

CLOSING THE GAP – BUILDING MOMENTUM

STATEMENT BY
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AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS
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CLOSING THE GAP – BUILDING MOMENTUM

Our aspiration is for every Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander baby born today to have the same opportunities, the same safe and healthy start in life, the same right to the best education and the same expectation to aim as high as any other Australian child.

Across the Australian community, many people, groups, companies and communities are working hard to close the gap between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians, in many different ways.

For the Australian Government in 2010-11 the focus is on implementation. With the States and Territories, we will be working to implement the commitments made since 2008 through a series of National Partnership Agreements. Some of these are agreements for all Australians and others are specifically for Indigenous Australians. Together these agreements provide a platform for major reform in areas such as Indigenous health, housing, employment, education and early childhood development.

This Budget strengthens and leverages major investments that are already being rolled out and supports existing programs and urgently needed new work.

The Government's commitment to Closing the Gap is driven by three policy imperatives:

- Addressing decades of under-investment in services, infrastructure and governance – a task for government
- Fostering community-led solutions and helping to rebuild the positive social norms that underpin daily routines like going to school and work – a task for Indigenous people with support from government and the wider community
- Changing the relationship between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians to one based on mutual knowledge and respect – a task for the whole Australian community.

Giving Indigenous children the best possible start in life so they can grow up looking ahead to a bright future is one of our nation's foremost challenges. We are tackling it with renewed vigour through a genuine national collaboration involving all levels of government.

Most importantly, we are working in partnership with Indigenous Australians because they are the ones who are best placed to lead change in their own lives, in their families and in their communities. Governments can help, but closing the gap will not happen without the active participation of Indigenous people.

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Since 2008, the Australian Government and the States and Territories have together committed an additional \$4.6 billion under the new partnership approach to Closing the Gap agreed through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG).

This is in addition to a range of other new partnerships with the States and Territories that establish outcomes to be achieved for Indigenous Australians and that will have a major impact on overcoming Indigenous disadvantage, especially for those living in urban and regional areas.

Improving Indigenous Australians' access to services available to the whole community is essential to help remove entrenched social and economic isolation and inequality.

The National Indigenous Reform Agreement, agreed by COAG in November 2008, provides a framework for the various agreements. It sets out the policy principles, objectives, outcomes, outputs, performance indicators and performance benchmarks underpinning Closing the Gap. It focuses on achieving the agreed Closing the Gap targets:

- To close the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians within a generation
- To halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade
- To ensure access to early childhood education for all Indigenous four year olds in remote communities within 5 years
- To halve the gap between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians in reading, writing and numeracy achievements for children within a decade
- To halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 (or equivalent) attainment rates by 2020
- To halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians within a decade.

COAG recognises that overcoming Indigenous disadvantage will require a sustained effort from all levels of government. Governments are now working together to overcome the legacy of decades of under-investment, ad hoc approaches and duplication of effort in Indigenous funding and services.

Our collaborative approaches are directed to seven action areas or building blocks:

- Early Childhood
- Schooling
- Health
- Healthy Homes
- Economic Participation
- Safe Communities
- Governance and Leadership.

The building blocks are interlinked. Achieving the Closing the Gap targets requires progress in each action area. Measures aimed at improvements in any one area will not work in isolation.

This statement provides an account of how we are supporting each building block through a range of initiatives and programs, underpinned by the extra resources and commitment flowing from the National Partnership Agreements.

Indigenous Specific National Partnerships

National Partnership on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes

Agreed in November 2008, the National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes commits \$1.6 billion over four years from 2009-10 to tackle the burden of chronic disease in the Indigenous community. It is targeting risk factors, improving chronic disease management and follow-up and expanding the capacity of the Indigenous health workforce, including 94 project officers. Recruitment is underway for the first 83 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outreach workers, and recruitment of a network of regional and local tobacco action workers is proceeding.

National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing

Agreed in December 2008, the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing committed \$5.5 billion over 10 years from 2008-09 to reform housing and infrastructure arrangements in remote Indigenous communities. The aim is to address overcrowding, homelessness, poor housing conditions and severe housing shortages in these communities. The National Partnership Agreement will deliver up to 4,200 new houses and up to 4,800 refurbishments to existing houses over 10 years. Targets for 2009-10 include 320 new houses and 587 refurbishments. We are on track to achieving these targets with 320 new houses underway across Australia, and 33 completed. More than 640 refurbishments are also completed or underway.

Closing the Gap: National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development

Signed in October 2008, the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development commits \$564.6 million over six years from 2008-09 to support Indigenous early childhood development. Thirty six Children and Family Centres are being funded to provide early learning, child care and family services. Access to antenatal, maternal and child health and teenage sexual and reproductive health services is being expanded.

National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Economic Participation

Agreed in December 2008, the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Economic Participation provides \$228.9 million over five years from 2008-09 to help create sustainable Indigenous employment opportunities in areas of government service delivery that have previously relied on subsidisation through the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program. As at April 2010, over 3,700 jobs had been created in the delivery of Government services replacing positions formerly funded under CDEP.

Indigenous Specific National Partnerships (cont.)

National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery

Agreed in December 2008, the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery is providing \$291.2 million over five years from 2009-10 to improve the delivery of services in 29 priority locations across the Northern Territory, Western Australia, Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia. The new statutory position of Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services is monitoring implementation.

Closing the Gap: National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Public Internet Access

Signed in July 2009, the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Public Internet Access is providing \$7.0 million over four years from 2009-10 to expand public internet access, awareness and use in remote communities.

Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement

Agreed between the Australian and Northern Territory Governments in July 2009, this National Partnership Agreement continues the Northern Territory Emergency Response, begun in June 2007, and aims to ensure the benefits are sustainable and driven by community aspirations. Over three years from 2009-10, the Australian Government is providing \$793.3 million for a wide-ranging package of measures covering community safety, support for families, expanded health services, enhanced education, literacy and numeracy, welfare reform, employment and governance and leadership, as well as the on the ground presence of Government Business Managers and Indigenous Engagement Officers.

ACCOUNTABILITY, EVIDENCE AND REPORTING

COAG has agreed that all governments must be accountable for the Closing the Gap commitments they have made. Across all the National Partnerships, the Australian Government is pursuing an agenda of transparency.

Progress against the six targets is being monitored and reported on at regular intervals, at national level and in each of the States and Territories. The Prime Minister reports to Parliament at the beginning of each year. The COAG Reform Council reports to COAG on progress against the six targets. This year we will receive our first report from the Council. The Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage framework, against which the Productivity Commission reports biennially, has been realigned to reflect the building block approach.

COAG has also committed to report transparently on how much governments spend on Indigenous services. The Indigenous Expenditure Report Steering Committee is developing a national framework for collecting and reporting on government expenditure in this area. A high level overview of the reporting approach was endorsed by COAG in July 2009. The first data report is expected to be delivered to COAG around mid-2010. Identifying the share of government expenditure that relates to Indigenous people is a complex exercise and the quality of the reporting will improve across subsequent annual reports.

Improved statistics relating to Indigenous people will help to build a better evidence base against which to measure progress. COAG has committed to improve data through the National Indigenous Reform Agreement. Last year the Australian Government committed an additional \$46.4 million over four years from 2009-10 to improve the collection and reporting of data by national agencies.

The Closing the Gap Clearinghouse provides public access to research on what works to overcome Indigenous disadvantage. The Clearinghouse is part of a COAG commitment to building the evidence base for achieving the Closing the Gap targets and related Indigenous reforms. The Australian Government provided \$1.5 million over three years from 2009-10. This was in addition to the \$1.0 million provided in the 2008-09 Budget, bringing total funding by the Australian Government to \$2.5 million over five years. The Clearinghouse website was launched in October 2009 and currently provides access to evidence based resources, including:

- A general collection of research, evaluations and reports relevant to the COAG building blocks
- A quality assessed collection of research and evaluations with individual quality assessments by subject experts

The Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services formally reports twice a year on the development and delivery of services in the 29 priority locations that are the focus of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery. His first report was released in December 2009. The Coordinator-General will also be providing an annual report to COAG and advises Commonwealth, State and Territory agencies on obstacles within their areas of responsibility and the need for any changes.

NEW WAYS OF WORKING: REMOTE SERVICE DELIVERY

The cross-government commitment to collaborate and present a coordinated single point of contact between government and Indigenous people, is most evident in the implementation of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery from 1 July last year.

Through this agreement the Australian Government, the relevant States and the Northern Territory have committed to change the way they work with Indigenous Australians in 29 remote priority communities. The broad objectives are:

- To create the institutions and regulatory structures that will encourage and facilitate community initiatives and participation in economic and community life
- To improve access for Indigenous families to a range of government services and achieve better coordinated services
- To raise these services to the standard provided to other Australians living in communities of similar size and location
- To improve governance and leadership within the communities, including among Indigenous community organisations
- To promote personal responsibility and positive behaviours.

The position and Office of the Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services was established in July 2009 to monitor the performance of government agencies in meeting their commitments to implement the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery.

Six Regional Operations Centres now serve the 29 priority locations, with a view to coordinating effort across the whole of government. Government is represented on the ground in each priority location by Government Business Managers assisted by Indigenous Engagement Officers (or equivalents).

For each community, data has been collected to provide evidence to identify service gaps and to provide a base from which to measure improvements. The information collected will be shared with the community and will inform the development of Local Implementation Plans. These plans are being developed with, and will be agreed by, local Indigenous people, building on community initiatives and aspirations.

The Local Implementation Plans for each community set out agreed priorities, actions, responsibilities and commitments. An initial iteration is expected to be negotiated this year. Agencies across government will commit to resources and timeframes to implement the changes laid out in the plans, with a particular focus on harnessing investment from the other relevant COAG National Partnerships and Agreements. Commitments have already started flowing to these communities.

In early childhood

- Nine communities have been selected to receive new Children and Family Centres and 12 communities are benefiting from new maternal and child health services.

In education

- Seven Remote Service Delivery priority communities will benefit from new or upgraded trade training facilities in local secondary schools and intensive support and assistance will be provided to Remote Service Delivery priority communities that apply for funding under the Trade Training Centres in Schools Program to meet the needs of remote communities. This is consistent with the findings of the first report of the Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services. For example, schools in remote Indigenous communities will now be able to deliver training targeted at the specific needs and education levels in these communities.

In economic participation

- Under the Indigenous Employment Program, the Government is funding enterprise opportunities to build economic participation in remote communities. For example, in the Northern Territory:
 - Daly Region Cattle Industry Training is receiving \$0.18 million in 2010-11 to deliver pre-employment training and employment in the region
 - \$0.07 million is being provided to assist the Gapuwiyak Culture and Arts Aboriginal Corporation in the establishment of a new cultural centre.

In health

- \$64.3 million over 10 years since 2000 in capital works funding has been committed to improved health infrastructure, including primary health care clinics and staff accommodation, in 25 of the 29 communities.

In housing

- 320 new homes and 687 refurbishments are on track to be completed in the 29 communities by December 2010.

Budget measure: Remote Service Delivery National Partnership Flexible Funding Pool - establishment

In response to the Coordinator-General's first report, this Budget allocates \$46.0 million over three years from 1 July 2010 for the Remote Service Delivery Flexible Funding Pool. Over three years, this Flexible Funding Pool will support priority projects identified through Local Implementation Plans that cannot be funded from existing programs. Projects may include environmental health and safety, community information technology equipment and maintenance, and repairs for community facilities.

Through this flexible funding pool, the Government will be able to respond quickly to community needs, reduce red tape and bureaucratic delays, and build community support for the Remote Service Delivery strategy.

ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

The success of the Remote Service Delivery strategy depends on strong engagement with Indigenous people - a principle that underpins all our Indigenous policies and the implementation of programs.

In February 2008, the Australian Government offered a National Apology to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and in particular to the Stolen Generations. After years of ignoring the injustices and failures of the past, the nation acknowledged what could not be denied or set aside. We set the course for change and committed to closing the gap between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians.

This Government's commitment to a relationship based on mutual trust and respect is reflected in the Australian Government's endorsement of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, support for the establishment of the new National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, support for Indigenous people to represent their interests at the United Nations, the encouragement of Indigenous electoral participation and accelerated efforts to secure the return of Indigenous ancestral remains from overseas collecting institutions to their communities of origin. An Indigenous Repatriation Advisory Committee has examined and will advise on new repatriation processes that are more inclusive of Indigenous aspirations.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation, supported in last year's Budget, is now in operation and has announced its first funding round for innovative community-based healing services. The Government is continuing to support Link-Up Services for members of the Stolen Generations, their descendants, families and Indigenous communities affected by past government removal policies and practices.

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The 2009-10 Budget provided additional funding of \$13.8 million over three years to expand these Link-Up services.

As announced in March 2010, the Government is providing \$600,000 over three years for the new National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance to provide a forum for Indigenous women to raise issues of concern and develop their own solutions. The new Indigenous women's alliance is one of six National Women's Alliances to be funded by the Australian Government to ensure the issues that concern women are raised with government and publicly debated.

Consultations, led by Indigenous academic Dr Jackie Huggins AM, began in February this year for a feasibility study into a National Indigenous Knowledge Centre. The concept was first raised at the Australia 2020 Summit as a way to support and promote Indigenous cultures and knowledge to the wider community. The study will look at potential roles and models for such a centre. The Government provides ongoing support to Indigenous culture through a range of arts, languages, broadcasting and heritage programs.

We have delivered on our election commitment to establish a new national body to enable Indigenous people to represent and advocate their interests to government. In November 2009, I announced \$6.0 million for the six month set up phase of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, followed by an additional \$23.2 million over four years for the operation of the body.

Once established the National Congress will play a vital role in advocating Indigenous positions and perspectives as part of the cross-community effort on closing the gap. It will be a company limited by guarantee and will have equal representation of men and women across three tiers:

- A National Executive of eight board members including two full-time co-chairs
- An Annual Congress of 120 community and organisational representatives
- An Ethics Council to ensure high standards are upheld by public office holders.

The model was developed through a year-long consultation process with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, which culminated in the development of a comprehensive report on a proposed model, by the then Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Mr Tom Calma, and an Indigenous Steering Committee.

Our commitment to an open and collaborative relationship with Indigenous people was also demonstrated in last year's consultations on the future directions of the Northern Territory Emergency Response.

Between June and August more than 500 formal meetings involving thousands of participants were conducted in the 73 Northern Territory Emergency Response communities and several other Aboriginal communities and town camps in the Territory. Workshops were also held with regional leaders and representatives from service delivery organisations.

The Government listened to what people had to say and carefully weighed up the views in the consultations as well as other information. Difficult choices were made and - while some decisions will not please everyone - we have taken decisive action to support the interests of children and strengthen families, in line with our commitment to reform the welfare and family payment system to foster individual responsibility.

The Australian Government is continuing our special investment in the Northern Territory through the Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement. At the same time we want to move our work in the Territory to a sustainable development phase in which Aboriginal people are able to lead change in their communities.

Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory will never achieve robust long-term outcomes if key measures rely on the suspension of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (RDA). The Government therefore introduced legislation in November 2009 to reinstate the RDA in relation to the operation of the Northern Territory Emergency Response. The proposed legislation also provides for the redesign of a number of Northern Territory Emergency Response measures to ensure they conform with the RDA.

Income management will be made non-discriminatory. It is proposed that a new income management scheme will commence across the Northern Territory - in urban, regional and remote areas - as a first step in a national roll out of income management in disadvantaged regions.

Since it was introduced in 2007-08, income management has been a key driver in improving the lives of women, men and children in the Northern Territory's Indigenous communities. Consultations and other research have found that children, the elderly and women are safer, better fed and better clothed and people are getting a better night's sleep. Harassment for money for alcohol, drugs and gambling has declined. More money is being spent on food, clothing and school-related expenses or being saved for larger purchases such as fridges and washing machines.

These benefits are attributed to a combination of Northern Territory Emergency Response measures, in particular income management, alcohol restrictions, community-store licensing and the increased police presence.

New income management measures in the Northern Territory are due to commence in July 2010, with implementation to be completed by 31 December 2010. The RDA suspension in relation to existing income management would be lifted to enable an

effective transition from existing to new arrangements. These timeframes are dependent on the passage of the legislation.

Budget measure: Continuation of funding for National Indigenous Television

The Australian Government announced earlier this year that it would continue funding for National Indigenous Television in 2010-11 at a cost of \$15.2 million. This complements a substantial existing investment in *Imparja* television, Indigenous Community Television, community radio stations, remote Indigenous media organisations and remote Indigenous broadcasting services. In 2010, the Australian Government is reviewing its investment in the Indigenous broadcasting and media sector to ensure that resources allocated to Indigenous broadcasting are delivering the best results for Indigenous people.

THE BUILDING BLOCKS- ACTION TO CLOSE THE GAP

CLOSING THE GAP: EARLY CHILDHOOD

COAG has committed to halving the gap in infant mortality within a decade and to extending early childhood education to all Indigenous four year olds in remote areas by 2013.

This Government has consistently recognised the importance of the early years, including the prenatal and neonatal periods, in the development of healthy children who go on to have successful and fulfilling lives. The wellbeing of Indigenous children is our foremost priority. The life expectancy gap will not be closed without better maternal and child health and the education and employment gaps will not be closed without the best possible start for young lives.

Our investments in this area are working to provide more quality services in areas such as preschool education, child care, family support and parenting and maternal, antenatal and early childhood health.

In November 2008, all Australian governments signed the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education which, from 2013, aims to provide universal access to early childhood education to all Australian children in the year before formal school. Indigenous children living in remote communities are a specific focus of this agreement. Bilateral agreements setting out actions, strategies and performance benchmarks have been finalised with each jurisdiction.

The Australian Government also provides funding of around \$12.0 million each year to preschools to support the participation of Indigenous children in early childhood

education programs. Preschools recognised by the state are eligible for funding, which is provided based on the number of Indigenous children enrolled.

The National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development is establishing 36 Children and Family Centres across Australia to integrate services in areas such as child care, early learning and parent and family support. States and Territories have been undertaking extensive community consultations on site selection, building design and service models and the locations have been announced. Twenty one centres will be located in regional and remote locations, with the majority of the centres operating by 2012.

Other elements of this National Partnership Agreement are expanding health education, treatment and care services for Indigenous mothers, babies and children, including the monitoring of sight, hearing and other developmental milestones. Teenage sexual and reproductive health services are also being expanded. States and Territories have begun recruiting new staff to support the delivery of expanded programs.

In 2010-11 up to 10 additional primary health care services will receive funding under the New Directions Mothers and Babies Services initiative, which now forms part of the National Partnership Agreement. This is in addition to the 57 sites already approved for funding. This initiative provides Indigenous children and their mothers with increased access to antenatal and postnatal care to support improved outcomes.

In 2010-11 the Australian Nurse-Family Partnership Program will be delivered in up to seven locations across Australia including Alice Springs, Cairns, Wellington-Dubbo and Melbourne. This program provides regular home visits to mothers of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children throughout pregnancy and until their child is two years old.

The Indigenous Mothers' Accommodation Fund, with capital funding of \$10.0 million over three years from 2008-09, is expanding affordable accommodation options for Indigenous women needing to travel to cities or regional centres to receive care before, during and after the birth of their child. A 24 bed facility began construction in Cairns in December 2009, at a capital cost of \$5.0 million, and is scheduled for completion in July 2010. I have also approved \$4.1 million for the construction of a 10-15 bed facility in Darwin. The facility is scheduled for completion by June 2011. Extensions to an existing 10 bed facility in Katherine are under way.

The Child Care Services Support Program provides \$43.0 million each year to around 269 Indigenous early childhood education and care services in areas where the market would not otherwise provide these services. These services include playgroups, crèches and outside school hours care services.

The Indigenous Parenting Support Program, an election commitment, provides additional early childhood services and informal parenting support services. At

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April 2010, 11 services, three of which are in Remote Service Delivery priority communities, were operational assisting over 240 families. A further 23 sites will be set up in Remote Service Delivery communities once community consultations are completed. A further 16 sites nationally will commence from July 2010.

As part of the Northern Territory Emergency Response, the Government committed \$15.5 million over four years from 2007-08 in capital and operational funding for nine new crèches and the upgrade of 13 existing crèches. As at 30 April this year, eight of the nine new crèches were operational and a further 11 existing crèches had been upgraded. Other childrens' services have been provided through the Northern Territory Emergency Response, including expanded access to playgroups. Three additional playgroups were funded in last year's Budget, and are being established in Remote Service Delivery priority communities in the Northern Territory.

To support the development of the early childhood workforce in remote Indigenous communities, 29 traineeships are being fully funded at a cost of around \$3 million from 2009-10 to 2012-13 for participants to gain a Certificate III or IV.

The Australian Government is building a better understanding of the needs of Indigenous children through the Footprints in Time study and the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI). Footprints in Time first begun in 2003 and was provided with \$12.0 million over four years from 2007-08 to continue developing the study. The AEDI complements this work, measuring the development of children in a community by the time they reach school age. The AEDI Indigenous Adaptation Study reviewed the AEDI questions, processes and materials to ensure that they are culturally inclusive and relevant for Indigenous populations. In 2007-08 the Government invested \$21.9 million to 30 June 2011 for the first national rollout of the AEDI.

Budget measure: Improvements to Budget Base Funded services - improved standards

Funding of \$59.4 million over four years from 2010-11 will be provided to improve the quality of around 140 Budget Base Funded early childhood services, including around 100 Indigenous services, to meet key aspects of the new national quality system for early childhood education and child care by 2014. Children attending the centre based early childhood services will benefit from improvements to the level of qualifications of staff at the service, physical environment of the service where this is required and governance and administrative capacity.

These services are directly funded by the Australian Government to provide child care and early learning opportunities to vulnerable and disadvantaged children in areas where the market would otherwise fail to deliver child care.

CLOSING THE GAP: SCHOOLING

Three of COAG's Closing the Gap targets relate to education:

- Ensuring all Indigenous four-year-olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years (see Early Childhood)
- Halving the gap for Indigenous students in reading writing and numeracy within a decade
- Halving the gap in Year 12 or equivalent attainment by 2020.

Education is also critical to achieving the three other Closing the Gap targets. Good health and good jobs are underpinned by a good education including the achievement of foundation skills in literacy and numeracy.

Over the years, a culture of low expectations has developed regarding the education of Indigenous people, resulting in poor outcomes for many Indigenous students. In the past governments have under-invested in remote schooling in particular, with an expectation of low attendance, and the needs of Indigenous students in other areas have also not been well considered.

We are determined to improve the educational outcomes of Indigenous students. Many Indigenous students are now being challenged to achieve and we are working across government to put in place the support and infrastructure they need to fulfil their potential.

The Australian Government is prioritising education for the whole community.

Our Education Revolution is built on collaboration with the States and Territories and the non-government education sector. It is being implemented through an unprecedented investment in Australian schools, including increased funding to government and non-government schools, major investment in school infrastructure and a wide-ranging reform agenda.

A record \$63.7 billion is being invested in Australian schools over three years from 2009-10. This almost doubles the previous \$33.5 billion commitment to funding and infrastructure and represents a 90 per cent increase over the previous four years. World-class infrastructure is being provided through a number of initiatives. A commitment of \$2.2 billion over six years from 2008-09 has been made for the Digital Education Revolution, and \$2.5 billion over 10 years from 2008-09 for the Trade Training Centres in Schools Program, \$19.0 million of which is being provided for schools in the 29 Remote Service Delivery communities. Finally, \$16.2 billion is being invested in Building the Education Revolution of which \$89.0 million has been

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approved for schools in the 29 Remote Service Delivery communities. Large numbers of Indigenous students are benefiting from this investment across Australia.

Our collaborative strategies are set out in the National Education Agreement and a series of National Partnership Agreements.

In schooling, the Australian Government has made significant investments to lift Indigenous student literacy and numeracy achievement through both mainstream and Indigenous specific programs.

Funding of \$2.6 billion over five years from 2008-09 has been provided for the three Smarter Schools National Partnerships. The \$540.0 million for the Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership, in particular, seeks to accelerate improvement in student literacy and numeracy outcomes, especially for those students most in need of support. The \$1.5 billion Low Socio Economic Status School Communities National Partnership supports the learning needs and wellbeing of Indigenous students to improve engagement and attendance. The \$550.0 million Teacher Quality National Partnership will support teachers including those in schools with predominantly Indigenous students.

Literacy and numeracy skills are fundamental to educational equality and to meeting our Closing the Gap targets. The Government is expanding literacy and numeracy programs for Indigenous students. Currently 16 intensive literacy and numeracy projects are active in more than 150 schools and other sites across Australia, with funding of \$21.9 million over four years from 2008-09. The next funding round will select projects on quality and their alignment with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan. The total funding available for this initiative is \$51.5 million over five years from 2008-09.

We are also investing \$4.9 million over four years from 2008-09 in professional development for teachers so they can prepare and maintain Personalised Learning Plans for Indigenous students in every year of schooling up to Year 10. Parents will be engaged in these plans and, with teachers, be part of their child's development.

The Parental and Community Engagement Program has approved 34 projects totaling \$4.65 million since 1 July 2009. These are assisting more than 4,200 Indigenous parents, caregivers or community members to be partners in their children's education. A number of projects are currently in development, leading to an expected increase in the uptake of the program and further expenditure of around \$20.0 million in the next six to 12 months.

Students in more than 400 schools across Australia are involved in 30 literacy and numeracy pilots to build an evidence base of what works for disadvantaged students, particularly Indigenous students. The education measures under the Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement aim to improve Indigenous literacy and numeracy outcomes and upskill local Indigenous education workers in 73

targeted remote communities. Part of this work involves providing on site and in context professional development on literacy and numeracy programs for which we have provided \$44.3 million from 2009-10 to 2011-12.

To ensure the needs of Indigenous students are kept in focus among the many parts of the Education Revolution, Australia's Education Ministers have developed an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010-14, through the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs.

The draft plan focuses on six areas that will have the most impact on Closing the Gap:

- Readiness for school
- Engagement and connections
- Attendance
- Leadership, quality teaching and workforce development
- Literacy and numeracy
- Pathways to real post-school options.

Budget measure: Support for the implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan

Governments will be expected to prioritise resources toward achieving the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan, which will represent the national agenda on progressing the Closing the Gap targets related to education.

The Budget enables \$15.4 million over four years from 2010-11 of Australian Government funding provided through the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000* to be directed to facilitating and leveraging actions under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan.

Funded projects may help schools and Indigenous families work together; assist schools to maximise Indigenous attendance; expand access to literacy and numeracy programs; offer better training to educators; or facilitate the sharing of 'what works' across schools and systems.

The Australian Government also made an election commitment to train 200 extra teachers for remote schools in the Northern Territory. The Government has committed \$98.0 million over five years from 2007-08 to this program which helps in addressing

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the enormous education deficits that had become entrenched in the Northern Territory. At February 2010, 140.5 new full time equivalent teaching positions had been filled by Northern Territory education providers. The remaining new teaching positions are expected to be filled by the end of 2012.

Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory has established a successful School Nutrition Program, at a cost of \$37.5 million over three years from 2009-10, to improve attendance and student performance. Approximately 8,000 meals are being provided each day to children in 67 communities attending 65 schools. Parents are able to contribute to the program using income managed funds.

The Youth Attainment and Transitions National Partnership Agreement has an explicit focus on Indigenous disadvantage. It is providing urgent concerted action backed by longer term reform to engage young people aged 18 to 24 in education and help them to make the transition to further education, training, employment and a career. The first project payments to the States and Territories have been made and are contributing to projects such as a new Youth Connections Program.

The Youth Connections Program began in January 2010 and provides an individualised and responsive service to support those most at risk of disengaging from education, including Indigenous young people. From 2009-10, \$286.7 million over four years is being provided under the National Partnership Agreement. To achieve national coverage, 113 Youth Connections Service Regions have been established. In those regions with high Indigenous populations, Youth Connections providers are required to meet set targets and outcomes for Indigenous young people.

Under this National Partnership Agreement, the Government has also committed \$182.9 million over four years from 2009-10 to the School Business Community Partnership Brokers Program. Partnership Brokers must work with the Youth Connection providers in each region to strengthen services for at-risk young people.

The Indigenous Youth Leadership Program continues to provide education choice for Indigenous students, especially those in remote areas. Since its inception in 2006 the program has provided scholarships for 481 secondary and tertiary students, with 125 students completing Year 12. The Government has also committed to providing \$33.0 million over three years from 2010-11 to the Indigenous Youth Leadership Program to help close the gap in Indigenous education. Eight Partnership Brokers will deliver around 1,510 scholarship year places for new and continuing secondary students over 2010-12. Three of these brokers will also deliver around 390 tertiary scholarship year places. More than 300 students are being supported by scholarships in 2010. At least 60 high performing schools and 30 university campuses are involved. In 2012, more than 640 (or 1.2 per cent) of Indigenous secondary students are expected to receive a scholarship through this program.

The Australian Government is also providing funding of \$20.0 million over three years from 2009-10 to the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation to provide

scholarships for Indigenous students at secondary schools partnered with the Foundation, with 50 places to be made available at partner schools by the end of 2010.

The Indigenous Youth Mobility Program, to which the Government has committed \$37.6 million over three years from 2009-10, enables access to quality education and training for employment, especially for young people living in remote areas. The program aims to achieve its target of placing 1,500 Indigenous people in apprenticeships and vocational education and training and university courses. It is providing more than 320 accommodation places in 17 host locations in 2010.

The Australian Government has committed to the construction and operation of three new boarding colleges for Indigenous secondary students in the Northern Territory. Following extensive community consultation, the colleges are being built to serve the East Arnhem, Warlpiri and Wadeye regions.

The Australian Government is providing \$46.6 million from 2008-09 to 2012-13 to the Sporting Chance Program which establishes school based sports academies as a means of engaging and retaining students and improving their academic performance. The program has expanded to involve 54 sports academies and five engagement programs, assisting more than 4,000 students. This will increase to around 5,000 students in 2011.

The Stronger Smarter Learning Communities initiative is led by prominent Indigenous educator Dr Chris Sarra. It operates via targeted school community sites, known as Stronger Smarter Learning Community hubs where leaders in each school are charged with supporting, developing and challenging staff and the local community in up to three 'affiliated schools' as well linking with others on the national network. Over the next three years the number of hubs is expected to grow to 60, with 180-240 affiliated schools.

The Closing the Gap targets for education are being tackled through many initiatives, backed by significant extra funding, both Indigenous specific and mainstream. Agreed trajectories for meeting the targets are under development with the States and Territories. As we progress, we will continue to ensure that Indigenous needs and outcomes are monitored, and resources applied through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan to fill any gaps.

CLOSING THE GAP: HEALTH

Investment in Indigenous health has increased significantly particularly for primary health care services, building the health workforce, targeting specific health problems and addressing health risk factors among Indigenous people.

Two of the Closing the Gap targets relate to health:

- closing the life expectancy gap within a generation

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- halving the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade.

Through the Indigenous Chronic Disease Package, the Australian Government is contributing \$805.5 million to the \$1.6 billion National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes, agreed in November 2008.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience a burden of disease two and a half times that of other Australians, with 70 per cent of the health gap due to chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, chronic respiratory disease and chronic kidney disease. The National Partnership is focusing on early identification and better management of chronic disease and reduction of chronic disease risk factors.

The Indigenous Chronic Disease Package involves:

- significant new funding for preventive health
- support and funding for more coordinated and patient-focused primary health care in both Indigenous community-controlled health services and general practice
- increased access to affordable medicines and specialist and allied health care
- building the numbers and skills of the Indigenous health workforce.

The Commonwealth's Implementation Plan was endorsed by the Australian Health Ministers' Conference in September 2009. Delivery commenced in 2010.

From May 2010, accredited general practices and Indigenous health services can receive incentives to identify, treat and manage Indigenous people with a chronic disease. In 2010-11, the Australian Government will expand the availability of free or low cost medicines for Indigenous patients with a chronic disease or chronic disease risk factors. Access to essential medical specialist care and allied health professional will also be increased.

The National Partnership includes a commitment to recruitment and/or training of more than 160 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outreach workers as well as additional health professionals, nurses, and Indigenous health project officers within Australian Divisions of General Practice (GP) and Indigenous health organisations.

The first intake of 83 outreach workers are being recruited from local communities to help link community members with health services. In 2010-11 a further 40 outreach worker positions will be established. This year, 38 GP registrar training posts are also being provided in Indigenous health services. Fifty professional development nursing scholarships will be provided to nurses currently working in an Indigenous health service and 50 nurse clinical placements for undergraduate nurses working in

Indigenous health. Recruitment of 94 Indigenous project officers in the Divisions of General Practice and National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation state affiliates is also underway.

The Indigenous Chronic Disease Package includes specific measures to tackle chronic disease risk factors, including poor nutrition and lack of exercise, through the commencement of Healthy Lifestyle Workers, Healthy Lifestyle sessions and activities, and local community social marketing campaigns.

There is a strong emphasis in the Package on tackling smoking. It is estimated that smoking accounts for 12 per cent of the total disease burden and one fifth of the deaths among Indigenous Australians. Mr Tom Calma, former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, has been appointed the National Coordinator for Tackling Indigenous Smoking. The recruitment of a network of regional and local tobacco action workers is proceeding. A social marketing campaign to reduce smoking is being developed for delivery in local communities. Team based service delivery by Healthy Lifestyle Workers and tobacco action workers will begin from 2010-11, together with enhanced Quitline services.

A complementary Indigenous Tobacco Control Initiative, with funding of \$14.5 million over four years from 2008-09, is researching effective anti-tobacco strategies in Indigenous communities, trialing and evaluating innovative community projects and offering smoking cessation training to staff working in Indigenous health. There are currently six sites trialing innovative methodologies, with 14 further projects across urban, regional and remote areas commencing this year. Findings will contribute to a comprehensive national approach to tackling smoking through the National Partnership Agreement.

Eating good fresh food is another path to good health. Indigenous people, particularly those living in remote communities, often struggle to get good food. The Australian Government has been working intensively with remote stores in the Northern Territory since 2007 to tackle problems arising from the poor quality and limited range of food available in many stores. This has involved the assessment, licensing and monitoring of more than 90 operators and working with managers and store committees to strengthen the day to day running of stores. Funding of \$18.3 million over three years was provided in the 2009-10 Budget to continue this work.

In 2010 there are 88 Australian Government licensed stores in the Northern Territory, 21 operated through the government funded Outback Stores and five through the Arnhem Land Progress Association. Nine stores have received infrastructure upgrades to improve operational efficiency and nutritional outcomes. Training is provided to operators to improve retail practices and nutrition awareness. In addition, the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations delivered five Building Stronger Stores workshops in the Northern Territory in 2009, with 98 attendees.

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The coming year will see the roll out of 10 community projects in the Northern Territory integrating governance and retail practice training for store committees.

At its July 2009 meeting COAG gave in principle agreement to extend the stores regulation work nationwide. Following this decision, on 7 December 2009, COAG agreed to a National Strategy for Food Security in Remote Indigenous Communities, outlining five strategic actions. These actions are:

- national standards for stores and take-aways in remote communities in the areas of retail management, financial management, governance, infrastructure, food and nutrition policy and promotion and food preparation and safety
- a quality improvement scheme to support implementation of the standards
- improved governance and accountability of remote community stores through increased incorporation under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006*
- a National Healthy Eating Plan for remote Indigenous communities
- a national workforce plan to improve food security in remote Indigenous communities.

The Strategy will be piloted in around 15 remote Indigenous communities across Australia during 2010-11.

The Australian Government has committed \$58.3 million over four years from 2009-10 to improved ear and eye health services for Indigenous people to reduce avoidable hearing and vision loss and help children to succeed at school.

A National Framework for the Delivery of Trachoma Control Programs has been finalised and trachoma control activities will be expanded in South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. This will enable more than 120 Aboriginal communities to be screened at least once a year. The need for trachoma control programs in other jurisdictions is currently being investigated. New monitoring arrangements will track progress in the elimination of endemic trachoma.

In the next six months several initiatives will be underway targeting better access to treatment of trachoma and elimination of the disease. These initiatives include new eye health services delivered through the expanded Visiting Optometrists Scheme in up to 115 Indigenous communities. Work will continue through the Central Australian and Barkly Integrated Eye Health Strategy including funding for additional eye surgical procedures. In September-October 2009, 52 procedures were completed and a second intensive surgery week was held in April 201. Additional eye and ear surgical procedures will be conducted in the coming years.

From May this year, approximately 200 sets of medical hearing equipment will be placed in priority Indigenous health services, with appropriate training for hearing

health workers. A communication campaign to raise awareness of hearing health begins in the second half of 2010.

This Government made an election commitment to reduce rheumatic heart fever among Indigenous children, funded at \$11.2 million over four years from 2008-09. Almost unknown in the wider community, rheumatic heart fever is a contributor to later chronic heart disease. The Menzies School of Health Research in Darwin has established a national coordination unit known as RHD Australia, which is helping to manage funded activities, implement a communication plan, develop education and training materials, and develop a data set. Agreements are in place with the Northern Territory, Western Australian and Queensland Governments to establish and expand registers and control programs.

Under the Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement the Australian Government is continuing to enhance health and related services, including alcohol treatment and rehabilitation.

The Expanding Health Service Delivery Initiative provides up to \$182.1 million over four years from 2008-09 for increased primary health care in remote locations in the Northern Territory, planning for regional support for remote area services, staff housing and clinic refurbishment. Since October 2008 this initiative has provided more than 390 health professionals who have been assigned to short term placements through the Remote Area Health Corps.

Follow-up treatment arising from the child health checks conducted in 2007-08 is proceeding with funding of up to \$35.8 million over five years from 2007-08. In 2010-11 an estimated 200 children will receive an ear, nose and throat treatment and follow up services, and more than 3,700 dental services will be provided to children living in prescribed communities.

The Northern Territory Mobile Outreach Service Plus expands existing sexual assault counselling services begun in 2007-08, and now provides a response to any form of child abuse related trauma for Indigenous children, families and communities in all remote regions across the Northern Territory. Since April 2008 a total of 294 visits to 82 communities and town camps in the Northern Territory have been delivered. The expanded service began in November 2009 and is expected to be at full capacity by October 2010. Total funding of \$18.5 million is being provided over five years from 2007-08 for the Northern Territory Mobile Outreach Service Plus and related services.

What Health Reform will do for Indigenous Australians

The Government's health and hospitals reform package will deliver important changes across primary care, hospitals and aged care that will benefit Indigenous people and communities. The reforms will deliver services that are better integrated, better coordinated, and more responsive to the needs of patients.

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Under the National Health and Hospital Network, the Commonwealth will have full funding and policy responsibility for all GP and related services. Funding and policy responsibility for services currently funded and managed by state and territory governments, such as community health clinics with allied health services such as dietitians and psychologists, will be brought together with Commonwealth-funded services such as GPs and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services to improve the quality of care for patients. This will enable health services to be better integrated and tailored to local needs.

The Government will invest \$449.2 million over four years from 2010-11 to transform the way Australians with long term illness are treated. This will begin with improving health outcomes for the nearly one million Australians living with diabetes.

From 2012 they will be able to choose to sign up with a GP practice or medical service of their choice. This practice will:

- become responsible for managing their care, including by developing a personalised care plan
- help organise access to the additional services they need, such as care from a dietician or podiatrist, as set out in their personalised care plan
- be paid, in part, on the basis of their performance in keeping their patients healthy and out of hospital.

This will also benefit Indigenous Australians who experience diabetes at higher rates compared to non Indigenous Australians.

Primary health care services, including Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, will be able to access funding under two new measures which improve access to after hours care and improve primary care infrastructure. Many people, particularly those living in rural and remote areas, who do not readily have access to after hours GP services or are not aware they exist, will gain access to high quality, affordable, and integrated after hours primary care services.

The Government will invest \$355.2 million over three years in this year's Budget to fund around 23 new GP Super Clinics and help around 425 General Practices, primary care and community health services and Aboriginal Medical Services. This will improve the quality and accessibility of these services.

To reduce smoking rates, the Government has implemented a 25 per cent increase in tobacco excise from 30 April 2010, above normal CPI adjustments, with the proceeds to be spent on health and hospitals. The Government will also legislate to mandate plain packaging for tobacco products from 1 July 2012 and boost its investments in anti-smoking advertising campaigns which will further bolster the effort to reduce smoking and the resulting disease burden among Indigenous people.

CLOSING THE GAP: HEALTHY HOMES

Housing is crucial to outcomes in all other areas of life. Children cannot grow up healthy and get a good education if their home environment is unsafe and overcrowded.

An Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report released in October 2009, *Indigenous housing needs 2009: a multi-measure needs model*, reveals the impact on Indigenous housing of decades of failed government policy and under-investment. The report found that around 10,000 additional dwellings were required at the time of the 2006 Census to tackle Indigenous housing disadvantage including homelessness, housing affordability and the deterioration of dwelling conditions across Australia. Indigenous people are under housing pressure from inner urban areas to very remote communities.

The Australian Government has made housing a major priority, in particular social housing for the disadvantaged and homeless. The National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing is providing \$400.0 million to the States and Territories over two years from 2008-09 and will increase social housing by around 1,900 dwellings by 2011. As at 31 December 2009, 23 Indigenous households are among the 488 households so far accommodated.

The Social Housing Initiative, part of the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan, is expanding access to social housing for all Australians, including Indigenous people living in regional and urban areas. Under this initiative, to which the Government has committed \$5.6 billion over four years from 2008-09, around 19,300 new social housing dwellings will be constructed by June 2012 and 70,000 existing social housing dwellings repaired. More than 1,400 dwellings already approved are expected to house Indigenous people.

The Australian Government is contributing \$550.0 million over five years from 2008-09 to the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness. This initiative is working to reduce Indigenous homelessness by one third by 2013, as part of working towards the Australian Government's target of halving homelessness in Australia by 2020.

In remote areas Indigenous housing need is critical. Houses are likely to be overcrowded and in very poor condition. To address this situation the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing is investing a total of \$5.5 billion over 10 years to provide up to 4,200 new houses and 4,800 refurbished houses. Funding is also available for a repairs and maintenance program, assessing housing condition, tenancy management, improvements to town camps and the provision of employment-related accommodation.

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Central to the agreement are major changes to the way housing is delivered in remote communities including:

- reforming land-tenure arrangements to ensure government investment is secured
- the development of better ways of managing new housing construction and refurbishment
- improving property and tenancy management practices, including provision for ongoing maintenance and the payment of rent at public housing levels
- building an Indigenous labour force through housing projects
- ensuring that local communities are consulted and housing activity meets local needs.

Progress is being made on land reform in the States to underpin investment through this National Partnership Agreement. In the Northern Territory, the Australian Government working with the Northern Territory Government has made significant progress with negotiation of leasehold arrangements on community owned land with Indigenous communities and land councils.

Appropriate tenure arrangements have been finalised or agreed in principle in 14 of the 16 sites identified for major capital works under the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP), including whole of township leases for Nguiu in the Tiwi Islands, and for Angurugu, Umbakumba and Milyakburra on Groote Eylandt. Additionally, secure tenure arrangements are now in place in all 18 Alice Springs town camps allocated to receive works under SIHIP.

In December 2009 COAG agreed to the renegotiation of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing and this has now been endorsed by all First Ministers who are parties to the Agreement. The renegotiation will enable a more competitive process for allocation of funding by the Australian Government for capital works and provide strong incentives for the States and the Northern Territory to progress the construction of new housing, refurbishment of existing houses and provision of employment related accommodation in remote Indigenous communities over the remaining eight years of the National Partnership Agreement. The new arrangements will begin on 1 July 2010.

COAG agreed to the renegotiation following consideration of progress on the implementation of the National Partnership by the States and the Northern Territory. Concern about slow progress on capital works had led the Australian Government to set up an Office of Remote Indigenous Housing in the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and to deploy staff to key jurisdictions to help oversee the rollout of this National Partnership Agreement.

Work agreed for the 2009-10 financial year has continued. The target for 2009-10 is for 320 new houses and 587 refurbishments to be completed. There has been an improvement by the state and Northern Territory Governments in progressing this work. We are on track to achieving these targets with 320 new houses underway, 33 completed and more than 640 refurbishments also completed or underway.

In the Northern Territory the Australian Government and Northern Territory Governments are jointly undertaking SIHIP as the first tranche of works under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing. By 2013, SIHIP will have delivered 750 new houses, 230 rebuilds of existing houses and 2,500 refurbishments across the Northern Territory. Two construction company consortia, known as 'alliances', are delivering the program.

Over the past year both governments have worked through a number of challenges arising from implementation of a remote housing program of unprecedented size. A major review of the program's performance in August 2009 confirmed that the program is on track to achieve its targets and made a number of recommendations for improvement. The SIHIP Post Review Assessment, conducted in March this year, found that all recommendations have been, or are in the process of being, implemented, including a stronger role for the Australian Government in managing the program.

In the Northern Territory, at the end of April 2010 the construction of over 80 new houses was underway, with seven completed. Over 180 existing houses had been refurbished or rebuilt and over 110 existing houses had refurbishments or rebuilds underway. In total, work on over 380 housing lots was underway or completed. The program's target of a minimum 20 per cent Indigenous on site workforce is being exceeded, with currently over 35 per cent of the National Partnership Agreement on-site workforce in the Northern Territory being Indigenous.

Under the Alice Springs Transformation Plan, a joint initiative between the Australian and Northern Territory Governments, SIHIP funds are being used for housing construction and upgrades. Progress has been swift since work was able to begin in early December 2009. The plan addresses the long-standing need to provide safe and well managed accommodation for the many Aboriginal residents of the town as well as people from remote communities who come to Alice Springs to visit or access services.

In February 2010, I announced construction of the Alice Springs Accommodation Park, a drug and alcohol free space that will house up to 150 visitors in a range of affordable accommodation options when it is completed in mid 2010. A number of other transitional accommodation facilities are being funded under the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan.

Following the town camp clean ups and the Fix and Make Safe program carried out in December and January, refurbishments of houses have commenced in Iparpa and

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Palmer's town camps and construction has started on six of the first of 85 new houses to be built as part of the Australian Government's \$100.0 million investment in housing and infrastructure across the town camps. The construction has so far provided job opportunities for 15 local Aboriginal trainees who are now trade assistants with the Territory Alliance team.

The integration of the town camps into mainstream municipal services has begun. Wheelie bins have been delivered to dwellings in the town camps, and the Alice Springs Town Council commenced weekly rubbish collection in early March.

The Dog Control Program, which has seen more than 670 dogs removed from Alice Springs town camps since December 2008, will receive an extra \$450,000 over two years from 2010-11 under the Alice Springs Transformation Plan.

The Alice Springs Transformation Plan is also identifying gaps in service delivery and working to strengthen social services in areas such as alcohol rehabilitation, family support and early childhood services. With the transition to mainstream tenancy arrangements, where residents pay public housing rent, people will be supported through life skills training, tenancy-support programs and intensive case management.

Under the Transformation Plan, the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory Government have committed \$3.0 million over three years from 2009-10 for a new Communities for Children site being established in Alice Springs to provide intensive early-intervention programs to vulnerable families, with children aged from newborn to 12 years. The project will use a community development approach to provide better support to families and children, running in collaboration with the community and local service providers.

In addition, the Government is investing \$51.7 million to improve water and wastewater services in 17 remote Indigenous communities across Australia, focusing on priority communities under the Remote Service Delivery National Partnership. The improvements will be funded from the National Water Security Plan for Cities and Towns, which provides \$254.8 million over five years to cities or towns with fewer than 50,000 people to upgrade older water systems, install new infrastructure and support practical projects that save water or reduce water losses.

Budget measure: Home Ownership Program – transfer of funding from the Home Ownership on Indigenous Land Program

The Budget enables a temporary transfer of \$56.0 million of unutilised capital from the Home Ownership on Indigenous Land Program to the Home Ownership Program, allowing greater flexibility in the use of these funds.

Indigenous Business Australia operates two programs assisting low-income Indigenous people to buy homes:

- the Home Ownership Program, which has been operating since 1975 and provides loans secured by freehold title, typically in cities and regional towns
- the Home Ownership on Indigenous Land Program, initiated in 2006, which provides loans secured by leases on community-titled land, typically in remote Indigenous communities.

Implementation of the Home Ownership on Indigenous Land Program has been slower than originally anticipated due to difficulties in establishing land-tenure reforms and suitable land-leasing frameworks and systems on Indigenous-owned land. Demand for Home Ownership on Indigenous Land loans has started, particularly in the Tiwi Island community of Nguiu in the Northern Territory which was the first community to sign a township lease under the amended *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*. It will, however, take some time for demand to meet the amount already appropriated to the program.

A capital injection of \$56.0 million in 2010-11 into the Home Ownership program will provide around 250 additional home loans for Indigenous Australians, many of whom are seeking to buy homes in urban and regional areas.

The additional funds will partially address the growing waiting list for Home Ownership Program loans in the short term. At end February 2010 there were 1,368 eligible applicants on the Home Ownership Program waiting list, up from 1,323 at 30 June 2009.

Future demand for Home Ownership on Indigenous Land loans will be met initially from its annual capital appropriation, with any excess demand met from revenue from the Home Ownership Program. The transferred capital will be made available to Home Ownership on Indigenous Land customers as demand accelerates. The two schemes will remain separate.

Promoting home ownership assists in closing the housing gap and enables Indigenous people to have the same home-purchase opportunities as other Australians.

Budget measure: Aboriginal Hostels Limited – upgrades and repairs

Aboriginal Hostels Limited is the largest provider of safe and affordable temporary accommodation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The company operates a network of 47 hostels and funds around 76 community hostels, providing more than 3,000 beds per night and more than two million meals a year at an affordable price.

The hostels, located across Australia, assist the homeless and enable Indigenous people from rural and remote communities to access services and employment and education opportunities.

The Government is providing \$6.9 million in 2010-11 to enable Aboriginal Hostels Limited to undertake necessary repairs and maintenance of a number of its hostels. This will ensure that Aboriginal Hostels Limited's building stock will continue to meet acceptable standards for public safety and occupational health and safety.

The funds will contribute to the Closing the Gap agenda and facilitate Aboriginal Hostels Limited's long-term viability.

CLOSING THE GAP: ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

COAG has committed to halving the employment gap between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians by 2018. To meet this target, major reforms have already been implemented to promote Indigenous people's participation in the wider economy.

A pivotal role is played by Job Services Australia (JSA), the new network of employment service providers that commenced on 1 July 2009. JSA works with the two principal Indigenous specific programs relaunched on the same date: the Indigenous Employment Program (IEP) and the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program.

As the largest employment program for Indigenous Australians, assisting over 95,000 Indigenous people, Job Services Australia (JSA) plays a pivotal role in closing the employment gap. Since it commenced on 1 July 2009 through to 31 March 2010, JSA had achieved over 25,600 job placements for Indigenous people and over 5,500 disadvantaged Indigenous job seekers had been placed in jobs for at least 13 weeks. Indigenous job seekers are able to access specialist services from over 181 JSA sites and a total of 18 Indigenous organisations have been contracted in their own right to provide JSA services.

In 2008, the Government committed over \$750 million over five years to the reformed IEP. The IEP complements the work of JSA providers, enabling individuals, communities and employers to benefit from tailored employment assistance packages including wage subsidies, training and mentoring and business support. In the first nine months of the reformed program, there were 12,777 commencements in the program, and over 7,500 employment placements.

The IEP is also supporting larger projects such as the Australian Employment Covenant that are advancing productive partnerships between Indigenous people and the private and non-government sectors. Funding is also being provided to the Aboriginal Employment Strategy until 30 June 2012 to provide assistance in nine sites in New South Wales and the Northern Territory.

In December 2008, the Government announced it would commit a net \$202.4 million over five years to reform CDEP around Australia, excepting the Torres Strait. The reforms are strengthening Indigenous communities and supporting Indigenous people in predominantly remote areas through community development and participation opportunities that develop skills, improve capacity, work readiness and employability, and link with local priorities. The 2010-11 Budget provides funding to extend these reforms to the Torres Strait region.

Based on consultations with Indigenous communities about CDEP reforms, the Australian Government has committed \$55.0 million over four years from 2009-10 for a national network of 87 Indigenous Community Support Service providers.

These providers are helping to connect Indigenous people and their families with a range of services including caring for families, early childhood, education, training, employment, financial management, housing, health and legal services.

Those participating in CDEP can access a range of personalised training and support designed to give them the skills needed to get a job. This includes vocational training, on-the-job work experience, literacy and numeracy training, mentoring support, and general work and life skills training. Employers providing work experience placements for new CDEP participants have access to the CDEP Work Experience Subsidy. At the end of March 2010 the reformed programs had achieved 1,877 employment outcomes.

The community development stream provides local people with the support and tools they need to deal with issues of importance to them. CDEP providers are working with their communities to develop community action plans setting out goals and actions to improve community life. The Government has recently approved \$172.4 million over three years from 2009-10 to help implement these plans in over 600 remote communities and outstations.

CDEP subsidisation of the delivery of government services to communities is being phased out across Australia. CDEP participants undertaking roles such as

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municipal service operators or health workers are being transferred into funded positions in government service delivery, with proper wages and conditions. The creation of properly funded jobs from CDEP positions is one of the principal strategies in the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Economic Participation. The Australian Government has committed \$172.7 million and the State and Territory Governments \$56.2 million over the five years of the agreement from 2008-09 to support the creation of up to 2,000 jobs from former CDEP positions. At April 2010, 1,538 positions had been created by the Commonwealth and the other jurisdictions. A further 2,211 jobs were established in the Northern Territory by December 2009 under the Northern Territory Emergency Response Jobs Package (over \$90 million over three years).

Indigenous enterprises provide a pathway for many Indigenous people to reach their economic goals. Indigenous businesses provide self-employment and employment opportunities for Indigenous people, helping to close the gap in employment outcomes.

The reformed IEP has continued to provide a range of assistance to support economic development activities and growth for Indigenous enterprises. In particular, the IEP has provided over 120 Indigenous enterprises with business support to set up, run and expand their business.

At least 30 of these Indigenous businesses are operating commercially with the support of the IEP's Indigenous Capital Assistance Scheme. These businesses are accessing commercial loans worth over \$5.6 million through the Westpac Banking Corporation, the Government's partner in this scheme.

The Australian Government is providing \$1.9 million from 2008-09 to 2010-11 to the Queensland Government to support the full time employment of nine Indigenous Enterprise Development officers at various locations across Queensland. The project aims to deliver on the ground economic and enterprise development services to Indigenous Queenslanders.

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and Indigenous Business Australia have jointly provided funding of \$0.15 million in 2009-10 to undertake a scoping study to explore the expansion of the East Arnhem Land Business Development Approach as successfully piloted in the Galiwinku community. The approach aims to provide direct small business development and support services on the ground to regional and remote communities.

Government procurement policies are being amended to boost Indigenous employment and business. In February 2010 the Australian Government launched an enhanced Indigenous Opportunities Policy under the National Partnership Agreement, which will have a staged implementation from 1 July 2010. The policy requires companies submitting bids for high value projects (over \$5.0 million, or over \$6.0 million for construction projects) in regions with significant Indigenous

populations to develop an Indigenous Training, Employment and Supplier Plan as part of their application. This will encourage corporate social responsibility in relation to Indigenous employment and training and the use of Indigenous suppliers. The Government will continue to consult with the sector between now and the commencement of the Indigenous Opportunities Policy in July this year.

The Australian Government is also supporting a three year pilot of the Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Council to help Indigenous businesses contract directly with corporate and government buyers of goods and services.

The Commonwealth and state and territory governments have agreed to raise the level of Indigenous employment in the public sector to at least 2.6 per cent to reflect the proportion of Indigenous people in the population. The Government has already invested \$6.0 million over three years from 2009-10 in the Australian Public Service Commission's Indigenous Employment Strategy to support Australian Public Service agencies in meeting the target. This Budget provides funding to assist Commonwealth public sector agencies outside the Australian Public Service to meet or exceed this target.

The Government's Business Action Agenda, funded in last year's Budget (\$3.0 million over four years), is seeking closer involvement of the private sector in Closing the Gap. A Government Ambassador for Business Action, Mr Colin Carter, was appointed in February 2010. Mr Carter has worked on community-business partnerships in Cape York and regional Victoria and will be engaging corporate leaders across the country, encouraging them to share their expertise with Indigenous people, businesses and communities.

Many Australian companies are already contributing to Closing the Gap through their Reconciliation Action Plans and participation in initiatives such as the Australian Employment Covenant.

Indigenous culture and cultural knowledge is an important economic asset. The Working on Country program trains and employs Indigenous rangers for work on environmental and cultural activities. The 2008-09 Budget provided \$90 million over five years for an additional 300 rangers, with the majority of the projects to be funded by June 2010. Working on Country currently employs around 630 Indigenous rangers on 66 projects nationwide.

The Australian Government has committed to secure a reliable level of income for the Indigenous Land Corporation. New funding arrangements guarantee an annual payment of \$45.0 million to the Indigenous Land Corporation from 2010-11 with later year payments indexed to the Consumer Price Index.

Budget measure: Reform of Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program in the Torres Strait

The Budget is providing \$44.3 million over four years from 2010-11 to align CDEP in the Torres Strait, administered by the Torres Strait Regional Authority, with reforms to the national CDEP program that commenced in other areas of Australia from 1 July 2009. This funding will be sourced from within the national CDEP program. In order that individuals, businesses and the Torres Strait community have adequate time to adjust, the reforms will be staged over two years.

The first stage, from 1 July 2010, will apply the reformed CDEP program rules, including the need for participants to register with employment services, and fund more than 200 positions in Australian Government service delivery. The second stage will see new CDEP entrants receiving income support payments instead of CDEP wages, and properly paid jobs created in State and local government service delivery. Continuing participants will receive CDEP wages until 30 June 2012.

Budget measure: Business skills for visual artists (National Arts and Crafts Industry Support element) - continuation

The Budget continues support for the Business Skills for Visual Artists initiative at a cost of \$4.0 million over four years, to enable Indigenous art centres to develop sustainable business models within the wider National Arts and Craft Industry Support (NACIS) Program.

NACIS supports more than 80 art centres across Australia, and more than 5,000 artists. Community-controlled art centres enable Indigenous people to engage in the mainstream economy and are often the only source of non-government income in remote locations. The centres also promote health and wellbeing and cultural maintenance.

A 2007 Senate inquiry into the Indigenous visual arts and craft sector identified a critical need for training for Indigenous artists particularly in the areas of business planning and artists' rights and responsibilities.

Since the introduction in 2006-07 of the business skills initiative there has been a 68 per cent increase in the number of NACIS activities and support for more than 30 communities not previously funded

Budget measure: Public sector employment strategy for non-Australian Public Service (APS) employees

This measure provides \$1.6 million in 2010-11 to enhance the ability of Australian government employers that are outside the Australian Public Service (non-APS agencies) to recruit and retain Indigenous staff.

Through the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Economic Participation the Australian Government is committed to meeting or exceeding 2.6 per cent national target for Indigenous employment in the public sector by 2015. Engagement of non-APS public sector employers is essential to meeting this target.

CLOSING THE GAP: COMMUNITY SAFETY

All Indigenous people should be able to live without violence and fear. Without safe and stable communities, investment in areas such as housing and education will fail to make a difference.

The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children was endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments on 30 April 2009 and the National Indigenous Law and Justice Framework was endorsed by the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General in November 2009.

In the Northern Territory the Australian Government has put in place over 60 extra police and 18 police stations, night patrol services in 80 communities, 21 safe places in 17 communities, child protection workers and violence counselling services, as well as widespread bans on alcohol and pornography. Projects for young people seek to divert them from the justice system, reduce antisocial behaviour and combat substance abuse.

Permanent police complexes will be established in three communities in 2010-11 and two further communities in 2011-12. Police numbers will be maintained. This Budget funds the continued deployment of Australian Federal Police (AFP) pending full transfer to the Northern Territory Police.

Under the Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement, the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Governments agreed to a staged approach to the withdrawal of AFP officers and their replacement by Northern Territory Police officers. This transition will take place over two years to support and maintain policing while the Northern Territory Police increases its capability to police remote communities.

Specialist units have also been set up, including the cross-border operations of the Substance Abuse Intelligence Desks and related dog operation units to which the

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Australian Government provided \$2.0 million in 2009-10. In 2009 the Substance Abuse Intelligence Desk operation resulted in 347 charges laid, and the seizure of large quantities of illegal alcohol, cannabis and kava. This Budget continues funding for the national intelligence gathering operations overseen by the Australian Crime Commission.

The Government has expanded the whole of government Petrol Sniffing Strategy, currently being delivered in the remote cross-border regions of the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia, the Kimberley and Mornington Island. The Strategy has a number of aspects, including roll out of non-sniffable Opal fuel and youth diversionary programs. This Budget expands availability of Opal fuel to reduce the disruption caused by petrol sniffing and its devastating impacts on individuals and communities.

Budget measure: Improving Access to Justice

The Government will provide an additional \$34.9 million over four years in the 2010-11 Budget for the Indigenous legal aid services program as part of its broader access to justice package to provide additional funding for legal assistance services to improve access to justice in the community.

This funding will support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services across Australia in delivering high quality and culturally sensitive legal aid services in criminal, civil and family law. The additional funding will assist in meeting increasing demand for these services and improve access to justice for Indigenous Australians across Australia.

Budget measure: Northern Territory policing presence – staged transition

The Budget provides \$9.2 million over two years from 2010-11 to continue deployment of AFP officers to remote communities in the Northern Territory. There are currently more than 60 additional police officers in the Northern Territory, as part of the extended police presence provided through the Northern Territory Emergency Response. Their job is to help ensure community safety and protect children. Some officers are also deployed to a joint Northern Territory Police/AFP child abuse taskforce.

The Australian Government has agreed on a staged transition of responsibility for the provision of police services to the Northern Territory Government, as part of the Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement. The AFP officers will be gradually replaced by Northern Territory Police as they are trained and deployed.

Budget measure: National Indigenous Violence and Child Abuse Intelligence Task Force - continuation

The Budget continues funding for the National Indigenous Violence and Child Abuse Intelligence Task Force, operated by the Australian Crime Commission.

Since 2006 the taskforce has been gathering a national picture of the nature and extent of serious crime across remote Indigenous Australia, including drug trafficking, fraud, violence and child abuse. The initiative is identifying and addressing the systemic causes of crime against these communities and assisting women, children and other vulnerable groups.

The additional funding of \$6.6 million over two years will enable the Australian Crime Commission to consolidate its intelligence holdings, support the establishment of cross-border intelligence units, and transition some of its capabilities and activities to other agencies.

Budget measure: Combating petrol sniffing - expanding the supply and uptake of Opal fuel

The Budget provides \$38.5 million over four years from 2010-11 to increase supply of Opal fuel, which has very low levels of the volatile compounds believed to cause the effects associated with petrol sniffing.

The measure will expand storage and distribution to meet community demand in northern Australia. New Opal storage facilities will be established in Darwin and northern Queensland by 2012-13.

The expanded roll out of Opal will help to reduce the incidence and impact of petrol sniffing in 11 regional and remote Indigenous communities in Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland, improving the quality of life and health in these communities.

CLOSING THE GAP: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

Governance and leadership initiatives are being advanced on a number of fronts. They recognise that Indigenous people and organisations must have the capacity to shape their futures.

Across the country, a new wave of Indigenous leaders is emerging, keen to take responsibility for the future of their communities and foster the personal responsibility that is at the heart of family and community life.

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The new national Indigenous representative body, the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, is being established in recognition of the need for Indigenous leadership on the national political stage. The new body will ensure Indigenous people play a central role in research, policy and program development on issues that affect them. It will be an effective mechanism through which Indigenous leaders can harness a diverse range of views to provide strategic advice to government on national matters.

To encourage Indigenous leadership, the Australian Government is conducting leadership development workshops with hundreds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over the coming year.

The Indigenous Leadership Development Program has been providing individual leadership development and capacity building since 2004. Around 1,000 Indigenous men, women and young people are expected to participate in 2010-11.

Leadership and capacity building is a particular focus of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery, to ensure that communities have the capacity and skills to engage with government in planning for a better future.

Around Australia, 40 Indigenous Engagement Officers are now working in remote communities in the Northern Territory and in Remote Service Delivery priority communities outside the Northern Territory. The Indigenous Engagement Officers are generally recruited from the local community and support Government Business Managers, helping to provide a link between government and community.

The role of Indigenous Engagement Officers is broadly to:

- ensure other government staff understand the circumstances and complexities of the local community
- help to explain government policies and processes to the community
- ensure community members understand what is being asked of them
- encourage and support local people to plan for their future.

Leadership training and support modules for Indigenous Engagement Officers are being developed to help them perform their role effectively. Capacity building training is also being provided to communities and local service delivery organisations through this National Partnership Agreement.

In February this year the Prime Minister opened the National Centre for Indigenous Excellence, in Redfern, Sydney. More than 5,000 young people from around Australia will be given access to sporting, educational and arts facilities, as well as mentoring and training. The centre is being funded by the Indigenous Land Corporation.