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Australian Government

# Foundations for a Stronger, Fairer Australia

*part of the social inclusion agenda*



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Information on the Australian Government's social inclusion agenda is available on the social inclusion website [www.socialinclusion.gov.au](http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au)

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# Message from the Minister for Social Inclusion



John Dewey once said that what the best and wisest parent wants for their own child is what our community should want for all its children.

That applies to all the obvious things: education, health care, safe and secure housing, a rewarding job when they grow up; it applies also to the less tangible building blocks of life.

We want our children to grow up knowing that anything is possible if they work hard. We want them to know that their unique qualities are to be celebrated. We want them to know that they are part of a community to which they have a responsibility to contribute, and that the community will give them a helping hand if times get tough.

I am pleased to release this report, *Foundations for a Stronger, Fairer Australia*. It outlines some key Government achievements over the last four years in breaking down the barriers that stand between the most disadvantaged Australians and meaningful participation in the community and the workforce.

Since 2007 the Government has acted decisively to address disadvantage. Our social inclusion initiatives support productivity, improved health outcomes, reduced welfare dependence and sustainable and cohesive communities.

The Government's social inclusion strategy is built on partnerships between government, the not-for-profit sector and the private sector.

It is also supported and informed by the work of the Australian Social Inclusion Board. I would like to thank the members of the Board and its chair, Ms Patricia Faulkner AO, for their ongoing efforts.

I would also like to thank the individuals and organisations that make a difference every day by working in our communities to build a stronger, fairer Australia. They do it because they recognise each of us has a responsibility to do what we can to improve the lives of all Australians.

**Tanya Plibersek**

# Introduction

In January 2010 the Australian Government launched a comprehensive social inclusion plan, *A Stronger, Fairer Australia*, which aimed to increase national prosperity and reduce disadvantage. This new report gives a snapshot of how the Government is delivering on social inclusion. What you'll read is just a sample of the work that's being done because every action the Government takes is focused on the building blocks of social inclusion: a strong economy and a strong society that leaves no one behind.

The Government believes all Australians have the right to learn, work, be part of their community and be heard on issues which matter to them.

The principles of social inclusion have a rich tradition in Australian culture. We think of ourselves as an egalitarian nation that values fairness and equality. We are self-reliant, but offer help to those in need.

All Australians should have the opportunity to enjoy their full potential. The Government's role is to build the right foundations: a strong economy; the opportunity to work, learn, and enjoy life; and the right services for people who need them.

Australia has emerged strongly from the global recession. Despite the strong economy, entrenched disadvantage still exists for some parts of the community. The economy needs to work for all Australians and the benefits of economic success need to reach into every corner of our nation.

The Government's 2010 plan focused on six priority areas where people face significant barriers:



1. Improving the life chances of children at the greatest risk of long term disadvantage;
2. Helping jobless families with children to increase work opportunities, improve parenting and build capacity;
3. Reducing the incidence of homelessness;
4. Improving outcomes for people living with disability or mental illness and their carers;
5. Closing the Gap for Indigenous Australians; and
6. Breaking the cycle of entrenched and multiple disadvantage in particular neighbourhoods and communities.

This report gives an overview of government actions in these priority areas. It also looks at what the Government is doing to support multiculturalism and help newly arrived migrants and humanitarian and refugee entrants begin their new lives in Australia.

## Examples of how the Government is delivering on social inclusion

- The nation's largest ever mental health reform package announced in the 2011-12 Budget will deliver more intensive support and early detection programs for people with mental illness to give them the best opportunity to develop their potential and participate in the economy and community life.
- The Australian Government's commitment to a National Disability Insurance Scheme will see reform to disability services and provide a new support system for people with disability, their families and carers and give people the support they need over the course of their lifetime.
- The *National Disability Strategy* sets out a ten year plan to address barriers faced by people with disability and ensure that services and programs address the needs of people with disability.
- Reforms to the pension system have delivered increases over the last two years to the maximum pension of about \$148 per fortnight for singles and \$146 per fortnight for couples combined. These increases will assist with cost of living pressures and help pensions keep pace with the prosperity of the broader community.
- Around 8.4 million Australians will have their superannuation savings boosted under legislation that has been introduced to increase the superannuation guarantee rate from nine per cent to 12 per cent. This will improve the adequacy of retirement incomes and deliver a comfortable and secure retirement for current and future generations of Australian workers. The Government will also provide a superannuation payment of up to \$500 annually for eligible low income earners - increasing the superannuation savings of 3.6 million low-income Australians, including around 2.1 million women.
- Over 72,000 Australian parents since 1 January 2011 have been able to take the time they need to nurture their child's early development and maintain links with the workforce because of the *Paid Parental Leave Scheme*.
- Children are being supported to get the best start in life through the record investment in universal access to affordable pre-school and kindergarten and quality early childhood education and care services. The Government is investing in access to world-class school education for all Australians by nearly doubling the national schools budget to a record \$65 billion.
- More Australian students are accessing the opportunities university education offers, regardless of their background or where they live. Between 2009 and 2011 university applications from low socio-economic status students increased by almost 13 per cent. The Government is funding a variety of measures to assist universities to attract, support and retain students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Almost 18,000 new social housing properties are providing stable housing to those who most need it, with over half being occupied by people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness. The number of Australians who are homeless or sleeping rough will be reduced through a \$1.1 billion agreement between the Australian Government and the states and territories.
- The Australian Government's Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples formally acknowledged the profound sorrow caused by past government practices and is the foundation for a new relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people based on trust and mutual respect.
- Indigenous Australians and governments are working together in a national effort to Close the Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and improve outcomes in Indigenous health, housing, remote service delivery, education, early childhood development and economic participation.
- The importance of a culturally diverse and socially cohesive nation has been reaffirmed in *The People of Australia - Australia's Multicultural Policy* and the appointment of the Australian Multicultural Council. A strengthened access and equity strategy will form a core part of government service delivery.

- Reducing red tape and simplifying reporting and regulatory requirements is making it easier for the not-for-profit sector to focus its efforts on service delivery. The Government and the sector are working in partnership to achieve a stronger, fairer Australia under the principles of the *National Compact*.
- Investment in skills and training is providing opportunities for jobseekers while at the same time building productivity and prosperity to benefit all Australians. *The Building Australia's Future Workforce* package in the 2011-12 Budget is providing over \$3 billion over six years to build an educated and skilled workforce and ensure opportunities for all Australians to experience the benefits of work.
- Fairer workplaces are supported by a more balanced industrial relations system under the *Fair Work Act 2009*.
- Job seekers and the very long term unemployed are receiving more flexible and tailored help to find work from Job Services Australia and Disability Employment Services. Disincentives for Disability Support Pension (DSP) recipients to participate in the workforce have been removed by allowing DSP recipients to work up to 30 hours a week and still be eligible for a part-rate of pension.
- Changing the way services are delivered by Centrelink and Medicare Australia is providing better support to people when they need it, in ways that respect their personal circumstances and focus on overcoming disadvantage.
- Every day community sector workers are delivering vital services to hundreds of thousands of vulnerable Australians. The Australian Government will make a joint submission with the Australian Services Union on equal pay to Fair Work Australia to deliver an historic pay rise to 150,000 of Australia's lowest paid workers in the social and community services sector – the vast majority of them women.

# 01

## Improving the life chances of children at greatest risk of long term disadvantage

All children need a good start in life including access to early childhood services. Early childhood development is essential to long term life chances and resilience. In the last few years there has been substantial focus on improving the life chances of children who are at the greatest

risk of disadvantage, and communities are starting to see the results of these initiatives. For the most vulnerable children and families, early intervention and support will help to break entrenched cycles of disadvantage and set children up to succeed later in life.

*“Being socially included is having someone to believe in you from the very start”<sup>1</sup>*

### Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters

The Australian Government has committed \$32.5 million over five years from 2008 to roll-out the *Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters* (HIPPY) in 50 communities nationally providing support to around 3,000 families. HIPPY is a two-year home-based parenting and early childhood enrichment program that empowers parents and carers to be their children’s first teacher.

Parents and their children enrol in the program in the year before their child starts formal school and participate in the program for two years. The program’s activities are designed to be integrated into the daily life of the family. The first year of the program provides children with activities which support pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills. The second year extends these activities and provides parents with additional information about children’s learning and development.

### Making a difference in Mt Isa, Queensland

*HIPPY Pioneer* in Mt Isa, Queensland has supported a number of *HIPPY* families in the local area. Most of the *HIPPY Pioneer* parents and carers enrolled in the program to increase their children’s potential in mainstream education. Parents have said that since graduating from the program there has been an improvement in their children’s self-confidence and language skills, allowing their children to interact more confidently with others in social and learning environments. Parents have also indicated that the program has built their own confidence and given them skills to prepare their children for school.

<sup>1</sup> Note: these statements have been developed following conversations with members of the community about what social inclusion means to them.



## Providing access to quality child care and early learning

In 2009 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) endorsed the *National Early Childhood Development Strategy*. This provides the broad policy framework for a number of key National Partnership Agreements with the states and territories on early childhood education, Indigenous early childhood development and a national quality agenda for childhood education and care.

Under the *National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education* every state and territory has agreed to provide universal access for all children to affordable pre-school and kindergarten by 2013. The Australian Government has committed \$970 million over five years towards this. All but two states and territories have met or exceeded their 2010 targets for the proportion of children enrolled in a pre-school program.

Agreements have also been reached on increasing educational participation rates of disadvantaged children, including Indigenous children, who are currently the most likely to miss out. To help increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children participating in preschool the Australian Government and state and territory

governments have endorsed the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Universal Access Strategy*. In addition, 38 new Children and Family Centres are being built across Australia to deliver integrated early childhood services for Indigenous families, including child care, early learning and parent and family support. The centres will also link to other services for children and families at risk. The first of these new Children and Family Centres opened in May 2011.

Attending high quality child care services is associated with increased participation in education, positive social behaviours in school and later life and higher educational achievement. In December 2009, COAG agreed to a National Partnership to establish a *National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care*.

The National Quality framework, which will apply to child care providers from 1 January 2012, will improve staff-to-child ratios so each child receives more individual care and attention and will require staff to have formal qualifications so they are better equipped to lead the activities that help children learn and develop.

A new National Quality Standard against which services will be assessed and rated will be introduced to drive continuous quality

improvement and provide families with better information for making choices about their children's education and care. In addition, the *mychild* website helps families find out about the different types of child care available and how to get assistance with the cost of child care.

The Australian Government also directly funds the operation of about 340 early learning and child care services in locations where commercial centres are unlikely to be supported. A total of \$62 million was committed under the *Child Care Services Support Program* in 2011–12 for this purpose. In addition, in the 2010–11 Budget over \$59 million over four years was committed to support building improvements, staff qualifications and the governance and administrative capacity of these services. Many of these centres support particularly disadvantaged communities, including remote Indigenous communities, allowing access to early childhood development activities for kids who would otherwise miss out.

There has also been heavy investment in schooling and education in recent years, including a focus on schools in low socio-economic status communities, to improve the quality of all schools so they work better for all students, including those children at greatest risk of disadvantage. Through the *Smarter Schools National Partnership for Low Socio-economic Status School Communities*, the Australian Government is providing \$1.5 billion over seven years to 2014–15 to support education reform activities in around 1,700 low socio-economic status schools around the country.

### Giving children the care they need

In 2009 the Australian Government introduced the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) which provides a snapshot, collected every three years, of how children in the community or a local area have developed by the time they start school. The Government has invested over \$51 million over five years to 2015–16. The Government is examining the AEDI results to better understand the needs of young children across Australia to determine what changes are needed to give all kids the start in life they deserve.

The 2011–12 Budget announced a major mental health package which provided funding to expand the current *Healthy Kids Check*. This will apply to three year olds and will, for the first time, include checks on the social and emotional wellbeing of children to ensure early intervention to support

strong and resilient children. This measure is being complemented by additional child and family mental health services through the expanded *Access to Allied Psychological Services* program.

Significant progress has also been made in the first two years of the implementation of the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children*. Endorsed by COAG on 30 April 2009, the Framework is an ambitious, long-term approach to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of Australian children. It aims to deliver a substantial and sustained reduction in levels of child abuse and neglect.

Achievements to date include the first-ever national standards for out-of-home care, which will provide a nationally consistent benchmark for the care of children and young people who are unable to live with their parents. The national standards are the result of extensive consultation with the state and territory governments, the non-government sector and children and young people who are living in or who have left care, and their carers. The 13 national standards were introduced from 1 July 2011, along with a schedule of national measurement and reporting arrangements.

Agreement has also been reached to implement a nationally consistent approach to planning for young people leaving out-of-home care. Young people leaving care will have the support to access housing, education and financial assistance, find employment and receive help to develop and maintain their health and wellbeing and independent living skills. This best practice approach will be incorporated by all states and territories into their leaving care planning processes. Progress in implementing the national approach will be monitored and reported on through the *National Standards for Out of Home Care*.

Funding of over \$16.7 million in 2011–12 will continue to provide much needed respite and support for carers of young people and young carers. In the 2010–11 financial year the *Respite Support for Carers of Young People with Severe or Profound Disability Program* assisted 6,731 carers. Almost 4,000 young carers were assisted with respite and carer support services through the *Young Carers Respite and Information Services Program*, and many more received information, referral and advice. Both programs are having positive outcomes for carers and their families.

## Supporting families

On 1 July 2011 the *Family Support Program* (FSP) was streamlined to include two core streams: Families and Children's Services and Family Law Services. These changes will provide greater support for vulnerable families and reduce red tape for service providers. The Family and Children's Services offered as part of the FSP has streamlined 20 existing services into four broad services:

1. **Communities for Children:** to provide prevention and early intervention services to families with children up to age 12 who might be at risk of disadvantage, with specialist Indigenous Parenting Support Services;
2. **Family and Relationship Services:** dealing with adult relationship issues, counselling for young people and children, and broader parenting support;
3. **Specialist Services:** for dealing with vulnerable families affected by issues such as drugs, violence and trauma; and
4. **Community Playgroups:** to support parents with young children.

The FSP supports vulnerable and disadvantaged families and children. FSP services help families and children to better manage life's transitions, ensure children who are at risk are protected and contribute to building stronger, more resilient and socially included communities.

*"Being socially included is having good opportunities early in life, like going to pre-school and being ready for school"*

### Communities for Children

Communities for Children (CfC) services provide locally tailored initiatives to parents and their children, such as playgroups, parenting education classes, mentoring and support groups and early learning programs. CfC seeks to offer help early and ensure parents have the support they need to give their children the best start in life. There are currently 49 CfC sites around Australia. An additional \$42.5 million funding was committed in the 2011-12 Budget to enable selected existing sites to provide extra services and to establish three new sites by 1 January 2012.

#### Making a difference in Broadmeadows, Victoria

In Broadmeadows, Victoria, the Broadmeadows CfC funds local service providers to help achieve better outcomes for children and families. Following extensive community consultation, the Hume Early Years Partnership (comprising members of local community organisations) developed a Community Strategic Plan for Broadmeadows. It focuses on school readiness, improving children's language, literacy and social skills, families' social connectedness, increased parenting skills and connecting community leaders.

Broadmeadows CfC has actively engaged hundreds of children through playgroups and story-time sessions. Evaluations have concluded that the programs and services have assisted in improving children's social and emotional wellbeing and readiness to attend school. More children are now attending pre-school programs and children involved in the program have improved language, literacy, emotional and social skills.

## Helping jobless families with children to increase work opportunities, improve parenting and build capacity

Another way to ensure vulnerable children have a good start in life is to support parents to break cycles of disadvantage and provide a better family environment. Employment is a powerful vehicle to increase family wellbeing and social inclusion, and the Australian Government has a strong focus on helping jobless families into work. More Australians than ever before are now experiencing the dignity and benefits of work with Australia having one of the lowest unemployment rates in the developed world.

Since the release of *A Stronger, Fairer Australia* the Australian Government has made significant progress to improve the circumstances of jobless families.

### Helping with the costs of child care

The Australian Government has made record investments to improve the affordability of child care and help families balance work and caring responsibilities. Out-of-pocket child care costs now take up a smaller proportion of families' disposable income, and for many low income families, over 80 per cent of their cost of child care is now being met by the Government.<sup>2</sup> Overall, the Government is providing \$20 billion over four years to 2014–15 for early childhood education and child care, including over \$16 billion for the Child Care Rebate and the Child Care Benefit. This will assist some 800,000 Australian families each year with the cost of child care.

In 2008, the Australian Government increased the Child Care Rebate from 30 to 50 per cent of out-of-pocket costs (up to \$7,500 per year, per child) and made the rebate available quarterly.

<sup>2</sup> For example, families on incomes below \$45,000 per year using part-time long day care at average fees have over 80 per cent of their fees met by the Australian Government.

Families now have the option to receive their Child Care Rebate payments fortnightly so they can access this important assistance when their fees are due. As at 30 September 2011, around 175,000 families were choosing to receive these payments fortnightly.

In addition, for families experiencing a hardship event that substantially reduces their capacity to pay child care fees (like floods or bushfires), the Australian Government provides a Special Child Care Benefit to cover up to 100 per cent of their child care costs. The Benefit also applies where there are serious concerns that a child is at risk of serious abuse or neglect and child care could improve developmental outcomes and improve the safety and wellbeing of the child. The Government has also invested in Jobs, Education and Training Child Care Fee Assistance which helps to cover the cost of child care for those on income support who need it to be able to look for or go to work or study.

### New reforms to help jobless families

The \$3 billion *Building Australia's Future Workforce* package announced in the 2011–12 Budget also provides new ways of working with the community to address disadvantage, boost participation, and increase support for vulnerable families. As part of this package, *Better Futures, Local Solutions* introduced compulsory participation requirements from 1 July 2012 for jobless families and teenage parents in ten priority sites around Australia. This initiative will connect parents to locally available services that:

- support better health and early development outcomes for their children;
- enhance school readiness and school transitions for pre-school aged children; and
- assist parents to prepare for work once their children start school, or earlier if they prefer.



The 2011–12 Budget included a number of other measures to assist jobless families:

- \$179 million to encourage sole parents to get into work and reward part-time work by reforming the income test for sole parents on Newstart Allowance. From 1 January 2013 these changes will let sole parents keep up to almost \$400 extra per fortnight of their income from part-time work.
- \$80 million for additional training places for sole and teenage parents to help them get the skills they need to get a good job and almost \$4 million for career advice for eligible sole parents.
- Workforce participation measures designed to make it easier for people to get the skills and experience they need to get a job or study. Funding has been extended for Local Employment Coordinators (LECs) to work in 20 Priority Employment Areas to help boost local job opportunities, including a new \$20 million Flexible Funding Pool to help fund activities and projects that aim to address local labour market problems. Around 40 Jobs and Skills Expos will also be held across Australia to help connect people with jobs and training opportunities, and \$19 million will be provided over three years for 34 Education, Skills and Jobs Coordinators for regional communities.

The Australian Government recognises that disadvantaged families also face a range of other stressors which can impact on the future outcomes of both parents and their kids, which is why it is investing in programs which take a whole-of-family approach and support parents to build their skills.

In the *Better Futures* sites, eligible parents in jobless families will be required to participate in regular interviews or workshops once their youngest child turns one. Centrelink staff will work with parents to develop individual participation plans setting out personal and family goals. Parents will be helped to access services to overcome barriers to employment, engage with their community and improve health and education outcomes for their children. This initiative also provides an additional \$23.4 million in funding for Communities for Children services to specifically provide programs to assist teenage parents and jobless families.

*“Being socially included is having the support and opportunity to move into education and employment”*

### Family Centred Employment Project

The *Family Centred Employment Project* (FCEP) model, developed with the advice of the Australian Social Inclusion Board, supports the employment, education and social participation of jobless families in the community by increasing the capability of family members. FCEP takes a ‘no wrong door’ approach to service delivery and recognises the expertise of service delivery organisations in providing employment services to their local communities.

#### **Making a difference in Goodna, Queensland**

In July 2010 the FCEP at Goodna in Queensland was launched to assist local jobless families to move into education and employment. The project works with selected families from the Goodna area to improve their social participation, mental health outcomes, education, training and employment participation. A particular focus of the FCEP in Goodna is on the early childhood development needs of young children aged up to five years. Family Case Managers work with individual families to help them develop a Family Care plan that reflects the families’ goals and aspirations towards education, employment and social participation.

## Reducing the incidence of homelessness



Safe, affordable and accessible housing is a basic need and access to it is essential for social inclusion. Since 2008 the Australian Government has committed almost \$5 billion in additional funding to tackle homelessness. In late 2008 the Government released the White Paper on Homelessness titled *The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness*. This set a strategic agenda to 2020 for reducing homelessness and established the Prime Minister's Council on Homelessness to independently monitor achievements. A Select Council on Homelessness was established in 2011 with the states and territories to drive an effective national response to reducing homelessness in Australia.

Following the White Paper, funding and implementation plans were agreed with state and territory governments under the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH)*. Under the Agreement, the Australian Government and state and territory governments have jointly committed \$1.1 billion to deliver new and better-integrated accommodation and support for people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The Agreement is a significant

first step to achieve the White Paper's interim target of reducing the rate of homelessness by 20 per cent by 2013 and its goal to halve the rate of homelessness and offer supported accommodation to all rough sleepers who seek it by 2020. The White Paper Strategy focuses on prevention and early intervention to stop people becoming homeless; break cycles of homelessness; and improve and expand the service response to homelessness. Across the states and territories over 180 new and expanded initiatives are now being delivered to reduce homelessness. Innovative specialist housing models are important initiatives in addressing homelessness. During 2009-10 the Australian Government funded 41 innovative projects across a range of housing programs, providing housing for people who are homeless – including aged care facilities for frail aged homeless people in Melbourne and Sydney and *Common Ground* style developments.

### Investing in new housing

The Australian Government understands that reducing homelessness requires investment in new housing.

*“Being socially included is having a safe place to call home”*

## Common Ground

*Common Ground* is an innovative housing initiative that provides a new form of affordable housing supply and support services for homeless people and those at risk of becoming homeless. The *Common Ground* concept brings together a mix of formally homeless people and others on low incomes into stable, long-term self-contained apartments that have communal areas and office space to provide support services, workshops, training and other activities. Eleven *Common Ground* developments or facilities based on the *Common Ground* principles are currently in operation or being established in Australia. *Common Ground* Sydney opened 104 new units on 15 November 2011.

### Making a difference in Hobart, Tasmania

*Campbell Street Common Ground* and *Liverpool Street Common Ground* in Hobart are expected to open 97 new units in early 2012 for people who are homeless. The Liverpool Street facility will include 47 units and the Campbell Street facility will provide 50 units. Half the tenants in both will be people who are currently homeless and the others will be for low-income tenants in need of affordable accommodation. Tenants will have their own apartments, enter into rental agreements and pay rent. Onsite support workers will provide support services to those who need them, both one-on-one and in group settings, to help tenants live independently and maintain their tenancy.

Under the Social Housing Initiative and the *National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing*, around \$6 billion has been provided by the Australian Government for the construction of over 21,500 new social housing dwellings and repairs and maintenance for 80,000 social housing properties. As at 14 October 2011 over 17,940 new dwellings had been completed with over 50 per cent of tenanted dwellings going to people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness.

In 2008 the Australian Government introduced the *National Rental Affordability Scheme* to stimulate the supply of 50,000 new affordable rental dwellings, with 35,000 to be delivered by 30 June 2014 and a further 15,000 in 2015–16. This initiative provides a National Rental Incentive for each approved dwelling which is rented to eligible low and moderate income households at least 20 per cent below market rates. As at 30 September 2011, over 4,600 new dwellings have been built and made available under this scheme helping to provide affordable private rental properties.

In 2008, the Australian Government also committed to a ten year *National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing*, that provides \$5.5 billion to build up to 4,200 new houses and refurbish up to 4,800 existing houses in remote Indigenous communities. See Chapter 05 on Closing the Gap for more information on the *National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing*.

The *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* introduced the *A Place to Call Home* initiative. The Government has committed \$150 million over five years up to 2012–13 for this program, with state and territory governments providing matching funding. States and territories will deliver over 600 new homes, to provide safe, affordable long-term accommodation to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Innovative housing models will be used to deliver some of these housing services. As at 30 June 2011, 302 dwellings had been purchased, allocated or constructed and 270 were occupied.



## Breaking the cycle of homelessness

The Australian Government has allocated over \$11 million to 30 June 2013 for the National Homelessness Research Agenda. This aims to improve the evidence base for delivering sustainable solutions to homelessness and develop a better understanding of the impact of homelessness on individuals and families through the delivery of:

- a. *National Homelessness Research Partnership Agreements;*
- b. *National Homelessness Research Projects;* and
- c. *Journeys Home: Longitudinal Study of Factors Affecting Housing Stability.*

As part of the new *National Partnership Agreement on Mental Health* the 2011–12 Budget also provided \$200 million to benefit people with severely disabling and persistent mental illness to break the

cycle of hospitalisation and homelessness and to improve the hospital interface. The 2011–12 Budget also provided over \$2 billion for a major mental health reform package, including additional funding to expand *headspace* services which help homeless young people. Further information on the mental health reform package is available in Chapter 04.

The 2011–12 Budget also included \$16 million to extend the viability supplement for aged care providers that deliver services to older people with a history of homelessness (as well as those providing services to residents requiring low care in rural and remote areas and those providing specialist aged care services to Indigenous Australians). For example, the supplement applies to aged care providers such as Wintringham, a Melbourne-based organisation that provides affordable housing and support services to frail, elderly homeless people.

*“Being socially included is having your needs met with respect and dignity”*

## Assistance for older homeless people

The Australian Government amended the *Aged Care Act 1997*, effective from 1 July 2009, to recognise that older people who are homeless have special needs allowing them to be specifically taken into account during the annual allocation of new residential places. Funding has also been made available for Approved Providers to build specialist residential aged care facilities for homeless older people.

## Making a difference in Redfern, New South Wales

The Australian Government provided \$16 million in funding to Mission Australia to build an aged care service for older homeless people in Redfern, New South Wales. Opening in 2012, it will accommodate 72 homeless people, including elderly homeless women. Each resident will have their own room and ensuite and each floor of 12 residents will have a separate dining room, lounge area, recreational space and clinics, and there will be a roof-top garden. The new service will include an on-site registered nurse, access to doctors, pharmacists, psycho-geriatricians and other health support services for those experiencing homelessness.

## Providing better services

In 2010 the Australian Government changed the way welfare payments are made, so that weekly payments of social security benefits are now being made for the most vulnerable recipients, including those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The aim is to prevent people becoming homeless because of difficulties in managing their money. As at 14 October 2011, there were 12,551 Centrelink customers in receipt of weekly payments.

Centrelink has introduced Community Engagement Officers (CCEO) to deliver outreach services to engage with people who are homeless and vulnerable and ensure they receive the assistance they need. The CCEO program involves 90 specialist Centrelink staff, located across all capital cities and many regional centres in supporting some of the most vulnerable people in the community. In the 2010–11 financial year CCEOs had 213,996 contacts with people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness. A further 20 CCEOs will be employed.

In January 2010 Centrelink also introduced a *Homelessness Indicator* to identify customers who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This information is used by Centrelink to support better targeted and more flexible services for these customers.

Job Services Australia (JSA) also works with homeless jobseekers, with around ten per cent of their total caseload categorised as homeless (constituting 71,600 homeless job seekers as at 30 June 2011). From 2009 until 2011, there have been just under 90,000 placements for homeless job seekers, including for 17,000 homeless young people. During this period, nearly \$100 million from the Employment Pathway Fund (an Australian Government funded flexible pool of funds administered by providers to assist job seekers) has been spent on homeless job seekers, including almost \$6 million on providing rent and crisis accommodation.

Centrelink Case Coordination services, introduced in the 2011–12 Budget, will help customers connect to services when they need them and means people facing complex issues, such as homelessness, will get better targeted support. Case Coordination provides intensive support for people who need it most by connecting them to the services they need. As at November 2011, eleven Case Coordination sites had opened with a total of 44 Case Coordination sites to be established over three years. See Chapter 06 for further information on Case Coordination.

## Improving outcomes for people living with disability or mental illness and their carers



The Australian Government strongly believes that people with disability and their carers have an equal right to participate in society. Many face a range of barriers which can make this difficult. The effects of these factors can lead to long-term exclusion and disadvantage. Since the release of *A Stronger, Fairer Australia*, there have been a number of significant steps made to improve outcomes for people living with disability or mental illness and their carers.

In August 2011 the Australian Government released the Productivity Commission's report into disability care and support. The Government has already started work with state and territory governments and people with disability to lay the foundations for a *National Disability Insurance Scheme* (NDIS) to provide people with the support they need over the course of their lifetime. Through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), the leaders of all state and territory governments have agreed with the Australian Government that major reform of disability care and support is needed through a NDIS.

A Select Council on Disability Reform, consisting of Treasurers and Disability Services Ministers, has been established, supported by an Advisory Group of disability experts and advocates, to lay the foundations for the NDIS. Through the Select Council, all governments have agreed to lay the foundations for the NDIS by mid 2013—a year ahead of the timetable set out by the Productivity Commission.

The National Disability Strategy was launched by the Australian Government on 18 March 2011, committing all governments to a nationwide approach to address barriers faced by people with disability and promote their participation. The Strategy's ten-year national plan for reform focuses on better inclusion for people with disability and seeks to create a society that enables people with disability to fulfil their potential as equal citizens. As part of the Strategy, the Government has committed \$11 million to an accessibility package of initiatives to support people with disability and their carers to participate in community life.

## Supporting people with disability in the workplace

Social inclusion aims to reduce entrenched forms of disadvantage, for example for people locked out of paid work because of disability. Many people with disability want to work if they can, but may need extra support. Employers may also need incentives to encourage them to employ people with disability.

The Australian Government has initiated a series of reforms in recent budgets to overhaul key aspects of the Disability Support Pension (DSP) to better support people with disability into work where possible, while continuing to provide an essential safety net for Australians who are unable to work to fully support themselves.

From 1 July 2012, the Government is introducing:

- New participation requirements, along with participation plans, for certain DSP recipients under the age of 35 with some capacity to work to help ensure they are aware of, and able to access, support that is available to them.
  - More generous rules for DSP recipients to work up to 30 hours a week and, subject to the income test, still be eligible to receive a part-rate of pension. This will remove a disincentive for DSP recipients to work if they are able, and will also improve incentives for DSP recipients to work or increase their hours of work.
- Over \$11 million for higher wage subsidies to employers who hire unemployed people with disability, helping job seekers with disability gain paid employment experience.
  - Over \$94 million to provide a wage subsidy of up to \$6,000 to employers who employ people who have been on income support for two years or more. This wage subsidy commences on 1 January 2012 and will be accessible through both Disability Employment Services and Job Services Australia programs, with job seekers with disability expected to make up a significant number of places.

From 3 September 2011, the Australian Government reformed DSP assessments to focus on people's ability, not their disability. In addition following a thorough review, revised tables for the assessment of work related impairment for DSP will be implemented from 1 January 2012, so that people claiming DSP will be assessed in line with contemporary medical and rehabilitation practices. The revised tables have been recommended following a thorough review by an Advisory Committee consisting of medical, allied health and rehabilitation experts, representatives of disability peak bodies, mental health advocates and relevant government agencies.

In the 2011-12 Budget the Australian Government also invested additional funding to improve support for Australians with disability to help them find and keep a job, including:

*"Being socially included is being able to get a job and reach your full potential"*

### Disability Employment Services

Disability Employment Services (DES) were introduced in March 2010 to provide more effective, tailored assistance for job seekers with disability, with further funding committed as part of the 2011-12 Budget. Providing ongoing support in the workplace through DES has been a critical factor in people being able to sustain jobs. Since DES began there has been a 41 per cent increase in the number of job seekers accessing assistance compared with the previous system, including more than 68,000 job seekers who have Psychiatric Disability. Of these job seekers with Psychiatric Disability, more than 13,000 have achieved sustainable employment since the start of the DES program.



There are also a range of other initiatives designed to help people with disability get and keep a job and be able to reach their full potential including:

- The Employment Assistance Fund – provides financial assistance to employers to help them with the costs of modifying workplaces, purchasing special work equipment, employing Australian Sign Language (Auslan) interpreters and providing disability awareness training for managers and supervisors.
- Australian Disability Enterprises – the Government funds over 320 Australian Disability Enterprise outlets across Australia which deliver supported employment assistance to approximately 20,000 people with moderate to severe disability who need substantial ongoing support to maintain their employment.
- The National Disability Recruitment Coordinator – helps large employers implement disability employment strategies.
- JobAccess – delivers a one-stop information shop about all matters relating to the employment of people with disability.

### Supporting children with disability

To improve life opportunities and transition to school the Australian Government is helping families of children that have disabilities that affect their development, to access early intervention services and therapies.

Since 2008, over 15,000 eligible children have received assistance under the \$220 million *Helping Children with Autism* (HCWA) program. For eligible children up to the age of seven, HCWA provides \$12,000 of early intervention services, the Autism Advisor service, workshops for parents, an Autism Spectrum Disorder website, Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centres, Autism specific-playgroups and Positive Partnerships for transition to school.

Since July 2011, more than 2,200 children with disability have registered to access early intervention services through the Australian Government's \$147 million *Better Start for Children with Disability initiative*. Children up to the age of seven who have been diagnosed with cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, Fragile X syndrome, or moderate to severe vision or hearing impairments, including deafblindness, can now access up to \$12,000 to spend on early intervention services of their choosing. Families who have signed up to this initiative can obtain services and therapies such as audiology, speech pathology and physiotherapy.

*Better Start* will also provide about 20,000 children with these disabilities under the age of 15 with access to new Medicare services for diagnosis and allied health treatment.

In addition, \$200 million over the next three years was committed in the 2011–12 Budget to provide more assistance to teachers and schools to support students with disability and improve their learning outcomes. This initiative will commence from 1 January 2012 and will provide an opportunity to identify the strategies which most improve the learning experiences of students with disability.

### Improving disability services

In the 2011–12 Budget access was extended to the Community Service Obligations component of the *Hearing Services Program* for young adults aged between 21 and 25 to ensure they receive the support they need while they are studying, training or establishing careers. This means that more priority groups with special needs will receive free hearing services including: rehabilitation, hearing aids and cochlear speech processor upgrades.

The Australian Government has also committed \$60 million to build innovative, community-based supported accommodation places for people with disability as part of the *Supported Accommodation Innovation Fund* (SAIF). Through SAIF the Government is looking to support innovative approaches to the delivery of supported accommodation which provide opportunities for people with disability to live as valued members of their communities and embody the principles outlined in the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. SAIF will deliver up to 150 new supported accommodation and respite places nationally.

### Giving carers the respect and support they need

Carers play a critical role in helping people with disability, but because of the intensive support they give, carers are among the most disadvantaged and socially excluded people in Australia. Carers are more likely to be socially isolated and disconnected from their peers and more likely to suffer from poor health and increased financial and emotional stress.

The Australian Government has delivered legislation formally acknowledging the role of carers at a national level, through the *Carer Recognition Act 2010*. Government agencies with policies and programs directed to carers, or the people they care for, now need to consult with carers and report each year on what they have done to better support carers. Organisations funded by the Government to support carers, or the people they care for, need to reflect the *Statement for Australia's Carers* in their work, including the fundamental principle that carers should have the same rights, choices and opportunities as other Australians. Government agencies are also required to consider the Statement when developing human resource policies that significantly affect their employees' caring roles. This will help drive much-needed cultural and attitudinal change about the demands and responsibilities of caring and the physical, emotional and financial toll this can have.

The National Carer Strategy, launched on 3 August 2011, is the Australian Government's long term commitment to carers. The Strategy will ensure that carers are valued and respected by society and that they have rights, choices, opportunities and the capability to participate in economic, social and community life.

The Strategy is structured around a vision, aim and six important priority areas:

- recognition and respect;
- information and access;
- economic security;
- services for carers;
- education and training; and
- health and wellbeing.

These priorities are supported by a \$60 million package of measures to raise community awareness of the contribution of carers and to improve carers' economic security.

In addition, the 2011-12 Budget included over \$54 million over five years to expand the *Mental Health Respite: Carer Support* initiative. This will help around 1,100 carers and families of people with a mental illness access a range of services including respite care and activities such as peer support and education to assist them in their caring role.

## Improving outcomes for people living with mental illness

Many people living with mental illness experience social exclusion, including through discrimination, isolation, unemployment and low educational attainment. The Australian Government is committed to improving services and support for people with mental illness, their families and carers through major reform to mental health services.

The 2011-12 Budget included the nation's largest ever mental health reform package. The Australian Government has committed \$2.2 billion over five years to deliver more intensive support services for people with severe mental illness, to detect mental health problems in the early years and support young people who struggle with mental illness. The package of measures includes:

- Over \$571 million over five years to improve outcomes for people with severe and debilitating mental illness. This historic funding will deliver significant benefits to the most vulnerable group of Australians with mental illness by providing them with a wider range of care options.
- The establishment of Australia's first National Mental Health Commission. The Commission signals a new approach to mental health leadership in Australia. The Commission will look at how well mental health and related systems are performing against agreed indicators, including the impact they are having on people with mental illness, their families and carers.
- \$154 million over five years to expand the successful *Personal Helpers and Mentors* (PHaMs) initiative to assist an extra 3,400 people with severe mental illness. Personal helpers and mentors provide practical support to people with severe mental illness to set and achieve personal goals such as finding employment and improving relationships with family and friends.
- \$443 million over five years for the *Taking Action to Tackle Suicide* measures, to support activities targeted at preventing suicide among particularly at risk groups, including Indigenous Australians and men.

*“Being socially included is having someone to turn to when times are tough”*

### Support for Day to Day Living

The *Support for Day to Day Living in the Community* program (D2DL) aims to improve the health and quality of life for people with severe mental illness through social activity.

D2DL recognises that meaningful activity and social connection are important for recovery from mental illness. Services focus on people who are socially isolated, have low levels of support and whose illness makes it hard for them to function in the community.

In the 2011-12 Budget the Australian Government committed additional funding of \$19.3 million over five years to expand this program. The program currently assists approximately 11,000 people per year, and with the additional funding will deliver services to an additional 18,000 people over five years.

### Making a difference in Wayville, South Australia

The *Mental Illness Fellowship of South Australia* Wayville D2DL Activity Program promotes wellbeing in a supportive environment by offering opportunities for people to progress their recovery and prevent relapse by improving their ability to manage their illness. This occurs by providing a place where people can build skills, develop friendships, be accepted and connect with the community. The Activity Program provides a flexible and supportive environment in which individuals can choose to participate in structured activities while socialising and meeting new people.

In August 2011, COAG agreed to commence work on the development of a *National Partnership Agreement on Mental Health*. This work will focus on the priority service gaps in Australia’s mental health system - to move it away from crisis-driven activity, towards prevention, early intervention and care in the community. COAG has also agreed to commence work on a *Ten Year Roadmap for Mental Health Reform* that will set out priorities and main steps in achieving this vision. The Agreement and Roadmap will be considered by COAG before the end of 2011.

Chronic mental illness can contribute to a lifetime of disadvantage and social exclusion. The best chance of preventing mental disorders or minimising their impact across a person’s lifetime is to provide early intervention in childhood. In the 2011-12 Budget the Australian Government announced a number of measures that seek to identify mental illness in children and young people and prevent the onset of mental illness for the vulnerable and at risk, including:

- \$61 million over five years in additional support that will double the number of Family Mental

Health Support Services. These services offer flexible interventions tailored to meet the needs of families, children and young people such as family support and counselling, information and referral to clinical or other community services, home based support and education and skills development.

- Over \$222 million over five years to fund additional Early Psychosis Prevention and Intervention Centres to assist young people with, or at risk of developing, psychotic mental illness and promoting early management of mental illness to protect against poor education and employment outcomes, homelessness and other forms of disadvantage.
- Over \$197 million over five years to provide additional *headspace* sites, to deliver mental health services for people between 12-25 years.
- \$11 million over five years to introduce a universal voluntary health check for three year olds that, for the first time, will include checking social and emotional wellbeing and development.

*“Being socially included is having someone to talk to and be supportive”*

## headspace

Only 25 per cent of young people with mental illness access services and for most there is a long delay between the start of symptoms and when they receive help. The National Youth Mental Health Foundation, *headspace*, provides health advice, information and support to young people between 12–25 years of age.

The increased funding in the 2011–12 Budget for *headspace* will provide full national coverage of *headspace* services, taking the total to 90 sites (up from 30). Through national coverage *headspace* will be able to help up to 72,000 young people per year.

### **Making a difference in Barwon, Victoria**

*headspace* in Barwon provides General Practice services for 12–25 year olds, mental health assessments and support, drug and alcohol counselling and support and advice on sexual health issues or other health and wellbeing concerns. Both individual and group programs are available. As at September 2011, Barwon *headspace* has seen 4,265 clients and provided 37,340 occasions of service since it started in July 2007.

# 05

## Closing the Gap for Indigenous Australians



Closing the Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is fundamental to achieving social inclusion in Australia. The Australian Government's agenda to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage is driven by three important imperatives:

- to overcome decades of under-investment in services and infrastructure;
- to encourage and support personal responsibility as the foundation for healthy, functional families and communities; and
- to build new understanding and respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The Government has an extensive and ambitious reform agenda in place with clear targets set to

close the gap in life expectancy, early childhood, health, education and economic participation.

The Australian Government is working towards these targets in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations, and in collaboration with state and territory governments. As part of this joint effort, the Government is working to improve access for Indigenous Australians to the services needed to improve health and life expectancy, including primary health care, child and maternal health and substance use services. Many of the improvements that make services more accessible for Indigenous Australians also make them more accessible for other disadvantaged Australians. This reform agenda complements, and is supported by, the social inclusion agenda.

## Supporting young Indigenous Australians

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) endorsed *The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014* which was launched by Australian Education Ministers in June 2011. The Action Plan is a long-term national approach to Closing the Gap in Indigenous educational outcomes, developed collaboratively with the states and territories and non-government education authorities. It is supported by significant funding from National Partnership Agreements and additional funding of \$15.4 million announced in the 2010–11 Budget.

Around 900 schools (which have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with the greatest need) will put additional focus on readiness for school, engagement and connections, school attendance, literacy and numeracy, quality teaching and pathways to post-school options.

Examples of activities which support the Action Plan are the *Indigenous Youth Leadership Program* (IYLP), with funding of almost \$70 million, and the *Indigenous Youth Mobility Program*, with funding of \$60 million to 2014–15. These support Indigenous students who choose to attend

vocational education and training, secondary school or university away from their home communities. These practical leadership development opportunities help develop a pool of future leaders and role models.

Students are encouraged to inspire other Indigenous young people by showing them how success can be achieved through education. In 2010, 446 students were placed in the IYLP, and as at October 2011, 634 students had been placed in the program (with 523 in secondary schools and 111 in tertiary education).

Another program aimed at Indigenous Australians is the *Parental and Community Engagement* (PaCE) program, for which the Australian Government has provided over \$84 million over four years. This is a community driven program for parents and carers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people helping them to engage with and support their children's education. As at 30 September 2011, 409 projects had been introduced. Overall, PaCE projects aim to reach 48,250 parents and carers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and 24,600 community members.

*“Being socially included is having a place to play and learn”*

### Child and Family Centres

As part of the Closing the Gap Agreement, COAG agreed in principle to the *National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development*. Joint funding of around \$547 million over six years has been committed to address the needs of Indigenous children in their early years. This funding built on the more than \$16 million committed over five years for the Indigenous Child Care Hubs, taking the total amount of funding under the Agreement to \$564 million over six years.

### Making a difference in Belconnen West, Australian Capital Territory

In May 2011 the Belconnen West Child and Family Centre opened as the first of 38 centres to be built across Australia under the National Partnership Agreement. The Centre provides a tailored range of children and family services catering for the needs of families in the local community, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and carers. The centre offers access to early learning activities, play group and parenting courses, as well as other vital services such as maternal, child health and allied health services.

## Supporting healthy lifestyles

Reducing the rate of tobacco smoking among Indigenous Australians is a high priority as part of Closing the Gap. In 2008 it was found that, on average, Indigenous people reported daily smoking rates more than twice those of non-Indigenous people, with 44.8 per cent of all Indigenous adults reporting being smokers compared to 18.9 of non-Indigenous adults. Tobacco smoking is responsible for one-fifth of the deaths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Australian Government is delivering significant initiatives to reduce smoking rates in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In March 2008, the \$14.5 million *Indigenous Tobacco Control Initiative* was launched. Under this initiative, 18 organisations around Australia are trialling innovative approaches among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to prevent smoking and get people to quit. Since December 2008 nicotine patches have been subsidised for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (and from February 2011 this was extended to all Australians wanting to quit smoking who have entered a support and counselling program). Under the COAG *National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes*, the Government committed over \$805 million over four years from 2009–10 for an *Indigenous Chronic Disease Package*, which included over \$100 million for a significant Tackling Smoking measure.

This includes the rollout of Regional Tackling Smoking and Healthy Lifestyle Teams across 57 regions, enhancements to Quitlines, training for health and community workers and the development of role models and champions. In 2010–11, 21 of 57 regions and the ACT have now received funding for Regional Tackling Smoking and Healthy Lifestyle Teams. A further 19 host organisations will be signed up in 2011–12 and a final 17 in 2012–13.

## Improving housing and education and employment outcomes

Access to safe and affordable housing is critical to closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage. In the 2010–11 financial year the Australian Government exceeded its targets for improving Indigenous housing in remote communities, with 490 new houses built and 2,288 refurbishments completed, against a target of 463 new houses and 2,012 refurbishments. This work was delivered in partnership with the Northern Territory and state governments under the \$5.5 billion *National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing*. This investment in housing is tackling the significant level of housing need in remote Indigenous communities. Overall, since the commencement of the National Partnership on 1 January 2009, more than 800 new houses have been completed and 3,100 houses have been rebuilt and refurbished nationally. This upward trend in delivery is set to continue, with jurisdictions commencing work ahead of schedule for 2011–12.

*“Being socially included is having representation and recognition”*

## National Congress and constitutional recognition

The Australian Government has committed over \$29 million to support the establishment of the National Congress of Australia’s First People. The Congress is central to building new partnerships based on mutual respect and understanding. It is a representative body that will engage and partner with governments and the corporate and community sectors on policy design.

The Government has committed to progressing recognition of the special and unique place of Indigenous Australians in the Australian Constitution. In December 2010 the Government appointed an expert panel to lead discussion and debate about Indigenous constitutional recognition and to encourage the public to put forward their views. The expert panel has been asked to develop options for constitutional change that would have the most chance of success at a referendum. Throughout 2011 the Expert Panel has led consultations across the whole Australian community aimed at building consensus on the recognition of Indigenous people in the Constitution.

The 2011–12 Budget affirmed the Australian Government’s commitment to Closing the Gap providing \$526.6 million across a range of Indigenous specific and mainstream measures designed to address Indigenous disadvantage. There was a strong focus in the Budget on achieving greater social inclusion for Indigenous Australians through education and employment outcomes, including:

- Over \$4 million over three years to trial a nationally recognised vocational education and training qualification for Indigenous school students in natural resource management, heritage related activities and cultural studies. This qualification will encourage students to finish school and help them qualify for jobs in local land management initiatives.
- Over \$50 million over four years to extend school based traineeships for Indigenous students in targeted schools through a new *Indigenous Youth Careers Pathways Program*. The program provides up to 6,400 young Indigenous people with personal mentoring and case management to help them deal with

any issues that may make the transition from school to work difficult. The young people also work one on one with participating employers who provide additional mentoring and work experience.

- \$171 million to extend until 2013 assistance under the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000* to ensure continuity for a range of valuable programs to improve Indigenous literacy numeracy, school attendance and achievement while the national Review of Funding for Schooling is underway.
- Over \$20 million on the Indigenous Employment Initiative providing jobs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the arts, culture and languages sector in regional and remote areas. Employees are engaged in key roles such as community media officers, arts workers, mentors and language assistants. These jobs provide important social and economic benefits in a culturally appropriate way to individuals and communities, with over 600 jobs supported in 2011–12 as part of this initiative.

# Breaking the cycle of entrenched and multiple disadvantage in particular neighbourhoods and communities



Different kinds of disadvantage tend to coincide in particular locations and persist over time. Entrenched disadvantage is often made up of a range of problems that can be very difficult to tackle. Vulnerable people in disadvantaged communities may not finish school, find it difficult to find and keep a job and sometimes rely on income support for long periods. In some households, long term unemployment becomes intergenerational. In these cases, evidence shows that targeting assistance to particular locations and building on local expertise of what works is often the best way to get good results for individuals and families.

The Australian Government set out its commitment in *A Stronger, Fairer Australia* to taking a place-based approach to disadvantage and has continued to test and evaluate a number of innovative approaches to social policy in areas of entrenched disadvantage.

In early 2011 the Australian Social Inclusion Board released a report into locational approaches to addressing disadvantage which has guided the development of these approaches.

## Working with remote communities

A place-based approach to Remote Service Delivery involves a commitment by governments to work with 29 priority remote Indigenous communities to improve the delivery of services. Under the *National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery*, governments jointly have agreed to develop Local Implementation Plans to guide future government investment in the priority communities. These are being produced in close partnership with, and with the agreement of, local Indigenous communities. The Australian Government is also supporting a welfare reform trial in Cape York which involves the local community in building social responsibility and economic opportunity and improving education and management of housing.

## Taking a new approach: *Better Futures, Local Solutions*

The 2011–12 Budget included *Better Futures, Local Solutions* as part of the *Building Australia's Future Workforce* package. This is a substantial commitment to taking an intensive, place-based approach in ten priority locations, with a focus on promoting social and economic participation and reducing entrenched disadvantage. This recognises there are some disadvantaged communities missing out on the benefits of the growing economy and the opportunities it brings. The locations that will benefit from a new range of services are: Logan and Rockhampton in Queensland; Wyong, Bankstown and Shellharbour in New South Wales; Hume and Greater Shepparton in Victoria; Burnie in Tasmania; Playford in South Australia; and Kwinana in Western Australia.

*Better Futures, Local Solutions* seeks to boost participation and reduce entrenched disadvantage by addressing the specific needs of some of the most disadvantaged communities. The range of support measures and obligations under this initiative have been designed to harness community assets to break cycles of ongoing disadvantage. These local solutions will be innovative, focus on individual needs and circumstances and, most importantly, will use the expertise of local people and integrated, effective services to make sure that communities are fully involved in identifying problems and finding solutions that suit them best.

The measures involve extra responsibilities and more assistance for eligible teenage parents on income support, jobless families and other vulnerable groups to support children and families and help parents enter or return to the workforce. They include new participation requirements for some parents receiving income support, expanded Communities for Children services and the introduction of Income Management in five of the *Better Futures* sites.

To help individuals, families and communities access these new services and achieve better outcomes, new and stronger governance and community engagement models are being put in place to make sure governments work together with the community and that community voices can be heard. As part of this, the Australian Government has established a \$25 million Local Solutions Fund to fund innovative local projects to boost engagement and participation in the ten *Better Futures* sites.

The 2011–12 Budget also extended funding for Local Employment Coordinators, including a \$20 million flexible funding pool to support their activities. The Coordinators are employed in 20 priority employment areas and help coordinate and drive local responses to local labour market problems. The extension also includes funding for Jobs and Skills Expos to help connect people with employment opportunities.

*“Being socially included is having the opportunity to grow up happy and healthy”*

### Making a difference in Shepparton, Victoria

Families in and around Shepparton will have extra help to provide a safe, happy and healthy environment for their children. Shepparton is one of the ten locations around Australia that will benefit from new services. In Shepparton, CatholicCare will receive \$2.6 million over the next three years to deliver early intervention and prevention services for local families through Communities for Children.

Shepparton will benefit from:

- Case Coordination: Local Centrelink staff will provide more tailored individual support to help people better access support and services in their community.
- Local Solutions Fund: Funding to be provided to community organisations to deliver programs that will assist families and individuals. Shepparton will share in the \$25 million Local Solutions Fund.
- Targeted Income Management: will start on 1 July 2012 in Shepparton, applying to vulnerable families and individuals, including those who volunteer for it.
- New participation requirements: from 1 January 2012 for teenage parents and from 1 July 2012 for jobless families.



## Providing tailored and targeted support

Between 2008 and 2011 Centrelink trialed a more socially inclusive service delivery system based on a place-based approach. The place-based service delivery trials developed local responses to local problems and provided intensive support for the most vulnerable in selected communities. An independent evaluation found that addressing multiple needs in an integrated way and building capacity in the local community had positive results for those given this additional support.

The Australian Government has introduced Centrelink Case Coordination services in locations across Australia to provide better targeted, individually tailored support for vulnerable clients, building on the success of these trials. The Government provided over

\$74 million in the 2011–12 Budget to introduce Case Coordination in 44 Centrelink sites by 2013–14. As at November 2011, eleven sites had already introduced services, with a total of 19 sites to commence services by 1 July 2012. Often it is by the smallest margin that people avoid homelessness, financial crisis, or unemployment. Through Case Coordination, Centrelink staff will be able to spend more time with customers to be responsive to early indicators of disadvantage and impending crisis. Customers who are facing significant challenges in their lives, such as homelessness or drug dependency, will be identified for early and additional support and referral to specialist services. Services will be tailored to meet customer needs based on their individual circumstances.

*“Being socially included is being able to get a job and reach your full potential”*

### Local Connections to Work

*Local Connections to Work* (LCTW), which commenced on 24 May 2010, is a new approach to service delivery to help disadvantaged job seekers overcome barriers to employment. It aims to help disadvantaged job seekers and their families access existing services by providing a range of government and non government services under the one roof in a Centrelink Customer Service Centre. By late 2011 there were nine LCTW sites, with a total of 24 to be established by mid 2015. As at 30 September 2011, 1,230 disadvantaged job seekers have found job and training placements with the assistance of LCTW services.

### Making a difference in Campsie, New South Wales

A new approach to helping the long term unemployed, vulnerable youth and other job seekers is paying dividends in the Campsie community. The Campsie LCTW program hosts 13 community partners offering services together on a rostered basis in the Campsie Centrelink Customer Service Centre. Disadvantaged job seekers have joint meetings with Centrelink and their Employment Services Provider to identify their needs and quickly link them to the right support, so they only need to tell their story once. Customers are benefiting from better collaboration between service providers and improved coordination of assistance. At Campsie Centrelink, service partners include local employment service providers and community welfare organisations as well as Housing NSW.

## Building socially cohesive communities

Multiculturalism in Australia is about building a shared sense of nationhood forged through mutual respect, common values and a commitment to fairness. Strong support for multiculturalism is part of the whole-of-government approach to a socially cohesive and harmonious society.

The Australian Government released *The People of Australia- Australia's Multicultural Policy* in 2011 to strengthen multicultural policies and programs. *The People of Australia* policy embraces four principles: celebrating and valuing diversity; maintaining social cohesion; communicating the benefits of Australia's diversity; and responding to intolerance and discrimination.

To help deliver these principles the Australian Multicultural Council was appointed to advise the Government on multicultural affairs. The Council is responsible for the implementation of the *People of Australia Ambassadors* program. Ambassadors will champion inclusion and provide 'grass roots' input to the Australian Multicultural Council and to government. The Council will also have a formal role in a strengthened access and equity strategy which will form a core part of government service delivery.

### Supporting new arrivals

Australia has a long and proud history of resettling people in humanitarian need and the Australian Government is committed to helping new arrivals become active participants in the community as soon as possible.

The Australian Government provides settlement support to about 13,750 refugees and others in humanitarian need that arrive under the Humanitarian Program each year. In recognition that humanitarian clients often face additional challenges to those faced by other migrants, they receive specialised assistance during the initial settlement period.



The new *Humanitarian Settlement Services* (HSS) program, which replaced the *Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy*, was successfully started on 4 April 2011 to provide intensive settlement services to humanitarian clients through a coordinated case management approach. This includes the delivery of services on arrival in Australia and assistance with housing, food provision, registration with Centrelink, Medicare, banks, schools and health services and linking clients to the *Adult Migrant English Program* (AMEP) to learn English. Case management helps new arrivals understand Australian laws and culture and helps them gain employment and participate in their local communities through connection to local social, recreational and sporting organisations. Where required, humanitarian entrants will be referred to torture and trauma counselling services.

An accommodation service also provides clients with housing on their arrival in Australia. Accommodation services may also include the provision of a basic household goods package to help clients establish their new home in Australia.

A new onshore orientation program is available to all clients aged 15 and over and focuses on helping new arrivals learn the critical skills needed to live and function independently in Australian society and to continue their settlement journey.

*“Being socially included is having help to settle into a new community”*

## Adult Migrant English Program

The *Adult Migrant English Program* (AMEP), first established in 1948, is the Australian Government’s largest settlement program. In 2010–11 the AMEP was delivered in more than 250 locations around Australia to more than 55,000 clients from over 190 countries. Almost \$205 million was committed in the 2010–11 Budget for the AMEP and related services. The program supports the Government’s social inclusion agenda by providing eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants with up to 510 hours of settlement-focused English language tuition to support them in their transition to life in Australia.

On 1 July 2011 a new AMEP business model was introduced which included an enhanced role for AMEP counsellors to provide clients with increased support; the introduction of an Individual Pathway Guide to provide a more clearly delineated pathway to further English as a Second Language courses, education, employment or vocational training; reinforcement of important settlement information for clients entering and exiting from the AMEP; and specialised youth classes.

### Making a difference in Warwick, Queensland

In 2010, 18 humanitarian entrants enrolled in the AMEP *Employment Pathways and Traineeships in English* program delivered in Warwick, Queensland for jackaroo and jillaroo training. The program provided participants with improved English, self esteem and rural settlement skills to help gain employment in the rural industry.

As a direct result of their participation in the course, 16 participants obtained a Certificate II in Rural Operations and 11 participants gained immediate employment in the rural towns of Millmerran, Goondiwindi, Dalby and Warwick. The remaining five participants continued with further study or sought employment at the completion of the program. In addition, a number of humanitarian entrants and their friends and families moved to Millmerran shortly after the program was completed.

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship, through the *Settlement Grants Program* (SGP), provides funding to assist humanitarian entrants and migrants settle in Australia and participate in Australian society as soon as possible after arrival. The SGP is targeted to meet the settlement needs of recently arrived humanitarian entrants and family stream migrants, as well as dependants of skilled migrants in rural or regional areas, with low levels of English proficiency. Approximately \$38.5 million will be spent in the 2011–12 financial year under the SGP. Of this, approximately \$25 million has been allocated to fund new projects and a further \$13 million has been allocated for ongoing settlement grant commitments. Funding for the SGP will increase to almost \$40 million in 2013–14.

The *Diversity and Social Cohesion Program* provides the additional resources often needed by not-for-profit community organisations to develop their own projects and find their own ways of helping their community build stronger relations. The aim of the funding is to promote respect, fairness and a sense of belonging for Australians of every race, culture and religion, and to develop the community capacity building skills of specific community groups under significant pressure due to their cultural, religious or racial diversity.

# Conclusion



The Australian Government is committed to maintaining its efforts to improve social inclusion in Australia, and in doing so will continue to draw on the advice and expertise of a wide range of partners.

The Australian Social Inclusion Board has an ongoing role as the advisory body to the Government on ways to achieve better outcomes for the most disadvantaged in the community.

The Government has built a close and cooperative working relationship with the not-for-profit sector. Under the framework of the *National Compact* the Government will continue to find new and better ways of working together based on mutual trust, respect and collaboration.

Other partnerships, between Government and with individuals and organisations investing in socially inclusive activities, are also being supported – volunteerism, social investment, charitable giving and philanthropy in Australia are important pillars in building a stronger, fairer Australia.

Shared investment between the Australian Government and state and territory governments, through the Council of Australian Governments and its National Agreements, is essential to improving social inclusion. Jurisdictional borders should not diminish efforts to reduce disadvantage and improve outcomes for all Australians.

The Government is committed to public accountability for progress in reducing the incidence of social exclusion. Evaluation of existing initiatives and support for research and innovation will ensure effort and investment can be directed towards the highest priorities.

Under the Government's national social inclusion measurement framework and reporting strategy, a baseline report on indicators, *Social Inclusion in Australia: How Australia is faring*, was published by the Australian Social Inclusion Board in January 2010.

An updated report, and the Government's response to the report, will be published in 2012.



