



Australian Government

REGIONS 2030

Unlocking Opportunity



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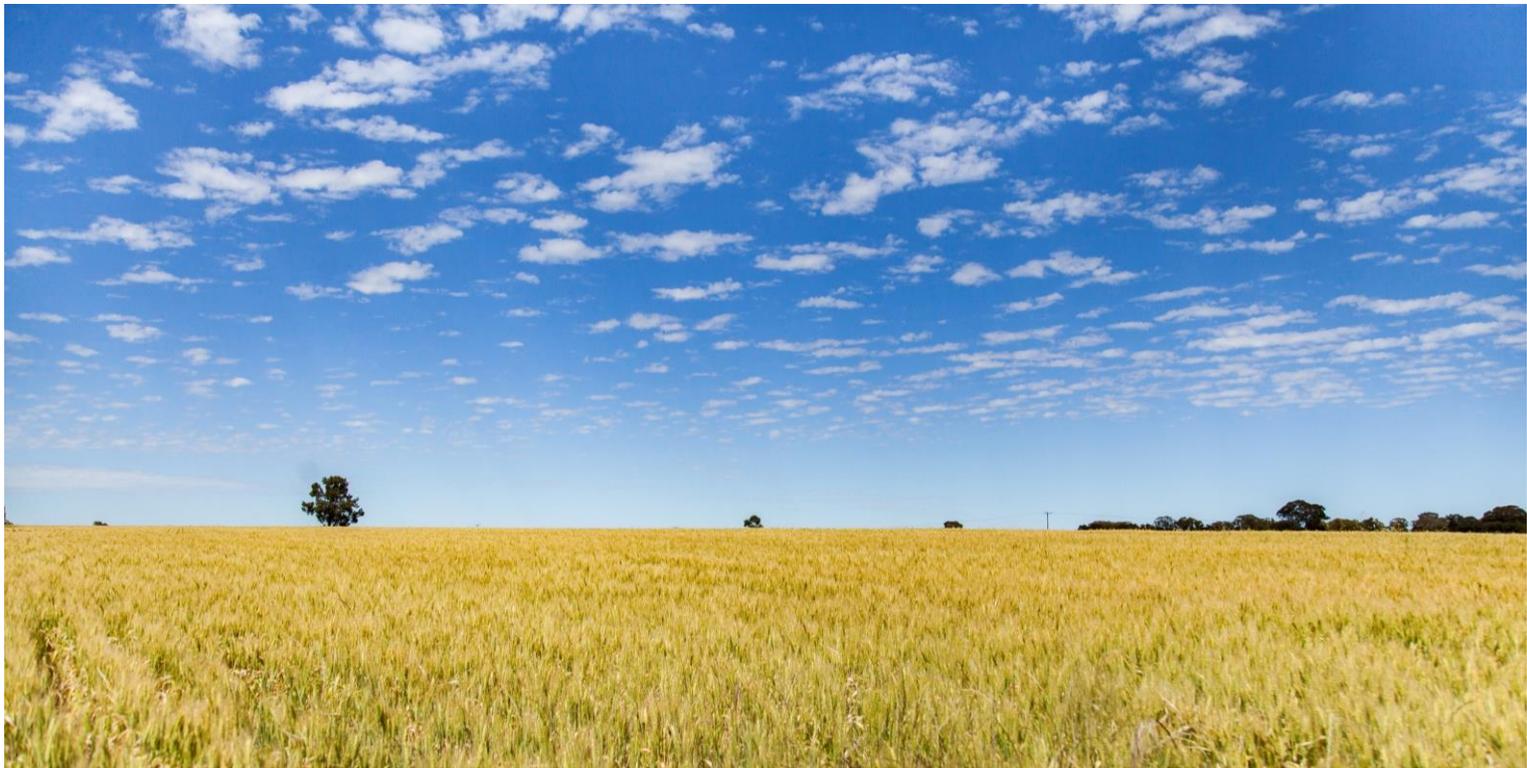


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This document was proudly printed in regional Australia



Foreword

As Minister for Regional Development, my goal is clear: in partnership with regional communities, I want to help build the kinds of communities our children and grandchildren either want to stay in or come back to.

Australia's regions are fundamental to the functioning of our cities and the nation. Regions supply much of the necessities of everyday life—from the food we eat to the energy that runs our households and industries. Without the driving force of regional Australia, the strength and vitality of our national economy and the Australian way of life would not be possible.

As a regional Australian, I see up-close the amazing things that are happening in rural, regional and remote Australia. While there are boundless opportunities, some of our regions also face a range of challenges. The Government recently asked the Productivity Commission to conduct a study of regions undergoing economic changes. The draft report indicates that about 80 per cent of regions are in good shape, with the other 20 per cent still adjusting to shifts, such as the construction phase of the mining boom coming to a close. The Government is already responding with significant measures, many of which are outlined in this document.

Regional Australia is not just important to those of us who live here. The Australian economy is largely driven by its regions. Australia's agriculture, forestry, fishing and mining industries, predominantly located in regional Australia, made up 57 per cent of the value of Australia's merchandise exports in 2016. Forty five cents in every dollar spent in Australia by international or local visitors is spent in regional areas. Most of the gas and electricity which powers city households is produced in regional Australia.

It is only logical that we should invest in Australia's regions because Australia's regions power Australia's economy. Investing in our regions pays massive dividends for our nation—strong regions are the foundation of a strong Australia.

This year's Budget builds on the substantial investments that the Australian Government has made in regional Australia. It demonstrates an ongoing commitment to building strong regional communities that businesses and families have the confidence to invest in.

This Government does not simply give lip service to Australia's regions; this year's Budget includes significant investment aimed at harnessing the opportunities and responding to the challenges present throughout regional Australia, including measures such as:

- An additional \$8.4 billion in new equity funding to construct Inland Rail.
- An extra \$200 million for the Building Better Regions Fund, bringing the total amount in the fund to almost \$500 million.
- \$272.2 million to provide grants of \$10 million or more for major projects to unlock the potential of regions.
- Lower taxes through the Enterprise Tax Plan.
- The structured decentralisation of Australian Government jobs from Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra.
- Increased access for regional Australians to psychological services via telehealth.

While these investments and initiatives are significant, they do not mean that the job is done. The Regional Australia Ministerial Taskforce, chaired by the Prime Minister, will continue to meet during the policy development phase, after which the focus will shift to implementation. The Taskforce ensures that the challenges and opportunities facing regional Australia at the very heart of government decision-making by bringing together key Ministers from across government including health, education, infrastructure, employment and industry.

The Taskforce has a very straight forward objective—to improve the lives of people living in rural, regional and remote Australia. It will position Australia's regions to unlock economic opportunities and ensure the benefits of our growing economy are felt in all corners of our nation.

While the establishment of the Regional Australia Ministerial Taskforce is a significant indicator of the Government's commitment to regional Australia, like other regional Australians, I know that government does not have all the answers. The most sensible solutions are often developed in the regions themselves. That is why the Australian Government will continue to back local communities to drive their own futures and be the leaders of their own destinies.

Together, let's continue to reflect on what makes regional Australia great and work to make its future even stronger.



Senator the Hon Fiona Nash

Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Local Government and Territories
Minister for Regional Communications





Our Approach: Whole of Government Action for Regional Australia

From our remote mining hubs, through to our world-class wine districts and our dynamic regional cities—regional Australia's landscapes, industries and people are diverse.

The Government acknowledges that a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to regional policy development doesn't work, which is why we are investing in partnership with communities. Decisions about the future of individual regions should be made by local people and supported by government, not the other way around. Government initiatives including Regional Development Australia committees, provide a vital link between local community stakeholders and government, advising the Australian Government on critical issues affecting economic development in regions and enhancing awareness of Australian Government programs.

Issues affecting rural, regional and remote Australians cross many policy areas—regional development is about more than just grant programs. That is why our approach to regional development does not operate in a silo. We know that regional Australians care about the health of their families, the education of their children, and the ability to access the benefits of technology, alongside traditional regional development indicators such as employment and economic growth.

Our approach coordinates activity across five key areas:



Jobs and
Economic
Development



Infrastructure



Health



Education



Communications

We know that when we get the combination of actions across these key areas right, regions—and those who live, work and raise families there—are positioned to make the most of their potential.

The newly established Regional Australia Ministerial Taskforce, chaired by the Prime Minister, spearheads our whole of government approach to Australia's regions. The Taskforce is working to improve the lives of rural, regional and remote Australians across the five key areas of health, education, infrastructure, communications and jobs and economic development. The work of the Taskforce builds on the solid foundations set by the Agricultural Competiveness White Paper and the White Paper on Developing Northern Australia.

This document outlines the Australian Government's investments, achievements and future direction for regional Australia across these five key areas. It provides examples of how the Government's investments are making a difference for regional communities.

It is important that we look to and learn from regional communities and businesses that are successfully navigating pathways for the future, including through capitalising on their unique advantages.



Regional Australia

By the numbers



Nearly **8million** people live outside our capital cities.



\$220million
Australian Government investment in the Regional Jobs and Investment Packages.



In 2016, our agriculture, forestry and fishing and mining industries (predominantly located in regional Australia) made up

57% of the value of Australia's merchandise exports.



The Australian Government is providing an additional

\$8.4billion
to deliver the Inland Rail project.



45cents in every dollar spent in Australia by international or local visitors is spent in regional areas.



More than **1700km** – the length of Inland Rail track corridor, connecting Melbourne to Brisbane through inland eastern Australia.



Nearly **\$770million** Australian Government investment in grants for regional projects to provide economic and social benefits through the Building Better Regions Fund and the Regional Growth Fund.



Improved local roads through a **\$4.4billion** investment in the Roads to Recovery program.



Black Spots Projects will receive **\$685million** to help make roads safer for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians.



Local bridges upgraded through a **\$420million** Australian Government investment in the Bridges Renewal Programme.

Expected

\$2.5 billion

in capital expenditure on NBN Co's fixed wireless network.



The Australian Government will invest an estimated

\$57.5 billion

in recurrent funding from 2018 to 2027 in regional and remote schools.

Approximately

\$2 billion

in capital expenditure on the Sky Muster satellite service.



In 2015–16, almost

373,800

children from remote and regional communities benefited from Government subsidised childcare.

More than

75%

of homes and businesses outside major urban areas can order NBN services or have network construction underway.



84%

increase in Commonwealth funding for students in regional and remote Australia between 2017 (\$3.9 billion) and 2027 (\$7.2 billion).



765

new or improved mobile base stations through the Mobile Black Spot Program, improving regional mobile coverage.



Better delivery of university education in regional areas through

\$71.3 million

to 23 universities in 2017.

Expansion of the Royal Flying Doctor Service's dental service through

\$11 million

Australian Government investment over two years.



Medicare-funded psychology through teleconferencing for rural and remote Australians:

\$9.1 million



Attracting doctors to rural areas through the General Practice Rural Incentives Program:

\$461.7 million



Keeping doctors in the bush through

\$28.5 million

Australian Government investment to establish 26 new regional training hubs.



Jobs and Economic Development

Towards 2030

Regional communities will benefit from national growth, attract more investment, create and maintain jobs and unlock their economic potential.

Regional Australia's greatest asset has always been its people. The Australian Government is focused on encouraging job creation and economic growth so that all regional Australians have the opportunity to contribute to their full potential.

New Initiatives

The Government has announced a range of new measures to harness the economic potential of regional Australia.

Decentralisation

Through our decentralisation policy, we will lead by example by creating jobs in regional communities. The Australian Government's commitment to the structured decentralisation of Australian Government jobs from Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra will benefit regional Australia through the creation of local jobs and career paths, increased economic diversification and the stimulation of economic growth. This commitment builds on the decentralisation of Australian Government activities with core relevance to rural and regional Australia, such as the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation's relocation to Wagga Wagga.

Lower taxes through the Enterprise Tax Plan

In 2015-16, the Government decided to back regional small businesses by cutting the business tax rate to 28.5 per cent for businesses with an annual turnover of up to \$2 million. The Government is not stopping there.

The first instalment of the Government's Enterprise Tax Plan will reduce the business tax rate for companies with a turnover of less than \$50 million to 25 per cent by 2026-27. Most businesses in regional Australia will directly benefit from this. These businesses employ over 6.5 million people across Australia, who will benefit from this measure.

The unincorporated small business tax discount will be available from this financial year for businesses with turnovers of less than \$5 million, up from the current \$2 million threshold and will be increased to 8 per cent.

Regional Investment Corporation

The Australian Government is establishing a Regional Investment Corporation (RIC) to deliver up to \$4 billion in farm business concessional loans and the National Water Infrastructure Loan Facility. The RIC will streamline delivery of loan arrangements, deliver national consistency and ensure farm business loans are speedily approved to help farm businesses in need. It will also provide loans to State and Territory governments for the construction of nationally significant water infrastructure such as new dams.

Industry

The \$100 million Advanced Manufacturing Fund has been created to bring global product and engineering opportunities into the Australian supply chain and R&D community. By supporting and encouraging advanced manufacturing, including in regional areas such as those affected by the closure of vehicle manufacturing, the Fund will help to provide greater opportunities and revitalise the economies of these regions.

Our Plan for Manufacturing in Regional Australia also draws together initiatives to grow Australia's manufacturing in our regions, and the Australian Government will help regional start-ups to be competitive by building the capability of the Incubator Support element of the Entrepreneurs' Programme to support them.

Innovation

The Digital Earth Australia initiative, led by Geoscience Australia, is a national, open big data analysis capability that will mean we can measure and detect changes across the Australian landscape over time. It will make comprehensive and accurate information about regional and remote Australia available quickly, providing individuals, governments and businesses with open data and new capabilities to increase efficiency, bolster profits and create jobs.

Employment

From 1 July 2018, a new \$98 million Career Transition Assistance Program will deliver a short, intensive course in which mature age job seekers 50 years and over will identify transferable skills, research the local labour market, explore new occupations suited to their skills and learn resilience strategies. The program will be trialled in five regions around Australia before being rolled out nationally from July 2020. This will be complemented by up to ten industry-based Pathway to Work pilots to be established in selected growth industries and/or for large infrastructure projects.

The Government is also investing \$263 million in a national expansion of the successful *ParentsNext* pre-employment program from 1 July 2018 to help more parents with young children at risk of long term welfare dependency to plan and prepare for employment by the time their children start school. Nationwide, each year the expansion will benefit around 68,000 parents, around one third of whom live in regional areas.

Existing Initiatives

Our new investment forms part of a bigger story of economic development and builds on initiatives already underway in regional Australia.

Regional Jobs

The \$220 million Regional Jobs and Investment Packages announced in 2016 are already being rolled out in ten regions across Australia to diversify local economies, stimulate long-term economic growth and deliver sustainable employment.

The Regional Jobs and Investment Packages have been specifically designed to ensure that local communities identify the sectors of their economy that should be invested in. Local investment plans are being developed by leaders in the community to guide the Government's strategic economic investment.

Instead of the Government 'picking winners', this approach allows communities to drive their own futures and ensures more sustainable employment outcomes.

Funding to Local Government

The Local Government Financial Assistance Grant program provides financial assistance—approximately \$2.5 billion per year—to local governments across Australia to enable them to meet local priorities. The funding is allowing local councils to identify and invest in local priorities such as infrastructure, health, recreation, environment and employment projects.

Employment

In addition to the jobactive employment services program, which connects job seekers with employers through a network of jobactive providers in over 1,700 locations across Australia, the Government is also investing and supporting our regions through programs such as the \$855 million Youth Employment Package.

Industry Growth Centres Initiative

The Government's Industry Growth Centres Initiative focuses on six industry sectors with high growth potential, where Australia has competitive strengths. Three of the Growth Centres (Food and Agribusiness; Mining Equipment, Technology and Services; and Oil, Gas and Energy Resources) are sectors primarily operating in and benefitting regional areas. Other Growth Centres (including Advanced Manufacturing and Cyber Security) are important enablers for both urban and regional businesses.

The Government has established these Industry Growth Centres in a long-term partnership with key industry leaders to improve the productivity and competitiveness of these sectors, help firms grow and prosper, and generate economic growth and employment across Australia.

For example, the Advanced Manufacturing Growth Centre is supporting a collaborative project between Geelong based carbon fibre manufacturer Quickstep and Deakin University to develop a low cost carbon composite fender for the European automotive market with the potential to generate export revenue of \$25 million.

This package gives young job seekers under 25 years the skills and real work experience they need to get and keep a job. The main elements of the package are the Youth Jobs PaTH (Prepare – Trial – Hire) and the Encouraging Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment initiative. Youth Jobs PaTH is a new flexible program designed to prepare young people for work. Through the program, employers, including those in regional Australia, can also trial a young person in their business through an internship and receive a wage subsidy of up to \$10,000 if they hire them. The Encouraging Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment initiative is providing a range of support for young people to create their own job by starting a small business.

The Government has also put in place a number of structural adjustment programs to help retrenched workers to transition to new employment as quickly as possible. Workers from eligible companies are provided immediate access to intensive employment support services to help reduce the regional impacts of large scale redundancies.

Indigenous Procurement Policy (IPP)

The Government's Indigenous Procurement Policy is creating new employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians by leveraging the Commonwealth's annual multi-billion dollar procurement spending to drive demand for Indigenous goods and services, stimulate Indigenous economic development and grow the Indigenous business sector.

The IPP has three main parts:

1. A target number of contracts that need to be awarded to Indigenous businesses.
2. A mandatory set-aside for remote contracts and contracts valued between \$80,000 - \$200,000.
3. Minimum Indigenous participation requirements in contracts valued at or above \$7.5m in certain industries.

Already, 708 Indigenous businesses have won over \$407 million in government contracts, a dramatic increase from just \$6.2 million to Indigenous businesses in 2012-13.

Country of Origin Labelling

New Country of Origin Food Labels introduced by the Government, will provide consumers with clear information about food products that are made in Australia and what percentage of ingredients are locally grown. For the first time, food labels will clearly identify Australian manufacturing jobs and Australian farming produce.



Infrastructure

Towards 2030

Regional Australia is serviced by high-quality and safe land transport infrastructure that connects communities with markets and new opportunities, and enables safe journeys from home, to work and across the country.

High-quality, safe and efficient transportation is key to regional Australia's connectivity and productivity. The Government has committed billions of dollars in road, rail and aviation projects to cut travel times, improve safety and bring businesses closer to markets—making it more efficient and less costly for our regional producers to get their goods to domestic and international markets.

Land transport infrastructure is just one area of focus. Well-planned investment in community infrastructure—such as cultural, community and sporting facilities—make regional communities increasingly attractive places to live, work and invest.

Continued investment in transport and community infrastructure will have positive long-term impacts on the vibrancy and sustainability of Australia's rural, regional and remote communities.

New Initiatives

Inland Rail

The Australian Government will deliver the 1,700 kilometre Melbourne to Brisbane Inland Rail project that will connect regional Australia to major domestic and global markets and bring Australian rail into the twenty-first century. Inland Rail will be delivered through the Australian Rail Track Corporation with the Government providing \$8.4 billion in additional equity funding to construct the project. The project will be completed by 2024.

Regional rail

The Government will connect regional centres to our capital cities, with faster, more reliable rail services, with regional Australia getting its fair share of the new \$10 billion National Rail Program.

A further \$500 million will deliver upgrades to the regional passenger rail network in Victoria.

Building Better Regions Fund (BBRF)

The 2017-18 Budget allocated an extra \$200 million to the Building Better Regions Fund, bringing the total amount available in the fund to almost half a billion dollars. The BBRF invests amounts of up to \$10 million per project in federal government funding.

The program creates jobs, drives economic growth and supports regional communities by supporting projects involving the construction of new infrastructure, or the upgrade or extension of existing infrastructure that provides economic and social benefits. The community investment stream of the BBRF invests in people and communities by supporting things such as tourism initiatives, local leadership, regional planning and community events.

Investing in major projects to unlock the potential of regions

The 2017-18 Budget also provides \$272.2 million for a new fund investing amounts of more than \$10 million of federal government funding, in partnership with local and State governments, into major projects which can help unlock the potential of a region.

An unprecedented investment in infrastructure

The Australian Government has committed to an unprecedented level of infrastructure investment across regional and urban Australia to improve safety, productivity and connectivity that includes:

- \$5.6 billion towards the major upgrade of the Pacific Highway in New South Wales.
- \$44 million towards regional road projects to improve regional road safety across Western Australia.
- Up to \$6.7 billion towards the major upgrade of the Bruce Highway in Queensland.
- \$345 million to a Rural and Regional Roads Package in Victoria.
- Over \$275 million to 2019-20 towards upgrading the Great Northern Highway between Muchea and Wubin in Western Australia.
- \$85 million to 2019-20 towards upgrading roads in the Anangu Pitjanjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in South Australia.
- \$400 million to 2020-21 and beyond towards the upgrade of the Midland Highway in Tasmania.
- \$170 million to 2019-20 and beyond towards the Outback Way (Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia) project to upgrade sections to improve safety and access.

Stronger Communities Programme

The Government will invest a further \$22.5 million to fund a further round of the Stronger Communities Programme (SCP). The program provides grants of between \$5,000 and \$20,000 to community organisations and local governments for capital projects.

Rounds one and two of the SCP were very successful, with a wide variety of critical projects funded across Australia. Projects included building upgrades and equipment for sporting clubs, aged care facilities and community groups.

Existing Initiatives

Infrastructure

The Roads to Recovery program will deliver funding of nearly \$4.4 billion from 2013-14 to 2020-21, to local councils for road works chosen by local councils, and to States and Territories for roads in other areas.

Black Spot Projects will receive funding of \$685 million from 2013-14 to 2020-21 to help make roads safer for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians.

The Bridges Renewal Programme will receive \$420 million from 2015-16 to 2020-21 to provide funding for upgrades and repairs to bridges that enhance access and facilitate higher productivity vehicle access.

The Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Programme will receive \$328 million from 2013-14 to 2020-21 to increase productivity by enhancing the capacity of existing roads, and reduce the number of road accidents involving heavy vehicles.

The Northern Australian Roads and Beef Roads Programmes will receive a total of \$700 million from 2016-17 to 2019-20 for upgrades to improve the resilience of key roads in northern Australia. These programs also have a focus on boosting Indigenous economic participation, offering significant opportunities for Indigenous job-seekers and businesses across regional Australia.

The National Stronger Regions Fund is investing more than \$630 million for 226 projects. This program resulted in projects totalling more than \$1.9 billion, creating new jobs and boosting local economies across Australia.

Regional Aviation Access Programme

Through the Regional Aviation Access Programme, the Australian Government has committed over \$80 million from 2016-17 to 2019-20 to provide targeted support for aerodrome infrastructure and air services to remote areas where they are not commercially viable.

Water Infrastructure

The newly established National Water Infrastructure Development Fund and the National Water Infrastructure Loan Facility are delivering unprecedented levels of investment in new water infrastructure.

The Australian Government has put in place \$2.5 billion in funding to support State and Territory governments develop secure and affordable water infrastructure that will drive regional economic growth, including the construction of dams, pipelines, wastewater reuse and managed aquifer recharge.

The National Water Infrastructure Development Fund is providing \$499.5 million from 2015-16 over 10 years to assist State and Territory governments to identify and fast track the construction of new water infrastructure. This important work has already commenced with \$59.5 million already allocated to 39 water infrastructure feasibility studies located across Australia and a further \$247.5 million committed for the construction of water infrastructure in regional Australia, including \$130 million for Rookwood Weir in northern Queensland.

The National Water Infrastructure Loan Facility is providing \$2 billion from 2016-17 over 10 years to State and Territory governments to assist them fund the construction major new water infrastructure that will provide secure and affordable water to underpin the growth of regional economies and communities. The loan facility will administered by the Regional Investment Corporation once established.

Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility

The Australian Government has established the \$5 billion Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility (NAIF), headquartered in Cairns. The concessional finance provided by NAIF will encourage and complement private sector investment in economic infrastructure that otherwise would not be built or would not be built for some time, helping the longer term expansion of the economy and population of northern Australia.





Health

Towards 2030

Regional communities will have better access to vital health services, improving long-term health outcomes.

The Government is working to address the medical workforce shortage in rural and remote Australia through a series of targeted measures.

The Government's priority is to get the right health professionals, with the right skills, into the areas where they are most needed. We are focused on improving the capacity, quality and distribution of the health workforce now and into the future.

That is why the Government is providing a range of initiatives to deliver better health outcomes, reduce health disparities and increase the number of highly trained doctors working in rural, regional and remote Australia.

New Initiatives

Mental Health

The Australian Government is improving the access of regional communities to vital health services through innovative and flexible delivery. Australians in rural and remote locations will now be able to access Medicare funded psychological services via telehealth. This will remove long-standing barriers to mental health support and ensure that help will be available to those who need it. This important new measure will increase access to critical mental health support for those in rural and remote areas and bring it closer in line to the level available to metropolitan Australians.

Suicide Prevention Trials

At least eight regional communities will take part in the Australian Government's suicide prevention trial sites as part of a \$192 million commitment to strengthen mental health care and suicide prevention. The locations include Central Queensland, Tasmania, Western NSW, Mid-West Western Australia, North Coast NSW, Townsville, The Kimberly and country South Australia. The sites will bring together and coordinate federal, state and local governments, GPs and mental health service providers to identify issues and deliver a tailored response to a community or individual need. Each trial site will run for three years and receive approximately \$3 million.

Dental

The Australian Government recognises the importance of dental health in preventing disease. This is why we are expanding the current Royal Flying Doctor Service's dental service. This Australian icon will receive an additional \$11 million over two years from 2016-17 to improve access to dental services for those in regional Australia who are unable to access a regular dentist.

Existing Initiatives

Medical Workforce

The Australian Government's Medical Infrastructure Strategy is improving the capacity, quality and distribution of the medical workforce, through two infrastructure streams: to support rural medical clinical training and to support remote general practice. Together, these two streams have the potential to provide end-to-end rural and remote experiences from medical student through to qualified general practitioner. The first stream focuses on



Rural Health Commissioner

The Australian Government is improving health services in the regions by creating Australia's first ever National Rural Health Commissioner.

The Commissioner will be a champion for rural health.

Once appointed, the Commissioner will work with rural, regional and remote communities, universities, specialist training colleges and across all levels of government to improve rural health policies and advise on ways to better target and address the health needs of rural, regional and remote Australia. The first priority of the Commissioner will be to develop a national rural generalist pathway. This pathway will address rural health's biggest issue: the maldistribution of medical professionals across the country.

our future rural medical workforce through the long-standing Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training program by funding student accommodation and teaching spaces which will also have the potential to deliver services. This focus on supporting the rural medical workforce, will remove barriers to training the future doctors of rural Australia.

The second stream supports general practitioners to work in remote general practice by building on the existing General Practice Rural Incentives Program and by supporting local councils and community groups with the establishment costs of a community-owned practice.

Drug and Alcohol Management Services

The Australian Government shares the community's concern about the harm that methamphetamine is doing, particularly in regional communities. That is why the National Ice Taskforce was established in 2015, to make recommendations on how to tackle the scourge of 'ice'. The Taskforce made it clear that we cannot just arrest our way out of the problem and that we must work to reduce the demand for this drug.

In response to the National Ice Taskforce Report, the Government is providing funding of \$298 million over four years from 2016-17 which is targeted toward strengthening education, prevention, treatment, support and community engagement. Of this, \$241 million of this is for additional drug and alcohol services through the Primary Health Networks. This is further to the Commonwealth's investment in alcohol and other drug services which overall equates to \$685 million in Commonwealth funding over four years from 1 July 2016.

Review of Medical Training in Australia

The Australian Government understands the importance of providing training from undergraduate through to specialist stages in rural Australia. During 2017, the number and distribution of medical places and schools in Australia will be assessed in the context of workforce modelling, the expansion of higher education places, and the Government's priorities to address maldistribution of medical professionals across the country.

Regional Training Hubs

To support the recruitment and retention of doctors to regional, rural and remote Australia, 26 new regional training hubs will be established at a cost of \$28.5 million to December 2018. These hubs build on the existing Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program and will work with local health services and rural medical training organisations to help guide medical students through the medical training pipeline in rural and regional areas. This will provide more opportunities for trainee doctors to complete their training in rural, regional and remote Australia and increase the likelihood that they will pursue a career in rural practice.

General Practice Rural Incentives

To further support the recruitment and retention of doctors to regional, rural and remote Australia, the Australian Government is providing \$461.7 million over four years from 2015-16 through the General Practice Rural Incentives Program to encourage medical practitioners to practise in regional and remote communities and to promote careers in rural medicine through the provision of financial incentives.



Baringhup, Victoria



Education

Towards 2030

Regional communities will have access to better opportunities to learn, train and gain qualifications.

High quality education equips people with the knowledge, skills and attributes to participate in a dynamic world. The Australian Government is investing significant funding to provide opportunities for regional students to participate in quality early childhood education, schooling, vocational education and training and higher education.

The Government's investment in regional education and training will help to ensure a stronger, more sustainable economy for regional Australia.

New Initiatives

Preschool

The Government has committed \$428 million to support universal access to quality preschool programs in 2018 through a one year extension to the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education. This funding will benefit approximately 346,000 children in the year before school across all preschool settings by ensuring they can continue to participate in 15 hours of quality preschool each week. Approximately 100,000 children in regional communities will benefit directly from this investment in 2018.

Early Childhood and Child Care

The Jobs for Families Child Care Package will make the child care system more flexible, accessible and more affordable. A key feature is the replacement of existing child care payments with a single means-tested Child Care Subsidy from July 2018. These reforms will provide more access to subsidised child care to the families who work the most hours, and higher levels of financial support to the families who earn the least. The Community Child Care Fund will commence from July 2018 to reduce barriers to accessing child care in disadvantaged areas and regional communities.

Schools

The Government will invest \$242.3 billion for schools in recurrent funding from 2018 to 2027. Of this, an estimated \$57.5 billion will benefit students in regional and remote schools. Commonwealth funding for students in regional and remote Australia will grow from \$3.9 billion in 2017 to \$7.2 billion in 2027—an increase of 84 per cent.

The Government recognises that it generally costs more to educate students going to school in regional and remote areas than it does for students in city-based schools. This is why extra funding—called a 'location loading'—is provided for students going to schools in regional or remote areas. The location loading is expected to benefit over 760,000 regional and remote students in 2018.

Higher Education

As part of the 2017-18 Budget, the Government will commit \$15 million over four years to the establishment and maintenance of up to eight community-owned, regional study hubs across regional and remote Australia. The hubs will improve access to higher education for regional, rural and remote Australia. They will support regional students to study courses locally delivered by distance from any Australian university by providing greater access to study support and infrastructure.

Regional students will benefit from increased support for sub bachelor places (such as associate degrees and advanced diplomas). The Government will extend demand driven funding to eligible sub bachelor courses which will give students a better opportunity to obtain a relevant, recognised qualification more quickly.

The Government will also commit \$24 million over four years for Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships, which will support 1,200 regional and remote students to undertake STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) studies. The scholarships are for undergraduate, postgraduate and vocational education students, and aim to improve access to educational opportunities for regional and remote students.

Students in the regions will also continue to benefit from the investment of more than \$280 million over the next four years through regional loading to support universities with the cost of educating students in regional and remote Australia.

Existing Initiatives

Early Childhood and Child Care

In 2015-16 almost 373,800 children from remote and regional communities benefitted from Government subsidised child care. Of these, 16,200 children living in remote or very remote areas utilised 266 child care services and 357,600 children from regional areas utilised 4,404 services.

Schools

The Government is providing approximately \$4 billion in recurrent funding to 3,382 regional and remote schools in 2017. The Flexible Literacy for Remote Primary Schools program is providing \$23.8 million to pilot two explicit teaching approaches in remote and very remote schools. Teach for Australia is receiving \$77.6 million and has supported 230 participants to be placed in regional communities, filling hard to staff teaching positions. The Smith Family Learning for Life program is receiving \$48 million from 2017 to 2020 to support 24,000 disadvantaged students in over 90 communities across Australia, half of them in regional communities.

Higher Education

The regional loading is providing \$71.3 million to 23 universities in 2017 to assist with education delivery in regional locations. The Structural Adjustment Fund provided \$377 million to assist universities (particularly regional) to prepare for the demand driven funding system. The Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program is providing \$140 million in 2017 to assist universities to improve low socioeconomic student (including regional low SES students) access to undergraduate courses and improve their retention and completion rates. Regionally-headquartered universities are estimated to receive around \$2 billion in funding in 2017. This includes grants for teaching and learning, student loans and research funding (including Australian Research Council funding).

Vocational Education and Training

In 2015-16, 60 per cent of participants in the Australian Apprenticeships program were from regional areas, attracting up to \$40 million in incentives for employers. The Rural and Regional Employer Incentive provides \$1,000 incentive payments to rural employers. The Skills for Education and Employment program helps to improve eligible job seekers' language, literacy and/or numeracy skills through the provision of up to 800 hours training—18 per cent of participants were from regional areas in 2015-16.



Regional students in WA given a boost to enrol in higher education

Under the Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program, the University of Western Australia (UWA) partners with 32 schools in the Kimberly, Mid-West, Gascoyne and Pilbara regions to encourage students to enrol in higher education.

Over 12,000 students from years 7-12 have participated in the program. Regional enrolments at UWA have increased from 8.2 per cent in 2011 to 9.6 per cent in 2015. Remote enrolments grew from 1.7 per cent in 2011 to 2.3 per cent in 2015.



Singleton, New South Wales



Communications

Towards 2030

Regional Australians will access modern and effective telecommunications and digital technology and services, no matter where they live.

Communications and connectivity are vital for people living, working and travelling in regional Australia.

The ability to connect brings regional Australia closer to the rest of the world and unlocks opportunities for students, farmers, families, health care providers and business owners.

Connected communities are strong and stable communities, both socially and economically.

New Initiatives

The challenges of Australia's vast geography and dispersed population density make it harder to deliver telecommunications services to rural and regional areas. However, reliable telecommunications services are essential for rural and regional communities to thrive.

Recognising this, the Australian Government is investing more in regional communications than at any other time. This historic level of investment is already bringing benefits to regional Australians.

The Australian Government has committed to the rollout of the National Broadband Network (the network) by 2020. With construction well underway, focus can now shift to getting as much out of the network as possible.

As a priority, the Australian Government and NBN Co Limited (NBN Co) are investigating options to improve data caps for customers on the Sky Muster satellite service.

NBN Co will also work with key stakeholders to develop a new suite of business products using the Sky Muster service that could be suitable for use by the agricultural sector.

In addition to existing products that assist education, NBN Co will investigate new services for rural health facilities that are connected to the Sky Muster service. Mainstream healthcare is becoming increasingly reliant on technology, and these products will help these facilities to meet patient needs.

The second Sky Muster satellite was launched in October 2016 and is now active. By activating the second satellite (instead of using it as a dormant backup) NBN Co has been able to double the capacity that the satellite service was forecast to provide.

In 2016, the Australian Government committed an additional \$60 million to the Mobile Black Spot Program, targeting specific locations announced in 2016. There will be an approach to market in 2017 to allocate this funding. This brings the total Australian Government commitment to the Mobile Black Spot Program to \$220 million.



Existing Initiatives

National Broadband Network

The National Broadband Network represents the largest rollout of telecommunications infrastructure ever undertaken in Australia.

In addition to providing fixed line broadband services to 2.5 million regional premises, the Australian Government is investing an expected \$2.5 billion in capital expenditure on NBN Co's fixed wireless network, and approximately \$2 billion on the Sky Muster service.

The rollout is more progressed in regional areas than in metropolitan areas. At present, over 75 per cent of homes and businesses outside major urban areas can either order services or have network construction underway.

Mobile Black Spot Program

The Mobile Black Spot Program is improving mobile coverage along major regional transport routes and in small communities. Rounds 1 and 2 of the program are delivering a total investment of almost \$600 million in new mobile infrastructure in partnership with telecommunication providers, and State, Territory and Local governments.

This investment is providing 765 new and improved mobile base stations across the country, resulting in new handheld coverage to 86,300 square kilometres and new external antenna coverage to over 202,300 square kilometres of regional and remote Australia. In addition, over 7,600 kilometres of major regional transport routes will receive new handheld or external antenna coverage. This unprecedented investment is providing improved coverage to 32,000 homes and businesses.

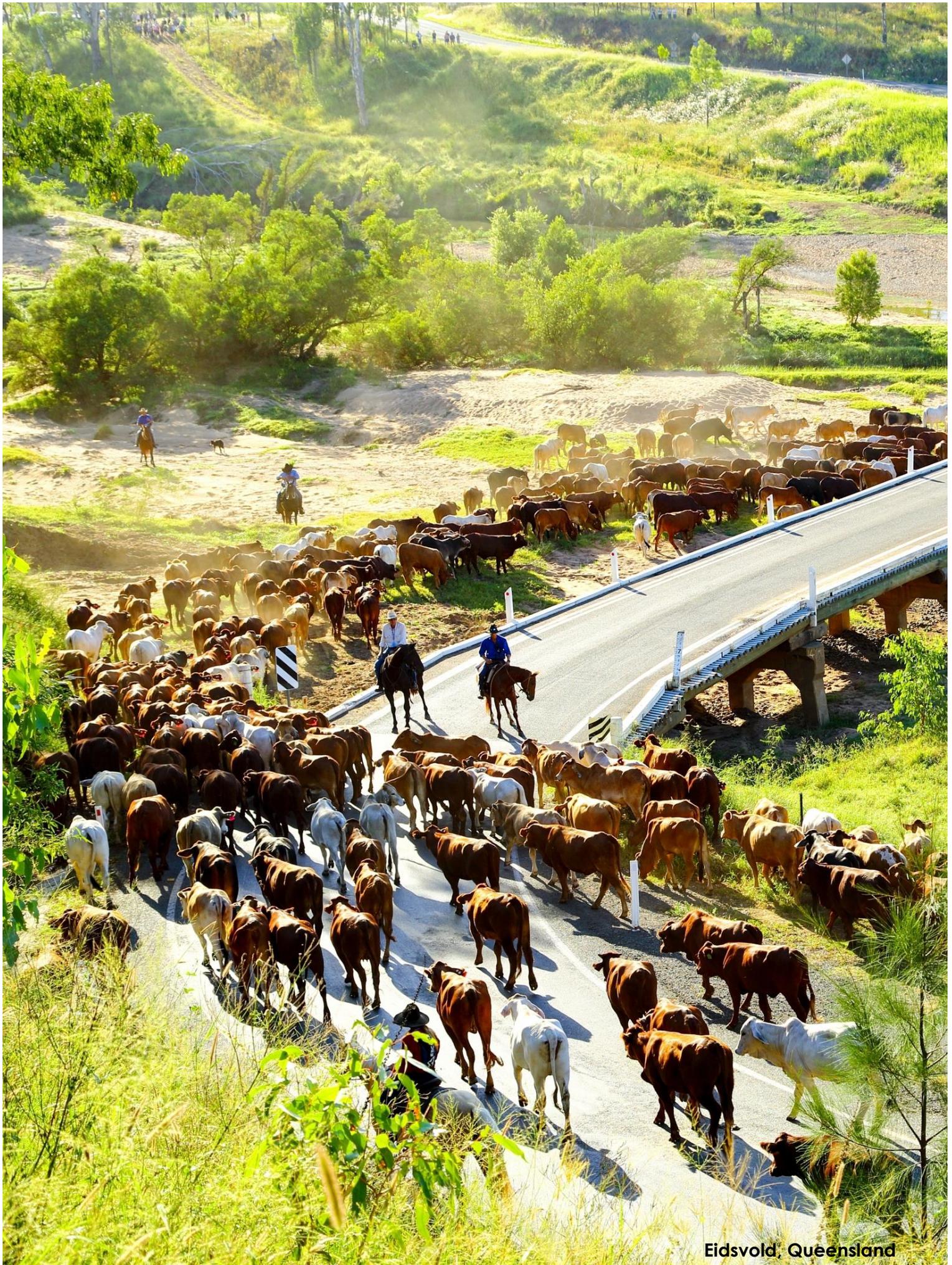


Improving mobile coverage in regional Australia

From Darnley Island in the Torres Strait to Eggs and Bacon Bay in Tasmania's south, hundreds of regional communities across Australia will benefit from new and upgraded mobile coverage thanks to the Mobile Black Spot Program.

This program represents the largest one time increase in mobile network coverage delivered by a single program in the history of mobile communications in Australia. With much of the planning now complete and approvals in place, rollout will ramp up significantly over the next 18 months.

There is strong support for the program, with every state government lining up to partner with the Australian Government, the mobile network operators and local communities on this important initiative.



Eidsvold, Queensland



Towards 2030

This document has introduced the Australian Government's Regions 2030 agenda: putting the aspirations of regional Australians at the heart of Government decision making.

Through significant investments across the five key focus areas of Jobs and Economic Development; Infrastructure; Health; Education; and Communications, Regions 2030 outlines the Australian Government's commitment to regional Australia and its future. Additionally, this Government's establishment of the Regional Australia Ministerial Taskforce to drive the Regions 2030 agenda demonstrates the priority we are placing on regional Australia across government.

The Regions 2030 agenda signals a marked shift in the Government's approach to regional development. It is a recognition that 'one-size-fits-all' initiatives will not work in all regions; that local communities often have better solutions than government; and that when communities and government work in partnership, we can achieve long lasting and great outcomes.

Communities, businesses and families across regional Australia will increasingly benefit from the Regions 2030 agenda over coming years. For example, towards 2030 Commonwealth funding for students in regional and remote Australia will increase by 84 per cent between 2017 and 2027. Towards 2030 regional businesses will receive a further boost as the first instalment of the Government's Tax Plan reduces the business tax rate for companies with a turnover less than \$50 million to 25 per cent by 2026-27.

While the measures outlined here are a great start, there remains more that we can do to make regional Australia an even better place to live, work and invest.

The Australian Government will continue to deliver faster and more reliable broadband, building transport links to better connect our regions with our cities and the world, enhance access to health services and improve education attainment rates.

To support this work, the Australian Government has initiated a range of reviews and reforms that will ensure the momentum of our agenda continues towards 2030.

One example is the **Review of Medical Training in Australia**, which in 2017 will assess the number and distribution of medical places and medical schools in Australia in the context of workforce modelling, the expansion of higher education places, and the Government's priorities to address maldistribution of medical professionals across Australia.

We are also undertaking the **Independent Review into Regional, Remote and Rural Education**, which will consider the challenges that impact on the learning outcomes of students in regional, rural and remote communities. It will also identify innovative ways to help these students succeed at school and in their transition to further study, training and employment. The Independent Review is due to report by the end of 2017.

Australia is largely driven by the contribution of its regions. The Australian Government's implementation of the Regions 2030 agenda recognises—and more importantly respects—this contribution. As we work towards 2030, let's embrace the challenges, seize the opportunities and make regional Australia an even better place in which to live, work and invest.



