of the academies located in regional Australia. The expansion will increase participant numbers at existing girls' academies located in regional areas and create new girls' academies in regional schools in Western Australia, Northern Territory, South Australia, Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria.

Return of Cultural Heritage

The Australian Government is investing \$10.1 million over four years to support the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) to deliver the *Return of Cultural Heritage* (RoCH) program.

Preliminary research has identified over 302 overseas collecting institutions with Indigenous Australian cultural heritage collections. Over 113,000 Indigenous Australian objects have been identified in these overseas collections.

The RoCH program, which commenced in 2020 has delivered a number of outcomes including the unconditional return of:

- 17 items, including sacred ceremonial objects, from an institution in the United States of America to their traditional owners – the Arrernte, Warlpiri and Warumungu peoples
- three decoy ducks from the Lower Murray region of South Australia from a private holder in the United States of America
- four items from private holders in New Zealand.

The initiative provides all Australians with the opportunity to gain a greater understanding of our nation's history and promotes learning, healing and reconciliation. Through the return of the culturally significant materials, the initiative will directly and indirectly contribute to the improvement of regional and remote Indigenous Australian's health and wellbeing.

Indigenous Business Australia – Regional Construction Stimulus

The Australian Government provided Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) with \$131.0 million in 2020-21 and 2021-22 as part of a \$150.0 million equity injection over three years. To effectively deliver the initiative aimed at new construction home loans in regional Australia in the midst of the pandemic, rising interest rates and cost of living pressures, the time to deliver the initiative has been extended to five-years. The Australian Government continues to be committed to stimulating economic activity in regional Australia and helping local economies thrive by assisting up to 360 Indigenous Australians to construct new homes through the *Indigenous Home Ownership Program*.

While current market conditions may continue to create opportunities and challenges in the path to home ownership, this investment is also supporting over 1,000 jobs by unlocking financing for construction projects in regional locations. The equity injection complemented other initiatives such as *Home Builder*.

IBA supports the well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through the delivery of initiatives like the Regional Construction Stimulus targeting customers living in regional Australia to ensure equity of service delivery, access to capital, local partnerships with employment providers and opportunities to upskill the community. IBA will continue to monitor and evaluate its impact on customers from an economic, social and cultural lens through the publication of its Impact Report.

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

The Australian Government provides annual funding of around \$21.3 million per year to AIATSIS to preserve and strengthen Australia's Indigenous culture and heritage much of which is held by, or on behalf of, regional communities. This had remained consistent since 2014-15 however increased in 2021-22 after the Government announced their commitment to establish the Ngurra Cultural Precinct on 4 January 2022. The national Indigenous collection is vital to research across a range of important areas for regional Australia, including native title, traditional ownership, land and water management, tourism, mining, agriculture, environment and higher education. In addition through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, AIATSIS is able to continue the *Return of Cultural Heritage Initiative* which enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to exercise decision-making over their cultural heritage and assists with the promotion and resurgence of their cultures, societies, language and knowledge both at regional and national level.

Aboriginal Hostels Limited

Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL) is a Commonwealth company that provides safe, culturally appropriate and affordable accommodation for Indigenous Australians who need to be away from home to access services and economic opportunities.

As at 14 September 2022, AHL operates 43 accommodation facilities providing up to 1,635 beds Australia wide. 95 per cent of these beds are located in regional and remote areas (740 beds per night in regional areas, 820 beds per night in remote areas and 75 beds per night in capital areas). The Australian Government will provide funding of \$35.9 million in 2022-23 to continue to deliver these services in remote and regional Australia.

Torres Strait Regional Authority

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) is the peak representative body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in the Torres Strait Region. The role of the TSRA is to work to close the gap and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in the region to determine their own affairs based on the Ailan Kastom (island custom) of the Torres Strait. The TSRA does this by formulating, implementing and monitoring programs for Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal peoples living in the Torres Strait. The TSRA is in its 28th year in 2022-23.

Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation

The Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC) assists Indigenous Australians to realise economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits that ownership and management of land and water can bring. This includes economic independence (in particular, employment for Indigenous people); the delivery of social benefits; cultural identity and connection; and environmental sustainability. It does this through returning land and water-related interests to Indigenous Australians, and supporting them manage these in the pursuit of their own aspirations.

The ILSC tabled its inaugural Regional Indigenous Land and Sea Strategies for four bioregions in 2019: Northern Australia; Desert; South West Australia and Southeast Australia and is scheduled to commence consultation on the revision of these strategies in 2023. In 2022-23, the ILSC's acquisition and management functions will continue to support Indigenous Australians to: manage their country for future generations; grow the value of Indigenous-held land and water country; connect to country and preserve and protect culture; and drive policy and opportunities.

The Australian Government is also continuing to fund the following initiatives:

- \$3.5 million over the 2022-23 and 2023-24 financial years to support the National Emergency Medal in the wake of Cyclone Debbie, North Queensland Floods (2019), and the 2019-20 bushfires.
- \$3.8 million over four years for the National Indigenous Australians Agency to partner with First Nations experts to design, pilot and evaluate resources to support frontline health workers engage in trauma-aware and healing-informed, culturally appropriate conversations with First Nations victims and survivors of child sexual abuse; and support referral to specialist services.
- \$1.9 million in 2022-23 to support the delivery of the Custody Notification Service in Western Australia and the Northern Territory, and undertake an evaluation of all existing Custody Notification Services.
- \$2.0 million over two years (2022-24) to expand the Youth Engagement Program – Kimberley to the Kimberley and Pilbara regions.

Social Services

The Social Services Portfolio comprises four non-corporate Commonwealth entities and two corporate entities. For the purposes of this statement, this includes the Department of Social Services, the Australian Institute of Family Studies, the National Disability Insurance Agency, the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission and Services Australia. Hearing Australia is not reported in this statement, as it is a Public Non-financial Corporation (Trading) entity.

The Department of Social Services is assisting the Australian Government deliver on its election commitments and is supporting and delivering essential social services to Australians, including those in regional and remote areas, to ensure no one is left behind and no one is held back.

In the 2022-23 October Budget, the Australian Government is providing funding to support the safety of women and children. A series of funding commitments for women's safety will drive outcomes under the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032*. The Government is also providing funding for 500 additional frontline service and community workers supporting women and children experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence.

The Department of Social Services will continue to support reforms to income management and support services in affected communities, including those in regional Australia. The Australian Government has abolished the Cashless Debit Card program and is supporting individuals through a safe and structured transition to a voluntary Income Management program so that people can determine how and where they spend their payments.

The 2022-23 October Budget includes a number of initiatives to address the significant housing and homelessness challenges and supply constraints currently facing Australia, including regional Australia, and helps improve access to safe and secure housing. Measures in the Social Services Portfolio include developing a National Housing and Homelessness Plan and the Closing the Gap Housing Policy Partnership.

To ensure no Australian with disability is left behind, the Australian Government has further invested in Department of Social Services initiatives that provide better support for people with disability in the 2022-23 October Budget.

Services Australia is the Australian Government's primary service delivery agency, connecting people with services across government and community services. Services Australia works closely with Australian Government agencies, state and territory jurisdictions, providers and businesses to deliver high quality, accessible services and payments to individuals, families and communities. Services Australia will make around \$225 billion in payments on behalf of the Australian Government in 2022-23, and provides services to almost every Australian at some point in their lives, including those in regional and remote Australia.

Services Australia is committed to making government services simple so people can get on with their lives. As part of this, Services Australia continues to focus on improving its digital service offer, so Australians can engage with government services at a time and place that suits them. Services Australia is expanding its digital service offer to allow Australians to access government services remotely. Improvements to digital services benefit regional and remote Australians, as digital servicing reduces the need for customers to travel to visit a service centre.

For customers with complex needs who require face-to-face services, Services Australia continues to modernise its face-to-face service centres. Services Australia has a significant presence across Australia with many regional and remote service centres, a network of agents and access points, 26 remote servicing teams and three Mobile Service Centres. The Mobile Service Centres travel to rural and regional communities to ensure that those communities have access to the same range of services that are available at other service centres in Australia. The Mobile Service Centres also assist with emergency on-the-ground support for Australian Government disaster recovery efforts.

Services Australia also provides critical support to Australians in need of urgent assistance, delivering payments and services on behalf of the Australian Government across regional and remote Australia, including to people impacted by COVID-19 and by natural disasters.

As at 31 August 2022, the Social Services Portfolio employed 41,453 staff under the *Public Service Act 1999*. Of this total, 9,337 are employed in Canberra, central Melbourne and central Sydney (23 per cent), 19,541 in other capital cities (47 per cent) and 12,575 in regional areas (30 per cent).

In addition to staff located in Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne, the Department of Social Services has staff located in other capital cities such as Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Darwin and Hobart and in regional areas such as Townsville, Cairns and Mount Isa in Queensland, Bendigo in Victoria, and Orange, Wagga Wagga, Wollongong, Charlestown and Batemans Bay in New South Wales.

The National Disability Insurance Agency is spread across 139 offices in different towns or suburbs: 34 in New South Wales, 29 in Victoria, 29 in Queensland, 15 in South Australia, 22 in Western Australia, 5 in the Northern Territory, 2 in the Australian Capital Territory, and 3 in Tasmania.

The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission has staff located in Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney and in other capital cities such as Adelaide, Brisbane, Perth, Darwin and Hobart.

Services Australia's service delivery responsibilities require a flexible, capable and connected professional Australian Public Service workforce across Australia, including in rural, regional and remote areas.

As at 30 September 2022, Services Australia had a total of 318 Service Centres across Australia:

- 5 in the Australian Capital Territory
- 102 in New South Wales
- 20 in the Northern Territory
- 69 in Queensland
- 24 in South Australia
- 10 in Tasmania
- 60 in Victoria
- 28 in Western Australia.

A significant number of these Service Centres are located in regional locations.

As at 30 September 2022, Services Australia also had 365 contracted Agents and 211 contracted Access Points throughout rural, regional, remote, and very remote locations. Access Points provide free self-service facilities for customers to conduct their business. Customers can access internet-enabled computers and printers, upload documents to their customer record, call Services Australia on the self-service phone, and access free Wi-Fi to use their own devices. Agents also provide a face-to-face information service, identity document certification, and assist customers to use self-service.

New Initiatives

Women's Safety

National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032

The Australian Government, in conjunction with states and territories, has released the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032* (National Plan). The National Plan commits to 10 years of sustained action, effort and partnership across numerous sectors and governments, with the vision of ending violence against women and children in one generation.

The National Plan includes objectives across the continuum of prevention, early intervention, response, recovery and healing, and promotes the need for inclusive and intersectional approaches to addressing violence against women and children. The National Plan will be underpinned by two 5-year Action Plans, and a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan, that will detail the Commonwealth, state and territory government investment and efforts towards implementation.

The key prevention initiatives include:

- \$104.4 million over five years from 2022-23 to support the national primary prevention organisation Our Watch to continue its important work under the National Plan. This funding will enable Our Watch to boost its efforts in prevention activities across Australia including for LGBTIQ+ people, women with disability and migrant women.
- \$46 million over four years from 2022-23 to deliver phase five and six of the Stop it at the Start campaign which will continue to drive population level change in people's attitudes towards violence.
- \$32.2 million over four years from 2022-23 for a national consent campaign focusing on young people aged 12 and older and their parents, building on \$10.7 million already allocated in the 2021-22 Budget for this campaign.

The following key initiatives are aimed at the early intervention and prevention of all forms of family, domestic and sexual violence:

- \$40.4 million over five years from 2022-23 to maintain Specialised Family Violence Services to assist individuals, couples and families, including those in regional and remote locations, who are experiencing, witnessing or at risk of family or domestic violence. This will include a focus on supporting children impacted by family and domestic violence.
- \$39.7 million over five years from 2022-23 to extend DV-alert training, which supports non-specialist frontline workers across Australia to recognise, respond and refer women experiencing or at risk of family, domestic and sexual violence. The Australian Government will also invest \$12.6 million over five years from 2022-23 to continue providing accredited sexual violence response training to community frontline workers, health professionals and the legal sector. Of this, \$2.6 million will be used to develop and deliver education resources and training to the justice sector, including the judiciary and legal sector practitioners.
- \$34.8 million over five years from 2022-23 for a national early intervention trial for adolescent boys aged 12-18 who present with adverse childhood experiences including family or domestic violence, and who are at risk of perpetrating family, domestic or sexual violence. Funding will be delivered through a place-based process in consultation with state and territory governments, and will increase access to early intervention services for young men and adolescent boys across a range of locations including regional communities.
- \$30 million over five years from 2022-23 to build and maintain links between *Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031* (Safe and Supported) and the next National Plan. Safe and Supported is Australia's framework to reduce child abuse and neglect and its intergenerational impacts. It builds on the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*.

- \$10.8 million over four years from 2022-23 to enable *No to Violence* to continue national coverage for the Men's Referral Service, a direct telephone and online support for men who use violent and controlling behaviour, and the Brief Intervention Service, telephone-based counselling for men who use violence. As this service can be delivered virtually, it also supports men living in regional Australia.

The following response initiatives will support women and their children who are experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence:

- \$240 million over three years from 2023-24 to extend the Escaping Violence Payment, which provides financial support to women escaping family, domestic and sexual violence across Australia.
- \$100 million over five years from 2022-23 to continue funding under the Safe Places Emergency Accommodation (Safe Places) Program through a Priority Cohort Round to deliver up to 720 new safe places for women and children across Australia. The Priority Cohort Round will focus on increasing the number of new and appropriate emergency accommodation places for First Nations women and children, women and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and women and children with disability. The Safe Places Program supports the building, renovation or purchase of new emergency accommodation for women and children leaving family and domestic violence.
- \$57.9 million over five years from 2022-23 to support up to 32,000 victim-survivors, including those in regional and remote locations, to stay safe in their own homes through security assessments and upgrades including cameras, bug sweeps and safe phones.
- \$25 million over five years from 2022-23 to partner with states and territories on innovative domestic violence perpetrator responses. This may include trials in regional locations.
- \$10.7 million in 2022-23 in additional funding for the Northern Territory under the National Partnership on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses, recognising the increased complexity of remote service delivery.
- \$8 million over five years from 2022-23 for the Support for Trafficked People Program to continue supporting victims of human trafficking and modern slavery, including those identified in regional areas.

Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission

The Australian Government is investing \$27.4 million over five years from 2022-23, which includes an additional \$5.0 million provided through the 2022-23 October Budget, to establish a Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission (the Commission). The Commission will support the Australian Government by providing national leadership, fostering relationships and promoting a coordinated and cooperative approach across government and non-government sectors to end family, domestic and sexual

violence throughout Australia. The Commission will promote transparent and accountable evaluation frameworks to measure progress against the National Plan, help coordinate action across the country, including remote and regional areas, so that people at risk of or experiencing violence can access the support and services they need no matter where they live, and act as an amplifying voice for victim-survivors.

Women's Safety – 500 community workers

In the 2022-23 October Budget, the Australian Government is committing \$169.4 million over four years from 2022-23 to deliver on its election commitment for 500 additional frontline service and community workers supporting women and children experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence. The investment creates new employment opportunities, including for case managers in shelters, financial counsellors in community organisations and support workers for specialist women's and children's services. Half of the jobs will be allocated to rural, regional and remote areas, in recognition of the greater frequency and severity of violence and increased barriers to accessing services, experienced by women and children in rural communities. This investment will support women and children experiencing or escaping violence in rural, regional and remote communities.

Transition Arrangements – Income Management

The Social Security (Administration) Amendment (Repeal of Cashless Debit Card and Other Measures Bill) 2022 ends the Cashless Debit Card (CDC) with participants to transition off the card by 6 March 2023. The transition arrangements include an extensive communications strategy, in-person on-the-ground engagement in each CDC site, visits to remote communities and a variety of local support services including financial counselling, emergency relief and emotional support.

This measure also ensures that the Family Responsibilities Commission can continue to support community members in the Cape York and Doomadgee region by re-establishing income management arrangements. Income management will continue in all Income Management locations, including the Northern Territory, in the short-term, while a system of voluntary income management is designed in consultation with affected communities.

The Government is making a substantial reinvestment in the extension and expansion of support services to meet the needs identified by former CDC communities, including those who, in future, 'opt-in' for income management.

The primary focus of support services will continue to be the uplifting and upskilling of people to be job ready, and where the community is sufficiently economically ready, to create and provide employment opportunities.

Under the support services reinvestment program, solutions will increasingly be community-led and co-designed, involve shared decision-making and be delivered under a collective impact approach to significantly disrupt social disadvantage.

A comprehensive data collection, analysis and reporting strategy is being developed to measure the impact of income management and support services in former CDC communities.

This initiative forms part of the Australian Government's 2022-23 October Budget *Abolish the Cashless Debit Card* measure.

National Redress Scheme

In the 2022-23 October Budget, the Australian Government is providing \$15 million in 2022-23 to address the significant increase in applications since March 2022 to the National Redress Scheme for Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse (the Scheme). The additional funding will support the Scheme to continue to deliver outcomes for survivors and improve both the predictability of application processing timeframes and the quality and consistency of outcomes.

The Scheme is a national program and this proposal would support the Scheme to provide for all survivors of institutional sexual abuse, including those living in regional areas across Australia.

In 2022, regional offices were established in Wollongong, Wagga Wagga and Hobart, joining Batemans Bay which was established in 2021, to support the operations of the Scheme. The additional funding provided by the Government in the 2022-23 October Budget will support jobs in Wagga Wagga, Wollongong, Batemans Bay in New South Wales and Hobart as well as Canberra.

As announced by the Australian Government on 6 July 2022, grant funding of \$39.7 million for Redress Support Services, extends until the end of 2023-24. Funding enables the continuation of effective, trauma informed support for survivors of institutional child sexual abuse. Noting the influx of applications to the Scheme, and a significant percentage from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians survivors, the funding also increased the number of support services from 33 to 45, including 11 Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and one Indigenous not for profit service. Services provide extensive coverage in all states and territories throughout regional Australia.

Helping Families Learn and Grow with Playgroups

The Australian Government is providing \$12.4 million over four years from 2022-23 for increased support for playgroups and toy libraries across Australia. Playgroups and toy libraries provide accessible and affordable spaces, resources and opportunities for children to play together and for parents and carers to seek social and parenting support.

Existing playgroups have been found to improve parents' confidence and social supports, contribute to children's early development and wellbeing, and provide soft entry points to formal supports, such as mental health services. By establishing more playgroups and toy libraries and supporting existing playgroups and toy libraries, more regional Australians, including First Nations families, will benefit from these community resources.

This initiative forms part of the Australian Government's 2022-23 October Budget *Support for Community Wellbeing* measure.

Early Years Strategy – development

The Australian Government is also providing \$4.2 million over two years from 2022-23 to develop an Early Years Strategy which will set out the Government's plan to best support Australia's children and their families. It will create a more integrated and coordinated approach to early childhood development and increase accountability for the wellbeing, education and development of children across Australia.

Changing Places

The Australian Government has committed to contribute \$32.2 million over four years from 2022-23 to the build of Changing Places facilities – specialised disability toilets for people with high support needs, or those not accommodated by standard accessible toilets – in each of the 400 Local Government Areas (LGAs) currently without one. Many of the existing 229 Changing Places facilities in Australia are in metropolitan areas, and as such many new facilities built under this measure will be regionally located to accommodate all LGAs.

Under this initiative, Changing Places facilities will be built in accordance with the Changing Places design specifications 2020, accredited as a Changing Places facility, listed on the Changing Places website, and listed on the National Public Toilet Map. Changing Places facilities are specialised accessible public toilet facilities, built with additional space and appropriate equipment, making them suitable for people who are unable to use standard accessible toilets. Facilities provide a height-adjustable adult-sized change table, a ceiling track hoist system, a peninsula toilet, circulation spaces, an automatic door with a large clear opening, and a privacy screen.

The Australian Government will work with the state and territory governments and LGAs and other Commonwealth agencies to deliver on this initiative with appropriate locations identified in consultation with relevant jurisdictions. It is expected this initiative would improve community accessibility for around 1.5 million people who require assistance with core activities, including the 1.4 million people who have a severe or profound disability.

This initiative forms part of the Australian Government's 2022-23 October Budget *Better Support for People Living With Disability* measure.

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Appeals Program

Funding of around \$9 million in 2022-23 was originally committed to the ongoing NDIS Appeals program. In the 2022-23 October Budget, an additional \$21.2 million over three years to 2024-25 will be committed as part of the *Plan for the National Disability Insurance Scheme* measure to enable providers to meet increased demand. Providing a combined total of approximately \$15.8 million in 2022-23.

The NDIS Appeals Program was set up in 2013 to ensure that people with disability affected by reviewable decisions of the National Disability Insurance Agency, have access to support when they are seeking a review of those decisions in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT). While the focus of NDIS Appeals is the provision of advocacy support, funding for legal assistance is available where there is wider community benefit and/or a disadvantage that would substantially benefit from legal representation.

There are 42 advocacy agencies and eight Legal Aid Commissions across Australia, including in most regional locations, funded under the NDIS Appeals program. In 2021-22, 405 people received legal support and 3,909 people received advocacy support including around 932 from regional, remote and very remote areas. There was a 42 per cent increase in advocacy clients from 2,721 in 2020-21 to 3,861 in 2021-22. Data from the AAT indicates the rate of new case lodgements exceeds the rate of case finalisation.

A search engine (disability advocacy finder by Ask Izzy) is available that enables people to identify their nearest NDIS Appeals provider.

Funding of \$11.2 million over four years from 2022-23 will also be provided in the 2022-23 October Budget measure, *Better Support for People Living With Disability*, for the Disability Representative Organisations program, doubling existing funding for systemic disability advocacy.

National Autism Strategy

The Australian Government is providing \$5.3 million over two years from 2022-23 to support the following initiatives:

- The development of a National Autism Strategy that delivers a coordinated national approach between all levels of government and service areas. The development of the National Autism Strategy will be undertaken in phases. \$1 million will initially be provided for phase one to undertake an approach that includes evidence-based development of a base stage, which includes gathering and initial analysis of current research, data and evidence and early consultation. Phase two will include comprehensive national consultation and engagement and phase three will include the launch and implementation of the National Autism Strategy.
- \$2 million to the Autism Cooperative Research Centre so it can continue its autism research, coordination, collaboration and advice to support the National Autism Strategy.
- \$0.3 million to support the development of the National Roadmap to improve the Health and Mental Health of Autistic People (the Roadmap). The Roadmap will be an associated plan to the National Autism Strategy, specifically targeting the need for improved health and mental health outcomes for autistic Australians, and
- \$2 million to the AEIOU Foundation for Children with Autism to expand their existing autism specific early intervention centre in Townsville, Queensland.

Increasing Residential Accommodation for People with Disability

The Australia Government is providing \$0.6 million in 2022-23 to support the expansion of Jindelara Cottage to provide additional accommodation options for people with disability living in regional New South Wales. This funding will allow for the repurposing of an existing cottage and construct of a new, specialised two storey facility. The expanded facility will provide additional respite accommodation for people with disability in Ulladulla and the surrounding regions.

This initiative forms part of the Australian Government's 2022-23 October Budget *Plan for the National Disability Insurance Scheme* measure.

National Housing and Homelessness Plan

The Australian Government will commit \$13.4 million over four years from 2022-23 to develop a *National Housing and Homelessness Plan* (the Plan). The Plan is a key strategic pillar of the Australian Government's housing reform agenda and will set out the key short, medium and longer term reforms needed to improve housing and homelessness outcomes. The Australian Government will work with stakeholders in developing the Plan, including stakeholders in regional Australia.

The Plan will identify areas of need across Australia, including regional areas. The Government's commitment to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap will also ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in remote, rural and regional Australia are positively impacted by policy development and actions that arise from the Plan.

Closing the Gap Housing Policy Partnership

Under Priority Reform One of the National Agreement on *Closing the Gap* (the National Agreement), the Australian Government is committing \$7.5 million over three years from 2022-23 to establish the Housing Policy Partnership (the Partnership).

The Partnership is intended to identify opportunities to work more effectively across governments, reduce gaps and duplication, and advise on policy and implementation of actions to address Target 9a of the National Agreement by 2031. Target 9a commits to increasing the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing to 88 per cent. The Policy Partnership will provide a forum for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have a genuine say in the design and delivery of housing services including policy issues and programs that impact remote, rural and regional communities.

Administration of COVID-19 and Emergency Payments

Services Australia will receive funding of \$588.4 million in 2022-23 for the administration of emergency response payments, fraud detection and other payment integrity work, and the ongoing delivery of digital customer services.

This includes funding for the previously provided timely administration of payments to those impacted by COVID-19 and the July 2022 New South Wales Floods. It will also allow Services Australia to plan, manage and respond to emergency events across the remainder of 2022-23, to deliver better outcomes for people impacted by disasters across all of Australia, including rural and regional areas. This will also allow improved digital customer services and on-the-ground mobile support.

Investing in Front Line Service Delivery

The Australian Government is committing \$109.6 million over four years from 2022-23 to increase Services Australia service delivery staff by 200 personnel.

Additional staff will be placed into roles around Australia, including rural and regional Australia, to improve the delivery of vital services and support to Services Australia's diverse customer base. This includes delivering high-quality, accessible services and payments on behalf of government and targeted face-to-face services to vulnerable customers including veterans, Indigenous Australians, refugees, new migrants and people experiencing family and domestic violence.

100 More Centrelink Workers in Far North Queensland

In line with its commitment to strengthen service delivery in Far North Queensland, the Australian Government will be committing \$49.2 million over four years from 2022-23 for 100 additional Services Australia staff in Cairns, Queensland. This will improve service delivery and will make it easier for people to do business with Services Australia.

Save Our Centrelink – boosting Government services in Sorell

The Australian Government is providing \$2.4 million over four years from 2022-23 to increase service delivery staff and boost government services in Sorell, Tasmania. This will enable Services Australia to provide increased face-to-face services to customers, including vulnerable customers who require additional support.

Current Initiatives

Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031

More than one in six (around 4.4 million) Australians have disability, of which around 1.4 million people are in regional Australia.

Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 (the Strategy) is Australia's overarching framework to drive action to improve outcomes for all people with disability. The Strategy's vision is for an inclusive Australian society that ensures people with disability can fulfil their potential, as equal members of the community. An initial investment of \$250 million was provided in the 2021-22 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook for the life of the Strategy to support its implementation.

Under the Strategy, all governments have committed to improve access to services for people with disability, including those living in regional Australia. The Strategy is driving change to uphold the rights, inclusion, and participation of people with disability in all areas of Australian life and locations. This includes driving change in employment, housing, education, justice, health, transport, communication and services.

The Strategy also has a strong focus on increasing the employment of people with disability, including in regional Australia, which is lower than in major cities. The employment rates for people with disability is lowest in inner regional areas at 44.2 per cent, followed by outer regional and remote areas (46.3 per cent), with the highest rate in major cities (49.7 per cent). The Australian Government is continuing to make progress on Australia's Disability Strategy by committing an additional \$2.5 million in the 2022-23 October Budget to extend the National Disability Research Partnership to help deliver on the Government's commitment to measure the implementation of Australia Disability Strategy.

Disability Gateway

The Disability Gateway service is a free national service that is a central point of connection and referral to help people with disability, their families and carers to easily find and access trusted information, supports and services in their local area.

It is a website (www.disabilitygateway.gov.au) and 1800 phone service (1800 643 787) with a social media channel (www.facebook.com/DisabilityGateway) that also includes disability-specific information about COVID-19 supports and vaccines.

The Disability Gateway contributes to progress under Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031, particularly the Community Attitudes Outcome Area, by improving community attitudes to positively impact on government policy priorities under the Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031.

The Disability Gateway service was initially funded as a three-year project to 30 June 2022. The service commenced as an ongoing program on 1 July 2022. Ongoing funding of approximately \$8.2 million (indexed) annually for the program was approved through the 2021-22 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

Targeted Action Plans

Targeted Action Plans (TAPs) established by Australian, state and territory governments support the implementation of the Strategy and provide short-term strategic investments to ensure specific deliverables. TAPs aim to improve outcomes for people with disability, including people with disability in regional communities.

The first five TAPs are for the period 2021-22 to 2023-24 and deliver action against community attitudes, employment, early childhood, safety and emergency management. An investment of \$76.8 million was provided for TAPs over the life of the Strategy, including \$21.7 million over three years from 2021-22 for the first five TAPs. Funding for each of these TAPs is below:

- \$7.6 million to deliver actions to improve paid employment outcomes for people with disability
- \$3.3 million to deliver actions to improve community attitudes towards people with disability to influence behaviour
- \$8.3 million to strengthen early identification, information, supports and service pathways for young children, from infancy to school age, with disability or developmental concerns and their families
- \$2.5 million to deliver actions to strengthen system design and supports to enable people with disability to receive high quality and safe services.

Closing the Gap Package

Under the *Closing the Gap* Implementation Plan, the Department of Social Services is leading measures to address targets on out of home care (Target 12) and family violence (Target 13).

The measure *Improving Multidisciplinary Responses for First Nations Families with Multiple and Complex Needs* is focused on strengthening the capacity of First Nations organisations and communities, including in regional, remote and very remote Australia, to provide coordinated and integrated holistic responses that are culturally safe, place-based and community-led. Other measures focus on building the organisational and workforce cultural awareness capabilities of the First Nations and non-First Nations Child and Family Sector Workforce, and increasing the involvement of ACCOs in the child and family sector, also in regional, remote and very remote areas. The *Outcomes and Evidence Fund* will support projects that help First Nations people experiencing, or at risk of, child removal and/or family violence, in selected metropolitan, regional and remote areas, with projects being developed with ACCOs and their communities.

Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters

In 2021, the Australian Government provided an additional \$19.3 million over five years from 2022-23 to continue to deliver the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY), and to support program reforms. The additional investment supports shifting the focus of HIPPY to children aged three and four years, and building the capacity and number of ACCOs delivering the program and improving culturally appropriate delivery. This brings the total Australian Government investment in delivering HIPPY over the five years to around \$155 million.

HIPPY is a two-year home-based parenting and early childhood program that helps parents and carers to be their child's first teacher. It is delivered in 100 communities across Australia, including 50 Indigenous-focused sites, targeting approximately 4,000 children each year. In 2021-22, 66 of the 100 sites were regionally based, with around 3,361 children in the target age group attending the program.

National Disability Insurance Scheme

Since 1 July 2020, the NDIS has been available everywhere in Australia, including in the Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands. The NDIS is now supporting more than 500,000 people with significant and permanent disability, regardless of where they live in Australia. Approximately one third of NDIS participants currently reside outside the major cities. The NDIS is operating under full scheme agreements in all jurisdictions other than Western Australia, which is still under a transition agreement. A full scheme for Western Australia is scheduled to commence in July 2023.

The NDIS workforce is expected to grow to 353,000 workers by 2024. Of the total workforce, around one-third will be in regional and remote areas.

The *National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment (Participant Service Guarantee and Other Measures) Act 2022* (the Amending Act) was passed in March 2022, and came fully into effect on 1 July 2022. The Amending Act implemented a number of recommendations from the 2019 Independent Review of the *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013* (the Tune Review), including enabling the new NDIS Participant Service Guarantee. The Guarantee will set in rules new service standards and clear timeframes for decision making by the National Disability Insurance Agency. The Amending Act also included amendments to enable better support for people where services are not readily available, such as in remote and regional areas, by giving additional ability for market intervention. The reforms in the Amending Act put people with disability at the centre of the NDIS and make it easier for participants and their families to navigate the NDIS, including people living in regional and remote communities.

National Disability Insurance Scheme – continuity of support

The Australian Government has committed to provide Continuity of Support to people with disability receiving Australian Government services, who are ineligible for the NDIS. Continuity of Support commenced in April 2021 and provides eligible clients with access to a level of support consistent with that which they were previously receiving. As part of the Continuity of Support arrangements, the Australian Government implemented funding agreements and/or variations with relevant service providers in 2020-21 to ensure seamless delivery of Continuity of Support for Commonwealth Government clients, including those in regional and remote Australia.

Continuity of Support arrangements continue for existing and new clients of the National Auslan Interpreter Booking and Payment Service who are aged 65 years or over. Mobility Allowance is still open to new clients. Individuals funded through the Disability Employment Assistance program also transitioned to the Disability Employment Continuity of Support program from 1 April 2021.

Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Program

The Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) program provides funding to organisations to deliver projects and activities in the community that benefit all Australians with disability (regardless of NDIS eligibility), their carers and families. These projects create connections between people with disability and the communities they live in. Projects aim to build the knowledge, skills and confidence of people with disability, and improve their access to community and mainstream services.

ILC is a national program, with projects delivered throughout Australia, including regional and remote locations. ILC grants are designed to be broadly inclusive and to benefit all Australians with disability, their carers and families. This includes priority cohorts for people with disability with intersectional challenges, such as, rural and remote, first nations, women, and culturally and linguistically diverse, in line with *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031*.

The ILC program will provide around \$153 million in funding in 2022-23, delivered across four streams:

- Individual Capacity Building – funds projects such as workshops and peer support activities to build individual's confidence to engage with the community. Also under this program, Disabled Peoples Organisations and Families Organisations are strengthened in their capability to deliver services for people with disability.
- National Information Program – funds activities such as online resources for people with disability, their carers and families
- Economic and Community Participation – funds projects that seek to support or improve employability of people with disability and their access to community activities, and
- Mainstream Capacity Building – funds initiatives that promote or support improved access to mainstream services, such as educating health professionals about disability to improve communication practices and health outcomes for people with disability.

A National Early Childhood Program for Children with Disability or Developmental Concerns

Service delivery under the National Early Childhood Program for Children with Disability or Developmental Concerns (NECP) is expected to commence in early 2023. This follows a co-design process with stakeholders in 2021-22 to develop the design of the NECP.

The NECP will provide a range of disability specific information and community supports for Australian children aged 0 to 8 years, regardless of where they live, with a focus on regional and remote areas.

The NECP will be available to children before a formal diagnosis is attained, which can be a particularly protracted process in regional areas. The program will strengthen connections to the community, and existing supports and services, including those delivered by the NDIS.

Disability Employment Services

The Disability Employment Services (DES) program provides specialist employment assistance to people whose primary impediment to employment in the open labour market is disability, injury or a health condition. The Australian Government will provide around \$1.4 billion in 2022-23 to support this important initiative. Additionally, the Government will invest a further \$19.4 million over four years from 2022-23 as part of the 2022-23 October Budget measure, *Future Arrangements for the Disability Employment Services Program*, to extend the DES program.

In 2021-22, the Australian Government invested more than \$470 million in the DES program to assist people with disability in regional Australia seeking employment in the open labour market. Subject to labour market conditions, a similar amount is expected to be spent in regional areas in 2022-23.

In regional Australia, 77 organisations are currently delivering the DES program from 1,543 locations. As at the end of August 2022, regional Australians comprised 32 per cent (or about 93,000 out of 291,000) of those receiving support through program.

From the commencement of DES in March 2010 until August 2022, over 303,000 participants in regional Australia have been placed in a job.

From 1 July 2021, eligibility was tightened to job seekers on income support with an assessed work capacity of less than 30 hours a week. This was done to better support job seekers with disability most in need of specialised support.

From 1 January 2022, job seekers assessed as being job-ready have the option to choose to participate in mainstream digital employment services instead of DES. As digital connectivity and inclusion increases in regional areas, digital access to employment services will better connect regionally situated job seekers to information regarding their job search and employment support, and will reduce the need to travel to attend in-person.

As of January 2022, education placements have been prioritised toward training courses that are relevant to recognised skills shortages with education outcome payments limited to courses that develop skills for occupations identified as being in demand by the National Skills Commission.

Support Services during the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability

The Australian Government has established free and independent supports for people engaging with or affected by the Disability Royal Commission, including:

- a trauma-informed national telephone counselling and referral service, delivered by Blue Knot Foundation (the National Counselling and Referral Service)
- in-person counselling services for people who have more complex needs and require more in-depth support
- Indigenous-specific counselling services, advocacy support and sector development
- individual advocacy support for people with disability who need significant support to tell their story and assistance in drafting submissions
- systemic advocacy support.

Counselling Services

The Australian Government has allocated \$16.5 million in 2022-23 for counselling supports for people engaging with or affected by the Disability Royal Commission.

Supports are available across Australia, including outreach support to regional and remote areas. Counselling providers under this program have a total of 35 outlets located in inner regional, outer regional and remote Australia.

As at 12 October 2022, the National Counselling and Referral Service has received 21,218 calls, delivered 11,329 counselling sessions and made 4,522 referrals.

As at 30 June 2022, 2,897 individual clients and 567 group clients have accessed the Frontline Counselling Services across 46,055 sessions. This includes 958 people who live in regional and remote areas.

Advocacy Services

The Australian Government has allocated \$16.3 million in 2022-23 for advocacy supports for people engaging with the Disability Royal Commission.

Supports are available across Australia, including outreach support to regional and remote areas. Advocacy providers under this program have a total of 62 outlets located in inner regional, outer regional, and remote and very remote Australia.

As at 30 June 2022, 3,785 individual clients and 12,327 group clients have accessed advocacy support over 63,027 sessions. This includes 782 people located in regional and remote areas.

National Disability Advocacy Program

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring people with disability have access to effective disability advocacy that promotes, protects and ensures their full and equal enjoyment of all human rights, enabling full community participation. Through the commitment to *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031*, all levels of government are responsible for supporting disability advocacy.

Funding of \$24.1 million in 2022-23 is committed to 59 advocacy agencies across Australia, including in most regional locations, under the National Disability Advocacy Program. In 2021-22, 13,726 people received individual support including around 5,000 from regional, remote and very remote areas. A search engine (disability advocacy finder by Ask Izzy) is available that enables people to identify their nearest National Disability Advocacy Program provider.

Integrated Carer Support Service

The Integrated Carer Support Service, publicly known as Carer Gateway, is a national network of 10 Carer Gateway service providers, delivers carer support services across 16 Carer Gateway service areas. The 16 Carer Gateway service areas are aligned to existing Primary Health Network regions to ensure the servicing of carers in regional and remote Australia as well as metropolitan areas. Total funding for the Integrated Carer Support Service is approximately \$196 million in 2022-23.

The Integrated Carer Support Service delivers a consistent approach to carer support services with tailored and targeted early intervention, preventative and skill building supports available at the national, regional and remote levels. There are approximately 243,500 carers living in outer regional and remote areas who could benefit from this initiative.

Individual Placement and Support

In 2020, the Australian Government provided \$45.7 million, including \$13.3 million in 2022-23, to deliver the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) program in 50 *headspace* sites nationally, 28 of which are in regional and remote locations. The IPS program targets vulnerable young people aged 12 to 25 years with mental illness helping them to enter or remain in education or employment.

The IPS program uses an evidence-based model, integrating employment and vocational support with clinical mental health and other non-vocational support. Professional employment specialists located in headspace sites will provide vocational and employment assistance, in tandem with clinical support.

From 1 July 2021 to 31 December 2021, the IPS program supported 1,314 young people who required mental health support to get into employment or further education each year.

The IPS program is complemented by *headspace* National's Digital Work and Study Service (DWSS). The DWSS provides work and study support via a digital platform to young people aged 15 to 25 who are unsure about where to start when looking for a job or who have questions about what they want to study. From 1 July 2021 to 31 December 2021, 347 young people were supported by DWSS.

In 2021, the Australian Government provided \$5.7 million over three years to further enhance the IPS Program as part of the 2021-22 Budget *Mental Health* measure, including:

- the IPS Adult Mental Health pilot which will take place over three years in the two regional sites of the eight Adult Mental Health Centres
- the IPS vocational peer support pilot which aims to assess whether IPS participants achieve better and more sustained outcomes with vocational peer support in place. Four IPS services participating in the pilot are located in regional areas
- ongoing evaluation to measure the effectiveness of the IPS program.

Families and Children Activity

The Department of Social Services delivers a range of programs under the Families and Children Activity that seek to support families, improve the wellbeing of children and young people, strengthen relationships, and enhance family and community functioning, as well as increase the participation of vulnerable people in community life.

The Australian Government is investing more than \$395 million per year from 2022-23 under the Families and Children Activity for programs and services across Australia, with an extensive footprint in regional areas.

In 2021-22, of the total 2,856 outlets delivering Family and Children Activities nationally, 1,339 were located in regional and rural Australia, and supported 89,684 clients (38 per cent of total national clients). Those regions providing the largest number of services to clients included Townsville (3,654 clients), Rockhampton (3,251 clients), Dubbo (2,538 clients), and Launceston (2,366 clients).

In an effort to provide certainty and build capability within the service sector, and ensure continuity of high-quality services to families, the Australian Government has extended a large proportion of grants under the Families and Children Activity for a further five years until 30 June 2026.

The Government has allocated funding of around \$1.6 billion over four years from 2022-23, which is a significant investment to support children, families and local community organisations right across Australia, including many in regional areas. Services receiving funding extensions include:

- Family and Relationship Services, Communities for Children Facilitating Partners and Family Mental Health Support Services (to 30 June 2026)
- Budget Based Funded Services and Children and Parenting Support Services (to 30 June 2023).

Family Mental Health Support Services

The Australian Government is investing more than \$259.5 million over five years to continue Family Mental Health Support Services (FMHSS) to 30 June 2026, including funding of \$52.4 million in 2022-23.

FMHSS 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. FMHSS is currently delivered through 207 outlets across Australia. The regional and remote locations delivering FMHSS to the largest number of individual clients include the Goldfields Region in Western Australia (467), Broken Hill and Far West in New South Wales (237) and Outback North in Queensland (153).

FMHSS can be accessed by participants either on an individual basis or as part of a group session. Of the 15,043 participants accessing FMHSS on an individual basis in 2021-22, 7,719 or 51 per cent were located in regional and remote Australia.

1800RESPECT

The Australian Government has committed to ongoing funding for 1800RESPECT, Australia's counselling, support and referral service for people in communities across Australia, including those in regional Australia, affected by domestic, family and sexual violence.

Services delivered by 1800RESPECT include:

- telephone and online counselling support services, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- a website with information, resources and referrals for those affected by domestic, family and sexual violence, the community and frontline workers
- mobile phone applications, which provide information on local domestic and family violence and sexual violence services, and ways for women with a disability to assess their safety with respect to domestic and family violence
- sector support through a range of online resources, such as a digital frontline workers' toolkit.

ABSTUDY

ABSTUDY is an ongoing program to help address educational disadvantages faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. ABSTUDY helps eligible Indigenous students and apprentices, many from remote areas, with study, living, and travel expenses, including if they need to study away from home. In 2021-22, ABSTUDY supported around 20,000 Indigenous secondary students and 10,000 Indigenous tertiary students. This includes around 4,700 Indigenous secondary students from remote areas who need to board away from home to access secondary schools.

In 2022-23, expenditure on ABSTUDY secondary allowances is estimated to be \$184.3 million, while ABSTUDY tertiary allowances is estimated to be \$133.2 million.

The Australian Government is continuing to deliver emergency and disaster provisions. In December 2021, the Australian Government announced additional provisions to support ABSTUDY recipients who are living away from home to study to access Fares Allowance and other assistance if they are affected by emergency events outside their control such as natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns. This additional support ensures boarding students can travel home in emergencies, and back to school when possible, and will minimise disruptions to their studies.

Assistance for Isolated Children

Families in isolated areas incur additional costs to educate their children. In 2021-22, the Assistance for Isolated Children scheme assisted around 13,000 students unable to attend an appropriate state school on a daily basis because of geographical isolation or medical or disability reasons. In 2022-23, expenditure under this program is estimated to be \$91.4 million.

In 2022, depending on the student's circumstances, the Assistance for Isolated Children scheme provides:

- Basic Boarding Allowance, \$8,856 per annum
- Additional Boarding Allowance, \$2,540 per annum
- Second Home Allowance, \$257.98 per fortnight (limited to a maximum of three students in a family)
- Distance Education Allowance, \$4,428 per annum.

Health Delivery Modernisation Program –Phase three

The Australian Government is investing \$96.8 million over four years from 2022-23 for Phase Three of the Health Delivery Modernisation program. This measure will deliver new digital health services and modernise Services Australia's critical health payment system for all Australians, including those in rural and regional Australia. The measure will also expand health system capabilities to deliver health policies and reforms.

New digital services to be delivered include Medicare enrolment and re-enrolment, Medicare Entitlement Statement application, Medicare complex care plan status, Medicare Provider Number registration for allied health professionals, an enhanced digital service offer for Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme written authorities and digital claiming for the Continence Aids Payment Scheme. Australians will no longer have to visit a Service Centre, phone Services Australia, or undertake paper-based processes in order to access a range of health services.

National Agent and Access Points Program

Australians in regional locations benefit from the Services Australia National Agent and Access Point Program. Agents and Access Points provide essential services to customers in locations where accessing Service Centres is difficult. As at 30 September 2022, Services Australia has 365 Agents and 211 Access Points across regional and remote locations.

Agents and Access Points provide free self-service facilities for customers to complete Agency business. Customers can access internet-enabled computers and printers, upload documents to their customer record, call Services Australia on the self-service phone, and access free Wi-Fi to use their own devices. Agents also provide a face-to-face information service, identity document certification, and help customers use self-service facilities.

Services Australia has invested in improved infrastructure and connectivity across the Agent and Access Point service delivery footprint ensuring regional and remote customers receive a consistent service offer to those in metropolitan areas.

myGov and Digital Identity

myGov is the Australian Government's largest government digital platform, allowing users to securely access government information and services online through a central portal. As at 30 September 2022, myGov is supporting over 25.4 million accounts to connect to 15 government services and is the primary entry point to government services for many people, including people in regional and remote areas. For these people the ability to access multiple government services online is a convenient way to do business and update their details, minimising the need to travel to regional Service Centres or to deal with multiple government agencies.

myGov also offers a digital inbox allowing connected services to send electronic mail to users, which is a convenient way for regional and remote users to receive information securely from government.

myGov is now integrated with the Australian Government's Digital Identity System. People have the option of linking their myGovID digital identity to their myGov account and using their digital identity to sign into myGov. Digital identity provides an option for myGov users to apply two-factor authentication for signing into myGov. Signing into a myGov account using a digital identity provides people an alternative to SMS-based two factor authentication. This is particularly useful for customers travelling overseas or in regional or remote areas where mobile phone access or mobile coverage is limited.

Services Australia is developing a myGov app. This app will be free to download and available via the App Store and Google Play. The first public release of the myGov app is scheduled for late 2022. The myGov app will allow customers to use rapid access methods, such as Face ID and Touch ID. This will provide access to a range of Medicare, Centrelink and Child Support payments and services via a single app.

The myGov Code Generator App (formally called the myGov Access App) is a smart device App (offered via the App Store and Google Play). The myGov Code Generator App is currently another option for myGov users who choose to apply two-factor authentication for signing into myGov. Similar to Digital Identity, this feature provides an alternative to SMS-based two-factor authentication, which is particularly useful for customers travelling overseas or in regional or remote areas where mobile phone access or mobile coverage is limited. This capability will be embedded within the myGov App prior to its release, providing a single app for all things myGov.

The Australian Government is also continuing to fund the following initiatives:

- The Regional and Remote Student Access to Education initiative acknowledges the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students' ability to qualify for independence under workforce participation criteria. This measure automatically recognises the six-month period between 25 March 2020 and 24 September 2020 as contributing to workforce participation in order for eligible students to qualify for Youth Allowance (Student) payment.
- The Fathering Project which benefits around 300,000 children and 290,000 families each year and is now being delivered in over 700 school communities across Australia, including in regional, rural, remote and very remote communities.
- Foundational work to inform the establishment of a National Centre for Place-Based Collaboration. The National Centre, once established, is intended to support existing and emerging place-based initiatives around Australia, but will initially focus on Commonwealth programs and initiatives, with a plan for scaling up and extending its support over time.
- Financial Wellbeing and Capability through continuing to support people under financial stress. In 2022, the Australian Government has committed \$2 million over three years from 2021-22 to maintain and expand the service offer of the National Debt Helpline through an online chat functionality. This is supporting individuals being able to access financial counselling assistance no matter where they live. This is part of the *Building the Long-Term Viability of the Financial Counselling Sector* investment to support the development of an industry funding model, and improved data, coordination and innovation activities for financial counselling, to boost supports for individuals in financial distress.
- Funding of \$10 million in 2022-23 for Volunteer Grants to help not-for-profit organisations to support their volunteers.
- Funding of \$9.4 million in 2022-23 to make sure older Australians can continue to access the successful Be Connected program through the established network and online resources.

- The Jobs and Market Fund to support the growth of the NDIS market and workforce in capacity and capability to meet the needs of NDIS participants. The Jobs and Market Fund also support the implementation of initiatives in the *NDIS National Workforce Plan 2021-2025*, such as the NDIS Ready project that is supporting capability building and helping strengthen culturally safe NDIS services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants, including those in regional and remote areas.
- Funding of \$7.6 million is being provided in 2022-23 for Boosting the Local Care Workforce which will support jobs in the care workforce including in regional and remote Australia. By June 2024, the workforce will need to continue to grow to support NDIS participants, with around 45 per cent of the additional jobs in the NDIS sector are expected to be in regional and remote areas.
- Young Carer Bursary Program, providing young carers in education with Bursaries currently valued at \$3000 each (up to \$3 million in 2022-23). In 2022, a total of 303 Young Carer Bursary Program recipients were from regional Australia.
- The provision of National Disaster Resilience and Support, through the operation of a fleet of three Mobile Service Centres, delivering high quality accessible services and payments on behalf of Government, and the planned expansion of the fleet in early 2021-22 with one additional Mobile Service Centre and three additional all-terrain vehicles.
- The ongoing provision of access to people living in remote areas to government payments and services via telephony services, and dedicated remote servicing teams.
- The ongoing delivery of the Farm House Allowance payment on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (with more than 17,500 customers receiving this payment from the commencement of the program in 2014 until 31 August 2022).
- The undertaking of regional citizenship testing in remote locations on behalf of the Department of Home Affairs (with 590 tests being undertaken in 42 Service Centres in regional areas across Australia, from Kalgoorlie in Western Australia to Mackay in Queensland).
- Maintenance of the National Indigenous Coalition as Services Australia's peak strategic and advisory forum on the effective delivery of payments and services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- The continued provision of Services Australia's Express Plus mobile apps for Centrelink, Medicare and Child Support services, which continue to be a popular and convenient way for people to transact digitally with Services Australia without the need to travel to a Service Centre or telephone Services Australia particularly benefiting those in regional and remote areas.
- The employment of Digital Assistants to provide customers with assistance on the Services Australia website, Centrelink online accounts and the Express Plus Centrelink mobile app.
- The ongoing provision for Electronic claiming of Medicare benefits.

Treasury

Treasury's role is to support and implement informed decisions on policies for the good of the Australian people, consistent with achieving strong, sustainable economic growth and fiscal settings.

The Treasury has offices in Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne and Perth. It undertakes regional engagement, including through visiting the regions, to deepen its understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing regional economies.

There are a number of entities in the portfolio that are nationally dispersed, such as the Australian Taxation Office and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). Office locations for these entities include Albury, Burnie, Geelong, Gosford, and Townsville. The ABS also hosts the National Data Acquisition Centre in Geelong and maintains an ongoing field interviewer workforce of approximately 500 people, supplemented by non-ongoing and casuals, which are located in communities across Australia.

The ABS produces a range of data about Australia's regions through the Census of Population and Housing, and other household and business collections. Much of this data is available through its regional data portal (Data by Region). Recently, the ABS has expanded the range of regional statistics in response to the need for information to support regional recovery from recent events including bushfires and COVID-19. These statistics include detailed regional data on housing, health and disability. The 2021 Census provided detailed regional data, including at small area level, in the first release in June 2022. Further Census data was made available in the second release on 12 October 2022.

As at 31 August 2022, the Treasury Portfolio employed 26,740 staff under the *Public Service Act 1999*. Of this total, 10,326 are employed in Canberra, central Melbourne and central Sydney (39 per cent), 13,448 in other capital cities (50 per cent) and 2,966 in regional areas (11 per cent).

Further details are provided in the Treasury Portfolio Budget Statements.

New Initiatives

A target of one million new homes under a Housing Accord

Under a new Housing Accord, the Government is bringing together states and territories, the Australian Local Government Association, investors and representatives from the construction sector to address housing pressures in Australia.

The Accord sets an aspirational housing supply target of one million new homes across Australia, including in regional areas, to be delivered over 5 years from mid-2024. Accord stakeholders will work towards this target, addressing the supply gap of new houses as our population continues to grow.

The Government will provide \$350 million over 5 years, with ongoing availability payments over the longer term, for an additional 10,000 affordable dwellings to be delivered across Australia and its regional areas. States and territories will also support up to an additional 10,000 affordable homes, increasing the dwellings that can be delivered under the Accord to 20,000 nationally.

Investing in social and affordable housing

The Accord builds on the Government's commitment to establish the \$10 billion Housing Australia Future Fund, which will support marginalised groups and frontline workers, including in regional Australia.

The Government has committed that, in its first 5 years, returns from the Housing Australia Future Fund will support delivery of 30,000 new social and affordable dwellings nationwide. An additional \$330 million of returns will help address acute housing needs in remote Indigenous communities and for veterans, and women and children leaving domestic and family violence.

To complement the Housing Australia Future Fund the Government is expanding the remit of the National Housing Infrastructure Facility, providing access to up to \$575 million of existing funds to invest in social and affordable housing. This expansion will help unlock a projected 5,500 new dwellings across Australia, attracting institutional investment and accelerating the supply of housing.

Regional First Home Buyer Guarantee

The Government recognises the importance of homeownership for economic and social wellbeing. That is why the Government has introduced a *Regional First Home Buyer Guarantee*, providing up to 10,000 places each financial year from 2022-23 to 2024-25 to support aspiring homebuyers in regional areas to enter the market sooner. Places under the *Regional First Home Buyer Guarantee* are available to eligible homebuyers with a minimum 5 per cent deposit. This is in addition to an expansion of the *First Home Guarantee* to 35,000 places per year and the *Family Home Guarantee* to 5,000 places per year to the end of 2024-25.

Help to Buy

The Government will support more regional Australians into home ownership through the Help to Buy shared equity scheme. Eligible home buyers will be able to access an equity contribution from the Government to support their purchase. This will mean Australians can buy a home with a smaller deposit and mortgage.

Youpla Group Funeral Benefits Program

The Government committed \$7.2 million to establish the Youpla Group Funeral Benefits Program to support the families of deceased Youpla policy holders and allow them to conduct Sorry Business with dignity. The program pays a grant in place of a funeral benefit that would otherwise have been paid by the Youpla Group before its collapse. Applications for the program opened on 7 September 2022 and will be accepted until 30 November 2023.

About 85 per cent of Youpla Group fund members live in Queensland and New South Wales. About 68 per cent of members live in regional Australia, with a further 11 per cent in remote areas and 7 per cent in very remote areas.

Current Initiatives

Cyclone and Related Flooding Reinsurance Pool – Implementation

Legislation passed Parliament in March 2022 to establish a reinsurance pool for cyclones and related flood damage, to improve the accessibility and affordability of home and business insurance in cyclone-prone areas. The reinsurance pool opened for business on 1 July 2022, is backed by a government guarantee of \$10 billion, or a larger amount if required, and is administered by the Australian Reinsurance Pool Corporation (ARPC).

Participation is mandatory for general insurers. Large insurers have until December 2023 to join, and small insurers have until December 2024.

The pool is expected to reduce insurance premiums for eligible household, strata and small business insurance policies exposed to medium to high cyclone risk, while maintaining incentives for mitigation. The ARPC will set premiums for low-risk policies at levels comparable to what would be charged by other reinsurers. Details on the outcomes the pool expects to deliver are available on the ARPC website.

In addition, \$15.4 million over four years from 2021-22 was provided to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to conduct a price monitoring role in relation to the insurance industry, with a focus on evaluating the impact of the cyclone reinsurance pool and whether the savings from the reinsurance pool are being passed through to policyholders.

The Australian Government is also continuing to fund the following initiatives:

- The Government is supporting the Fundraising Institute of Australia in 2022-23 to enhance its framework for natural disaster fundraising and reporting, improving public trust that will support charities providing crucial services to recovering regional communities.
- The Government is making it easier for Community Foundations to access donations, by listing as deductible gift recipients up to 28 entities related to community foundations affiliated with the peak body Community Foundations Australia.

Veterans' Affairs

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) has supported veterans and families for more than a century, empowering them to continue life after service within a society that understands their commitment and values their ongoing contribution to the community.

The 2021 Census (Australian Bureau of Statistics) included a veteran indicator for the first time. This has enhanced our understanding of the geographic spread of the 581,139 current and former serving members of the Australian Defence Forces across the country. Early analysis shows approximately two in five veterans and veteran families are in regional, rural and remote communities.

Using these insights in connection with ongoing engagement with clients and the broader veteran community, DVA will continue to guide the development and delivery of services and support for Australia's veterans.

Contributing to regional government infrastructure, DVA has offices in regional centres around Australia and DVA staff are co-located with Services Australia in a number of regional offices.

As at 31 August 2022, the Veterans' Affairs Portfolio employed 2,783 staff under the *Public Service Act 1999*. Of this total, 1,639 are employed in Canberra, central Melbourne and central Sydney (59 per cent), 1,090 in other capital cities (39 per cent) and 54 in regional areas (2 per cent).

New Initiatives

Veterans' and Families' Hubs Network Expansion

The Government has committed \$46.7 million over four years from 2022-23 to further expand the network of Veterans' and Families' Hubs to an additional 10 locations, including 6 in regional areas.

The program is delivered in partnership with ex-service organisations, community organisations and state and territory governments and provides integrated support to veterans and families across Australia, including in regional communities. The hubs will improve access for veterans and families to a range of services including support for transition, employment, health and social connection. The additional regional hubs will be established in areas including Ipswich, Queanbeyan, the Hawkesbury and Hunter regions, the Tweed/North Coast region and the Surf Coast/Geelong region.

New hubs will also be established in the metropolitan areas of South-West Perth, and Northern Adelaide, which are anticipated to provide support for veterans and families in the surrounding regional areas.

This includes the continuation of the 2021-22 Budget commitment, which included an additional \$10.7 million to expand the network to Tasmania and Southeast Queensland. This initiative builds on the \$2.5 million committed in the 2021-22 *Mid-Year Economic Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO)* for Tasmanian Hubs at Launceston and Burnie and the \$30 million 2019-20 MYEFO Veteran Wellbeing Centre Network Budget Initiative. The existing Veterans' and Families' Hubs Network has six hubs operating in Darwin, Townsville, Perth, Nowra, Wodonga and Adelaide.

Support for homeless veterans in Darwin

The Government has committed \$3.6 million over two years from 2022-23 to provide funding to the Council of Australian Veterans for the construction of a temporary accommodation facility in the Northern Territory. This project builds on the Australian Government's broader commitment to address homelessness in the veteran community, and forms part of the Veteran Homelessness Plan. The accommodation, to be known as the Scott Palmer Centre, will also support former ADF members to secure appropriate and permanent housing solutions, employment support and connect them to other support programs. This measure will benefit veterans experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness in the Darwin region.

Current Initiatives

Sustaining a Care and Support Workforce for the Veterans' Community

\$70.5 million over four years is being provided from 1 July 2022 to fund targeted fee increases to domestic assistance and personal care services under the Veterans' Home Care program. This fee increase will strengthen the viability of care and support providers delivering services to DVA clients and facilitate continued access to services for the veteran community, including in regional areas. The fee increase recognises the important role of the care sector in supporting DVA clients to remain safe and independent in their homes for longer and the need for uninterrupted access to services for veterans and their families.

Expansion of Kookaburra Kids Defence Kids Program

The Australian Government is providing funding to the Australian Kookaburra Kids Foundation to deliver the Defence Kids Program supporting the unique needs of children of current and ex-serving members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF). Additional funding of \$13.7 million over three years from 2022-23 is being provided to expand the program to new regional locations including regional Queensland (Townsville), the New South Wales mid-north coast, regional New South Wales (Albury/Wodonga/Wagga Wagga region), regional Victoria (Mornington Peninsula, Bendigo/Ballarat), and additional regions in South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania. This will allow many more children to join the program both face-to-face and online, regardless of geographic location.

Acute Support Package

The Acute Support Package provides \$36.8 million over four years to deliver simpler access to a greater range of support for more veterans' families. Subject to the passage of the Defence, Veterans' and Families' Acute Support Package Bill 2022, eligibility will be extended beyond families and widowed partners of veterans covered by the current Family Support program and will include additional veterans at risk of crisis, and widowed partners. It will also no longer tie eligibility to a veteran's type of service, nor the participation in rehabilitation, and includes the families of recipients of the veteran payment.

Around two in five veterans reside in regional or remote Australia. This initiative enables more families in these locations to access existing services in their region, which will have a positive impact particularly in areas of high veteran population.

